



# Preparation of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) as a catalyst for national climate action

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## Summary

The preparation for the new international climate agreement has advanced national policy making even before the agreement is adopted. NewClimate Institute in cooperation with *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), assessed the extent to which the preparation of intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) has catalysed enhanced national climate change mitigation capacity and action, beyond the preparation of the INDC itself. The results are presented in Figure 1 and summarised overleaf.

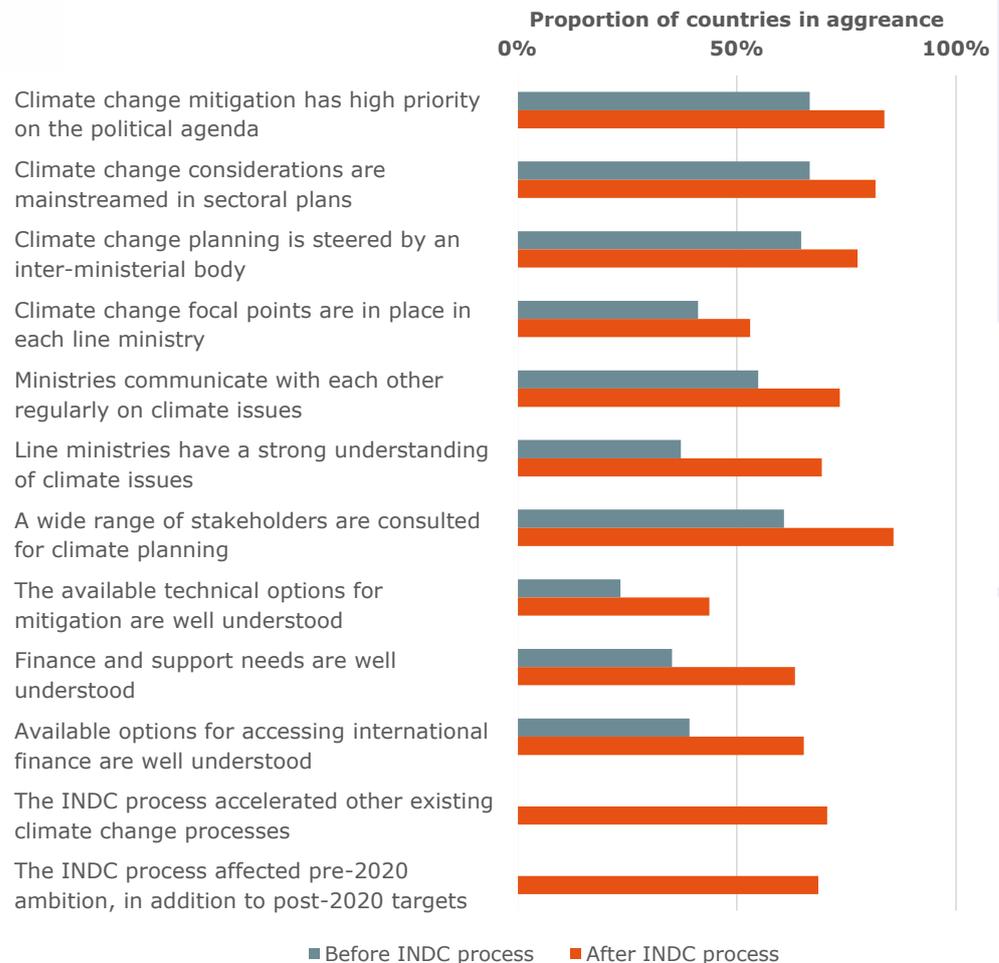


Figure 1: INDC process benefits reported by 52 countries



## **National climate change processes were kick-started, consolidated and enhanced**

INDCs have kick-started climate planning and strategy development processes and consolidated and built upon existing climate strategy and planning processes, as confirmed by over 70% of the consulted developing countries. The concentrated international focus brought on by the INDC process has catalysed new or renewed momentum at the country level for the development of new policies and legislation, and new action plans for implementation that reach down to the sectoral level. Formerly separated pre- and post-2020 approaches were consolidated. The INDC process suggests a shift in the approach of countries, where developing country governments now see climate action as a continuous engagement rather than a fragmented one-time activity.

