

WHY ARE NDCs SO IMPORTANT?



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Editor: Francesca Predazzi

Why are NDCs so important?

Jane Wilkinson

"NDCs pledge action based on a country's own assessment of circumstances and priorities."



There are many reasons why Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) are important. But we begin with some history.

Prior to the Paris Agreement (2015), only 38 developed countries were required to reduce emissions based on multilaterally agreed targets. These targets legally bound countries to do 'whatever it took' to meet their obligation over a predefined commitment period. The approach fundamentally failed because, when push came to shove, it became clear that countries could and, in fact, did walk away from their mitigation commitments with only a loss of face.

Seven reasons why NDCs are so important:

First, NDCs pivot away from imposed 'top-down' targets toward self-determined, bottom-up pledges to act based on a country's own assessment of circumstances and priorities.

Second, NDCs facilitate appropriate climate action by all countries. Indeed, this universal application is the defining characteristic of the Paris Agreement.

Third, because information underpinning the self-assessment is presented within NDCs, they offer a transparent snapshot of national circumstances at a point in time. They include information about physical and geographical attributes, economic circumstances, contribution to (and ability to sequester) global greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), and vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Fourth, they encourage countries to consider their mitigation potential then indicate what they will do, how, by when and with what assistance (if necessary). This makes them blueprints for climate action. They also offer flexibility as countries may choose which policies, programmes and financial tools they will use to achieve their goals.

"They encourage countries to consider their mitigation potential, which makes them blueprints for climate action."

"It is of concern that 39.5 % of updated NDCs only aim to increase their mitigation ambition by a meagre 2.7 %."

Fifth, while not a compulsory element, most countries have used NDCs to highlight how they will adapt to climate change impacts, specify adaptation priorities and indicate support needs. This element invites all countries – not just those with urgent mitigation challenges – to participate in global action.

Sixth, the projected impacts of NDCs can be aggregated to show where the world stands in relation to climate goals and enhancing scientific understanding about the progression of global warming and its impacts on the global climate system.

Seventh, NDCs are works in progress. They must be updated every five years to accommodate improved scientific data, changing circumstances and growing political support for stronger, more ambitious climate action.

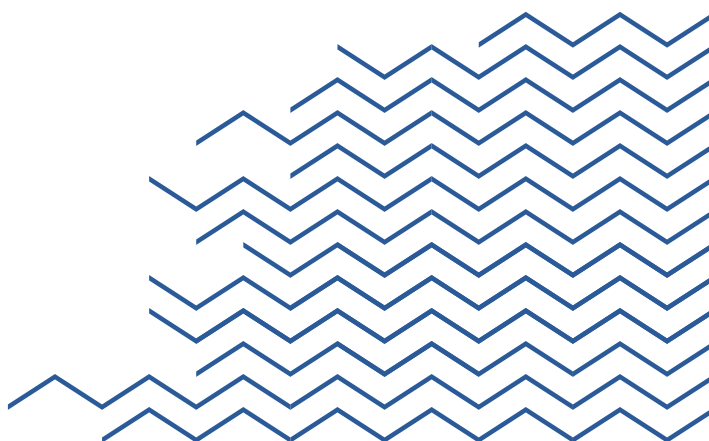
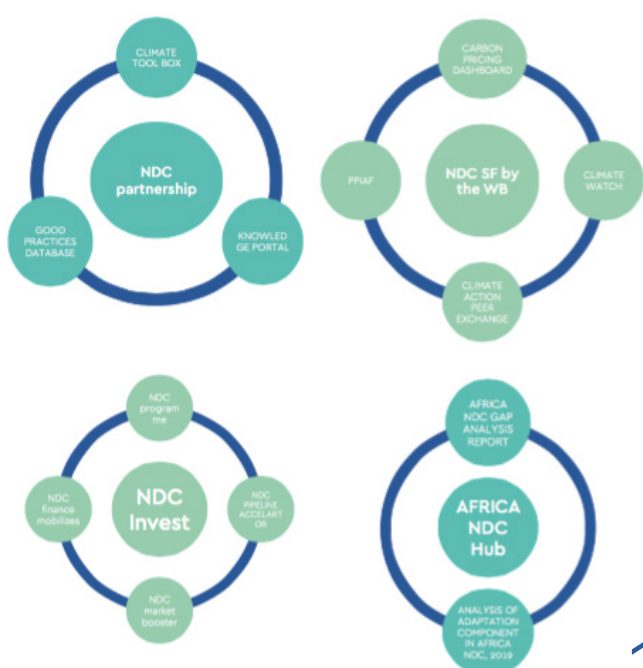
Under the first NDCs submitted in 2015, countries set the world on a pathway to a 3.4 °C temperature increase, well above the 2 °C goal agreed in Paris. Cumulative evidence highlights the increasing frequency and growing severity of climate change impacts around the world. Furthermore, in 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear that even at 1.5 °C of global warming – the aspirational goal supported by the EU and most

