



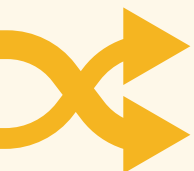
NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION (NDC) ENGAGEMENT MADE SIMPLE

A handbook for policy and advocacy experts working on national climate plans

October 2024

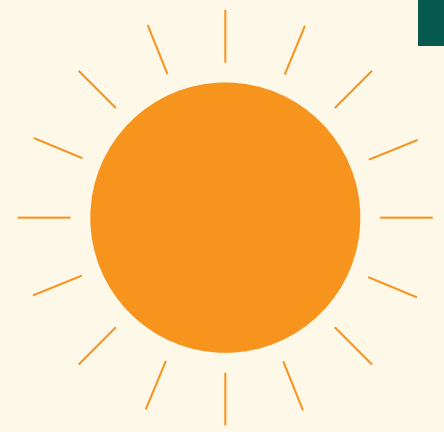
A collaboration by the NDC Transparency Initiative





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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2025, all countries that signed the Paris Agreement will have to develop new national climate plans called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Importantly, each country gets to set its own contribution - it is '*nationally determined*'. The purpose of NDCs is to set out the contribution of each country to the Paris Agreement and can include plans for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enhancing adaptation and resilience efforts and aligning financial flows (see *Annex*). NDCs are simultaneously embedded in a country's unique domestic policy making environment, and the global architecture of the Paris Agreement.

The urgency for greater climate ambition and action is clear. There has been progress in climate ambition since the Paris Agreement, but further action is necessary to meet long-term global mitigation goals to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Immediate domestic action is required to realise the global goal of reducing emissions by 43% by 2030, by 60% by 2035 and achieve net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050.

All countries must pursue comprehensive systematic changes across all sectors and contexts, including addressing the leading drivers of climate change - fossil fuels and deforestation. This involves urgent action across economies - on energy, food and nature. Inclusive and equitable strategies are essential to support vulnerable communities and close the emissions gap. Also, embracing economic diversification and just transitions will ensure a fair and effective climate response.

The content of this handbook is aimed at policy and advocacy experts around the world.

Civil society has a critical role to play in ensuring that these transitions are ambitious, transparent, fair and inclusive, with no community left behind. The risks are too high for anything less. With this in mind, this handbook aims to provide a framework for civil society to develop policy asks and engage on NDCs with governments at the national level.

2. NDCs: AN ADVOCACY PRIORITY IN 2024-2025



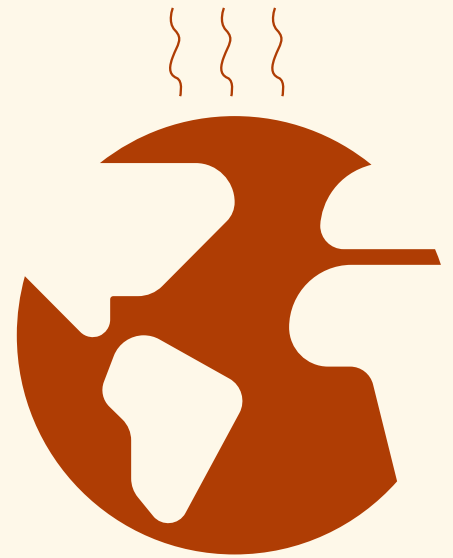
Collectively, all countries need to ensure that the world remains on track for limiting global warming to 1.5°C.¹ Evidence has shown widely that the pledges countries have made so far are insufficient to limit global warming to the safe operating limit of 1.5°C.² NDCs provide the key mechanism for countries to put forward their pledges for climate action, being sometimes referred to as 'the heart of the Paris Agreement'. All countries should be submitting their new NDCs (also called NDCs 3.0) in 2025. This provides a key opportunity for countries to readdress their climate ambition in their NDCs (e.g. their 2030

pledges) and ensure new targets for 2035 align with the goal of limiting temperature to 1.5°C.

Countries nationally determine their climate action, taking into account local and national needs and priorities, while having in mind the most vulnerable communities. At the same time, countries must orient their climate action plans at the latest scientific knowledge provided by the [IPCC 6th Assessment Report](#), and the decisions taken by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) into the formulation of climate action.

¹ As per the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#), a collective GHG emissions reduction of -43% by 2030 and -60% by 2035 compared to 2019 is needed to have a chance to stay on track.