### **Capacity for climate planning was increased**

The INDC process significantly advanced national political agendas. Climate change mitigation is now a high political priority for the vast majority of consulted developing countries (ca. 84% compared to 67% before), which may represent a new critical mass for enhanced international cooperation and negotiation. Institutional structures were developed or strengthened, with new inter-ministerial committees, climate change focal points in line ministries and enhanced communication between ministries. The number of countries stating that climate change is understood well by all ministries nearly doubled through this process. Countries with a broad participation in climate change policy making have increased (from 60% to 80%).

### **INDC processes accelerated national mitigation planning and commitments**

The INDC process has constituted a concentrated period of stock-taking and target setting at the national level for over 175 countries, resulting in considerable advances concerning the volume of formal and internationally communicated climate change mitigation targets, and the ambition level for long term action entailed by these targets. Submitted INDCs now represent Parties that account for approximately 94% of global annual greenhouse gas emissions, including the top-ten emitters as well as first-time contributions from many countries with major regional influence.

## **Pre-2020 ambition was indirectly enhanced**

Ambition for the period prior to 2020 was indirectly enhanced by the INDC process in over two thirds of the consulted developing countries. In some countries, this benefit came through reinforcing and providing renewed impetus for previously developed strategies and commitments, whilst in others the increased awareness and capacity across governmental and non-governmental stakeholders has led to more regular consideration of climate change at the sector planning level.

### **Progress is still needed for elaboration of technical options and finance plans**

The catalysing impact of the INDC process has been limited in some areas. In particular, countries report that the limited timeframe available for INDC development was not conducive to the development of detailed implementation plans for the specific technical measures proposed. Also a thorough assessment of finance and support needs remain critical issues.

### **Regular rounds to renew and revise contributions can maintain the momentum**

A process for regular rounds of preparation and renewal of national contributions will ensure that momentum for increased mitigation capacity and policy making activity is carried forward and built upon, rather than lost, as is likely if the INDC development experience is taken as an isolated, one-off process. Much of the developments at the national level, which have been achieved through the INDC process, have been supported by international cooperation throughout 2014 and 2015. Continued international cooperation is required, alongside national leadership, to build upon the catalytic impact of the INDC process and to continue to close the capacity gaps that remain, particularly related to the analysis of technical options and the development of finance plans for increasing ambition.

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## Introduction and overview

All Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) were requested to submit an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which would ultimately be included in a new international climate agreement in December 2015. By 25 November 2015, 149 submissions representing 177 Parties had been received. Together, the emissions of these Parties account for approximately 94% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions (NewClimate Institute 2015b). Analysis from the Climate Action Tracker shows that the collective impact of the INDCs submitted, if fully implemented, leads to an increase in global temperatures of approximately 2.7°C above pre-industrial levels (CAT 2015). This illustrates encouraging progress and is an improvement to earlier projections which consider current policies (+3.6°C according to CAT), while still requiring further, significant efforts in order to hold warming below 2°C as agreed internationally in the Cancun Agreement (UNFCCC 2010), or even below 1.5°C as advocated by an increasing number of Parties and civil society organisations.

The INDC preparation process represents the first time that the majority of Parties from all regions and economic backgrounds have engaged in a process to formulate a formal contribution to a new climate agreement. As such, the process has been a learning curve for most countries and supporting institutions at the national and international level. The preparation of the INDC in many cases also required new climate policy planning and decision processes at the national level.

This briefing paper presents the results of research which assesses the extent to which activities associated with the development of INDCs have catalysed enhanced climate change mitigation capacity and developed necessary structures for ensuring the sustainability of long term processes, beyond the preparation of the INDC itself. As such, the paper explores what is changing at the country level, and how this can translate to increased climate change mitigation action now and in the future.

