



2019 SDG-Review: The Natural Link between Climate Action and Sustainable Development

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Climate Action Network (CAN) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 1300 members in over 120 countries.

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1. Natural Synergy Between Climate Action and Sustainable Development

The [IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C](#) is the first to explore the synergies and tradeoffs for climate mitigation and adaptation actions with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the report, climate change impacts and responses are closely linked to sustainable development which balances social well-being, economic prosperity and environmental protection. The SDGs, the report notes, 'provide an established framework for assessing the links between limiting global warming of 1.5°C or 2°C and development goals that include poverty eradication, reducing inequalities, and climate action'¹.

It also shows that national mitigation and adaptation plans, if carefully designed, will benefit sustainable development and poverty reduction as well as contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C and create more resilient communities and countries. Sustainable development supports and enables the fundamental societal and systems transitions and transformations that will help limit global warming to 1.5°C. It can achieve ambitious mitigation and adaptation in conjunction with poverty eradication and efforts to reduce inequalities. The IPCC report shows that in the context of sustainable development, international cooperation can create an enabling environment for limiting warming to 1.5°C in all countries and for all people. Such cooperation is critical for developing countries and vulnerable regions.

The briefing explores links and synergies between the SDGs and limiting climate change to 1.5°C of warming, provides recommendations for linking policy processes for the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, in particular, the NDCs. Furthermore, it lays out expectations for the 2019 SDG review, namely SDG13 - climate action - as well as key events such as the UNSG Summit and the SDG Summit in September 2019. **Policy and decision makers need to harness the natural synergy between climate action and sustainable development. Updated and enhanced NDCs need to make a clear link to the SDGs while the implementation of all SDGs must be aligned with 1.5°C compatible pathways.**

¹ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/SR15_SPM_version_stand_alone_LR.pdf

2. The 1.5-°C Threshold should be a guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda

The [IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C](#) clearly spells out that holding global temperature increase to a maximum 1.5°C is necessary, possible and urgent. It suggests that ‘limiting global warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C will make it markedly easier to achieve many aspects of sustainable development, with greater potential to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities’². However, “warming of 1.5°C is not considered ‘safe’ for most nations, communities, ecosystems and sectors and poses significant risks to natural and human systems as compared to current warming of 1°C”³. While there are significant synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals and pathways compatible with the Paris Agreement, exceeding 1.5°C risks to reverse development achievements and excluding millions of people from sustainable development. Rapid and massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the next decade are critical to avoiding such impacts, promoting sustainable development and protecting ecosystems: limiting warming to 1.5°C is an essential prerequisite to achieving the SDGs. Development pathways compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5°C should therefore be a guiding principle of the planning and implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals.

2.1 Taking full advantage of key moments in 2019 to link the climate and SDG agenda

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) need to be planned and implemented holistically and addressed with coherent policies that help to realise co-benefits. At COP 24, parties agreed in the [Talanoa Call to Action](#) to “aim to achieve net-zero emissions, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”. Parties, furthermore, made an explicit link to the SDG process stating the Talanoa Dialogue may inform the process to enhance NDCs “as well as their participation in the 2019 Secretary-General's Climate Summit, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other important processes”.

Policymakers need to take full advantage of the 2019 SDG review and related key events, namely the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July, the UNSG Climate Summit and the UN SDG Summit in September 2019:

The HLPF needs to reaffirm countries’ commitment to enhanced institutional coordination between the SDG and Paris Agreement. This needs to be taken into account when designing new and more ambitious NDCs by 2020 as well as in later NDC reviews, VNRs and national planning cycles allowing joined-up implementation and adjusting implementation efforts going forward based on both agendas. Considering committed climate actions and SDG targets together will help avoid duplication of effort and take full advantage of opportunities for more efficient budget allocation and raising financial resources for implementation.

² https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_chapter5.pdf

³ https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_chapter5.pdf

Taking into account SDG commitments can help countries to ensure that climate actions promote wider social, economic and environmental ambitions.

Building on these cross-references at the HLPF, countries need to announce at the UNSG summit clear plans and commitments to enhance their NDCs by 2020, reflecting the urgency of the climate crisis in line with the 1.5 C threshold. As many leaders as possible, particularly leaders from major emitting countries need to come prepared to the UNSG Climate Summit and present their concrete plans for bringing NDCs into line with the 1.5 C target by 2020.

