



Recover green: **Higher NDC Ambition through** **Collaborative Climate Action**



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1. Executive Summary

Current commitments to fight climate change are not sufficient. At the same time, countries, regions and cities are facing the challenge of how to recover from the coronavirus crisis. Any future recovery packages will have to reflect the targets set out in the Paris Climate Agreement. A pathway compatible with the Paris Agreement will be locked in – or not – in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis. There will not be another opportunity to mobilise finance in the order of magnitude already seen since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Countries' plans for climate action in the form of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are due to be renewed and/or updated in 2020. The coronavirus crisis has changed the conditions under which governments operate. Many of the underlying assumptions on which NDCs are based – such as the availability of domestic budget resources, scope for borrowing or access to international climate finance, economic growth, and emissions trajectories – are now being called into question. Travel restrictions have also meant that COP26 has been deferred until November 2021. On the other hand, the measures many governments were already developing for their NDCs form an excellent basis for coronavirus recovery packages.

Some estimate the global potential for reduction in urban greenhouse gas emissions is around 3 gigatons of CO₂ equivalent (GtCO₂-eq) a year by 2030, most of which is in addition to current NDC pledges. This amounts to about one quarter of the gap between the national governments' commitments in their current NDCs of and the target of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. Very few of the existing NDCs take account of urban development (subnational levels) despite the leadership demonstrated by many cities and regions.

By driving forward zero-carbon communities as an economic recovery strategy from the coronavirus crisis, local and regional governments can reduce the impact of future global crises by building healthy, equitable and resilient societies.

When it comes to planning for low carbon societies, broad participation is not just a question of democratic principle. Collaborative Climate Action is the guiding principle for greater, and better, climate action and should be understood as the cooperation across levels of government to increase the ambition and the effectiveness of climate action.

Governments have already shown in their response to the coronavirus crisis that they can act much more swiftly and on a larger scale than they previously believed possible. The same urgency now needs to be applied to the climate emergency.

Specifically, sustainable infrastructure stimulus packages for cities can channel large-scale investments into technologies with long-term climate benefits and

revive local economies during and after the recovery from the coronavirus crisis, making them highly suitable as subnational contributions within NDCs.

Current knowledge of the NDC process, as well as of other similar processes, suggests that the following recommendations should apply to the NDC updating process, taking the coronavirus crisis into account:

- Engage subnational governments in NDC design, through strengthened dialogue between national and subnational levels, for example through stakeholder consultations
- Create fora for subnational actors to present their climate initiatives and contributions and include them in NDCs or its background documentation
- Establish a coordination mechanism that oversees the NDC development and the sustainable recovery, as a way of managing the process of project consideration and keep an updated list of projects compatible with the climate targets.

Collaborative Climate Action (CCA)

A condition for ambitious and efficient climate policies



Climate action works best when all levels of government cooperate.



Modern city housing powered by renewable energy on the island of Hulhumalé, Maldives



2. Introduction

There is an urgent need for more ambitious and more effective climate action. Across the world, countries, regions and cities are declaring a climate emergency. At the same time, those countries, regions and cities are in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The process of writing this discussion paper started well before the outbreak and previously focused solely on subnational levels in NDCs. It has since then been updated to reflect the changing conditions.

Even as nations and their inhabitants tackle the coronavirus crisis and immediate relief measures, a vibrant and inspiring debate is taking place on how the recovery measures can accelerate progress towards decarbonization and broader social and environmental sustainability goals rather than simply restoring the unsustainable patterns that will leave us more prone – and less resilient – to future crises.

It can be both tempting and rational to prioritise ‘shovel ready’ projects for the recovery, but this may favour carbon-intensive ‘business as usual’ approaches. Reverting to ‘normal’ is not an option, however: ‘normal’ was unsustainable.