The research that supports this briefing involved desk research, online surveys and inputs from government representatives, national consultants and supporting institutions linked to the

development of in-country INDC preparation processes. In total, information was obtained from stakeholders in 52 countries, covering all regions. It builds upon earlier analysis of the challenges and opportunities from the INDC process (NewClimate Institute 2015a).

Figure 1 presents results from a comprehensive survey on where the INDC process has had a particular catalytic impact. Survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements presented considering the situation in their country prior to and after the INDC process. The proportion of countries agreeing with the statements given is compared for the period before, and after the INDC preparation process.

Experiences with in-country processes and discussions in international fora, lead to the assumption that some of the results as presented in Figure 1 may be prone to inflation due to the potential bias of in-country respondents. However, it is assumed that this potential issue effects both the *before* and *after* INDC development data, and that the large progression represented by the difference between these two statistics is assumed to be significant.

On average, across all of the statements, 54% of responding countries reported progression during the INDC process. Some of the most notable opportunities and benefits, indicated by the survey results and also from interviews with country representatives, are:

1. INDC processes have catalysed long term planning instruments for climate change mitigation at the country level by kick-starting new processes and consolidating existing approaches.
2. Capacity for climate change mitigation planning and implementation has been enhanced on the country level through the development of institutional structures, technical capacity and broader participation.
3. Many countries have advanced their mitigation commitments and ambition, including for pre-2020 action.

Each of these outcomes will be explored further in the following sections.

## Development of long term national climate change policy planning

### *INDCs have kick-started climate planning and strategy development processes*

The concentrated international focus on the development and formal communication of national climate change mitigation plans has provided a major impetus for countries to kick-start or re-stimulate long-term climate planning.

In some countries the INDC has prompted the new or renewed development of policies and legislation, such as the new Climate Change Acts of Vanuatu and Macedonia, and the Climate Change Framework Policy and Bill which is nearing its finalisation in Kenya.

#### **Box 1: Georgia's 2030 Climate Action Plan**

Georgia's INDC development process catalysed the development of a *2030 Climate Action Plan*. The Climate Action Plan, expected to be ready by the end of 2016, will include specific steps and institutional responsibilities for the implementation of Georgia's strategic climate change objectives. The 2030 Climate Action Plan was catalysed by the INDC process in two specific ways. Firstly, the INDC represented a consolidation of Georgia's mid- and long-term climate change planning into a formal and internationally communicated construct, providing a concrete and immediate requirement for a transition from planning to implementation. Secondly, the INDC is the only document reflecting Georgia's current climate change strategy to have high level political approval from the head of state and also key ministries, and provides a high level mandate for the assignation of institutional responsibilities across ministries, as required for successful implementation of the 2030 Climate Action Plan.

The 2030 Climate Action Plan advances Georgia's mitigation capacity by formally engaging all ministries under a common responsibility for climate change objectives, for the first time. This process is likely to result in an increased consideration of climate objectives at the sectoral planning level and will, in turn, increase the capacities of various ministries to engage in climate change planning in the future.

Although many countries have been very active in developing low emission development or similar strategies in the past years, several countries have initiated new Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) processes as a direct effect of the increased momentum afforded

by the INDC process. These include, for example, Moldova and Ivory Coast.

In other countries with relatively mature climate strategy development, the INDC process has prompted the development of implementation action plans that reach down to the sectoral level. Examples include Georgia's 2030 Climate Action Plan (see Box 1) and new sectoral implementation plans which are under development in Ukraine.

### *INDC processes consolidated and built upon existing climate strategy and planning processes*

For many countries, the INDC process has been a way to integrate, consolidate and shape the progress achieved in individual efforts undertaken since COP 13 in Bali, when a roadmap for long-term cooperative action was agreed. While different countries are at different stages of planning and implementing climate actions, there has been a clear tendency during the INDC process in most countries to build on efforts undertaken to date. The consolidation and continuation of existing pre- and post-2020 approaches in countries is a constructive step forward for the stability and direction it entails for national climate policy making, and for the confidence it offers to private investors.