² UNFCCC, [NDC Synthesis Report](#), published on 14 November 2023.



3. HOW IMPORTANT ARE NDCs? WHEN TO ENGAGE?

The level of detail in each NDC can be informed by their own policy context. Where a country has established climate legislation and sector plans, these may be acknowledged as climate pledges. In other instances, countries may use NDCs as an opportunity to propose new GHG emissions reduction targets, yet to be enshrined in law, policy, etc. However, as a rule, ambition must increase with each NDC.

Civil society has a role as watchdog in the continuation of the process. Having this in mind, ambition always needs to be anchored in transparency and correspond to monitoring and evaluation schemes. Ambitious and transparent NDCs allow civil society, and other important stakeholders, to participate in the dialogue and ensure elements such as justice and equity are sufficiently considered.

4. HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE NDC PROCESS?



1. GET TO KNOW THE CURRENT NDC

Explore your country's current NDC, its Long-Term Strategy (LTS), and learn about its content and critiques. Your civil society network may have analysis or commentary on the current and upcoming NDC, including GHG reduction pathways, for example. You can also consult resources available on the following websites: NDCsWeWant, Civil Society Equity Review and Climate Action Tracker.

2. IDENTIFY GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

Identify the main government actors in the development of the NDC - including who is leading on its development. For example, you could look for information in your own networks, ask your government contacts, or consult the list of National Focal Points.

3. FIND ALLIES

Find allies in your national context who have similar aims as you: not just from civil society, but also research, think tanks, media, private sector, etc. You can exchange information on opportunities to engage, and support and bolster each other's demands.

4. FORMULATE YOUR POLICY ASKS

See the sections below for ideas on how to develop policy demands. Depending on the national context, you may get the opportunity to submit them to your government contacts through meetings, written consultations, public hearings, workshops, etc.

5. PARTICIPATE IN THE NDC PROCESS

There are different ways on how to engage in the NDC process of your country. Some countries have clearly defined processes that you can join. In other cases, it is most fruitful to establish direct engagement with the government. Oxfam has prepared a great [publication](#) on participation.

6. FIND OUT THE TIMELINE

NDCs should be submitted to the UNFCCC around nine months ahead of COP30, which will take place in November 2025. This means that many countries will finalise their new NDC in February 2025. Find out the timeline in your country, e.g. through your government contacts. This will help you identify the best timing for your policy engagement. Countries that miss this deadline are likely to submit their NDCs ahead of COP30.

7. IDENTIFY OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

Once your country has submitted its NDC, there are more opportunities to engage: you can use a public campaign or collaborate with media to further influence the government according to your advocacy asks - perhaps you can ask your government to submit another NDC with higher ambition, show how they can accelerate implementation, or set out how they will fund the activities.





5. FORMULATING YOUR POLICY ASKS FOR NDCs

There are tools available which can help you think about what demands you want to present to your government. Two recommendations are provided below.

Climate Action Network (CAN) International Guidelines for NDCs 3.0

The CAN guidelines understand NDCs as comprehensive and rights-based climate action plans. They suggest that you think about your advocacy asks according to four key pillars:

1. AMBITION IN CLIMATE ACTION

The NDCs must respond to the Global Stocktake (GST) outcomes and beyond.³ The first GST decision from COP28 in 2023 outlines some actions all countries should consider to address the gaps in ambition to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The window to act is closing. Therefore, NDCs need to include economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets (with enhanced 2030 targets as well as 2035 targets aligned with 1.5°C), sectoral objectives, and information on transparency and tracking progress.

2. FAIR SHARE

The NDCs must reflect equity through 'fair shares'. This includes fair domestic emission reductions, and, for countries with higher capacity and responsibility, fair financial support to others with less capacity and means.

3. DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED

The NDCs must include solidarity and justice. They have to reference adaptation, loss and damage, and just transition. They also have to address development challenges and co-benefits with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Generally, the NDCs must take a rights-based approach and adhere to principles of inclusiveness and participation.

