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ALIGNING NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

Lessons Learned and Practical Guidance

November 2017



This is a
preview to the
FULL PUBLICATION
TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2018,
containing deeper analysis and
more in-depth case studies.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement in 2015 has set the world on a new pathway toward sustainable development. All countries pledged to take ambitious action to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities, and tackle climate change, ensuring that no one is left behind.

A deeper analysis and more in-depth case studies will be developed into a full publication, to be launched in 2018.

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement put forth an innovative and complementary framework for accelerating action and achieving ambitious sustainable development objectives. Under the 2030 Agenda, a series of 17 global **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDG) have been agreed that are to be universally achieved. Under the Paris Agreement countries are expected to submit a **Nationally Determined Contribution** (NDC) which outlines their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience to climate change. Although SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to establish national frameworks to achieve the goals. The SDGs are integrated and indivisible, balancing economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, whilst the Paris Agreement aligns with the 2030 Agenda and demands urgent climate action. As we move forward with implementation of these two agreements we must transform them into concrete action and tangible results.

At the national level, the two processes have largely operated in silos. Different institutional, policy and administrative processes, different actors, and different datasets have been utilized to translate these global agreements into national actions. The SDGs localization processes (i.e. to develop national strategies to achieve SDGs) and NDC Implementation Plans are being devised in parallel -- with limited, if any, communication or interface between the two.

The alignment of these two agendas is imperative to reduce duplication and increase efficiency - maximizing resources, technical capacity, information, and expertise sharing. As presented in the recent working paper by the World Resources Institute,¹ many of the climate actions highlighted in the NDCs also have the potential to generate mutual benefits across the 17 SDGs. Similarly, actions defined to meet SDG targets have the potential to contribute towards achieving NDC commitments. The two agendas are interlinked and aligning their implementation provides a great opportunity to accelerate progress across both agreements.

Nonetheless, while many countries recognize the need for aligning the two agendas, the question remains: how should this be done?

UNDP has unique experience supporting countries to develop Intended NDCs (INDCs), leading global public consultations to define SDGs, and most recently to support governments in designing and implementing NDC and SDG roadmaps to meet these commitments. Building on this experience across a range of countries and development contexts, nine entry points have been identified as critical for fostering greater complementarity between NDCs and SDGs. These nine entry points are presented here, along with some initial questions and considerations to start the alignment process. Examples from UNDP's experience in countries are also provided to illustrate how these entry points translate in a country context.

¹ *Examining the Alignment Between the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions and Sustainable Development Goals, working paper, September 2016, https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/WRI_INDCs_v5.pdf*

UNDP Support for Nationally Determined Contributions

UNDP is providing wide-range support to countries in developing and implementing NDCs. This includes 15 NDC regional dialogues co-organized with the UNFCCC Secretariat and other partners since 2014, benefitting approximately 150 countries, and support to 43 countries in developing INDCs ahead of COP21. The majority of these countries are receiving support on NDC implementation, focusing on institutional frameworks, implementation plans, mitigation actions, monitoring, finance, and long-term low-emission development strategies. Specific support on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) is also underway, supporting 48 countries in medium to long-term climate change adaptation planning and budgeting. In addition, UNDP supports an extensive portfolio of adaptation and mitigation initiatives, with funding from the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund, Special Climate Change Fund, Adaptation Fund and several bilateral donors, all of which directly contribute to meeting the adaptation and mitigation commitments of NDCs. The focus going forward is on exchanging country experiences, building capacity to implement NDCs, and supporting countries to access, combine, and sequence climate finance to deliver ambitious action.

UNDP Support on SDG Implementation

To meet the demands of the 2030 Agenda, UNDP has been working with its partners across the UN System to support countries through the Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy Support (MAPS) approach. MAPS is the common approach adopted by the UN Development Group to frame support for countries to implement the 2030 Agenda.

- **Mainstreaming:** Helping governments to land and contextualize the agenda at national and local levels; ultimately reflecting the agenda in national plans, strategies, and budgets. This means mapping what a country is already doing, and where it needs specialized support. It is also about continuing to engage national stakeholders and develop new partnerships.
- **Acceleration:** Supporting governments and national stakeholders to target resources at root bottlenecks to sustainable development, paying special attention to interventions which have synergies and trade-offs across sectors.
- **Policy Support:** Providing coordinated and pooled policy support to countries upon demand, making thematic expertise from across the UN System available in an effective and coherent way.