The years 2020 and 2021 represent a milestone. For the first time since 2015, countries will put forward new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which need to go beyond current national climate plans. This should bring us closer to the Paris Climate Agreement targets of decarbonising economies and improving resilience. Latest climate science estimates of average temperature increase under current NDCs range from 2.9 to 3.4 degrees Celsius. This increase in the global mean temperature is associated with rising sea levels, dwindling ecosystems and biodiversity and the expansion of areas unsuitable for human habitation. More extreme and slow-onset events such as heat waves, storms and flooding will threaten human health, livelihoods and economic growth. The impacts undermine global efforts to achieve development and prosperity in the Global South as well as in the Global North. The devastating effects of climate change can be prevented only by more ambitious and more effective climate action designed to achieve net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 (IPCC 2018).

This year and the coming year are also a milestone because of the unprecedented health crisis and the economic crisis it has created. Governments around the world are making extraordinary amounts of money available to cope with the crisis: the EU has already agreed a EUR 540 billion package, and the World Bank Group is prepared to deploy up to USD 160 billion for recovery over the next 15 months. This is an opportunity to design recovery packages that build on the measures that many governments were developing before the coronavirus crisis, not least the NDCs being prepared for COP26. Governments around the world have spent considerable time and effort in recent months and years preparing new NDCs, creating ‘shovel ready’ measures for recovery.

The impact of the post-coronavirus economic stimulus is likely to exceed that of both the 2008-09 global financial crisis and the Great Depression. It will be crucial in shaping



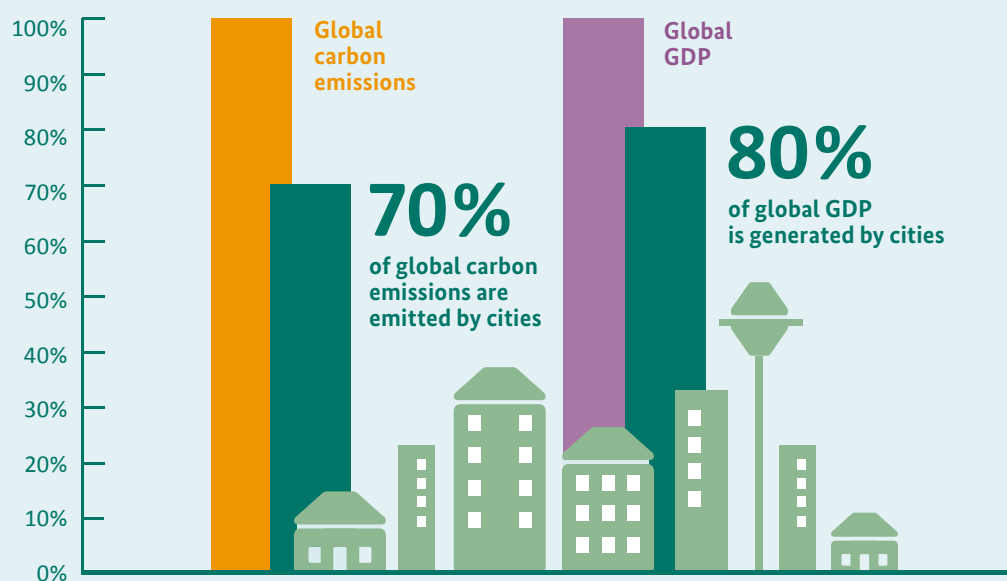
the long-term emissions trajectories and determining whether the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C temperature limit can be achieved (Climate Action Tracker 2020).

Any future recovery packages will have to reflect the targets set out in the Paris Climate Agreement. A pathway compatible with the Paris Agreement will be locked in – or not – in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis. There will not be another opportunity to mobilise finance in the order of magnitude already seen since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Healy 2020). To stay aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement, economic recovery plans therefore need to take a whole-of-society approach, with all relevant stakeholders on board.

Urban climate action is a crucial part of the solution, with cities and regions playing an indispensable role in implementing climate action and achieving sustainable development: Cities account for about 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and around two thirds of resource and energy use. However, they are also economic and innovative powerhouses, generating about 80 per cent of global GDP. For more than three decades now, cities have been showing outstanding leadership locally and in their networks in terms of driving ambition and implementing climate action. Almost 10,000 cities and local governments have set emissions reduction targets and drawn up a strategy for delivering on their commitments. These front-runner cities provide motivation and experiences, but more needs to be done to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, when almost 70 per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas.