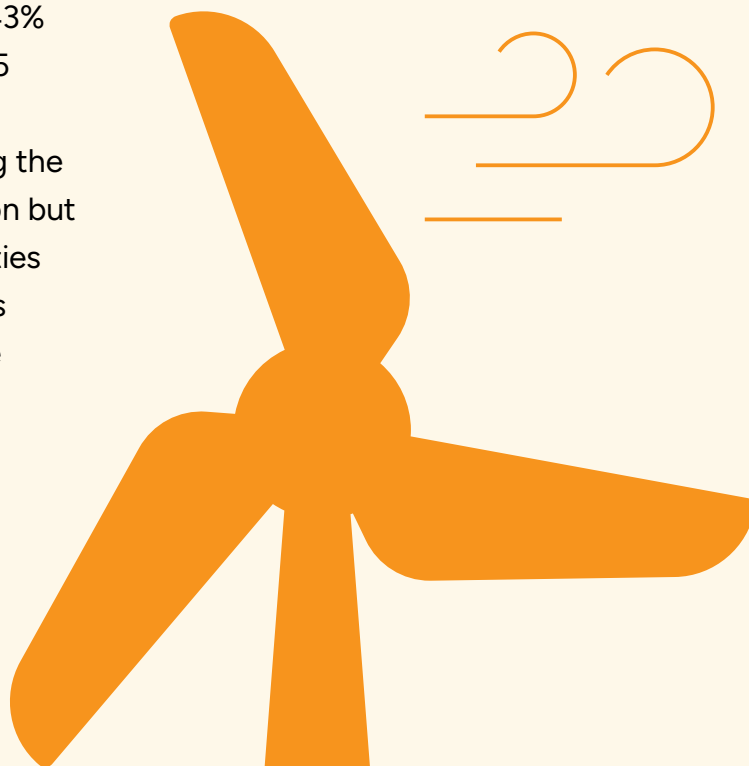
4. CLIMATE FINANCE

The NDCs must either include how adequate finance to respond to needs is provided to countries in need of financial support, or information on what these national financial needs are. Note that COP29 in Azerbaijan in November 2024 discusses a global climate finance goal for developed countries - the New Collective Quantified Goal (the 'NCQG'). This discussion could assist you with advocacy on climate finance.

³ The Global Stocktake is a process in the Paris Agreement to take stock of the collective ambition of all Parties on progress to meeting its global goals, and what corrective action is needed.

In order to align with 1.5°C pathways, CAN advocate that NDCs include:

- **Net-zero objectives** for developed countries by 2040 and developing countries by 2050, including phasing out of all fossil fuels by the same date for credible net-zero objectives.⁴
- **Enhanced absolute emission reduction targets** for **2030** and **2035** that are at least in line with IPCC findings for 1.5°C (a collective GHG emissions reductions of -43% by 2030 and -60% by 2035 compared to 2019) with developed countries taking the lead, according to Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), free from false solutions (nuclear, carbon capture and storage, etc.).⁵
- **Clear milestones for the energy transition:** indications in each NDC of how the Party plans on implementing paragraph 28 of the GST outcome decision.
- **Action on nature:** Clear indications in each NDC to conserve all ecosystems, and halt and reverse deforestation by 2030.



⁴ The “net” component needs to remain for residual GHG emissions in other sectors like agriculture but not for climate pollution from the fossil fuel sector.

⁵ Civil society has science-based initiatives, such as the [Climate Action Tracker](#) guidance and the [Climate Equity Reference Calculator](#), that can provide valuable input on 1.5°C alignment at country level.



World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) NDCsWeWant Checklist

The WWF NDCsWeWant checklist - see next page - provides a means to measure progress in NDCs. The list of five areas and 24 criteria also provide a framework for you to consider key policy, taking into account the latest guidance from the UNFCCC negotiation processes (e.g. the Global Stocktake).

The current NDCsWeWant Checklist reflect WWF's two key calls on countries to:

- **Update current commitments**, in addition to making new ones: this is necessary to get back on track sooner rather than later and will reduce the irreversible losses in nature already underway as a result of climate change impacts. For this reason, we also introduce 'tipping points' to our expectations.
- **Set out their response to the outcomes from the most recent stocktake** (the GST) identifying the gaps which need to be filled by countries, and the cost-effective strategies that can achieve this. WWF recognises that there is no one size fits all, but the global milestones are clear and must be met. Countries should be clear on strategies and timelines to support global milestones as fossil fuel phase out, conserving ecosystems, and halting and reversing deforestation.

The checklist also sets out expectations for all elements important for climate ambition which must also be reflected in the NDC, and the NDC development process, such as participation and inclusivity, links to sustainable development, and monitoring and reporting.