The national processes for developing and agreeing on more ambitious NDCs should also be used to mobilise commitments towards the Sustainable Development Goals and this should be reflected in a strong Declaration at the UN SDG Summit following the UNSG Climate Summit. Following the UNSG Summit, the SDG Summit must clearly acknowledge in its declaration that SDG 13: *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts* is far off track and countries need to immediately enhance climate action. **It is essential that the SDG-Summit goes beyond its first goal to “showcase areas of global progress”, and focuses on its third goal to “leverage progress in key areas to kick-start an acceleration process.”**

CAN stands ready to support building bridges between the SDG and Paris policy processes in national processes on NDC Enhancement as well as integrating the climate agenda in domestic sustainable development policies.

2.2. Reviewing Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change impacts

While recognizing the natural links and co-benefits of the SDGs and climate action, Climate Action Network outlines key expectations for the SDG13 review in the context of the 2019 review process, based on the SDG13 indicators :

13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

Current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are fundamentally inadequate to keep the world on a pathway below 1.5°C global warming; the current collective ambition of the NDCs takes us to a global 3°C – 4°C temperature increase⁴. In the UN-SDG-Summit Declaration, countries must commit to sustainable development pathways compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 C and to significantly enhance their NDCs by 2020. Where opportunities arise to do so, other sustainable development co-benefits should be introduced into national policies, strategies and planning and trade-offs should be managed effectively. The declaration should build on clear commitments and plans made individually by countries to enhance their NDCs by 2020 through transparent, multi-stakeholder and inclusive processes.

⁴ The Emissions Gap Report 2016: A UNEP Synthesis Report:
<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/unesp/document/emissions-gap-report-2016-unesp-synthesis-report>

13.1A Mobilized amount of United States dollars per year starting in 2020 accountable towards the \$100 billion commitment

Developed countries should demonstrate how they intend to ensure a balance between adaptation and mitigation support. Following the adoption of new accounting rules at COP24, developed countries must commit to applying the highest standards of reporting. Countries need to show how the \$100 billion commitment will be reached. A significant milestone is the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund this year. Contributor countries need to go beyond doubling previous pledges in the replenishment process and should confirm this at the meetings in New York in September.

Furthermore, governments should work towards :

- Aligning rapidly all sources of finance, domestic and international with the Paris Agreement long-term goals and the SDGs.
- Creating enabling environments that support the growing wave of responsible business among financial institutions and particularly initiatives that address climate-related financial risks and embrace the investment needs that sustainable development requires.
- ensuring all policies related to the alignment of financial flows include equity considerations and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

3. Linking the Climate and the SDG Agenda

Links and synergies between Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement have been made apparent, but there is also an opportunity to use climate action to reinforce the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs. Several SDG themes (i.e. socio-economic sectoral categories) are addressed by numerous climate actions, indicating that there are multiple opportunities for policy coherence. This can be a major contribution of climate action to the delivery of coherent cross-goal delivery of Agenda 2030.

The IPCC report found in particular that there were ‘robust’ synergies with SDG3 (health), 7 (clean energy), 11 (cities and communities), 12 responsible consumption and production, 14 (oceans) and 15 (life on land). It further found that 1.5°C pathways that include low energy demand, low material consumption and low GHG-intensive food consumption have ‘the most pronounced synergies and the lowest number of trade-offs with respect to sustainable development and the SDGs’.

Analysis⁵ has shown that links between existing NDCs and the SDGs are found in the areas of water, food and energy. The social SDGs are highly under-represented in NDC commitments compared to the environmental and economic goals; in particular health, education and gender equality (SDGs 3, 4 and 5, respectively). Reflecting the findings of the IPCC on

⁵ SEI (2017) Exploring connections between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Stockholm: SEI <https://mediamanager.sei.org/documents/Publications/SEI-PB-2017-NDC-SDG-Connections.pdf>

climate-resilient development pathways and “the importance of addressing structural, intersecting inequalities, marginalisation, and multidimensional poverty” to “transform the development pathways themselves toward greater social and environmental sustainability, equity, resilience, and justice”, along with the multiple connections between climate vulnerability and poverty, more ambitious NDCs should account for social as well as the environmental goals of Agenda 2030. Despite environmental goals being overall more represented in the NDCs than social ones, many countries do not make explicit plans to realize potential for nature-based solutions, that could help deliver SDG 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land) as well as contribute to climate mitigation and resilience, depending on the location and planned activities.

