



Aligning Sustainable Development Goals with Climate-Resilient Growth

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2015 the UN will host the 21st annual Conference of Parties (COP 21) negotiations to achieve universal commitment to an ambitious, legally binding agreement on climate change. A total of 196 countries will spend two weeks deliberating on the investment each is willing to make towards a common climate agenda. This climate negotiation also coincides with other inter-governmental discussions taking place under the UN's auspices in the second half of this year. All of these processes aim to reframe global development aspirations for the next 15 years and beyond. The intersection of the UN meeting on post-2015 development goals in September, the COP 21 in December, and the on-going discussions regarding the Financing for Development agenda (held in Addis Ababa in June 2015)¹ represents a timely opportunity for the developing world to seek a common and holistic development vision that balances economic, social and environmental concerns; safeguards development from climate impacts; reduces carbon

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emissions and other unsustainable practices; and promotes action on protecting threatened ecosystem services without compromising sustainable development. In addition, this paradigm calls for investors and the recipients of development finance to demonstrate its catalytic use to promote equity and a meaningful contribution to the achievement of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This presents an opportunity to ensure that climate change, sustainable development and financing priorities are aligned, mutually reinforcing and tailored to achieve similar transformational goals. According to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) President Christiana Figueres, 'these global efforts are all borne by a common need and an intertwined imperative'.²

In order to achieve these aims, it is important to highlight and pursue climate change opportunities that are aligned with and promote national social economic agendas. Adaptation frameworks and emissions pathway strategies can provide countries with the opportunity to anchor their domestic needs and priorities within scaled-up climate actions that deliver broader sustainable development. If conducted properly these nationally determined frameworks serve to link adaptation and mitigation strategies to important growth sectors, and provide effective solutions for pursuing multi-faceted objectives that concurrently promote resilience and local SDGs. These are also useful tools to expand and embed co-benefits approaches within international and domestic policy decision-making frameworks.

COP 21 AND NATIONALLY DETERMINED MITIGATION GOALS

Although climate governance architecture has developed over time, there still remains a significant gap between political ambition and practical reality. This is especially so in view of the overall aim of keeping the average rise in global temperature to below 2°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. After the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference failed to reach a new agreement, the 2011 Durban conference decided that a deal applicable to all countries should be concluded in 2015 and come into force in 2020.

The Kyoto Protocol (KP) established the world's first greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction treaty with binding commitments for industrialised countries only. However, in the future, all parties to the UNFCCC will take on meaningful GHG reduction pledges. Whereas the KP used a top-down approach in determining the required emission reduction levels, a new agreement will adopt a bottom-up approach based on voluntary contributions that are individually deemed to

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be ambitious and fair. However, although the new climate change agreement will not involve legally binding targets, international peer pressure will be instrumental in influencing parties to fulfil their undertakings and conform to their stated mitigation goals.

As building blocks towards this global target and in preparation for the Paris summit, countries have agreed to publicly outline the post-2020 mitigation actions they intend to take under a new international agreement, known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). INDCs, in conjunction with other nationally determined mitigation frameworks such as Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) for developing countries and Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDs),³ serve as useful climate planning instruments to catalyse near-term action and raise ambitions for reduction targets. These frameworks demonstrate intended national action towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient future in accordance with scientific requirements. Countries are also encouraged to include their adaptation plans and needs within their INDCs. Although not compulsory, it does offer a more holistic perspective and is particularly important for those most vulnerable to climate impacts, including least developed countries (LDCs) and vulnerable small island states. National adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) currently provide a framework for LDCs to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs to adapt to climate change.

INDC formulation requires an in-depth process of internal introspection and policy setting, in which countries must determine their adaptation and mitigation contributions in the context of other domestic priorities, circumstances and capabilities. Often, this will be through the use of quantifiable data, and technical or policy guidance. Although the Lima Call for Climate Action leaves it to individual parties to determine the format of their INDCs,⁴ countries are required to define the scope and coverage of national projects, provide quantifiable information on the reference points, time frames for their implementation, and methodological approaches for estimating and accounting for GHG emissions. Countries have been requested to use comparable accounting methods in measuring their emissions to make data provided by each country comparable. Many of these processes already exist in the respective countries and will not necessarily be developed solely for the purpose of an INDC. It is also hoped that INDCs will encompass the targets and actions already developed for LEDs, NAMAs, NAPAs and other relevant plans, helping to co-ordinate the various aspects and levels of climate change policy within a country.

RAISING THE OVERALL LEVEL OF AMBITION

As the maturity of these processes differs substantially by countries, it is reasonable to expect that parties put forward contributions that are in line with their respective levels of preparation, capability and available resources.