WWF CHECKLIST FOR THE NDCs WE WANT

5 areas
24 criteria

NDCs 3.0

I. AMBITION

MITIGATION | All countries should enhance ambition in mitigation; large emitters must do it.



- 1 **Strengthened mitigation targets:** All countries should strengthen current targets according to their responsibility and capacity. In setting up their 2035 targets, countries should also review and enhance their 2030 targets.
- 2 **An economy-wide absolute 2035 target and revised 2030 ambition:** All countries - especially large emitters (e.g. top 30 emitters that account for ~90% of global emissions) and those with per capita emissions higher than the global average - should include 2035 economy-wide targets in their revised NDCs. 2030 targets should also be revised.
- 3 **A carbon budget until at least 2035 aligned to 1.5°C:** Having a carbon budget until at least 2035 that is 1.5°C aligned is the NDC ultimate test. It is particularly important for the environmental integrity of Art. 6 transactions. For this criterion WWF will rely on scientific analyses from independent consolidated institutions.
- 4 **NDC targets aligned to a 2050 or earlier Net-Zero Long-term Strategy:** While LTS are roadmaps, NDCs should incorporate the decisions and policies that translate the long-term vision into clear targets and implementation plans. All countries should submit LTS to the UNFCCC alongside new NDCs.

ADAPTATION, CLIMATE IMPACT AND RESILIENCE



- 5 **Clear adaptation objectives:** All countries should include an adaptation component with sector-specific objectives and in line with national adaptation priorities, other international commitments, and in line with the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). National Adaptation Plans and NDCs should reinforce each other.
- 6 **Addressing loss and damage:** Countries should identify strategies to avert, minimize and addressing Loss and Damage within plans for broader climate action.
- 7 **Measures to prevent tipping points:** All NDCs should include national systemic assessments of exposure to tipping point risks, measures that contribute to the prevention of reaching tipping points, plans for managing potential impacts and strategies for fostering positive tipping points.

FINANCE



- 8 **Enhanced finance commitments:** All countries should define the national resources allocation to climate change policies together with private sector investment and regulatory measures. Developed countries should provide clarity on levels of international support with a view to doubling adaptation finance.
- 9 **Clear conditional targets:** Where conditionalities exist, they should be clear, specific and actionable - how much needed, what type, and what exactly will be the outcome of the support.
- 10 **Moving from conditional to unconditional targets:** Countries must gradually enhance in real terms their national financial contribution to climate change policies and measures.

II. FOSTERING SYSTEMIC CHANGE



- 11 **Increased sectoral coverage:** Countries should increase scope to include more sectors, while strengthening all planning at the sectoral levels. Sectoral contributions from sub national and non-state actors and voluntary commitments should be included. NDCs should consider sectoral recommendations from the Global Stocktake on transitioning away from fossil fuels, the role of all ecosystems (including halting and reversing deforestation by 2030), and transitioning to sustainable consumption and production, (including in food systems, among others).
- 12 **Quantitative sectoral targets:** Quantitative targets and specific policies, strategies and plans for decarbonization of sectors must be included in NDCs, in order to complement economy-wide targets.
- 13 **Key structural sectors included:** The role of sectors not directly connected to emissions reductions but that have a key structural role as enablers of emission reductions and enhanced adaptation such as social development / welfare, governance, education and health, should be identified in NDCs.
- 14 **Just Transition Policies:** Measures and policies for the creation of decent work and quality jobs, as well as frameworks for stakeholder dialogue and exchange of best practices and institutional capacity needs, should be part of all NDCs.
- 15 **Cross-sectoral approaches:** There are important opportunities to include mitigation and adaptation cross-sectoral measures in NDCs on energy efficiency, electrification, hydrogen technologies, green infrastructure; carbon pricing and others.
- 16 **Technology options to close the 2030 ambition gap:** All countries should indicate how they will close the 2030 gap by upscaling existing cost-effective mitigation technology (e.g. costing under US\$100 per ton of CO₂e) options through conditional or unconditional targets in this critical decade.