Our research reflects the role of INDCs towards this progress. 71% of the survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the INDC process accelerated development of other existing climate change processes in their countries. For these countries, INDCs can be argued to be a step forward in developing a consolidated national response for climate action. The formal nature of INDCs - most countries needed a cabinet decision or high level political approval before submitting its INDC to the UNFCCC - and their high visibility at the international political level supported this. Based on the status of their climate planning the streamlining of policies has taken different forms in different countries. For countries like Moldova (see Box 2) and Liberia, the political thrust by INDCs led to the revival, reframing and reprioritisation of strategies and action plans that were facing barriers. For others, such as South Africa and Mexico, the INDC process helped bring existing plans closer to implementation by identifying mitigation opportunities.

## Integration of pre- and post-2020 approaches

A noteworthy marker of the role of INDCs in encouraging long term planning and action through building on existing processes and actions has been the way in which countries have integrated their approaches on the pre- and post-2020 climate action. This is specifically so for countries who had been actively involved in conceptualising NAMAs and LEDS in the past years. Many of these countries have focussed their post-2020 approach on the sectors prioritised in their NAMAs/LEDS and built on the institutional processes developed under these. 36% of low- and middle-income countries with INDC submissions see NAMAs or NAMA-type instruments as a means to implement the objectives set out in their INDCs (Fridahl et al. n.d.); this is a significant volume considering that just 45 countries (35% of all low- and middle-income countries) are known to be developing NAMAs (NAMA Database 2015). For instance, in Thailand, the foundation laid for NAMAs made the INDC development easier as line ministries already had a level of understanding of their role and some knowledge on the potential mitigation opportunities in their sectors. Thailand utilized this sectoral buy-in to steer discussions towards implementation by ideating development of

### Box 2: New and consolidated policy approaches

*“The INDC process has been catalytic for the Republic of Moldova because of the momentum it has created for policy and institutional reform. Moldova had already developed a draft LEDS (up to 2020) for Governmental approval in 2013. However, circumstances delayed its approval until 2015. With the initiation of the INDC discussion, the Climate Change Office under the Ministry of Environment decided to build on their experience to redraft and extend the LEDS till 2030. The Climate Change Office anticipates to table the revised LEDS for approval by June 2016.”*

- Representative from the Climate Change Office,  
Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova

*The INDC process for Thailand was built on the NAMA frameworks laid during the last 4 years. Stakeholders were already aware of the plans, and ready to engage. For future reviews, a 5-year cycle and strategic reviews of the INDC provide an instrument to evaluate if gaps and barriers are adequately addressed to enhance mitigation and adaptation actions.*

- Representative from Thailand

a mitigation roadmap including a periodic review of the progress of actions (see Box 2).

The INDC process suggests a normative shift in the approach of countries, where developing governments now see climate action as a continuous engagement rather than as a fragmented one-time activity. It is noted that in many INDC submissions, this enhanced long term action is invariably linked to a clearer identification of the synergies with broader national development objectives, and an expectation of increased volumes of available international support.

## Enhancement of capacity for mitigation planning and implementation

### Advancing the political agenda

Information collected from countries, as shown in Figure 1 indicates that the INDC process played a role to increase political priority of climate change mitigation at the national level: following the INDC process, approximately 84% of countries agree that climate change mitigation has high priority on the domestic political agenda, up from 67% before the process. This is a significant leap in the course of one or two years, considering that efforts have been going on to establish climate change mitigation on political agendas for many years. This increased level of political prioritisation is also likely to be linked to the expectation of new and larger sources of international finance for climate change action.

The development to a situation whereby climate change mitigation holds high political priority in the majority of countries may represent a crucial critical mass, facilitating enhanced international cooperation and informed negotiation for the Paris agreement, as well as for future international cooperation. Sustaining the political momentum in the coming years is key to extracting the maximum potential from this development.