Significance of cities worldwide

In 2050: 70% of global population will live in cities



Almost 10,000 cities and local governments worldwide have set emissions reduction targets as well as strategies on how to deliver on their commitments.



Estimates of the contribution of local governments and other non-state actors¹ to addressing climate change differ, but some put the global potential for urban greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions at around 3 gigatons CO₂-equivalents (GtCO₂-eq) a year by 2030, largely additional to current NDC pledges. This amounts to about one quarter of the gap between the commitments in national governments' current NDCs and the target of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (Adriázola, Dellas & Tänzler, 2018). Recent research suggests that global GHG emissions in 2030 would be 1.2 to 2.0 GtCO₂-eq lower than the current national policies scenario if the recorded and quantified commitments by individual regions, cities and companies in the ten major emitting economies are fully implemented (Kuramochi, Roelfsema, Hsu et al., 2020).

In general terms, national governments across the globe have primary authority over about one third of the potential for urban climate change mitigation towards net zero carbon emissions. The local level accounts for a further one third, while the final one third hinges on collaboration between differing levels of government (Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019).

As well as contributing to the targets of the Paris Agreement, climate action by cities and regions can support Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given the increasing importance of synergies between climate action and other SDGs and the focus on potentially negative impacts, cities and regions can help ensure that climate efforts are implemented in a way that supports, rather than hinders, local sustainable development (NewClimate Institute et al., 2019).

National governments are the principal actors involved in implementing national climate targets and driving forward the spirit of the Paris Agreement across all sectors of society and all regions of individual countries. National capacity extends beyond the mandate of local governments, giving national governments the authority to change framework conditions, which need to be conducive to local and regional climate action.

Already in response to the coronavirus crisis, governments have shown that they can act much more swiftly and on a larger scale than they previously believed possible. The same urgency needs to be applied to the climate emergency.

In planning for low carbon societies, broad participation is not just a question of democratic principle: it is at the local level that the greatest understanding of preferences, options, behaviours and needs lies. Collaborative Climate Action is the guiding principle for more and better climate action. It should be understood as the cooperation across levels of government to increase the ambition and the effectiveness of climate action. Although we are getting used to more coercive strategies used to control the pandemic's spread, medium-term recovery will require more participatory processes.

Collaborative Climate Action requires committed decision makers, dedicated efforts and well-designed governance structures and processes as well as a national government committed to the principles of Collaborative Climate Action and line

¹ Paragraph 118 of Decision 1/CP.21 accompanying the Paris Agreement refers to non-state actors as non-Party stakeholders. This grouping encompasses non-state and private actors, as well as governments at sub-national level – that is, regional (e.g. provinces and federal states) and local (e.g. cities).



ministries willing to pull in the same direction. This way, synergies can be harnessed and trade-offs between different policy areas can be managed. Furthermore, it needs subnational governments not only to represent their local interests but constructively to integrate them into the national policy making process. Implementing Collaborative Climate Action needs to address all policy processes from planning and design to implementation and monitoring. Collaborative Climate Action also needs to be embedded into an adequate institutional architecture, ideally building on existing institutions and processes.

This paper sets out to answer the following questions:

- What is the current situation? (How are subnational levels handled/not handled in existing NDCs and how were subnational actors involved (or not) in the development of the first round of NDCs?)
- How can ambition in NDCs be enhanced by incorporating Collaborative Climate Action?
- How can subnational actors contribute to the NDC enhancement process and therefore to a more ambitious NDC update?
- What are the benefits for both national and local governments?
- How can Collaborative Climate Action contribute to ‘building back better’, through NDCs in the post-coronavirus recovery phase?

The paper does not explicitly cover the implementation of NDCs. Its focus is rather on the development and content of new or updated NDCs.