This approach has enabled the UN System to provide integrated support to 114 countries, including expertise and analytic tools to measure, finance and implement development plans, embedding the SDGs into national development plans and structures, and prepare roadmaps towards 2030.

ENTRY POINTS

- ⬡ Establishing an enabling environment
- Planning and delivering on commitments
- Tracking progress and reporting

The following entry points are organized around three categories:

ESTABLISHING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



Institutional arrangements



Policy coherence



Capacity building efforts



Data generation and management

PLANNING AND DELIVERING ON COMMITMENTS



Timelines and scales



Targets



Financing opportunities

TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING



Reporting and review mechanisms



Processes for revision and updates



ESTABLISHING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT



1 Institutional arrangements

The organizational bodies, national structures, and individual actors in place to implement SDGs and NDCs are important drivers of action. In many countries, there are two separate sets of focal points, Ministries or working groups in place to implement the two agendas. Recognizing how these people, bodies, and structures can work together is a good starting point for alignment. For example, enhancing collaboration across institutions and platforms through intra-national technical working groups, boards of directors, steering committees, etc., can help to bridge the gaps.

⬡ Important issues and guiding questions:

- Which Ministries and focal points are tasked with coordinating SDG implementation and/or NDC implementation? What types of arrangements are in place between the lead Ministry/focal point and partner Ministries/focal points?
- Do coordination mechanisms (e.g. working groups, regular steering committee meetings, overlapping focal points, systematic information sharing systems, stakeholder consultations) already exist to bring together necessary actors to contribute to NDC or SDG processes? How do they differ for SDGs and NDCs? How are they similar?
- What policy frameworks, legal frameworks or laws are in place to support these institutional arrangements? Do they apply to both SDG and NDC processes?
- How are these arrangements translated at the local/sub-national and sectoral level? Do they differ for the two agendas?
- Does the policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks facilitate coordination of and sharing information between relevant actors?

CASE STUDY: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

relevant entry points



The 2017 **Trinidad and Tobago** NDC Implementation Plan, developed with support from UNDP, highlights the interlinkages between achieving SDG and NDC targets. This reference to SDGs, focusses on institutional arrangements and means of implementation – that is, finance, capacity, policy coherence, partnerships, and data monitoring and accountability. Specifically, the Plan indicates that the efforts to establish and strengthen governance structures for NDC implementation will work to put in place strong, accountable, and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) and strengthen the means of implementation (SDG 17). An online national Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) System will be developed that is linked to SDG reporting requirements and MRV requirements for NAMAs, developed under the UNDP Low-Emission Capacity Building Programme.

[Ref: *Climate and Development and Knowledge Network (CDKN) (2016) Planning for NDC Implementation – Quick Start Guide and Reference Manual*. Available at: <http://www.cdkn.org/ndc-guide/book/planning-for-ndc-implementation-a-quick-start-guide/introduction/>. (Accessed: 10 August 2016)]



2 Policy coherence

Both SDGs and NDCs should be grounded in the country's development and sectoral policies, strategies, and frameworks. This can be assessed and analyzed – both those that exist and those being developed, as a helpful starting point to identify synergies for alignment. Policy coherence should be assessed from national to sub-national to local levels (vertically) and across line Ministries and sectors (horizontally). This can improve results tracking, identification of potential implementation partners, and maximizing local resources.

Important issues and guiding questions:

- Has a stocktaking been conducted of all existing SDG and NDC-related policies, strategies, and frameworks?
- Do any existing national development plans or climate change policies reference either NDCs or SDGs? How do they align with the priorities, targets, and commitments of NDCs and SDGs? Similarly, do relevant sectoral plans and policies reference and/or align with NDCs and SDGs commitments and targets?
- Are analytic tools and necessary policy documents accessible to conduct alignment assessments?
- How do the priorities or defined actions reflect these commitments?
- Are any new policies or strategies under development (e.g. national or sectoral) or planned in the coming years (e.g. new national development strategies, climate change policies, NAPs, agricultural policies, tourism strategies)? How can these processes be used as an opportunity for aligning NDCs and SDGs?
- Are there innovative and ground-breaking climate-related actions that build on existing relevant policies, strategies, and frameworks, while also contributing to NDC implementation or SDG implementation? What can be learned from these experiences?