### Developing and strengthening institutional structures

Most countries that have submitted INDCs to date already have taken first steps to establish an institutional framework at the national level in order to coordinate the planning and implementation of INDC related actions (UNFCCC, 2015). Institutional

structures that have been significantly enhanced throughout the INDC development process include, in particular, inter-ministerial coordination arrangements and broad stakeholder consultation processes.

With regard to inter-ministerial arrangements, many countries report that they already had respective structures in place before they embarked on the INDC process. According to our research, in 65% of the countries climate change planning had already been steered by an inter-ministerial body before 2014. In some of these cases, however, the INDC preparation process had an impact in terms of strengthening and consolidating the existing structures. For instance, fewer than half the countries included in the survey had climate change focal points in place within each individual line ministry before the INDC process; in some countries, the increased need for information management and data collection that came up with the INDC development accelerated the assignment of such focal points, as reported by the Ivory Coast. Likewise, Lebanon reported that the INDC preparation process considerably encouraged open and constructive communication between different line ministries and intensified their collaboration.

### **Box 3: Institutional development in the Ivory Coast**

The Ivory Coast created an inter-ministerial and private sector platform to oversee the INDC development. Moreover, climate change focal points were appointed in each ministry to manage information and data collection; and identify adaptation and mitigation options in their respective sectors. The INDC exercise highlighted how mitigation actions can be in sync with developmental actions (e.g. joint developmental and mitigation outcomes in agroforestry). Moreover, since all stakeholders were very keen to understand the specifics of the INDC and the COP 21 outcome, the INDC process has helped to create a platform for in-depth stakeholder engagement. This is a significant development since, in the past, strategically engaging with actors in the main polluting sectors has been a challenge.

With the INDC laying out a clear vision for a sectoral strategy in priority sectors, the next step is to develop a Low Emission Development Strategy, over the coming two years, for which the INDC preparation exercise has provided a strong starting point.

In other countries, the INDC process has triggered the establishment of entirely new and long-term institutional structures. If provided with sufficient resources and support, this goes along with a substantial enhancement of capacity of national experts. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, for example, the INDC preparation advanced discussions on the creation of an Environmental Protection Agency under the Ministry of Environment, which is expected to become operational by the end of next year.

### *Broad base participation for climate change planning*

In addition to the enhancement of inter-ministerial processes, the INDC has in many cases also significantly improved broad-base participation in climate change planning and implementation. Most countries generally emphasise the relevance of national stakeholder involvement in order to raise awareness of and ensure ownership for the implementation of long-term climate change action. This assessment is also reflected in our research, with 61% of the countries stating that stakeholders were consulted for climate change planning before 2014. Thus, many countries already had experience with stakeholder processes, which were, however, often limited in their scope. After the INDC process, this number leaps to 86%, pointing to a particular relevance of comprehensive participation in the INDC preparation process. The engagement of a wide range of stakeholders (including from the private sector, academia and civil society, as well as from all relevant sectoral ministries and regional and local governments) is thereby considered to be most important, on the one hand, to formulate realistic mid- and long-term targets, and, on the other hand, to demonstrate co-benefits of climate change action to key stakeholders and to ensure the buy-in of such action beyond the INDC preparation. The Philippines, for instance, highlighted in this context the particular influence that private sector involvement in the INDC process had for creating strong momentum for climate change in the country, and for propelling mitigation processes in particular.

Eventually, the INDC preparation process has also enhanced South-South cooperation in the form of consultations and dialogues between developing country governments. In the framework of the INDC

development, many regional workshops were held which have reportedly improved local and international communication structures.

### *Development of technical capacity at the national level*

Broad-based technical capacity at the national level for climate change policy planning, including a thorough understanding and awareness of climate related issues in sectors and line ministries not traditionally engaged in the climate change discussion, is widely understood as a key barrier to the development and implementation of climate change mitigation measures at the sectoral level. Research conducted earlier in 2015, found that *limited expertise for assessing mitigation options* and *lack of understanding in other sectors and ministries* were two of the most significant barriers for the development of INDCs and other climate change processes (NewClimate Institute 2015a).