Meeting the climate targets will overall contribute to meeting the SDG 2030 goals. **However, it is imperative that we move beyond the discussions and agreements, to elaborating the specific trade-offs and benefits/co-benefits that come with pursuing SDG 13 and the other SDGs on a national level.** Furthermore, there is a clear need for much more disaggregated data to assess climate action impacts, and for monitoring adaptation efforts.

Need to plan for SDGs & just transition in LTS

Transitioning to a sustainable future that is compatible with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement will require economy-wide transformational change. Decision-makers must ensure they are fully informed on the options to guide the transition, taking a long-term view to create the appropriate policies for a just transition. An SDG lens and an integrated approach can support a just transition, which ensures the poorest, marginalised and more climate vulnerable are included in national targets for emissions reduction. Specifically, decent and quality job creation (SDG 8), education and vocational training (SDG 4), and social protection (SDG 1) need to be included in NDCs and long-term planning. Most Long Term Strategies lack such an integrated approach. However, elements of just transition can be seen in Finland’s Climate and Energy Roadmap 2050 which includes a period to overcome the impact on employment from the phasing out of the peat industry, Costa Rica’s recent decarbonisation plan, Spain’s pledge of 250 million Euro for just transition plan to support mining regions and Canada’s introduction of a just transition task force for coal communities.

The trade-offs, as well as the areas of co-benefits, will vary from country to country and even within countries depending on local characteristics. It is therefore imperative to identify these local, regional and country-specific trade-offs and co-benefits between the SDGs and the climate goals. Such detailed analysis would then guide the policy choices towards climate resilient sustainable development pathways and will enable society to realise benefits and manage compromises. The IPCC report identifies the geographies, sectors and demographics which will be hardest hit by climate change. These findings need to be “translated” into national and sub-national contexts.

Particular attention will have to be paid to socially and geographically marginalised groups such as smallholders, subsistence farmers, women, children and coastal communities to

devise national plans and projects that take into account the principle of “leaving no one behind”. In addition to paying particular attention to the poorest and marginalised groups in devising national climate policies and SDGs, there are also multiple options for linking and integrating the two agendas when devising specific policies. Examples clearly linking climate mitigation policies with improvements in public health and air quality can be found in such diverse countries as Finland, Peru, Ethiopia, France and Bangladesh.

4. Next steps: Fostering synergies between SDGs and NDCs

Countries, especially big emitters must come well prepared to the UN SG and SDG Summit Summit and present clear commitments, detailed plans and concrete actions to enhance their NDC and climate ambition by 2020. **In doing so, countries should build on the Talanoa Dialogue and conduct national multi-stakeholder dialogues: These open, transparent and solution-oriented dialogues involve all stakeholders to ensure an inclusive approaches to common challenges within the national climate plans and provide a platform to bring together experts to create synergies and align policies on domestic NDC and SDG tracks.**

Multi-stakeholder Dialogues can ensure enhanced levels of trust between the different actors, promote knowledge sharing among participants, and generate solutions and foster the path towards ambition enhancement at a local and national level. These multi-stakeholder dialogues can serve as a key platform to bringing together experts from both tracks to create synergies and align policies of under domestic NDC and SDG policies. Linking NDCs with SDGs can help get greater buy-in for climate action and foster better understanding of co-benefits of climate action.

Finland’s national sustainable development strategy, Society’s commitment to Sustainable Development was agreed through an inclusive, multistakeholder process to build a common understanding of national challenges. It brought together „representatives from 84 different bodies, including all ministries, municipalities and regions, business and labor unions, the Sami indigenous people and the autonomous Aland Islands, the science community, the church, and 49 civil society organizations representing various interests, including the environment, development, sports, youth, consumer, health, education, and immigrants.”⁶ Ensuring that the NDC revision processes in 2020 specifically address the policy choices, trade-offs and benefits that will result from a transition towards a climate resilient development pathway.

Building on these cross-references at the HLPF, CAN expects leaders to come to the UNSG summit prepared with bold and clear plans to enhance their NDCs by 2020, in line with the 1.5 C threshold reflecting the urgency of this climate crisis

⁶https://wriorg.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/connecting-the-dots.pdf?_ga=2.154700670.73621220.1553849664-2125496380.1548141501