CASE STUDY: THAILAND

relevant entry points 

In **Thailand**, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which is currently under development with support from GIZ, and the UNDP-UNEP NAP- Global Support Programme, makes reference to and emphasizes the SDGs, as well as important national policy documents, such as the 20-year National Strategy and the 12th National Social and Economic Development Plan (2017 – 2021). A stocktaking analysis was also undertaken to identify the specific relationship between climate actions in the NDC and each of the 17 SDGs. UNDP, UNEP, UNEP-DTU, and WRI are currently developing an NDC Implementation document in collaboration with UNFCCC that would take this into account.



3 Capacity building efforts

There are ongoing capacity building efforts to support both NDC and SDG processes and related technical and financial expertise. This includes trainings, dialogues, technical support, and efforts to raise awareness of various experts. These efforts provide an opportunity to educate those involved in one process about the other process, and emphasize the interconnectedness between the two. It is important to enhance local expertise and create opportunities for local experts and government institutions, while also strategizing how best to maintain a sustainable pool of local experts, e.g. training of trainers. This includes sharing information across different government bodies and stakeholder groups, which will help capitalize on opportunities for integrated approaches. Key policymakers across diverse sectors can also be trained systematically in NDC, SDG, and development planning processes. A good starting point is to assess the capacity needs for implementing both NDCs and SDGs, in order to identify overlaps and synergies.

Important issues and guiding questions:

- What are the capacity needs for implementing the NDCs and SDGs? How are they similar and/or different? What would the support look like to address these needs – are there areas for synergy?
- What is already being done to build capacity? How can these efforts be combined to further align the two? How can they leverage the technical, financial, and human resources of the other?



Promoting Renewable Energy in Mae Hong Son Province.
Photo: UNDP, Thailand.



4 Data generation and management

Further defining national targets, informing actions to meet these targets, and monitoring these actions all requires robust data generation, analysis, and management. Strengthening and reforming national statistics offices, from being the primary data collectors to becoming custodians of wider 'data-ecosystems,' will enable datasets to draw from a much larger range of sources. For example, the Global Data for Sustainable Development Initiative from the UN Statistics Division (<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs>) supports countries to put in place the systems and capacity to gather and analyze data, while also enhancing mandates for data collection and sharing across ministries. This includes a wide variety of data types which is necessary given these issues cut across sectors, scopes, and scales.

At the same time, much of the data needed for NDCs will also be needed for SDGs, and vice versa. This is also true of other global and national agreements, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which also have data-related initiatives ongoing (e.g. online Sendai Monitor and Global Partnership for Disaster-related Data for Sustainable Development). Therefore, the data collection, analysis, and review process provides an opportunity for alignment, and links with other national processes. Given the increased need for data sharing in order to meet the commitments for both NDCs and SDGs, putting in place the right data generation and management systems can bring different actors together and ensure greater alignment.

○ Important issues and guiding questions:

- Which data is being collected and analyzed to inform the design of NDC/SDG roadmaps, implementation of actions, and measurement of their achievements?
- Where is the information being collected? Where does it sit?
- How is data shared between relevant actors? Are systems already in place to make this happen? Which access restrictions are in place for the data?
- Are end-users able to understand the best way to use this data?

CASE STUDY: JAMAICA

relevant entry points



The MAPS mission to **Jamaica** found that several planning documents and the nation's 'Vision 2030' included three targets on Climate Action, all three of which directly align to SDG 13 including two of its indicators. In addition, the draft SDG roadmap developed included a recommendation for a better understanding of socio-economic vulnerability, based on disaggregated data. This will require institutionalization of national risk information systems and establishment of damage and loss accounting databases to help monitor and analyse progress towards the achievement of the SDGs as well as other global agreements like the Sendai Framework for DRR and the Paris Agreement.