For example, INDCs can vary from comprehensive GHG emission reduction plans, to peak and decline pathways, to sectoral targets, to policy frameworks, regulations and other tools such as carbon markets, taxes, subsidies and incentives. Costa Rica has agreed to phase out GHG emissions to net zero by 2021, while the US has pledged to reduce emissions by 83% from 2005 levels to 2050. President Barack Obama's Climate Action Plan, when fully implemented, will cut nearly 6 billion tonnes of carbon pollution through 2030. China plans to peak its emissions by 2030, while South Africa proposes to peak emissions by 2025, plateau until 2035 and thereafter decline its emissions. Commitments to sector-specific targets are also included in INDCs. Morocco proposed a 14% share of solar power in electricity generation capacity in 2020, while Uganda has suggested a policy instrument, a renewable energy feed-in tariff, to achieve its emission pledges. Countries such as Brazil have committed to curb emissions through reducing deforestation and more efficient waste management.

INDCs can set inspirational targets and be politically driven, or countries can opt for a technically-driven process, determined by what is economically feasible. A politically-driven process requires strong leadership and co-ordination among responsible agencies to guarantee their effective implementation and to achieve the targets. A more technically-driven process ensures that mitigation policies and actions are robust and feasible, and can be realistically translated into national goals. Whichever process is selected, multiple rounds of broad stakeholder engagements are necessary. This can be undertaken by a national co-ordinating body for climate policy or a politically-endorsed, inter-ministerial co-ordination committee.⁵ South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs, in partnership with its provincial environmental counterparts, is currently hosting various stakeholder consultations in the lead-up to COP 21 to formulate its country-wide INDC position.⁶

INDCs are to be submitted by 1 October 2015, in advance of COP 21. Each INDC will be publically accessible on the UNFCCC INDC portal. Thereafter the climate secretariat will prepare a synthesis report (by 1 November 2015) on the aggregate effect of the proposed INDCs. INDCs will ultimately be determined in accordance with pledges of international support, and by the identification of mitigation opportunities aligned with national socio-economic agendas. In this regard it is imperative to identify mitigation sectors that are aligned with local development priorities and can stimulate co-benefits.

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Mitigation actions within INDCs and other frameworks should be selected on the basis of their contribution towards transformational impacts and their alignment with national economic and development priorities, highlighting mitigation potential and trade-offs. For example, smart agriculture can increase yields during drought periods while responding to emission reduction demands. The same is true for enhanced action around reducing deforestation and the protection of natural ecosystems that deliver carbon sequestration and multiple non-market (including adaptation) benefits.⁷ National climate strategies that are compatible with and promote economic development help to integrate

climate resilience into economic planning, actualise climate-responsive development plans, and mainstream low-carbon growth opportunities at all levels of government. Currently NAPAs and NAMAs express varying levels of climate-compatible development. However, their full integration into national and sectoral policies, as well as budgetary and regulatory frameworks, is crucial.

Box 1: Aligning climate change and sustainable development agendas

Climate change and sustainable development agendas include a range of complex, cross-cutting issues that transcend improving resilience to climate impacts, attracting appropriate finance and reducing carbon emissions. Discussions require an interrogation of deeply structural issues such as common but differentiated responsibilities, poverty and inequality, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, population dynamics and the management of the natural resource base for future social development. The ultimate aim is for policymakers in the areas of sustainable development, finance for development and climate change to leverage co-benefit strategies that aim to complement one another through the support of each other's objectives.⁸ These can include contributions to simultaneously enhance environmental quality; protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency strategies; de-carbonise the economy; and minimise waste and pollution.⁹

Some frameworks, such as the NAPAs, are specific to achieving goals around improved country resilience. Adaptation also overlaps naturally with development because climate-sensitive vulnerability and poverty-reduction strategies are crucial to promote resilience. Adaptation includes strategies to create high levels of economic and livelihood diversity; promote skills, learning and innovation; reduce dependence on ecosystem services; and reduce inequality.

On both the mitigation and adaptation fronts, projects that seek to create additional employment benefits and supplementary income to promote the long-term sustainable use of natural resources or conservation must be supported. These initiatives can cover numerous sectors, for example, composting of organic waste and better waste demand management, improving energy efficiency and public transportation networks, distributing renewable energy systems, insulating housing and commercial properties, and reforestation and restoration initiatives. This is apparent in South Africa's public works programmes, such as 'Working for Water', 'Working for Wetlands' and 'Working for Land', which promote unskilled job creation through clearing invasive alien vegetation, wetland rehabilitation, waste management and fire prevention. According to the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) 2013 Emissions Gap



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Tea plantation near Rubavu, Rwanda

Report,¹⁰ there are key measures that offer both mitigation and food security benefits in the agricultural sector, such as improved pasture management, non-tillage agriculture,¹¹ increased nutrient and water use efficiency and the increased use of trees and perennials on farms (agroforestry).¹² This extends to choices in the value chain to increase socio-economic equity and protect environmental integrity.