III. INCLUSIVENESS AND PARTICIPATION



- 17 Inclusive process to invite inputs from institutions and citizens in the NDC design:** Transparent public processes to involve civil society, business, financial sector, subnational governments, and citizens will strengthen the quality of policy measures and their implementation. The process should be inclusive, and empower citizens and relevant constituencies to have the skills and opportunities to input throughout NDC development.
- 18 Disclosure of information:** Such processes should involve the sharing of drafts that detail the scope, ambition and content of the proposed enhanced NDCs.
- 19 Reporting back on inputs:** Countries should have in place a process to invite and record inputs (through a virtual platform) that can allow the consolidation and meaningful consideration of inputs. Governments should report back to ensure accountability.
- 20 Whole-of-government and whole-of-society climate governance structures:** A climate governance infrastructure (or the commitment to develop such governance mechanisms) facilitates the effective implementation of the NDC through effective coordination across ministries, and meaningful engagement of subnational governments and non-state actors. NDCs should create, strengthen/empower such institutions.

IV. CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



- 21 Delivering on synergies with SDGs:** The inclusion of linkages with Sustainable Development Goals can help ensure and assess the alignment and integration of climate-related policies and measures with development needs and strategies. NDCs should consider how to shift to low carbon and climate resilient development trajectories. Energy access should be a priority for international cooperation.
- 22 Delivering on climate and nature synergies:** Countries should include nature-related measures for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. NDCs should include ambitious, measurable and time-bound numeric targets (e.g. hectares of ecosystems utilized, CO₂ sequestered and/or number of people benefiting from increased resilience). Nature-based solutions in NDCs should not be seen as a distraction from emissions reductions in other sectors, especially the energy sector. NDCs should include enhanced efforts towards halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and by conserving biodiversity, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards. NDCs and NBSAPs (National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans) should reinforce each other, taking into account synergies with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

V. MEASURING, REPORTING AND VERIFYING



- 23 A transparent national system to track implementation:** NDCs should include a system (or a proposal of a system) to monitor the implementation of the policies and projects with appropriate indicators (GHG and non-GHG). The system must be transparent, facilitate effective public engagement and evolve to account for the contributions of subnational and non-state actors to the delivery of national climate targets.
- 24 Summarise the response to the Global Stocktake:** NDCs should summarise changes undertaken to respond to the outcomes of the [latest] Global Stocktake, including actions and assumptions undertaken to meet sector guidance.



6. ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS IN DEVELOPING NEW NDCs

It is important that all countries develop new NDCs with increased climate ambition reflecting **urgency, leadership and implementability according to local circumstances**. There are some common concerns that countries may raise which would prevent the necessary progress. Such discussions include:

RESPONSIBILITY: Countries outside the G20 contribute a small share to the global greenhouse gas emissions. Some argue that it therefore does not matter if they reduce them or not, as this is the responsibility of big emitters.

There is a process of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities. Every country has a role to play in combating climate change according to their local circumstances. Moreover, many of the activities which should be included in these national climate plans - such as transitioning to clean energy - could provide economic, social and other benefits to people above and beyond averting climate catastrophe. It is therefore important that all countries make efforts to urgently shift to low carbon economies. Collective action is essential to achieving meaningful progress, and countries with lesser capabilities should be supported by those with more in meeting ambitious climate action.

DEVELOPMENT: Traditional development pathways have relied on fossil fuels to drive economic development. Transitioning to greener energy sources can seem like a threat to their development goals: some countries may argue that it is unfair they cannot also expand fossil fuels, while others may feel there are no alternative development pathways.

Sustainable development that also phases out fossil fuels can create new economic opportunities, improve public health, and ensure long-term resilience against climate impacts.

CAPACITY: Countries, including least developed countries, may be reluctant to declare high ambition; they argue there are not sufficient (existing) resources (finance, capacity, technology) to fund these activities.

Many countries lack the financial resources, technical expertise, and institutional capacity to meet ambitious climate goals. International cooperation, including financial aid, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives, is crucial to support these nations in their climate efforts. Yet NDCs can provide 'conditional' targets, which are commitments subject to appropriate resources being made available through climate finance.

LOCK-IN: Governments may argue that there are public and/or private sector procurement plans in place which prevent a transition in the short term.

Existing investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and long-term contracts can hinder the shift to renewable energy. Governments and businesses need to develop strategies to phase out these commitments and invest in sustainable alternatives, ensuring a smooth and just transition.



IMPACT OF TRANSITIONING: Governments may have a concern that climate activities will be expensive and unpopular.

The transition to a low-carbon economy can involve significant upfront costs and may face resistance from industries and communities dependent on fossil fuels. However, the cost of this transition will be much higher the further countries delay - including direct and indirect economic and social costs.