EU EU GCCA+ partners – many of the world's ecosystems would be irreversibly damaged, putting people and physical assets at an ever-increasing risk.

With EU GCCA+ partners among the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts, the importance of finalising NDC updates in 2021 – with sufficient ambition to significantly narrow the emissions gap – cannot be overstated. In February 2021, the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) released a synthesis of the 48 NDCs updating the pledges of 75 countries (for example, the EU comprises 1 NDC for 27 countries) representing 39.5 % of the Parties. Although the process of updating is not complete, it is of concern that they only intend to increase their mitigation ambition by a meagre 2.7 %.

This issue of our magazine explores some of the ways EU GCCA+ partners are harnessing the power of NDCs to integrate climate change into national development planning, and to pool international resources to support national priorities with EU GCCA+ support. We also explore some of the challenges countries face in meeting their support needs, and how barriers are being overcome to translate national goals into actions at the local level.

NDC tools by the 4 leading architects



Climate forward

Rwanda's long-term vision for green growth



"Rwanda's approach to development embedded in its NDC values healthy and productive land and natural ecosystems."

"Rwanda wants to move forward quickly through a good mix of climate funds, new market-based mechanisms, and support from international donors."

In many developing countries, climate change and sustainability are seen as unnecessary or unaffordable 'add-ons' in the immediate pursuit of poverty alleviation, better living standards and economic growth. Thus, constrained public finances and a limited understanding of the opportunities green and climate-resilient growth can offer mean that some administrations may continue to pursue development based upon the artificially cheap and polluting fossil-fuel energy sources and the overuse of land and other natural resources.

Rwanda's approach to development, as embedded in its NDC, is based upon a long-term vision that values healthy and productive land and natural ecosystems. Since 2011, its comprehensive *Green Growth and Climate Resilient Strategy* has helped to organise and identify linkages between adaptation and mitigation across sectors. Building on existing policies and lessons learned, Rwanda's initial NDC is a good example of how governments can integrate climate change and sustainability into the national development agenda to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods, protect natural resources and ecosystems, and grow the economy. The recent [cross-visit from Benin to Rwanda to share the local approach to climate change](#), organised by EU GCCA+, shows the Rwandan approach attracts interest.

The NDC notes that Rwanda is densely populated, highly vulnerable to climate change, and strongly reliant on rain-fed agriculture both for rural livelihoods and for exports of mainly tea and coffee.

Unsurprisingly, building resilience across the land-use and water-management sectors is being prioritised. Both are also seen as integral to achieving energy security and a low-carbon energy supply that supports the development of green industry and a sustainable tourism sector.

Rwanda used extensive data analysis to inform estimates of its mitigation potential and to quantify conditional and unconditional mitigation contributions in its first NDC. In 2020, it was among the first countries to submit an updated NDC that builds on these targets by detailing implementing entities, time frames, the required funding, interlinkages and synergies between the different sectors and components. In the transport sector, for example, Rwanda aims to mitigate by reducing emissions through tax incentives, scrapping old vehicles while, at the same time, working with the bus system and promoting the electric vehicle programme alongside a climate-resilient approach to road infrastructure.

Harnessing the power of mainstreaming climate change means Rwanda's NDC reads like a green development plan. Furthermore, the government has prioritised developing a better capacity to measure, report and verify its efforts to help to bridge the current gaps in action and finance. Rwanda wants to move forward quickly, exploring how to meet its conditional targets through a good mix and use of climate funds, new market-based mechanisms, and support from international donors.



Monica Bonfanti

Case study

An international partnership for Namibia's first ambitious NDC



Country:
Vulnerability (CRI Index):
EU GCCA+ Project:

Namibia
85th most vulnerable country
Support on coordination and implementation of the NDCs for Namibia



"Namibia's first ambitious NDC pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 89 % by 2030."