An indication from the survey results under this latest research activity, as presented in Figure 1 is that the INDC process began to address these common shortfalls, yet had a limited impact in an area that still requires particular progress. The proportion of countries indicating a *widespread understanding of climate change issues across ministries*, as well as a *sound understanding on the technical options for mitigation, support needs and available options for accessing support*, has almost doubled during the INDC process. However, the status in this area before the INDC progress was particularly poor, and despite this progression, the resulting proportion of countries reporting strong capacity remains low: less than half of countries report a strong understanding of technical mitigation options, whilst understanding of finance options and support needs is also limited.

Although progression on technical capacities was limited compared to the political and institutional impacts of the process, some countries made progress due to concentrated efforts to acquire new knowledge and to improve the communication of existing knowledge across a wider group of stakeholders. For example, although most primarily made use of a consolidation of existing information, several countries are known to have developed scenario analyses, feasibility studies and impact

assessments, at least partially for the purpose of providing new knowledge as input for the INDC development.

## **Advancing mitigation commitments and ambition**

### *INDC processes accelerated national mitigation planning and commitments*

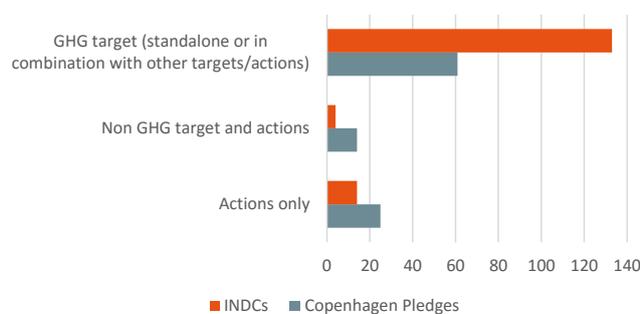
The INDC process has constituted a concentrated period of stock-taking and target setting at the national level for over 175 countries, resulting in considerable advances concerning the volume of formal and internationally communicated climate change mitigation targets, the ambition level for long term action entailed by these targets, and, indirectly, action for pre-2020 climate change mitigation.

Before the INDC process, 58 developing and 42 developed countries (including all 28 EU member states) were covered by climate change mitigation pledges to the UNFCCC, of which 61% included GHG emission targets (WRI 2015). Now, nearing the end of the INDC preparation process, 177 Parties (including all 28 EU member states) have submitted intended contributions to the UNFCCC, of which approximately 88% include GHG emission targets.

Figure 2 demonstrates the significant progression in the volume of intended contributions under the INDC process (including submissions up to October 21 2015), compared to pre-2020 pledges. The mass of countries now covered by intended contributions that include GHG emission targets account for approximately 85% of global GHG emissions<sup>1</sup>. This includes all of the top-10 emitting Parties (including the EU as a single entity), all of which have proposed contributions that go beyond the timeframe of their existing pledges (UNFCCC 2015). Furthermore, countries which have now proposed quantitative GHG emission targets for the first time include economies with major regional influence in regions with potential for rapid economic development, such as Argentina, Colombia, Ethiopia, Morocco (see Box 4), Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana and Central African Republic. It needs to be recognised that the legal status of the commitments

<sup>1</sup> GHG emissions in 2012 according to the EVOC tool

presented in the INDCs is still unclear; the commitments may or may not become formal and binding depending on the Paris outcome. Nevertheless, the proportion of greenhouse gas emissions accounted for by countries with quantified GHG emission targets in Africa and Latin America has increased since the INDC process from 8% to 58%, and from 57% to 86%, respectively.



**Figure 2: Comparing the volume of INDCs with pre-2020 pledges**

The direct result of the increased volume and ambition of intended quantified GHG emission contributions would be to considerably reduce projected climate warming. An assessment of this impact is outside the scope of this paper, but available from the Climate Action Tracker (CAT 2015). Moreover, new targets from the INDC process will increase awareness of climate change issues across the developing world. The actions to be implemented to achieve these targets are likely to continue to mainstream climate change in sector strategies, and to extend price signals for greenhouse gas emissions in regional markets worldwide.