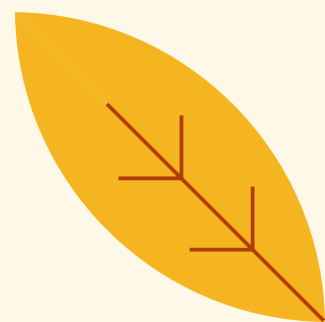
Moreover, there are a number of financial and wellbeing benefits which governments could provide to their citizens through a green transition, including improved public health, cheaper living costs and better quality homes, and green jobs. This is why just transition planning is an important consideration as countries develop their NDCs.

1.5°C ALIGNMENT: Climate plans are already 1.5°C aligned. Some countries believe their current climate plans are sufficient to meet the 1.5°C target set by the Paris Agreement.

Ongoing assessment and enhancement of these plans are necessary to ensure they remain effective and ambitious in the face of evolving climate science and impacts. Indeed, we need to see the ambition across all NDCs to truly consider if ambition is 1.5°C aligned. No NDC is yet considered to be 1.5°C aligned and collective ambition is way off track to the Paris Agreement needs.

FEASIBILITY: The feasibility of implementing new technologies and practices may be questioned.

Feasible and cost-effective technologies are well known across almost all sectors - including energy. Collaboration between governments, the private sector, and academia can overcome these challenges, so governments should consider how to mobilise a whole-of-society approach in the NDC. Fossil fuel subsidies must be shifted to supporting new sustainable technologies.



ANNEX

BACKGROUND ON COUNTRIES' NDCs AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES (LTS) OBLIGATIONS

Overview of countries' national activities under the Paris Agreement Ambition Cycle 2024/25

■ Each country must submit a new NDC to the UNFCCC including 2030 and 2035 mitigation targets and plans

- This should be submitted 'at least 9 to 10 months in advance of the seventh session' (which will take place in Nov 2025 at COP30). Countries are unlikely to stick to this timescale. NDCs should be submitted no later than the cut-off point for the UNFCCC's 2025 NDC and LTS synthesis reports (likely to be September 2025).
- In their NDCs, countries must demonstrate alignment with the outcome of the GST, pathways to limit temperature rise of no more than 1.5°C, and with their respective long-term goals.
- Countries should strengthen the 2030 targets by the end of 2024.
- Countries should communicate in 2025 their NDCs with an end date of 2035.

■ Countries should communicate or revise their long-term low GHG emissions development strategies (LT-LEDs, also known as 'Long-Term Strategies', 'LTS')

- This should be submitted by November 2024. Civil society should call for LTS submission alongside countries' NDCs, with the expectation that both are submitted any time ahead of the cut-off point for the UNFCCC 2025 NDC and LTS synthesis reports (likely to be September 2025).
- LTS should set out action towards just transitions to net zero emissions by or around mid-century, taking into account different national circumstances.
- To ensure transparency, LTS should include clarifications on the use of international markets under Article 6, Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), and negative emissions such as direct air capture.

■ Countries should submit their first biennial transparency report and national inventory report at the latest by 31 December 2024. Countries will undertake a (confidential) monitoring exercise with the UNFCCC during 2024-25. The reporting will be openly available.

NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCs)

The Paris Agreement (Article 4, Paragraph 2) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive domestic climate action plans known as **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**^{6,7} to the UNFCCC.⁸

An NDC is the main means to communicate:

- Plans for reducing GHG emissions (Article 4). The collective mitigation actions of Parties contained in all the NDCs will determine whether the world will achieve the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement – to “[hold] the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels” (Article 2.1.a). The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) decision at COP28 in Dubai, ‘Underscores that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at the temperature increase of 1.5 °C compared with 2 °C’ and parties resolved **‘to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C’** (Paragraph 4, CMA 5).
- Plans to enhance adaptation and climate resilience efforts (Article 1.b).⁹
- Plans to make financial flows sufficient for low emission and climate-resilient development (Article 1.c).

The NDC Ambition Cycle

The NDCs are a central instrument of the Paris Agreement to achieve its long-term goal. Parties to the agreement are legally obliged to have an NDC, and to put in place measures to achieve it. They must report regularly on their emissions and on their progress in implementing and achieving their NDCs, through a mechanism called the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). However, this is not a legally binding or enforceable commitment.