3. Urban content in current NDCs

Very few existing NDCs take account of the subnational level despite the key role played by cities and the leadership they have demonstrated. A report published in late 2019 finds that only 23 countries have an NDC that alludes to climate change mitigation in urban areas (Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019). However, many more countries have NDCs that allude to urban adaptation and resilience.

One example of subnational content in an NDC is Mexico, whose NDC partly relies on the 2013 National Strategy on Climate Change (ENCC, Estrategia Nacional de Cambio Climático). Federal states and associations of municipalities were involved in formulating the strategy, which incorporates ‘instruments for the policy on climate change within the three orders of government’ (VICLIM, 2019).²

² Presentation by VICLIM, a GIZ supported project on Vertically Integrated Climate Policies, funded by the German International Climate Initiative (IKI)



Many countries' NDCs include sector-based commitments with urban relevance. However, sectoral approaches miss two important opportunities in cities. First, they fail to capture the mitigation potential associated with spatially concentrating people, infrastructure and economic activity: higher densities and mixed use of space, for example, enable people to walk or cycle rather than using motorised transport. Second, sectoral approaches may not sufficiently empower local governments to pursue ambitious climate action within their jurisdictions (Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019).

In 2018, a study of NDCs with urban/city components (including those simply mentioning these) showed that only 12 countries' NDCs included such components: five of these countries are in Africa, four in Latin America and the Caribbean and three in Asia. The study differentiates between the inclusion of cities in the process of developing the NDC, and in the implementation of the NDC. Only in Benin, the Gambia, Israel and Peru were cities involved in formulating the NDC (GIZ, 2018).

A 2019 study, which also included other non-state actors, such as civil society and companies, included the following key insights:

- Most links to initiatives by cities, regions, businesses or civil society in NDCs under the Paris Agreement are made by developing countries.
- Developing countries describe non-state actors primarily in the context of vulnerability and adaptation policy implementation; developed countries, by contrast, mainly describe these actors' role as collaboration across a range of functions.
- Closer coordination between non-state actors and national governments, designed to fully leverage their contributions to NDCs, can be achieved by explicitly outlining non-state actors' contributions in future NDC updates (Hsu, Brandt, Widerberg, Chan & Weinfurter, 2019).

3.1 Textual NDC elements as examples

As shown above, only a small number of NDCs contain contributions at subnational level, their role or their involvement in the formulation of the NDC. Examples of the handful that do so are:

- Georgia's (I)NDC document states that "the most intensive pre-2020 mitigation action [...] should be the voluntary reduction of GHG emissions committed by 13 self-governing cities and municipalities [having joined] the [...] 'Covenant of Mayors'(CoM). Further facilitation of this initiative will significantly contribute to post-2020 implementation processes (Georgian Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, 2017)."
- Costa Rica's NDC document states as 'mitigation options' that "solid waste is the third biggest emission source and is continuously growing. The publication of [the] Official Urban Development Plan for the Metropolitan Area and the Land Use Planning National Policy involve critical measures that have a bearing on GHG emissions. Costa Rica has begun the design of a Low Emission Development Strategy for the urban sector, together with potential NAMAs in transportation and waste management, sustainable housing, all together represent important steps to reduce emissions from cities (Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy, 2015)."



4. NDC development process and NDC update process

The latest climate science underscores the urgent need for increased ambition: current NDCs are not consistent with a pathway to 1.5 degrees and would instead lead to more than 3 degrees of warming (GIZ, 2019). This means that Parties to the Paris Agreement need to go beyond their current commitments.

4.1 Enhancing ambition in NDCs

Nationally Determined Contributions are a central feature of the Paris Agreement and represent a bottom-up approach to determining the level and distribution of mitigation and adaptation actions. Linked to this is the key feature of ‘evolving ambition over time’, which is (or will be) expressed through new rounds of NDCs. Article 4.3 of the Paris Agreements states that:

‘Each Party’s successive nationally determined contribution will represent a progression beyond the Party’s then current nationally determined contribution and reflect its highest possible ambition’ (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015).

The Paris Agreement established a series of five-year cycles to increase ambition, including through NDCs that would become more ambitious over time. Countries also specifically agreed on 2020 as a critical next step in the Paris process.