"Namibia's NDC is highly conditional on international support to cover 90 % of the anticipated costs."

Namibia is the most arid country in sub-Saharan Africa with highly variable climatic conditions, high temperature variability and water scarcity. In 2019, Namibia's worst drought in 90 years killed thousands of livestock and left one in three, or around 800 000 Namibians, short of food. It is one of the world's most sparsely populated countries and although classified as an upper-middle-income country, it suffers from significant inequality. In 2019, 29 % of the population were classified as 'severely poor'. Namibia has experienced severe impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, with the number of people living on USD 5.50 per day or less growing by 200 000 to 1.6 million. Only 53 % of the population currently have access to electricity.

Namibia's ambitious first NDC pledges to reduce GHG emissions by 89 % below business as usual by 2030. Most GHG savings in Namibia's NDC are projected to come from improvements in the agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors as well as by increasing the share of renewables in the national energy mix from 33 % to 70 %. Namibia's NDC is highly conditional on international support to cover 90 % of the anticipated costs (around USD 50 billion in 2015 dollars).

In 2018, the International NDC Partnership worked with the Namibian government to leverage the NDC as a focal point of consultation and collaboration.

In November of that year, a variety of national actors joined forces to identify and 'validate' a set of prioritised actions to be implemented in partnership with international partners offering technical and financial support to take forward specific elements.

Using this partnership plan, in 2019, EU GCCA+ set out to identify potential mechanisms and approaches that could help unlock action across the board by addressing systemic blockages – inadequate coordination and insufficient access to finance.

A EUR 4-million EU GCCA+ programme was approved to: (1) support a mechanism to underpin coordination for integrating climate change across development planning; (2) build technical capacity to formulate and scale finance, including through better use of national budgets and fiscal policies; and (3) pilot a funding mechanism to enable communities living in vulnerable situations to access finance and off-grid solar technologies in peri-urban and rural communities which, in turn, could secure access to water in rural areas.

Cross-cutting solutions help to unlock multiple benefits that effectively tackle climate change while delivering value for money and improving livelihoods. The EU is committed to building on lessons already learned to unleash the potential of NDCs as blueprints for sustainable development.

Jane Wilkinson

Case study

Nigeria: waste programmes and the international carbon markets



Country:
Vulnerability (CRI Index):
Eu GCCA+ Project:

Nigeria
18th most vulnerable country
Nigeria Climate Change Response Programme (NCCRP)



"With the support of the EU GCCA+, the Nigerian government established the Nigeria Climate Change Response Programme (NCCRP)."

"Nigeria wants to facilitate access to carbon finance by generating internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMO)."

Nigeria is Africa's largest country by population and GDP, the second heaviest emitter in Africa behind South Africa and is among the top 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change risks. In its NDC, Nigeria has pledged unconditionally to reduce emissions by 20 % by 2030, or by 45 % with support.

Exploring the relationship between Nigeria's NDC goals and the nature of the work supported by the EU GCCA+ provides a good example of how NDCs set overarching goals and act as 'guardrails' for subsequent activities to achieve them. In 2020, and with the support of the EU GCCA+, the Nigerian government established the Nigeria Climate Change Response Programme (NCCRP). The aim of the NCCRP is to identify actions that would reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency, reduce energy costs, and facilitate the transition to renewable energy.

As described in issue #3 of this magazine, 'The mitigation effect', waste management is a growing problem for Nigeria and opening new sources of investment into improving waste management is a priority. With this in mind, the NCCRP is mandated to: (1) support robust institutional and sectoral monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions from the energy and waste sectors; (2) establish a baseline for waste emissions; (3) support the reduction of these by identifying best waste-management practices; and (4)

improve the understanding among a wide range of stakeholders of the opportunities available to take effective climate action.

In 2020, the government requested EU GCCA+ support to expand the NCCRP's terms of reference to accommodate new approaches enabled under the Paris Agreement that could help Nigeria meet its conditional 45 % NDC target. Specifically, Nigeria wants to use international cooperative market-based approaches – or carbon markets – to facilitate access to carbon finance by generating internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs) through waste programmes that can be sold on international carbon markets.