There are also many new opportunities to achieve multiple ‘wins’ in the uptake of clean energy. Between 2010 and 2012, the uptake of modern renewable energies grew by 4% globally. East Asia led the charge, representing 42% of new renewable energy generation. In recent years there has also been an upsurge in investments for renewable power generation in Africa, such as hydro-power developments in Ethiopia, geothermal power in Kenya, and solar power in Ghana. By ramping up investments in renewables, African countries can leapfrog decades of fossil fuel-based development and see multiple socio-economic and environmental benefits. In South Africa, in an attempt to move away from dependency on coal, the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme has successfully channelled substantial private sector expertise and investment into grid-connected renewable energy, at highly competitive prices.

In preparation for COP 21, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) must encourage its member states to align their INDCs to their national development and poverty strategies. For example, African negotiators must emphasise clean energy and the energy–food–water nexus in relation to climate change, and the opportunity this presents for our continent.¹³ AGN members must also maintain a consolidated position and identify barriers that will prohibit Africa from implementing these INDCs. These can include a lack of appropriate support

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Box 2: South Africa's green growth plans

In South Africa Green economy strategies have gained traction since the 2008 National Framework for Sustainable Development. A significant policy breakthrough came early in 2011, when the government adopted a resource-efficient, low-carbon and pro-employment approach as one of the key drivers in its New Growth Path (NGP) for 2020. This vision is further outlined in the cabinet-endorsed National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Action Plan (2014), the National Development Plan: Vision for 2030 (NDP) and South Africa's Climate Change Response White Paper (2011). This is further supported by sectoral policies and strategies including the integrated resource plan, integrated electricity plan, industrial policy action plan, environment sector green economy implementation plan, and the national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

According to a UNEP Green Economy Modeling Report of South Africa¹⁴, green investments can stimulate additional gross domestic product growth of over 2% by 2030, relative to 2012. While this also translates into an increase in per capita income over the years, the growth target stipulated in the NDP will not be realised without higher investments in designated sectors such as energy and agriculture.

The NGP lists the Green economy under Jobs Driver 3, 'seizing the potential of new economies'.¹⁵ A study conducted in 2011 by the Industrial Development Corporation, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the Trade Industrial Policy Strategies¹⁶ revealed that an estimated 98 000 jobs in the short term (2011–2012), 255 000 in the medium term (2013–2017) and 462 000 in the long term (2018–2026) could be created through developments in the Green economy in South Africa. Although these values represent vague projections, they still signal the opportunities in the Green economy sector.¹⁷ The 2011 study states that over half of these jobs are envisaged in natural resource management (232 926 jobs), energy generation (130 023), energy and resource efficiency (67 977), and emissions and pollution mitigation (31 642). The waste sector alone has been challenged to produce 107 743 jobs by 2030.

for technology transfer, development finance and capacity building. However, headway should not only depend on conditional arrangements. African countries, particularly South Africa, are urged to be ambitious and seek to accomplish most of their INDC commitments regardless of the international negotiation outcomes, especially because it is a positive development choice to do so.

CONCLUSION

Various meetings this year serve as important platforms for deepening international co-operation and assessing opportunities for common global development and climate agendas. The outcomes should contribute towards sustainable global development in the long term. After all, human development gains will only be possible if climate change is addressed. COP 21 provides a unique opportunity to support the overarching objectives of the post-2015 UN development agenda, while producing policy instruments (such as INDCs, NAMAs, LEDs and NAPAs) that can frame climate actions within an integral sustainable development agenda. With the right policies and pathways at a domestic level, as well as substantial support for developing countries at the global level, a new low-carbon, climate-resilient economy can be created and catalysed from Paris onwards.



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Villagers gather to collect water from the communal water pump

The submission of INDCs is merely the beginning of a longer process that will need to be reviewed and adjusted over time. However, INDCs can be used to establish a domestic institutional framework for the preparation of comprehensive climate policymaking for international and also domestic purposes. In the lead-up to COP 21, the focus must shift from restating negotiating positions to finding common, mutually beneficial solutions that contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, and respond effectively to the adaptation needs of the continent, while meeting socio-economic development concerns. These should be consistent with raising the overall level of ambition for supporting climate action on both mitigation and adaptation fronts. This transition requires support from the international system, with finance that is adequate, predictable and sustainable. There must also be a clear focus on

programmes to unleash private sector finance and scale up other forms of climate finance to strengthen the sustainable development of African countries.

