

Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Maximizing Co-Benefits by Linking Implementation across SDGs and Climate Action

Venue: UN City, Copenhagen/ Time: 1-3 April 2019

Concept Note (Draft)

Context

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in 2015 has established a firm foundation for the coherent implementation of climate action and sustainable development objectives at all levels. Ensuring full alignment and coordinated efforts to achieve both the SDGs and the Paris Agreement is critical to maximize co-benefits.

With the approval of the Paris Agreement rule book at COP24, there is now an urgent opportunity to focus on closing the ‘ambition gap’ towards reaching the global objective of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, including through new/updated nationally determined contributions (NDCs) by 2020, and by scaling up climate action towards both adaptation and mitigation. Simultaneously, the global review process for the SDGs completes its first quadrennial cycle in 2019, with SDG 13 (‘Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’) itself set for in-depth review at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July. Focusing on concrete measures for synergistic implementation would help inform and align both climate and SDG processes at all levels, thus stimulating corresponding action from multiple stakeholders. Such synergies can also be realized from a joined-up consideration of other global frameworks and agreements such as the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction¹, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights².

¹ Climate change is already impacting the nature of weather-related hazards, leading to loss and damages that can potentially erase development gains in various sectors. Building resilience of people, economies, and natural resources to the impacts of climate change is the common ground between SDGs, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts.

² According to the UN Human Rights Council, climate change directly and indirectly threatens the effective enjoyment of a broad range of human rights including those related to life, health, food, housing, water and development.

Potential synergies between climate action and the SDGs abound. For example, the energy transitions envisaged in SDG 7 can be expected to contribute significantly to lowering GHG emissions relative to business-as-usual pathways, thereby contributing to the objectives of the Paris agreement. Similarly, more sustainable industrialization under SDG 9, sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices under SDG 2, and changing patterns of consumption and production in line with SDG 12 can all contribute towards low-emission pathways, the creation of new kinds of jobs and long-term progress towards eradicating poverty and other deprivations.

At the same time, progress made towards limiting global temperature increase would significantly ease the path towards many other SDGs, such as those related to poverty, hunger, access to water, terrestrial and ocean ecosystems, health, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, among others. Many of the goals and targets can also be achieved in ways that would enable adaptive responses to climate changes, for example those related to resilience and disaster risk reduction in SDGs 1, 9 and 11, respectively relating to poverty eradication, infrastructure and urban settlements. All of these considerations are particularly relevant for Small Island Developing Countries and others in special circumstances.

The relative strength of these interlinkages between climate impacts and the SDGs varies across countries and regions, as do the actions needed to ensure that co-benefits are maximized at all levels. A better understanding (including their quantification, wherever possible) of these co-benefits in local, national, regional and global contexts can spur more deliberate action and collaboration towards realizing them. Such actions and collaborations could result in, for example, improving the design and implementation of policies, directing finance and resources towards critical nexuses, supporting specific private sector activities, and promoting well identified science, technology and innovation (STI) initiatives.

Such actions are urgently needed. The IPCC's 2018 Special Report on the impacts of global warming at 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels identifies the critical consequences of such a temperature rise, including widespread impacts on human well-being and the degradation of critical ecosystems. The report emphasizes that urgent action is needed within the next twelve years to stay within this limit³. Limiting global warming to the

³ The report also outlines synergies, co-benefits and trade-offs in taking action, including linkages with implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

greatest extent possible is in itself a human right imperative critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Hence, the next round of new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to be communicated by 2020, will be crucial to reflect the increased level of ambition towards this end. The period to 2030 is also the window within which the SDGs are to be achieved: hence maximizing synergies between NDCs and National Development Plans/SDG Action Plans, as well as other instruments such as National Adaptation Plans and National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies, will be critical in this regard.

Strengthening win-win outcomes for climate action and the SDGs

At the national level, the scope of such convergence has been examined through a number of studies that look at linkages across 'NDCs - countries' own commitments of action towards the Paris Climate Agreement - to the SDGs. For example, Brandi *et al* (DIE, 2017) and Dzebo *et al* (SEI, 2017) have noted the potential for climate related actions from the NDCs to contribute to all of the SDGs. They also observed that the most frequent links were to the SDGs related to food, water, energy, cities and life on land; but that links to others such as health, education, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls were relatively less common. Strong links to SDG 17, especially through those NDCs whose implementation is conditional to receiving financial support, were also apparent.

The UNFCCC Adaptation Committee has looked at the interlinkages in taking adaptation action across the 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and found examples of actions already taken by countries and regions, success stories, and lessons learned.

The full potential of identified synergies such as these could, however, be difficult to realize unless deliberate action for joined-up implementation is taken. For example, Northrop *et al* (WRI 2016) studied 162 'Intended National Determined Contributions' (INDCs) and found that the potential plans, policies, targets or other measures contained in them were aligned to 154 of the 169 SDG targets to varying degrees. However, they also found that most countries did not refer to their national planning priorities and objectives in communicating their INDCs, leading to an apprehension that many of the potential mutual benefits could remain un-realized during the implementation process.

Some of the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) in 2016 and 2017 noted the links between climate action and the SDGs. Arguably this represents a higher level of political awareness of the linkages between the SDGs and climate action; however, details were not presented on how to benefit from these links during implementation.

Other opportunities may also arise through a consideration of National Adaptation Plans and National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies, including instruments such as the Sendai Framework Monitor.