⁶ This terminology was adopted to emphasise the “bottom-up” (nationally determined) nature of the contributions that countries make to the global effort to address climate change, as opposed to a “top-down” (globally determined) approach.

⁷ Prior to their respective ratification of the Paris Agreement, documents outlining the post-2020 climate actions Parties intended to take under the agreement were known as their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

⁸ The latest NDCs are available through the UNFCCC online [registry](#). The UNFCCC secretariat also provides a [synthesis report](#) of all NDCs.

⁹ Under the Paris Agreement and Katowice decisions, [adaptation components of NDCs are considered part of adaptation communications](#) (Article 7). Decision 9/CMA.1 (guidance for adaptation communications) provides the guidance for adaptation components of NDCs.

2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Countries meet reporting requirements of the Paris Agreement by the end of the year New climate finance goal (NCQG) established (?)	Countries submit new NDCs/LT-LEDS including updated 2030/2035 climate ambition targets (before Sept 2025*) Countries undertake assessment of their progress ('ETF') Revision of the guidelines for NAPs 'NDC features' process	Second Global Stocktake commences	Revision of the NDC ICTU (guidelines for NDCs) Estimated publication of the IPCC SR on cities, methodology on CDR	Second Global Stocktake concludes	Countries meet reporting requirements of the Paris Agreement by the end of the year IPCC AR7?	Countries submit new NDCs/LT-LEDS including updated 2035/2040 climate ambition targets (before Sept 2030*)

Source: WWF

Under the Paris Agreement, Parties need to submit new or updated NDCs by 2020¹⁰, and to update these at least¹¹ every five years thereafter (Article 4.9). Each round of updated NDCs should be followed by a Global Stocktake (GST). The GST assesses the world's collective progress in implementing the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals (Article 14) [see figure above], with the aim of informing governments on their next NDCs.

For each five-year cycle, Parties are expected to submit their NDCs at least 9-12 months in advance of the relevant session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). For the current NDC Ambition Cycle, Parties should submit any climate ambition plans and targets at the latest before the cut-off date for the 2025 synthesis reports, expected to be September 2025* [See figure].

Under the Paris Agreement, NDCs must represent a progression compared to the previous NDC, and reflect its highest possible ambition (Article 3).¹² **Progression in the context of this first cycle of NDCs refers to the mitigation component:** while Parties can simultaneously strengthen other aspects of the NDC, these do not count towards enhanced mitigation ambition.¹³ In practice, there has been little recourse in the multilateral fora so far when Parties have slid back on climate targets, as in the case of Brazil.

¹⁰ Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the delayed COP26, this was pushed back to 2021.

¹¹ A Party can update its NDC at any time, as long as the update is more ambitious and does not "backslide" to lower ambition.

¹² Each Party's successive NDC will represent a progression beyond the Party's current NDC, and reflect its highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances (Article 4.3).

¹³ European Capacity Building Initiative (ECBI) [2020 Pocket Guide on NDCs](#).

Common timeframes

Countries have chosen different timeframes for their INDCs/NDCs, with the majority opting for either a five or ten-year timeframe.¹⁴ As of COP26, the Paris Rulebook *encourages* Parties to adopt a five-year *common* timeframe in NDCs, meaning that NDCs should all advance in five-year intervals, with submissions of NDCs with a 2035 timeframe by 2025; and those with a 2040 timeframe by 2030, and so on. This has been echoed in the COP28 CMA 5 decision (Paragraph 170), and there is a stronger political will to adopt this for new NDCs.

Civil society should support the adoption of common timeframes to increase the transparency of monitoring collective progress: the IPCC 6th Assessment Report sets out clear global milestones on GHG emissions reduction which can provide a guiding start nationally and internationally: *'limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot requires deep, rapid and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions of 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035 relative to the 2019 level and reaching net zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050'* (Paragraph 27).

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement / International markets

The rules for implementing Article 6 and the use of carbon credits can have a considerable impact on the ambition of NDCs, and hence overall ambition under the Paris Agreement.¹⁵ COP26 finalised guidance for Article 6 with strong provisions against double counting of emissions reductions. However, it permits Parties to use Certified Emission Reduction credits (CERs) from Clean Development Mechanism projects registered after January 1, 2013 to meet their first NDC or first adjusted NDC, with no corresponding adjustment (since the mechanism predates this requirement). Many actors are discouraging Parties from transferring their greenhouse gas (GHG) *mitigation performance* to other countries in order to meet their emission reduction commitments (known as Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)) towards meeting the targets in their NDCs, even if they can legally do so.¹⁶

It may be relevant for civil society experts to comment on Article 6 if it is an existing component of the NDC.