Countries with an NDC timeframe ending by 2025 are requested to communicate a new NDC by 2020. This NDC should have a longer timeframe, for example a sufficiently ambitious target for at least 2030, and should include the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding.

Those countries whose NDCs have a timeframe ending by 2030, in turn, are requested to communicate or update their NDC by 2020. This guidance refers to the process of developing new or updated NDCs as “NDC enhancement”.

Options for updating NDCs include enhancing ambition and/or increasing the scope of the target (e.g. to cover more sectors or additional greenhouse gases), and this is a promising entry point for subnational actors and Collaborative Climate Action.

Apart from providing ‘the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding’, there are very few demands for specific content in NDCs (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015, Article 4.8). Whether to include subnational levels, and if so, in what way, is not addressed in the Paris Agreement apart



from the preamble which recognizes the importance of the engagements of all levels of government. However, the Katowice climate package (also known as the “Rulebook” of the Paris Agreement) states:³

‘Information on the planning processes that the Party undertook to prepare its nationally determined contribution and, if available, on the Party’s implementation plans, including, as appropriate: (i) Domestic institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities and indigenous peoples, in a gender-responsive manner’ (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2019).

Those Parties that need to communicate new NDCs by 2020 may need to carry out new analysis of mitigation options and adaptation potential. Updating the analysis is also useful because the costs and benefits of some options may have changed (for example, prices for renewables have fallen significantly), and because decision makers may now have better information about other key variables, such as projected energy demand or variations in water availability. The coronavirus crisis is adding a new dimension to the situation: not only are many government staff who were involved in NDC preparation now focusing on the coronavirus crisis, but many of the underlying assumptions on which NDCs are based – such as the availability of domestic budgetary resources, scope for borrowing or access to international climate finance, economic growth and emissions trajectories – are being questioned (Hammer, Hallegatte & Banaji, 2020).

Parties will also need to ensure consistency between the new target beyond 2025 and any longer-term target set out in their long-term low emission development strategy (LT-LEDS). Parties are invited to communicate their LT-LEDS in 2020.

At the time of writing, only nine Parties to the Paris Agreement have submitted a new or updated NDC (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Suriname, Norway, Moldova, Japan, Chile, New Zealand, Rwanda and Andorra) – with promising inclusion of subnational levels in both Chile’s and Rwanda’s NDCs.

The Paris Agreement and the accompanying rulebook refer only vaguely to subnational involvement and Collaborative Climate Action, and most NDCs reflect that omission or lack of focus. However, the (current) update process creates a unique opportunity to strengthen NDCs with the help of subnational commitments.

³ Katowice climate package: Further guidance in relation to the mitigation section of decision 1/CP.21, FCCC/PA/CMA/2018/3/Add.1: Decision 4/CMA.1



4.2 Including subnational levels in NDCs

Many of the first round of NDCs were developed in short time frames, sometimes by external consultants, and without clarity on what the Paris Agreement would contain. There was also limited time to consult with stakeholders outside the national governments. The opportunity to review and update the NDCs by 2020 enables Parties to learn from their initial experience and identify ways to engage a broader range of stakeholders to access new information and enhance ownership of the NDC both within and outside the government. Enhancing engagement with subnational governments may reveal additional potential for mitigation or innovations providing impetus for enhanced ambition (Fransen, Northrop, Mogelgaard & Levin, 2017).

The process of updating NDCs can be an opportunity to rally support for climate action, increase awareness, strengthen public participation, and ensure that a strategic vision is co-created with relevant stakeholders, not least the subnational levels. National governments are in the driving seat in terms of defining their contribution to emissions reductions, but subnational actors can contribute significantly to increasing ambition in an NDC by adding local targets and actions.

