

Making Reviews Relevant

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Plan A

- Once upon a time . . .
- . . . there was talk of

A fair, ambitious, top-down, and legally binding architecture,

in which a science-based global carbon budget,

is allocated among the world's nations by way of some negotiated, quasi-scientific, equity-based process.

- Plan A, of course, was never really on the table.

Plan B -- “Pledge and Review”

- In the early 1990s, when the term “pledge and review” came into common use, it was said that it would achieve the same goals as Plan A.
- National pledges would be subject to substantive assessment. If a pledge was found to be inconsistent with the global goal, the expectation was that the submitting Party would “revise and re-pledge”.
- The details were of course never agreed. But the logic was broadly understood, and broadly accepted.
- Also, and critically, the “review” aspect of “pledge and review” was widely understood to apply to individual pledges as well as collective ambition.
- In Lima, and then in Paris, it became clear that Plan B was also beyond reach. The Parties simply do not want their pledges to be closely examined or compared.
- Thus, Plan B also bit the dust.

**So what did we get in the
Paris Breakthrough?**

The ambition ratchet – the bits we have

- **The NDC process itself** -- the bottom-up architecture itself, and the nationally determined planning processes that the NDCs imply.
- **Conditional NDCs** – which allow even poor countries to develop and table ambitious low-carbon development plans (Article 4.19) that they cannot and should not be expected to execute on their own.
- **The dynamic review cycle** -- the formalized periodic process itself, which anchors and integrates a variety of iterative processes.
- **The progression clause** -- by which the Parties have agreed to avoid backsliding.
- **The transparency agreement** – which allows everyone to see what everyone else is doing. (Article 13 and related decisions.)
- **The global stocktake** - and of course the preliminary stocktakes, the 2016 and 2018 “facilitative dialogs” that will begin the stocktake process.

The ambition ratchet – the missing bits

A robust ambition mechanism requires two more elements, both of which depend on progress on differentiation.

- **A public finance breakthrough / roadmap.** Uncertainty about the scale, delivery and scope of public climate finance is and has been the biggest impediment to progress.
- **A robust review process:**
 - science-based (carbon budgets rule!)
 - normative, ex-ante assessment of pledges (not just ex-post reviews of implementation)
 - at the national (not just the aggregate) level,
 - domestic action & support for cooperative international action,
 - not just mitigation – adaptation and Loss & Damage too.

INDCs are not compatible with 1.5°C or 2°C



As the Parties “Note with concern” in the decision text (para 17)

“Notes with concern that the estimated aggregate greenhouse gas emission levels in 2025 and 2030 resulting from the intended nationally determined contributions do not fall within least-cost 2°C scenarios but rather lead to a projected level of 55 gigatonnes in 2030, and also notes that much greater emission reduction efforts will be required than those associated with the intended nationally determined contributions in order to hold the increase in the global average temperature to below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels by reducing emissions to 40 gigatonnes or to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels by reducing to a level to be identified in the special report referred to in paragraph 21 below.”

Plan C

Why does a robust ambition ratchet require equity assessment?

- As we all know, this is a global commons problem.
- And because we have no top-down, legally binding regime, it can only be solved in a high cooperation world.
- And a high cooperation **climate** world can only be one in which each Party sees the others to be doing their best to make a fair contribution.
- Which is why the equity assessments of individual national contributions are necessary.

We need an Inside / Outside Strategy for Equity Assessment

- On the *formal side*, the relatively expansive TORs of the 2023 Global Stocktake should be applied to the 2018 Stocktake (“Facilitative Dialogue”, Para 20). Further, a focusing moment for pre-2020 revision and resubmission (ambition ratcheting) must be created.
- On the *informal side*, global civil society – broadly conceived to include all sorts of campaign networks and independent researchers – has no choice but to explore and debate the larger challenge of science-based equity assessment.

The 2023 Global Stocktake

- The scope is limited to “the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this Agreement and its long-term goals.”
- This is not what’s needed for a robust ambition mechanism. Still, it represents the most that the Parties have been able to agree.
- And, critically, it will consider “mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation and support,” and will be conducted “in the light of equity and the best available science.”
- This broad scope is a major win, and could even be a decisive one, ***if the stocktake were scheduled to take place before 2020 rather than after it.***

The 2018 Dress Rehearsal

- The 2018 stocktake was intended by many as the start of the five-year review and ratchet (resubmission) cycle. This should be clarified as quickly and definitively as possible.
- This stocktake is *not* mitigation only. The links to MOI are clear in Para 20, which refers to “the collective efforts” in relation to “progress towards the long-term goal.” This clearly has to include MOI for mitigation. *This is the only reasonable interpretation.*
- Para 20 contains no explicit mention of resubmission. But it declares that the purpose is to “inform the preparation of the nationally determined contributions.” This clearly implies revision and resubmission in conjunction with the 2018 stocktake.
- Beyond the existing text, the Parties should do everything possible to anticipate the comprehensive terms of reference of the Global Stocktake, which are much better and clearer than the 2018 stocktake decision text.
- Finally, note that if we get early entry into force, we’ll have an excellent chance to do just this, in effect having a full review of the collective position in 2018 rather than 2023.

The Challenge for Civil Society

- Civil society groups must fill the gaps in the formal process. To develop independent initiatives to pioneer the comprehensive science-based equity assessment that is actually needed.
- To be sure, civil society groups also disagree on key points. But civil society is not subject to the same constraints as the Parties. It is for example free to define action properly, as including both direct domestic action and the provision of MOI.
- Also, civil society is free to go beyond aggregate reviews to assess individual INDCs, and to do so in a equity-aware manner that respects the legitimate concerns of developing countries.
- For example, some developing countries fear that individual reviews would show that their pledges fall short of their mitigation potential. But this is only true if those reviews do not take full account of the dilemmas created by the absence of sufficient support.
- Civil society is free to face this situation in a solutions-oriented manner that seems to elude the Parties.

Thank you

- Download the Climate Equity Reference Project discussion paper “Making Reviews Relevant”:
http://is.gd/cerp_mrr
- Download this slide deck:
http://is.gd/bonn_mrr