¹⁴ Almost all Parties communicated an NDC implementation period of until 2030. (See: UNFCCC NDC Synthesis report).

¹⁵ According to the UNFCCC NDC Synthesis report, as of 12 Oct 2021 almost 77% of Parties stated that they plan to or will possibly use at least one type of voluntary cooperation.

¹⁶ with or without corresponding adjustments.

Format

Parties are free to decide for themselves what process to follow when developing NDCs, as well as the form and detail they use to respond to Article 4, paragraph 2. The Paris Agreement (largely through The Katowice Climate Package, or Paris Rulebook) provides some additional guidelines. These include:

- Requesting each Party to provide the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding (ICTU) through a simple tabular format of key information on the mitigation target (Decision 4/CMA.1).¹⁷
- Clarification that an adaptation communication may be submitted as a component of, or in conjunction with, an NDC (Decision 9/CMA.1).
- Guidance that developed countries should undertake economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets, while developing countries are encouraged to move over time towards economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets in the light of different national circumstances (Article 4).

LONG-TERM LOW GHG EMISSIONS DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS (LT-LEDS)

The Paris Agreement (Article 4, Paragraph 19) requires each Party to formulate and communicate to the UNFCCC¹⁸ Long-Term Low GHG Emissions Development Pathways (LT-LEDS) (commonly also known as 'Long-Term Strategy' or 'LTS'). **Long-term horizons for climate action are typically up to 2050.** So far, less than half of the Parties to the Paris Agreement have submitted an LTS.

Long-Term Strategies are not a legal requirement of the Paris Agreement. The achievement of the LTS is not a legally binding or enforceable commitment. The UNFCCC has been attempting to normalise LTS in recent years, and there was a call in the COP28 decision text to ensure they are aligned and consistent with NDCs, as this is not currently the case.

¹⁷ As per Decision 1/CP.21, ICTU should include, appropriate quantifiable information on the reference point (including a base year); timeframes and/or periods for implementation; scope and coverage of the NDC; planning processes; assumptions and methodological approaches, including for estimating and accounting for anthropogenic GHG emissions and, if appropriate, removals; how the Party considers that its NDC is fair and ambitious, in the light of its national circumstances; and how the NDC contributes towards achieving the objective stated in UNFCCC Article 2. See also Decision 4/CMA.1, Annex I: Guidance for ICTU of NDCs.

¹⁸ The latest LT-LEDS are available through the UNFCCC online [registry](#).

Format/Content

There is no agreed format for an LTS, nor any guidance on the content. According to the COP28 decision, countries' LTS should set out action towards just transitions to net zero emissions by or around mid-century, taking into account different national circumstances. It is also commonly understood that the contents of the LTS should reflect that of the NDC on a longer timeframe.

A net zero commitment is not a substitute for an LTS. We support a substantive strategy which sets out the details of any such target alongside more specific long-term targets and planning on components of the NDCs. The NDCsWeWant checklist can provide a framework to formulate advocacy asks on this topic.

The UN Secretary General's [acceleration agenda](#) calls for developed countries to set net zero GHG targets at or as close to 2040 as possible, while developing countries to set them at or as close to 2050 as possible. Net zero targets can ensure transparency through elements such as:

- Clarification on the scope of emissions.
- Absolute emission reductions targets.
- Peak emissions date.
- Clarifications on the use of international markets under Article 6.
- Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF).
- Negative emissions such as direct air capture. And
- Sectoral planning for fossil fuel phase out, conservation of carbon sinks and food system transition.

At COP28, Parties agreed that by COP29, they would set out how they would transition to global net zero emissions by or around mid-century.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Assessment Report
CAN	Climate Action Network
CBDR-RC	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CDR	Carbon Dioxide Removal
CERs	Certified Emission Reduction credits
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
COP	Conference of the Parties
ETF	Enhanced Transparency Framework
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GST	Global Stocktake
ICTU	Information necessary to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding
INDCs	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITMOs	Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes
LT-LEDS / LTS	Long-Term Low GHG Emissions Development Pathways / Long-Term Strategies
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NCQG	New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



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