More and more countries now recognise the potential of subnational action and are looking for ways to enhance the cooperation with subnational stakeholders. In the framework of the NDC Partnership (NDCP) – a global coalition of more than 170 countries and institutions that aims to advance the implementation of NDCs – countries have increasingly expressed the need for support in involving subnational governments in NDC implementation processes. To support NDCP member countries in their NDC updating processes, the Partnership has launched a short-term technical support instrument, the Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP). CAEP makes it even more evident that countries are requesting support with advancing Collaborative Climate Action: half of the countries receiving support under CAEP have requested support with getting sub-national governments involved. Most requests apply to the NDC updating process, while a smaller number concern accelerating NDC implementation. As of April 2020, 67 of the 88 subnational engagement activities requested are being supported through CAEP.

For the financing of subnational action, the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (CCFLA) serves as the only multi-level and multi-stakeholder coalition aimed at closing the investment gap for urban climate-friendly infrastructure projects. The Alliance promotes cooperation and collaboration among its more than sixty members that re-present the main market players in city-level climate finance; including banks, city networks, think tanks, as well as national governments as the ‘gatekeepers’. Alliance members have specific aims and deliverables to:

- Build awareness of city finance needs and opportunities.
- Craft a strong global architecture to support measurement and evaluation.
- Identify existing solutions and gaps in city-level climate finance.
- Support new investment solutions that fill crucial gaps in cities climate finance.



4.2.1 The example of biodiversity

Even though local government is incorporated in the UNFCCC – and therefore the Paris Agreement – process, their presence is not particularly strong. A different approach has been taken under the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD), where a COP decision was taken already in 2008, which:

‘Encourages Parties, in accordance with national legislation, to recognize the role of cities and local authorities in their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, to facilitate the adoption by cities and local authorities of practices that support the implementation of these strategies and action plans, and to support the development of local biodiversity strategies and action plans consistent with National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans’ (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 2008).⁴

The CBD includes a process resembling the Paris Agreement’s NDC process, producing documents called National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Following the notion of NBSAPs, the united local and regional governments developed the term “LBSAPs”, Local Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The recommendation to the Parties and to local and regional governments is to link NBSAPs and LBSAPs systematically. While LBSAPs should also (but not only) translate the national biodiversity strategies into local actions, the NBSAPs should include the local targets, plans, strategies and actions while supporting these through national means. Their development and formulation should include subnational actors. Parties to the CBD are invited to involve subnational governments, cities and other local authorities when revising their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 2008).

4.2.2 How-to: designing an inclusive process for developing and updating an NDC

Decarbonizing economies requires transformation in all sectors with implications for technologies, jobs, health and social welfare as well as for the environment. Public engagement and buy-in from stakeholders are therefore needed to enable and contribute to the national climate targets. Crucial to this process is collaboration between the national level and stakeholders in subnational levels of government and representatives from business, unions, academia and other parts of civil society.

Collaboration between and within levels of government can improve coordination and implementation of national climate objectives. Consultations taking place in the early phases of climate policy development can also reinforce national climate objectives. An example is consultation with representatives from city associations, which can give an updated and first-hand account of ongoing efforts, existing institutional capacity and needs for finance, including incentives for climate action. Other examples are dialogues with industry and the private sector, which are well placed to provide information on necessary investment environments and conditions for low-carbon development.

⁴ United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, COP decision 2008, UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/IX/28



There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to the design of stakeholder consultations, nor is there an optimal way of conducting engagement processes that can be applied to every country. Nevertheless, principles and guidance to national governments planning stakeholder consultations include the following steps:

- Identification of objectives and key topics
- Planning of the engagement process (stakeholder selection, resources including costs and staff, choice of design and method, communication flows including expectation management on the outcome etc.)
- Implementation: conducting consultation, such as through workshops, questionnaires and forums using online tools or face to face
- Evaluation and organisation of communication of results
- Information on the follow-up process e.g. integrating results into the political process (Karakoska, 2018).

New and innovative forms of cooperation – both national and international – will be required to ensure that the path out of the coronavirus crisis is sustainable, equitable and resilient in all countries. Collaborative Climate Action is an integral part of connecting all levels of society and achieving a robust and ambitious exit strategy and moving towards a low carbon future.

