

Adaptation to climate is not something new. Societies and ecosystems have always adapted and slowly changed over time. But climate was, for each generation, a static element, and each society was usually able to find solutions for their most common climatic challenges.

Climate change is changing this paradigm. And the rate at which climate is changing is unprecedented. Even last week the new IPCC report confirmed that the climate has already changed and will continue to change. And that humans are to a large extent to blame.

The case for mitigation to climate change is today even stronger. If emissions are a cause, it is our moral duty to reduce them and to fight to find cooperative solutions, where each country does its fair share in reducing emissions.

Things don't look particularly good in that front. Despite economic downturn in Europe and elsewhere, increasing emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) challenge the climate even further.

We cannot fail to mitigate the causes of climate change and let us all work hard to advance on this front, starting already next month in Warsaw, when the Parties of the UNFCCC meet again.

Yet, all scenarios and the reality around us point towards a different climate future, with increasing impacts upon our societies and, in many areas of the world, increasing hardships for people, activities and natural resources. Mitigation will change the magnitude of climate change, but it won't stop it.

As a consequence, we know that the future of freshwater will not look like the past. In my country less rain will mean a higher pressure on freshwater, higher risk for seawater to contaminate soils and freshwater aquifers, more droughts and increased risk of forest fires.

Portugal has, proportionately, one of the biggest coastlines in Europe. It contains features from shallow estuaries to high rocky cliffs. Sea level rise and increased erosion in some sandy shores, soft cliffs and wetlands is already threatening some of our postcard sceneries and the livelihoods of many. The challenge to manage and adapt this extensive coast is immense.

Portugal adopted its National Adaptation Strategy in 2010. And like many European and other countries faces now the challenge of moving forward with its implementation. The EU has earlier this year adopted its own strategy and will monitor closely how its Member-states develop their adaptation efforts in the near future. Articulation and cooperation will be key-words in this interaction.

Adaptation is not about keeping the status quo, it is about making changes. Business as usual is not an option. Yet barriers to adaptation are also real. Why adapt when there is uncertainty? Why adapt when short term priorities are so overwhelming?

The answer is partially scientific: we don't know everything, but we know enough for many decisions to be made. The other side of the answer is economic: the costs of adapting are much smaller than the cost of compensating for lost lives, for the loss of livelihood quality and for the loss of economic capacity.

We need to know the risks, prioritize action and manage the risks.

As a new OECD Report puts it “climate change is to a large extent water change”. In Portugal and in other countries this is self-evident, and the water sector plays a predominant role in all discussions about adaptation to climate change.

Adaptation crosses borders and sectors, and water has this unifying capacity to focus adaptation discussions. Water is fundamental for most economic activities and biophysical systems. Collecting, storing and transporting water to sustain our human needs can be both expensive and difficult. Water related extreme-events can have devastating effects on our lives.

It is therefore not surprising to notice that water management increasingly sophisticated and important over the last years and decades. In Portugal and hierarchy of plans ensures that the right decisions are taken at the right levels of government. A National Water Plan establishes the major options of the national water policy and the principles and rules guiding it; The Water Basin Management Plans try to ensure the conditions for the sustainable use of water in each river basin including criteria for water use and quality, ensure the supply of human needs and establish criteria for guaranteeing the protection of water.

This framework is complemented with Specific Plans for Water Management. In this context I would like to highlight the National Programme for the Efficient Use of Water, and the Plan for High Hydro-power Potential Water Dams. While the first aims to reduce water consumption without reducing water social and economic utility, the second increases our climate mitigation potential and creates an increased capacity to manage water scarcity that we believe will be of value now but even more in the future.

We can find in Portugal several examples of work in progress regarding adaptation: coastal protection is one of the main areas of investment given our particular vulnerability. We can name several types of actions of implementation of National Action Plan on Coastal Protection 2012-2015, in priority sites: insertion of buffer strips in spatial planning rules (2 sites: Ovar and Marinha Grande already in place), monitoring coastal dynamics and shoreline evolution (S.P Moel to Cabo Espichel concluded); conclusion of risk evaluation and vulnerability for most of Portuguese coast.

In the past reactive measures were privileged to attend local emergencies and hazards, only effective in short time scales, such as sand deposition and construction of coastal protection hard infrastructure, but now we want to privilege a shift towards prevention, according to knowledge and experience we accumulated in the area, with cost-benefit evaluation. This can include measures as replacements of people and infrastructures.

Some positive signs are also coming from the business sphere. During this conference you will visit the facilities of EPAL, the biggest water supplier and distributor company in Portugal. Conscientious of their exposure to climate change they recently concluded a study for adaptation to climate change at company level. They will now initiate adaptation action and are better prepared to think future investments considering climate change. Other utilities are following suit and the major producer and distributor energy companies are now also starting to consider climate risk in their risk portfolios.

Much has yet to be done at municipal level, but also here there are encouraging signs. Some municipalities, Sintra, Cascais and Almada, to highlight the first, are showing leadership and

have already developed their own assessments of climate exposure and are now better prepared to incorporate climate risk in their local planning. Programme AdaPT will devote 1.5M€ to promote adaptation at local level and we hope that soon the list of municipalities prepared to consider climate change in their planning will increase dramatically over the next years.

Support given to farmers and foresters, using the funds of the Common Agriculture Policy, have also dedicated a large share of its budget to promote action to increase climate resilience, notably protecting soils and promoting soil organic matter and preventing and fighting forest fires.

The new financing framework from the EU 2014-2020 will open new possibilities for climate financing. We recall the commitment of all European Governments to use at least 20% of available funds to climate financing and Portugal is now in the process of designing its measures for all sectors. In this context let me assure you that Portugal is committed use this opportunity to further enhance our mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

In a few minutes we will also mark the beginning of a new financing instrument fully dedicated to adaptation to climate change in Portugal, with the formal adoption and endorsement of **Programme AdaPT**. This programme was foreseen in the MoU on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism signed last year between Portugal, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and is now ready to be fully implemented by the Portuguese Environment Agency and the Portuguese Carbon Fund.

Following the guidance given by all organisations present in the coordination of our National Adaptation Strategy, Programme AdaPT will focus its attention and priorities in promoting adaptation at local level, in promoting easy access to climate change information, in promoting climate change education (and I note the presence of some 10th grade students from Montemor-o-Novo here today to start learning about adaptation, welcome to them), and in promoting some pilot adaptation measures in all priority sectors identified in ENAAC.

EEA Grants is an excellent funding opportunity for Portugal, but maybe more importantly: it is an opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other.

“too much, too little” is the title of this conference. Droughts and water scarcity on one hand, floods and coastal erosion on the other, highlight perfectly what the challenge of adaptation is. Cities, agriculture, forests and infrastructures in Portugal and in your countries, depend greatly on this particularly resource, at the same time so important but also the most affected by future changes.

This is an important enough reason to justify the focus of this conference. To share, learn and get inspired by the on-going climate adaptation efforts across countries and regions and to maybe give that extra step towards active cooperation across our governments and institutions in this so challenging area.

I hope you find the topics we selected for the conference inspiring, I wish you some fruitful discussions, we hope to learn a lot from your diverse experiences and that you can also take back some inspiration from what you saw and learned while staying in Lisbon.