There is hence a strong case to be made for examining how best to leverage advocacy, policies, programmes, implementation mechanisms, multi-stakeholder action, resources and partnerships for both the SDGs and for climate action, so that co-benefits are maximized and trade-offs minimized at all levels. Further advancing the coherence between the NDCs and the 2030 Agenda can help to place climate action firmly into a long-term development pathway that aligns national development priorities with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. This can help governments to prepare more ambitious NDCs when communicating or updating NDCs by 2020; and simultaneously accelerated progress towards many SDGs. The Conference aims to make a contribution in this regard.

Rationale for a Global Conference

The multiple inter-linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement indicate that integrated and synergistic implementation of both would lead to many benefits. Such an approach would considerably enhance effectiveness and the quality of outcomes, besides contributing towards more efficient use of resources, greater coherence across sectors and actors, and the formation of novel partnerships.

The details of such an approach would vary, depending on the context. In some contexts, there may be limited awareness of how the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are linked - in such cases, there may be a need for sharing examples of interlinked and synergistic approaches, greater advocacy and research. In others, where such awareness is well established, there may instead be a greater need for practical guidance to support implementation in ways that would make the most of these linkages.

Apart from national and local levels, possibilities at global and regional levels could also be highlighted. In particular, several of the 'means of implementation' identified in SDG

17 – such as finance; technology; capacity-building; policy/institutional coherence; multi-stakeholder partnerships; and data, monitoring and accountability – can provide, if properly directed, cross-cutting support across both climate action and other SDGs. The Paris Agreement also makes explicit reference to the importance of means of implementation to achieve the temperature goals, including through dedicated articles on Climate Finance, Technology, Capacity Building and Transparency.

A diversity of implementation experiences and research from different parts of the world is fueling a greater understanding of these issues, as well as bringing to the fore good practices, gaps, challenges and opportunities towards the joined-up implementation of both agendas (see, for example, <https://www.wri.org/publication/connectingthedots-ndc-sdg>).

It is in this context that DESA and UNFCCC secretariat, in collaboration with other partners, is organizing a Global Conference to strengthen synergies between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. To this end, the Conference, scheduled for 1-3 April in 2019 in Copenhagen, will bring together practitioners, experts and policy makers from both developing and developed countries, as well as international resource persons from academia and think tanks, the private sector, NGOs and representatives of relevant UN organizations.

Objectives of the Global Conference

The focus of the Global Conference will be on promoting joined-up implementation at the global, regional and country levels, with a view to also informing the review of SDG 13 at the HLPF in July 2019.

Participants will identify specific examples to illustrate the potential of synergistic and interlinked approaches towards realizing the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement (including through analyses of National Development Plans, NDCs, NAPs, National Risk Reduction Strategies among others). They will also, analyze gaps and challenges (including trade-offs), and make a set of concrete recommendations for strengthening synergies, increasing ambition, advancing implementation action, maximizing co-benefits and stimulating multi-stakeholder partnerships. These will include directing means of implementation towards more joined-up action; as well as scaling up and enhancing the mobilization of resources that could benefit sustainable development at large

including climate action, as well as ensuring effective use of resources and avoiding duplication.

These are expected to help advance synergies in implementation towards the SDGs and climate action, to be considered as part of the review of SDG13 in the HLPF 2019. In addition, the conference expects to contribute towards approaches that will help enhance ambition in climate action to commit towards more ambitious new or updated NDCs by 2020.

The Conference will also provide a unique opportunity for peer-to-peer exchange of information and experiences. It is anticipated that implementing partners will be motivated to translate these into concrete results on the ground, and follow-up events could also be held to continue peer-to-peer learning and exchanges.

Participants

A total of about 200-300 participants is expected. These could be from countries that have established robust SDG implementation mechanisms, conducted VNRs, have substantially advanced implementation towards their NDCs and/or NAPs or deployed win-win solutions for climate action and the SDGs at scale through multi-stakeholder partnerships. DESA, in consultation with its partners, will identify knowledgeable and experienced practitioners, policy makers, experts and resource persons from academia, the private sector and civil society. Depending on resources, a number of participants from developing countries will receive support towards their participation. Representatives of developed countries and those of international organizations will be responsible for their own participation.

Expected Outcomes

The outcomes of the conference will consist of:

- (i) a publication containing selected expert papers on key topics discussed at the Conference including country-level case studies (drafts will be presented as background);
- (ii) a policy-relevant summary reflecting the highlights of discussions; and
- (iii) a set of concrete recommendations for strengthening the linkages between climate action and the SDGs and focusing efforts on synergistic implementation on the basis of these linkages to maximize co-benefits.

It is expected that these outcomes will help inform on-going and future discussions on relevant issues at the HLPF, UNFCCC conference of parties and other relevant platforms.

- 11:30 – 12:30** Ministerial Roundtable (II)
- 12:30 – 13:45** LUNCH
- 13:45 – 15:15** Sharing country experiences (parallel sessions)
- 15:15 – 15:30** BREAK
- 15:30 – 17:00** Focus sessions – I (parallel sessions)
A: Awareness-raising, youth, gender and education
B: Connecting the local and the global
C: Science, technology and innovation (STI)
- 17:30 – 19:00** RECEPTION (all participants)
-

3 APRIL

- 9:00 – 10:30** Focus sessions – II (parallel sessions)
D: Partnerships and stakeholder action
E: Supporting vulnerable countries and populations
F: Strengthening reporting and tracking progress
- 10:30 – 11:00** BREAK
- 11:00 – 12:00** Stock-taking Roundtable: Focus sessions report back to plenary
- 12:00 – 12:45** Toward HLPF, SDG Summit, Climate Summit and COP25
- 12:45 – 13:00** Closing
- 13:00 – 14:00** LUNCH

[14:00 onward –Optional after-conference meetings by partners, if desired]