



SYMPOSIUM ON LOSS AND DAMAGE

Advancing Non-Economic Losses: Data, Policy, and Capacity for Action

4 - 5 May 2026 | Bonn, Germany

Co-organised by UNEP/UNEP-CCC | UNDRR | UNDP

Concept Note

Background and Rationale

Climate change is driving losses and damages globally, much of which are non-economic in nature. These include impacts on human health, cultural heritage, biodiversity, ecosystems, livelihoods, and community identity. In many contexts, climate impacts manifest through displacement, involuntary immobility, and the progressive erosion of place-based identities, social cohesion and cultural continuity. Despite their profound implications for resilience, human rights, and sustainable development, such non-economic losses (NELs) remain underexplored in national planning and underrepresented in global policy processes. These dynamics represent NELs that sit at the intersection of humanitarian need, development reversals, and peace and stability risks, yet remain weakly captured in loss and damage assessments and policy responses.

Countries have highlighted the need for improved data, methodologies, and institutional arrangements to capture and respond to NELs. At the same time, countries and regional organizations are seeking greater conceptual clarity, practical methodologies, and support to better reflect NELs within national policy frameworks and for access to finance. Recent milestones including the operationalization of the Santiago Network (SN) and the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) create opportunities to respond to these needs. Countries can tap into these and other mechanisms to enhance tracking of impact, finance response to NELs, strengthen relevant policies, and institute capacity-building strategies, in a manner that is coherent with and complementary to existing loss and damage initiatives and governance arrangements.

This two-day symposium will convene policymakers, practitioners, experts and community representatives to advance science-based, practical, and locally grounded approaches to addressing NELs. The event will focus on strengthening enabling conditions, particularly data, policy coherence, and institutional and human capacity development to support effective responses to

NELs and to lay the groundwork for improved readiness and access to climate finance. Emphasis will be placed on regional and locally led practices, including community and Indigenous perspectives, and on gender-responsive and human-rights-based approaches, ensuring that local knowledge and governance systems inform global policy and practice.

Recognizing that NELs sit at the intersection of humanitarian need, development challenges, and peace and stability risks, the symposium will promote approaches that bridge humanitarian response, long-term development planning, and peacebuilding, reinforcing the importance of coherent frameworks for prevention, response, and recovery.

Symposium Structure and Sessions

The symposium will combine multi-stakeholder consultations, case-based learning, thematic breakout sessions, and concise, policy-oriented outputs. Designed in line with the rolling plans of action of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM ExCom), including its Expert Groups on Non-Economic Losses, Comprehensive Risk Management and the Task Force on Displacement, this structure will generate concrete inputs on NEL methodologies (including those related to biodiversity and ecosystem services), NELs in human mobility contexts, cultural and heritage dimensions, governance and coordination arrangements, and dissemination and capacity-building efforts.

Objectives

The symposium will:

1. Foster knowledge exchange on evidence, tools, and approaches for understanding and addressing NELs.
2. Explore existing and emerging methodologies and practices to measure, monitor, and value non-economic dimensions of losses and damages, and identify options and priorities for further work on data standards and practical guidance for countries.
3. Identify ways to strengthen enabling conditions, particularly data, policy coherence, and institutional capacity, for integrating NELs into national strategies and international processes, with a view to laying the groundwork for improved access to finance over time.
4. Provide targeted inputs to the implementation of relevant activities of the rolling plans of the WIM ExCom Expert Groups.

Expected Outcomes

The symposium is expected to result in:

- **Shared understanding** of NELs dimensions, challenges and implications for countries, communities, and ecosystems.
- **Practical demonstrations** of tools and methodologies through interactive Breakout sessions
- **Enhanced collaboration** across UN agencies, academia, civil society, and local communities, centering Global South perspectives in support of developing countries.

