The Emerging Paris Climate Agreement: Can Transparency Deliver Stronger Action?

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Overview

• An evolving climate regime

• The emerging “hybrid” paradigm

• Role of transparency
  • Ex ante – Sizing up countries’ intended nationally determined contributions” (INDCs)
  • Ex post – Holding countries accountable for implementing their INDCs

• What a Paris agreement can do
Evolution of the global climate effort

• **1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**
  - Objective: Stabilize GHG concentrations to “prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”
  - Principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” (CBDRC)
  - All countries commit to implement “measures to mitigate climate change”
  - Developed countries commit to assist developing countries with finance, technology and capacity building

• **1997 Kyoto Protocol**
  - Binding emissions targets and timetables for developed countries only
  - 2nd round of Kyoto targets (2013-2020) covers only 13% of global emissions

• **2009 Copenhagen Accord/2010 Cancún Agreement**
  - Voluntary pledges from 90+ countries with 80+% of global emissions – fall well short of 2°C pathway

• **What have we learned?**
  - Kyoto: strong legal and technical rigor; shrinking participation
  - Copenhagen/Cancún: broad participation but low ambition
The emerging paradigm

A hybrid of

“top-down” and bottom-up” elements

that balances national flexibility and international discipline

to promote broad participation and strong ambition
The mandate for Paris

• **2011 Durban Platform for Enhanced Action**

  • Parties “launch a process to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties”

  • Agreement is to be reached by COP 21 (December 2015 in Paris) and be implemented from 2020
Growing convergence: the Paris agreement should...

• Allow countries considerable flexibility in defining their own nationally determined contributions (NDCs), while setting rules and norms to strengthen accountability and ambition

• Rely largely on de facto self-differentiation via nationally determined contributions – rather than on defined categories of countries – to achieve a balanced distribution of effort

• Build ambition over time through periodic review of collective progress and updating of national contributions, probably every five years
Growing convergence: the Paris agreement should...

• Create a clear expectation of “no backsliding” or “forward progression” in the scale, scope or type of parties’ contributions

• Put much stronger emphasis on climate adaptation

• Mobilize support for developing countries
Role of transparency

- **Ex ante** (i.e., before Paris or before subsequent rounds of NDCs)
  - To encourage countries to come forward with their best efforts
  - To provide an opportunity to assess the fairness and adequacy of countries’ intended contributions

- **Ex post** (during/after implementation of NDCs)
  - To assess progress in implementing NDCs/hold countries accountable
  - To assess collective progress toward long-term goals
  - To promote policy learning and sharing
  - To provide facilitative assistance to countries to strengthen their implementation
Ex ante transparency

• COP 19 in Warsaw said:
  • Parties should communicate their INDCs “in a manner that facilitates the clarity, transparency and understanding of the intended contributions”

• COP 20 in Lima said:
  • Information provided with INDCs may include:
    • Quantifiable information on reference point (e.g., base year), time frame for implementation, scope and coverage, planning processes, assumptions and methodologies [e.g., for estimating and accounting for GHG emissions and removals]
    • How the Party considers its INDC to be fair and ambitious, in light of its national circumstances
    • How it contributes towards achieving the objective of the Convention
    • UNFCCC to report on the “aggregate effect” of INDCs by Oct. 1
Overview of INDCs to date

• 31 INDCs covering 58 countries and ~70% of global emissions

• All set emission reduction targets (most are economy-wide)
  • 16 are absolute
  • 2 are intensity-based
  • 13 are pegged to projected business as usual (BAU)

• All are for 2030 except US and Gabon (2025)

• 8 are partly or fully conditional on finance or on availability of market mechanisms

• 11 anticipate using international market mechanisms; 5 others will consider them in the future

• 14 include an adaptation component
Metrics countries use to address equity/ambition

• Share of global emissions
• Per capita emissions (current and/or projected)
• Annual decarbonization rate
• Projected decline in emissions intensity (per GDP)
• GDP per capita
• Human Development Index ranking

Source: World Resources Institute
Comparability: shifting baselines

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions: GHG Reductions in 2030 Relative to Three Baseline Years

- **1990 baseline**
  - United States: 24.3%
  - EU-28: 40.0%
  - Japan: 15.6%
  - Canada: 14.5%

- **2005 baseline**
  - United States: 25.4%
  - EU-28: 35.0%
  - Japan: 34.8%
  - Canada: 30.0%

- **2013 baseline**
  - United States: 27.8%
  - EU-28: 25.7%
  - Japan: 26.0%
  - Canada: 27.8%
"Measurement, reporting and verification" (MRV) standards differ for developed and developing countries in:

- Depth/frequency of reporting
- Depth/standards of review

Mechanisms include:

- Reporting
  - National communications
  - Emissions inventories
  - Biennial reports

- Review
  - Expert review
  - In-country review
  - Peer review: International consultations and analysis (ICA) for developing; international assessment and review (IAR) for developed
• Transition to a common transparency framework with built-in flexibility for countries of varying capacities

• Self-selected tiers with differentiated standards/timing for:
  • Different capacity levels
  • Different types of NDCs

• Facilitative, not punitive: help parties understand and overcome obstacles to full implementation

• Continued support to strengthen capacity in developing countries
What a Paris agreement can do

• Catalyze national action

• Establish a balanced and durable framework that
  • Gets all the major players on board
  • Provides strong accountability
  • Works to build ambition over time

• Build confidence that all are contributing their fair share, enabling stronger efforts by all
Additional Resources

- **Vision for Paris: Building an Effective Climate Agreement**
  - Report of the Co-Chairs of the Toward 2015 negotiators dialogue

- **Toward a 2015 Climate Agreement**
  - C2ES policy briefs on Paris-related issues, including legal form, differentiation, adaptation and finance
  - Overview of countries’ INDCs
  - Background on UNFCCC
  - [http://www.c2es.org/international/2015-agreement](http://www.c2es.org/international/2015-agreement)