

OECD WORKSHOP ON THE BENEFITS OF CLIMATE POLICY 12-13 DEC

COMMENTS ON PAPER BY JOHN CALLAWAY: ADAPTATION BENEFITS AND COSTS- MEASUREMENT AND POLICY ISSUES

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As a practising policy-maker with experience in both developed and developing countries, I responded to the central premise of this paper, namely that adaptation to climate change occurs along a continuum from no or limited adjustment to partial adjustment to full adjustment (p.30). It seems to me (albeit as a non-economist) that the author has constructed an impressive framework for economic analysis (p.8-26) which synthesises this understanding of decision-making and makes a significant advance.

I would also make the following points, particularly with reference to the central purpose of the project:

1. I concur with the author's concern that there should be a reality check on who needs information at a global level about the benefits of reducing CC damages (p.1). What follows from this is crucial in that it focuses on where effort can and should be put in view of data, methodological and resource constraints for research and analysis which were referred to by all contributors. Fruitful ways forward need to be pursued at national and sectoral levels which can then be used for the global level. Indeed there is not much evidence that scientific proof or economic analysis is driving decision-making anywhere at any level currently, rather a general sense of scientific understanding and economic impacts. As neither science or economics will be able to deliver beyond all reasonable doubt in the timeframes needed to ensure stabilisation at low levels of ghg concentrations, there is a real need to be pragmatic about how decision-making can be improved and not aim for an ideal methodology.
2. Such an approach is vital in view of the nature of policy on adaptation (as indicated above). Unlike policy on mitigation, in my view adaptation policy is not basically about a distinct body of policy, rather it is about adjustments within the fine grain of an enormous range of organisations in the public and private sectors who work to their own separate strategic processes.
3. The author touches on decision-making processes at various points, and I would suggest that the project as a whole could usefully first identify and then examine a number of case studies about the handling of climate policy at a national and even international level to see what types of information have been used and how. This is because at present the project rests too rigidly within a rational decision-making framework. In reality analyses of public policy have showed that providing better knowledge for decision-making, doesn't necessarily improve it.
4. The author provides some helpful conceptualisation on defining vulnerability in relation to climate variability, and adjustments made to that and climate change (p.29-30). The need to tackle climate variability as a first strategy, (p.4-6) has resonance elsewhere and before formal publication of the paper it would be helpful if he connected with initiatives such as the Adaptation Policy Framework of UNDP.
5. Again, the author has been able to employ his direct experience to usefully analyse constraints of the capacity of developing countries to adjust to climate change (p31-32). In view of the significance of aid budgets for the economy of many LDC countries, there is a route to addressing this issue.