More ambitious mitigation targets are needed as the aggregate effect of recent low-carbon energy developments, as well as submitted and proposed INDCs, is not yet enough to result in a peak in global emission levels by 2030. It is therefore important that national pledges submitted for COP 21 form the basis of a virtuous cycle of rising ambition, whereby political leaders create clear expectations for the energy and other sectors on low-carbon development.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- COP 21 outcomes should support the overarching objectives of the post-2015 UN development agenda and seek to establish an international framework for climate action that reconciles development aspirations for all developing countries.
- National policies must incorporate resilience and mitigation into future development planning at local and regional levels.
- INDCs can be used as vehicles to align national mitigation contributions to sustainable development priorities and to catalyse the transition from business-as-usual pathways to climate-resilient, resource-efficient, low-carbon and pro-growth development.
- INDCs can expand and embed co-benefits approaches within international and domestic policy decision-making frameworks through investment in smart agriculture, sustainable urban development and renewable energies.
- Alongside these processes a financial system must be created that strengthens sustainable development aspirations in African countries by engaging the private sector, building country ownership and scaling up investments to bring about transformational change in development pathway options.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The third International UN Conference for Financing for Development was held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015. The post-2015 development agenda and SGD goals are likely to be adopted at the UN Summit from 25 to 27 September 2015. Seventeen SDGs and 169 targets are proposed.
- 2 Figueres C, 'Paris 2015 a Defining Moment for a Long-Term Sustainable Future', European Progressive Observatory, 13 March 2015, <http://www.queries-feeps.eu/paris-2015-a-defining-moment-for-a-long-term-sustainable-future/>.
- 3 IISD (International Institute for Sustainable Development), 'UNEP DTU, GIZ Discuss Links between NAMAs and INDCs', Climate Change Policy & Practice, <http://climate-i.iisd.org/news/unep-dtu-giz-discuss-links-between-namas-and-indcs/>.
- 4 Bavbek G, 'Forming an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution: Key Considerations for Turkey', Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) Climate Action Paper, Series 2015/2, August 2015, <http://edam.org.tr/en/File?id=3175>.

- 5 Climate change and sustainable development must become political priorities, supported by good co-operative governance frameworks, collaboration across ministries and significant stakeholder engagement.
- 6 SA is an active international climate negotiator and member of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) coalition. SA currently chairs the G77 and China grouping, and is also a member of the Brazil, South Africa, India and China (BASIC) climate negotiating grouping. All these alliances promote developing countries' voices at multilateral forums.
- 7 Examples include the Addo Spekboom project in South Africa, which has both carbon sequestration and livelihood benefits through its eco-furniture project that uses wood from invasive tree species to manufacture school desks and furniture.
- 8 Climate and Development Knowledge Network, 'Defining Climate Compatible Development', Policy Brief, November 2010, http://cdkn.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CDKN-CCD-Planning_english.pdf.
- 9 Arowolo S, 'COP 21: Towards an inclusive climate negotiation in Paris', Africa Climate & Development Initiative, 23 July 2015, <http://acdi.uct.ac.za/blog/cop-21-towards-inclusive-climate-negotiation-paris#sthash.n0OcbT2PdpuF>.
- 10 UNEP (UN Environment Programme), *The Emissions Gap Report 2013*, Nairobi, November 2013, http://www.unep.org/pdf/UNEP_EmissionsGapReport2013.pdf.
- 11 No-tillage agriculture is a farming practice characterised by eliminating soil ploughing by placing seeds directly under the mulch layer from the previous crop. This approach avoids emissions caused by soil disturbances, and from burning fossil fuels to run farm machinery for ploughing.
- 12 Agroforestry is a tree-based system that is more productive, sustainable and better attuned to people's cultural or material needs than treeless alternatives. Agroforestry also provides significant mitigation benefits by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere in the tree biomass.
- 13 Arowolo S, *op. cit.*
- 14 UNEP, *Green Economy Scoping Study: South African Green Economy Modelling Report (SAGEM) – Focus on Natural Resource Management, Agriculture, Transport and Energy Sectors*, 2013, https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/docs/greeneconomy_modellingreport.pdf.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Main J *et al.*, *Green Jobs: An Estimate of the Direct Employment Potential of a Greening South African Economy*, Industrial Development Corporation, Development Bank of Southern Africa, Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies, 2011, <http://www.idc.co.za/projects/Greenjobs.pdf>.
- 17 Arowolo S, *op. cit.*

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