There are now increasing numbers of national stakeholder engagement processes in the context of climate policy, including from France, Germany, Peru, Portugal and South Africa. The French Government embarked on a comprehensive process as it formulated the 2015 French climate legislation. Consultation involved two tiers – a citizen debate including local debates – a participatory website and an institutionalised debate. The institutionalised consultation built on a dedicated debate council, a Secretariat and consultations with expert groups and representatives from key sectors of the economy on defined aspects of the climate legislation.

Stakeholder engagement is key to Collaborative Climate Action. However, incorporating engagement into national climate governance frameworks requires institutions that ensure regular interaction and exchange, for example when reviewing or updating climate policies. France transformed the dedicated debate council into a national consultative institution involved in every legislation concerning environmental policy, thereby institutionalising the consultation process.

In Argentina, investing in Collaborative Climate Action strengthened their NDC. In 2016, the country engaged in a nationwide consultation process to align national climate targets with subnational and cross-sectoral efforts to mitigate climate change. This resulted in the country submitting a more ambitious NDC and raising its unconditional target from 15 per cent to 17 per cent and its conditional target from 30 per cent to 37 per cent.

Another example specific to the NDC process can be found in Peru, where the “Dialoguemos NDC”, a national-level consultation, has been expanded to the local level as a multi-stakeholder consultation in the context of NDC enhancement.





5. Partnership for Collaborative Climate Action

One outcome of the International Conference on Climate Action, which took place in Heidelberg, Germany in May 2019 is the Partnership for Collaborative Climate Action, built upon the Partnership Declaration on Collaborative Climate Action (German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), 2019). Partners commit to priority actions to foster Collaborative Climate Action across government levels within their respective jurisdictions. Signed by national, regional and local governments alike, plus supporting networks and organisations, the Declaration states that the different levels of government jointly will:

- Demonstrate enhanced collective climate ambition and develop and implement coherent policies and plans for achieving the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement across all economic sectors, striving for limitation in temperature increase of well below 2° C.
- Alongside mitigation, strive for achieving a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases and engaging stakeholders and citizens in the process, based on our respective competencies and spheres of influence.
- Take clear and tangible commitments to mitigate the impacts and improve the resilience to climate change for the most vulnerable urban populations. In this regard, develop nature-based solutions and green infrastructures to enhance cities resilience to disasters caused by climate change effects and contribute to mitigate climate change.
- Share lessons and cooperate among and between all levels, inter alia within coalitions, networks and partnerships, to encourage, inspire and support more ambitious climate policies and programmes embedded in the sustainable development agenda, and catalyse transformative initiatives.
- Pursue Collaborative Climate Action that is innovative and inspirational, suitable for replication and upscaling as well as gender-sensitive, inclusive, but also concrete, visible, measurable and focused, and, underscoring the economic case for ambitious climate action and integrating social and ecological benefits.

The Partnership for Collaborative Climate Action offers a platform for mutual learning and exchange of experiences across tiers of government and borders.



6. Benefits of Collaborative Climate Action in NDCs for a green recovery

6.1 For national governments

National or regional governments have primary authority over only 35 per cent of the potential for urban mitigation, but a further 37 per cent of the mitigation potential identified in cities depends on Collaborative Climate Action between national, regional and local governments (Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019).

For national governments cooperating with regional and local governments and involving them in policy design, planning and implementation through consultations, additional benefits can take the form of:

- increased buy-in from local governments, which has been part of the process, has influenced it and feel increased ownership
- adequately selected measures/sectors/actions/policies resulting from consultation of local expertise as part of the selection process
- adequately designed measures resulting from consultation of local expertise as part of the design process

These benefits also improve the conditions for an effective implementation of climate action.


Specifically, sustainable infrastructure stimulus packages for cities can channel large-scale investments into technologies with long-term climate benefits and revive local economies during and after the recovery from the coronavirus crisis, making them highly suitable as subnational contributions in NDCs.

The leading countries of tomorrow will be those that support an equitable and sustainable transition to a new urban economy in their cities.