Deliberations at the symposium will serve as substantive inputs for:

- Issue brief(s) synthesizing gaps, lessons, and recommendations for integrating NELs into planning, finance, and capacity-building, including a curated portfolio of national and regional case studies and success stories. These will highlight experiences piloting or applying NEL approaches, particularly locally led and community-driven initiatives, with a focus on identifying key barriers and how they were managed in practice.
- A joint side event at COP31, informed by the symposium's discussions, to highlight key outcomes and recommendations, raise the visibility of NELD priorities, and inform global negotiations.
- Improved understanding of how NELs linked to displacement, migration, and mobility can be systematically identified, tracked, and addressed within national L&D, adaptation and recovery frameworks.

Target Audience

- Government representatives and Members of the WIM ExCom
- Members of WIM ExCom Expert Groups, esp. NEL, TFD and CRM and other technical experts from relevant organizations, bodies, networks and expert groups.
- Scientists and researchers, including IPCC authors and other academic institutions.
- UN agencies, international organizations, regional and intergovernmental organizations, and bilateral and multilateral donors supporting work on loss and damage and NEL.
- Civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, local community leaders, and other non-state stakeholders.

Tentative Agenda*

Day 1- 4 May 2026 (Monday)

Time	Session Title	Description
08:45–09:15	Registration	
09:15–10:15	Opening Plenary: Understanding Non-Economic Losses (NELs) in a Changing Climate	Overview of global science, practice, and policy relevance of NELs; positioning the symposium within the broader loss and damage architecture and UNFCCC processes. Introduction of key activities under the NELs, CRM and TFD rolling plans of action.
10:15–11:15	Thematic Session 1: Evidence on NELs	Examination of non-economic impacts on health, livelihoods, culture, biodiversity, ecosystems, identity, social cohesion, and displacement. Discussion of barriers in NEL assessment methods, innovations in practice, and ways to address data and analytical gaps for policy relevance.
11:15–11:30	Group Photo	
11:30–11:45	Coffee Break	
11:45–13:00	Thematic Session 2: Measuring What Matters: Methodologies and Indicators for Assessing NELs	Presentation of emerging and existing frameworks for assessing NELs; integration into national monitoring and reporting systems; discussion of baselines, data standards, and implications for access to finance. Particularly: • Role of PDNAs in assessing NELs • Tracking hazardous events and losses and damages • Displacement

* The detailed agenda is currently under development and may be subject to minor revisions.

Time	Session Title	Description
13:00–14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00–15:30	Breakout Sessions Learning by Doing: Tools and Participatory Methods for NEL Assessment	Hands-on demonstrations of assessment tools, participatory and rights-based frameworks; practical exercises on data collection, participatory metrics, and adaptable tools for country use. 1. Environment, Ecosystem and biodiversity 2. Mobility and displacement 3. Culture and Heritage
15:30–16:00	Coffee Break	
16:00–17:00	Thematic Session 3: Regional and Country Case Studies	Lessons from applied NELs assessments; integration into national policies; enabling conditions for scaling; regionally grouped case studies highlighting success factors.

Day 2- 5 May 2026 (Tuesday)

Time	Session Title	Description
09:30–10:30	Thematic Session 4: Policy and Governance Pathways for NELs	NDCs, DRR strategies, SDGs, and displacement-sensitive planning; discussion of institutional arrangements, legal and regulatory options, coordination across ministries and governance levels.
10:30–11:00	Launch: Loss & Damage Guide	
11:00–11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30–12:30	Thematic Session 5: Community and Country Perspectives on Implementation	Voices from SIDS, LDCs, and climate-vulnerable regions; gender-responsive and inclusive approaches; usability of tools, guidance, and ; ensuring genuinely locally led implementation. Country representatives; community leaders; women’s and youth groups
12:30–13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30 - 14:30	Thematic Session 6 - Part 1: Finance and capacity development as enablers of averting, minimizing and addressing NELs	Status and perspectives from formal loss and damage bodies on NELs: • WIM ExCom • Santiago Network • Fund for responding to Loss and Damage
14:30-15:00	Coffee Break	
15:00–16:00	Thematic Session 6 - Part 2: Perspectives from countries and practitioners on enabling actions to manage NELs	Discussion on readiness for loss and damage funding proposals, public fiscal allocation, private sector engagement, and strengthening long-term institutional capacities of national focal points.
17:00–17:30	Closing Plenary	Way forward and recommendations