Furthermore, in addition to the formally communicated post-2020 targets, 69% of countries responding to the survey agreed that the INDC process has increased ambition for climate action before 2020. In some countries, such as Indonesia, Liberia and Sierra Leone this came through reinforcing and providing renewed impetus for previously developed strategies and commitments. As another example, representatives from Micronesia and Togo indicated that enhanced understanding of climate change across stakeholders from various sectors, achieved through the broad consultation process for the INDC development, has increased pre-2020 action since

climate change issues are being considered more for sectoral planning, with immediate effect.

#### Box 4: New targets from major regional economies

Morocco is one of several major African economies to have set a national GHG emissions reduction target for the first time, under the INDC process. As a major economy with pronounced influence in North and West African markets, Morocco's new intended contribution has profound regional significance. The *re-confirmation* and up-scaling of previously set national targets for renewable energy provision will also increase confidence among potential investors of low-carbon infrastructure in developing countries due to the perceived reliability of policy signals.

## Conclusions and implications for national policy makers and for the international process

### *The preparation for the new international climate agreement has advanced national policy making*

The survey and interviews conducted for this briefing paper provide detailed evidence that the international process has driven significant developments in national climate change mitigation policy making, even before the agreement is adopted. Aside from the level of ambition proposed by countries in their INDCs for post-2020 mitigation action, the benefits brought by the INDC preparation process have also had the effect to increase capacity and potential action for mitigation in the period *before* 2020 for the majority of countries.

The catalysing impact of the INDC process has been limited in some areas. In particular, countries report that the limited timeframe available for INDC development was not conducive to the development of detailed implementation plans for the specific technical measures proposed, nor the thorough assessment of support needs and financing plans, which remain critical issues.

However, the evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that INDC processes have had largely positive impacts in most countries for kick-starting long term planning processes, advancing climate change mitigation on political agendas, integrating pre- and post-2020 approaches, enhancing facilitative institutional structures, broadening the

base for participation in policy making processes, and developing in-country technical capacities.

### *Regular processes for the preparation and renewal of national contributions may maintain momentum*

The politically agreed and steered process of INDCs has initiated and accelerated a unique process of strategy-formation and target-setting across a large majority of Parties to the convention. Going forward, it is essential to maintain this political and technical momentum, in order to increase the collective potential of countries to raise ambition in the near future to a level consistent with a pathway for a stable climate system.

An embedded process for regular rounds of preparation and renewal of national contributions will ensure that momentum for increased mitigation capacity – including strategy and policy development, streamlining of actions and processes, improvement of institutional structures, and development of technical capacity – is carried forward and built upon, rather than lost, as is likely if the INDC development experience is taken as an isolated, one-off process.

### *National leadership and continued international support is required to build upon the catalytic impact of the INDC process*

Much of the developments at the national level which have been achieved through the INDC process have been supported by the international technical support from various sources throughout 2014 and 2015. However, the ending of this concentrated period for INDC development does not constitute the end of a cycle for strategy development and capacity building. The political momentum should be maintained through national leadership and, where needed, country driven support for the further elaboration, and planning for implementation, of INDCs in 2016, such as deeper assessment of financing options, development of MRV frameworks and pilot activities.

As evidenced in this paper, the INDC process overall resulted in a number of positive developments at the national level. At the same time, global commitments continue to fall short of what is required by science to close the emissions gap and limit global warming to a maximum of 2°C above pre-industrialised levels. Political will needs to be

strengthened at all levels and significant capacity gaps need to be overcome. It is of crucial importance now to turn the many plans and targets into concerted action on the ground to ensure timely implementation of proposed activities pre and post 2020.

*A briefing paper on the next steps after Paris, including INDC implementation, support needs and financing plans, will be available in February 2015.*

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