PLANNING AND DELIVERING ON COMMITMENTS



5 Targets

SDGs and NDCs have unique targets that are defined through the agreements. SDG targets have been defined globally, and apply to all countries, with the opportunity for countries to adapt or modify the targets for their specific context, priorities, and needs (i.e. localization). Specific indicators are also defined at global, regional, and national levels. NDC targets are voluntarily defined by individual countries based on national circumstances. These national contributions are considered during global stocktaking under the Paris Agreement, which aggregates all country contributions. Assessing and recognizing the synergies between these targets (i.e. mapping where NDC targets contribute to each of the SDG targets) will help align action. National and sub-national development targets can be used to bring together NDC and SDG targets, since both sets of commitments link back to the country's development priorities.

○ Important issues and guiding questions:

- What are the targets defined for NDC achievement, in terms of GHG emissions, mitigation co-benefits, and adaptation?
- How can NDC targets be applied/associated with the SDG targets and vice-versa?
- Does the country have a NAP that contributes to the NDC? If so, how do these priority measures contribute to NDC and SDG targets across various goals?
- How do NDC and SDG targets relate to the country's development priorities?

CASE STUDY: ARMENIA

relevant entry points



The MAPS mission to **Armenia** supported the government to develop an SDG Roadmap. Through this process, one of the five key accelerators identified was green economy approaches, with a focus on renewable energy. The country has an almost near-total dependence (over 90%) on imported fossil fuels, therefore the Roadmap recognized the synergies and co-benefits of investing in energy efficiency as a way to meet several different SDGs and targets. The NDC also includes a strong focus on energy efficiency, as well as ecosystem-based approaches to climate change –which also comes through strongly in the SDG Roadmap, as well as the NAP that is being developed. Recognizing these synergies and opportunities to align the NDC and SDG process puts forward a strong foundation on which to implement the two agendas.

Lake Sevan,
Armenia
Photo: Nik Sekhran





6 Timelines and scales of targets

Most NDCs include commitments through 2025 or 2030. The SDG framework extends through 2030, with some targets benchmarked for 2020 (e.g. substantial increase of inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and disaster risk management in cities and human settlements (SDG Target 11.b)). Other national processes, such as national development strategy cycles and national budgeting and priority setting processes, should also be considered. At the same time, NDCs and SDGs refer to actions at local, sub-national, and national scales. Recognizing the disparities and similarities between these timelines and scales, finding pathways for synergy, and potentially reconciling where they may be at odds, helps accelerate alignment.

○ Important issues and guiding questions:

- Has any analysis been conducted of the timeframes of the various targets under the NDCs and SDGs localization at the national, sectoral, and sub-national level?
- Where are the synergies and disparities when it comes to timelines? Can these be reconciled?
- Where are actions targeted – at the sub-national, sectoral or national level? Can this be better aligned across the two agendas? How can the SDG localization process be utilized to help align the scales?



*Demonstration project in IWRM.
Photo: UNDP Mauritius*





7 Financing opportunities

Implementation of both the NDCs and SDGs will require extensive funding, which can be a challenge in developing countries that have limited public budgets and weak engagement with private sector. While a variety of dedicated international climate finance options have emerged to finance NDCs (e.g. Green Climate Fund, Global Environmental Facility, Adaptation Fund, bilateral), these international public funds will not be sufficient to meet all needs. SDGs also require additional finance above and beyond national budgets. Using these public funds to both incentivize and leverage private investment in activities to meet NDC and SDG targets is important – including tax breaks, policy frameworks, and other innovative measures. A good first step is to conduct costing of the proposed NDC and SDG activities and recognize where there may be overlap and synergy (e.g. budgetary review, such as Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review). This can assess relevant existing expenditures (e.g. sectoral budgets) and identify gaps, duplication, and priority areas for action, a helpful step towards better alignment. In the end, financing for both NDCs and SDGs will need to come from a range of sources (i.e., national budgets, private sector, international climate finance, international development finance). These sources must complement one another and work together to achieve both agendas.

○ Important issues and guiding questions:

- Where is funding currently coming from to support NDC activities? To support SDG activities?
- How are the dedicated sources of climate finance (e.g. GCF or GEF) being used? Does this contribute to SDG implementation? How can this complement or be used to incentivize further investment in SDGs?
- How can the private sector be incentivized to support both NDC and SDG implementation? What policies and measures are already in place to facilitate private sector investment? How can they be strengthened?