6.2 For subnational governments

Cities, local and regional governments are affected by the legal, institutional and financial instruments and frameworks put in place by regional and national levels of government. The frameworks in a given country may support or obstruct local climate action. National support may be needed to help cities establish policies and minimum standards and to obtain the required resources and technical information (OECD, 2014).

Since 37 per cent of the mitigation potential identified in cities depends on Collaborative Climate Action between national, regional and local governments, so it is crucial that the corresponding policies, instruments and measures are designed and implemented inclusively and cooperatively.



Collaborative Climate Action can take many forms and is highly context and sector specific. How local, regional and national governments work together depends on the legal, cultural and institutional frameworks and traditions in each location. It will however increase the visibility of subnational levels at the national level, which can create better conditions for urban climate policy development and implementation.

Cities that pursue a low-carbon development will be more efficient, productive and innovative and offer a competitive advantage as they seek to attract global talent and investment.

Sectoral examples include prioritising improved public transport, cycling infrastructure and greater use of renewable energy, which will give cities better air quality and thereby boost the populations's resilience to health threats (especially to respiratory diseases).

By driving forward zero-carbon communities as an economic recovery strategy from the coronavirus crisis, local and regional governments can reduce the impact of future global crises by building healthy, equitable and resilient societies.






7. Conclusions and recommendations

Including the local level in the formulation of NDCs is a major opportunity to enhance climate action. It also provides for concrete measures suitable for post-coronavirus recovery packages. It is, therefore, important that national governments explicitly recognise cities as systems in their climate policies and plans. This paper illustrates how national governments could go further in including subnational levels in the updating or formulation of NDCs. A large number of NDCs fail to address urban opportunities, so there is significant scope to increase ambition during the NDC update process.

Current knowledge of the NDC process and of similar processes suggests that the following recommendations apply to the NDC update process:

Local potential to increase ambition

-  **Apply** locally adapted (context relevant) methods to determining local mitigation potential, depending on data availability
-  **Provide** fora for subnational actors to present their climate initiatives and contributions
-  **Verify** whether these initiatives are reflected at national level and, if not, calculate their emissions reduction potential



- ➔ **Identify** areas that are under the sole responsibility of – and require action by – a subnational authority and make them explicit in the NDC or its background documents, including where they relate to policies and measures and climate finance.

Local participation in the NDC process

- ➔ **Engage** subnational government in the design of NDCs at an early stage
- ➔ **Strengthen** dialogue between national and subnational governments, for example through stakeholder consultations.
- ➔ **Institutionalize** coordination and consultation processes

Conducive frameworks

- ➔ **Ensure** that subnational levels have the mandate and access to resources (financial and human) to fulfill their mitigation potential
- ➔ **Support** subnational governments in accessing data and information, including through knowledge sharing and learning among subnational governments, for example through the Partnership for Collaborative Climate Action
- ➔ **Set** national standards (for example, energy efficiency in buildings, targets for renewable energy or greenhouse gas emissions) and allow the subnational actors to set theirs higher – but not lower



Building the bridges between NDCs and a sustainable post-coronavirus recovery strategy will require significant coordination, both across sectors and between levels of government. Collaborative Climate Action can advance this effort in different ways, for instance:



Establish a coordination mechanism that oversees the NDC development and the sustainable recovery, to manage the process of project consideration and keep an updated list of projects compatible with climate targets.



Explore and establish ways to make grant support available to help with project preparation, with a focus on converting NDC commitments into actionable projects that would be competitive in stimulus discussions (see for example C40's Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force⁵ or the Cities Climate Finance Gap Fund).⁶

⁵ https://www.c40.org/press_releases/taskforce-principles

⁶ The Gap Fund is a new Multi-Donor Trust Fund hosted by the World Bank and European Investment Bank. It will provide grant funding for early-stage technical assistance that supports the development of concrete project proposals for low-carbon and climate-resilient urban infrastructure projects based on climate action plans. The Gap Fund will be officially launched and made operational in the course of 2020.



The city government of Mexico City started a reforestation programme to plant 10 Million trees in Mexico City in parks, streets and avenues in the year 2019.

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