CASE STUDY: MAURITIUS

relevant entry points  

In **Mauritius**, the promotion of a green economy is a national priority. It was therefore a central component of the planning process for SDG implementation. Under the UN MAPS mission, a green fiscal policy analysis was undertaken and recommendations were provided on transitions to a green economy – including an analysis of environmental fiscal instruments in Mauritius. As a result of this mission, a draft roadmap was developed which recommends innovative financing instruments to help promote a green economy, such as green or blue bonds. It also makes explicit reference to the target related to climate change (SDG 13) and how it was included in Mauritius' INDC.



8 Reporting and review mechanisms

Both NDC and SDG implementation processes require concrete (and often complex) reporting and review processes, with many of the periodic review cycles determined at the global level. For example, for NDCs under the Paris Agreement, several milestones are set between now and 2020, namely the 2018 facilitative NDC dialogue, NDC updates every five years (2nd NDC to be submitted in 2020), an invitation to submit the mid-century, long-term low GHG emission development strategies by 2020, and a first global stocktake in 2023. The 2030 Agenda's Follow-up and review process includes national SDG Reports and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The VNRs take place during the annual High-level Political Forum in New York, including an oral statement by countries, with an opportunity for other Member States and stakeholders to respond. 22 countries volunteered in 2016, 43 in 2017, and 48 are expected in 2018. In addition, UNDG is supporting the preparation of SDG Reports, for country-level review.

While the NDC and SDG reviews may occur at different times, the processes can provide an opportunity for aligning the two agreements, and also reduce duplication of efforts. In many cases, reporting and review systems are already in place or training has already been completed (e.g., UNFCCC GHG inventory reporting, NAMA, CDM, NAP reporting, support to national SDG reports). It is therefore helpful to map where the resources and well-functioning systems already exist, in order to limit redundancy. This may include a mapping of actors involved in national, sub-national, and sectoral reporting and reviewing processes.

□ Important issues and guiding questions:

- How could SDG and NDC milestones –where countries are committed to provide progress updates – be used as opportunities for bringing together the two processes?
- What does the reporting mechanism for each of these global agreements translate to at the country level (process, timeline, data generation, etc.)? How could these feed into and reinforce each other?
- Who is involved in each of the reporting processes for the NDCs and SDGs? Are there any overlapping actors? How can these be better aligned?



9 Processes for revision and updates

While NDCs were submitted under the 2015 Paris Agreement, continuous review and revision of these commitments are required, given the quickly changing landscape – i.e. new technologies, available finance, and new data and information. Formal processes for updating NDCs are taking place every five years to further increase ambition. Progress towards SDGs and localized targets will also be ongoing, with review processes providing an opportunity for identifying bottlenecks and challenges and the associated measures to address them. Therefore, these 5-year NDC updates provide an opportunity to continue to align NDC targets with SDGs and address some of the challenges identified in the SDG reviews, while re-engaging stakeholders from the two processes.

□ Important issues and guiding questions:

- How can the 5-year NDC revision and update cycle be incorporated into the national localization process of SDGs?
- What is the strategy for institutionalizing cyclical NDC revisions and preparing for stocktaking dialogues? How could this incorporate SDG-related processes, actors, or information?

Additional Resources

For more information on the linkages between NDCs and SDGs, and the current services available to support and align these processes, please find below a series of resources.

- UNDG MAPS Guidance Note: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/Post2015-SDG/UNDP-SDG-UNDG-Reference-Guide-UNCTs-2015.pdf> and <https://undg.org/document/mainstreaming-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-reference-guide-for-un-country-teams/>
- WRI Publication on (I)NDCs and SDG alignment (September 2016): https://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/WRI_INDCs_v5.pdf
- WRI blog, updating analysis of NDCs and recent VNRs (July 2017): <http://www.wri.org/blog/2017/07/tackling-climate-change-part-many-countries-sustainable-development-plans>
- NDC Partnership expert series, blog on linking NAPs, NDCs and SDGs: <http://ndcpartnership.org/using-ndcs-naps-and-sdgs-advance-climate-resilient-development>
- UNDP NDC Support Programme: <http://www.undp.org/ndc-support-programme>
- National Adaptation Plans Global Support Programme (UNDP-UNEP): <http://globalsupportprogramme.org/nap-gsp>



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