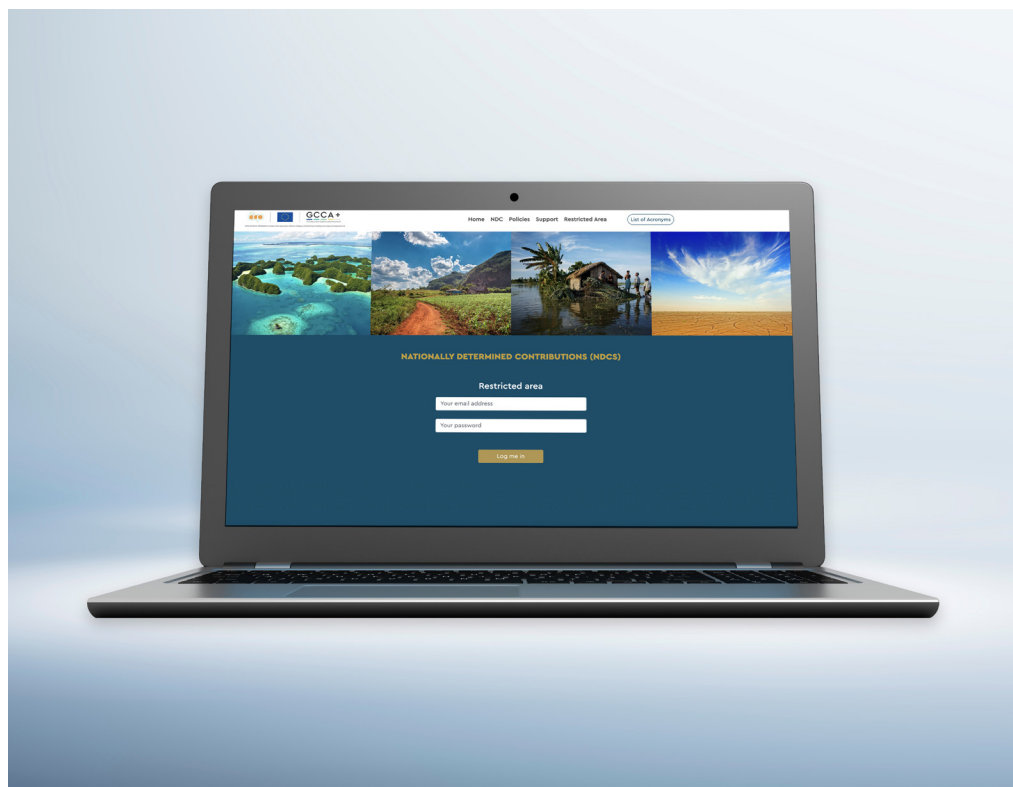
To be counted against the reduction of NDC emissions, ITMOs must be robust and credible units of carbon. Their generation will rely heavily on the accurate and transparent to measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV) processes being supported by the NCCRP. At the same time, through some of the NCCRP capacity-building programmes tailored for public and private stakeholders, they aim to enlarge the spectrum of new business opportunities in waste management to help reach the Paris Agreement targets. Finally, as capacity is built up, the data collected through MRV processes and the lessons learned might also be used to inform scale-up action in the waste sector or support the development of other activities in other sectors.

Monica Bonfanti

Intra-ACP in focus

The ACP NDC tool: an automated process for submission

"The tool provides a simplified, automated process for mandatory NDCs submission to the UNFCCC where data is owned by the respective country."



The ACP NDC online tool was developed as part of the response to a request by member states of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) to assess capacity gaps and needs in terms of developing NDCs, as well as to support OACPS member countries in preparing their new or updated NDCs.

This tool provides countries with a simplified, automated process for submitting mandatory NDCs to the UNFCCC in line with a set of guidelines that are intended to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding. Accordingly, it ensures that all information required by the UNFCCC is clearly spelt out in the form of an exhaustive checklist so that these issues are appropriately

addressed by member states. The tool also provides two additional optional sections – Adaptation communication and Capacity building needs and technical and financial support – to enable OACPS members to submit a more comprehensive NDC.

One of the main advantages of the tool (available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) is that it offers fully secure access: data entered on the platform is owned by the respective country and visible to it alone, unless it is intentionally shared with other tool users. Access to other users can be granted by the tool's country administrator at his/her discretion. In this way, within the same online space, stakeholders from multiple sectors can provide both remotely and in real time

all the necessary technical elements to review contributions in line with national policies and strategies.

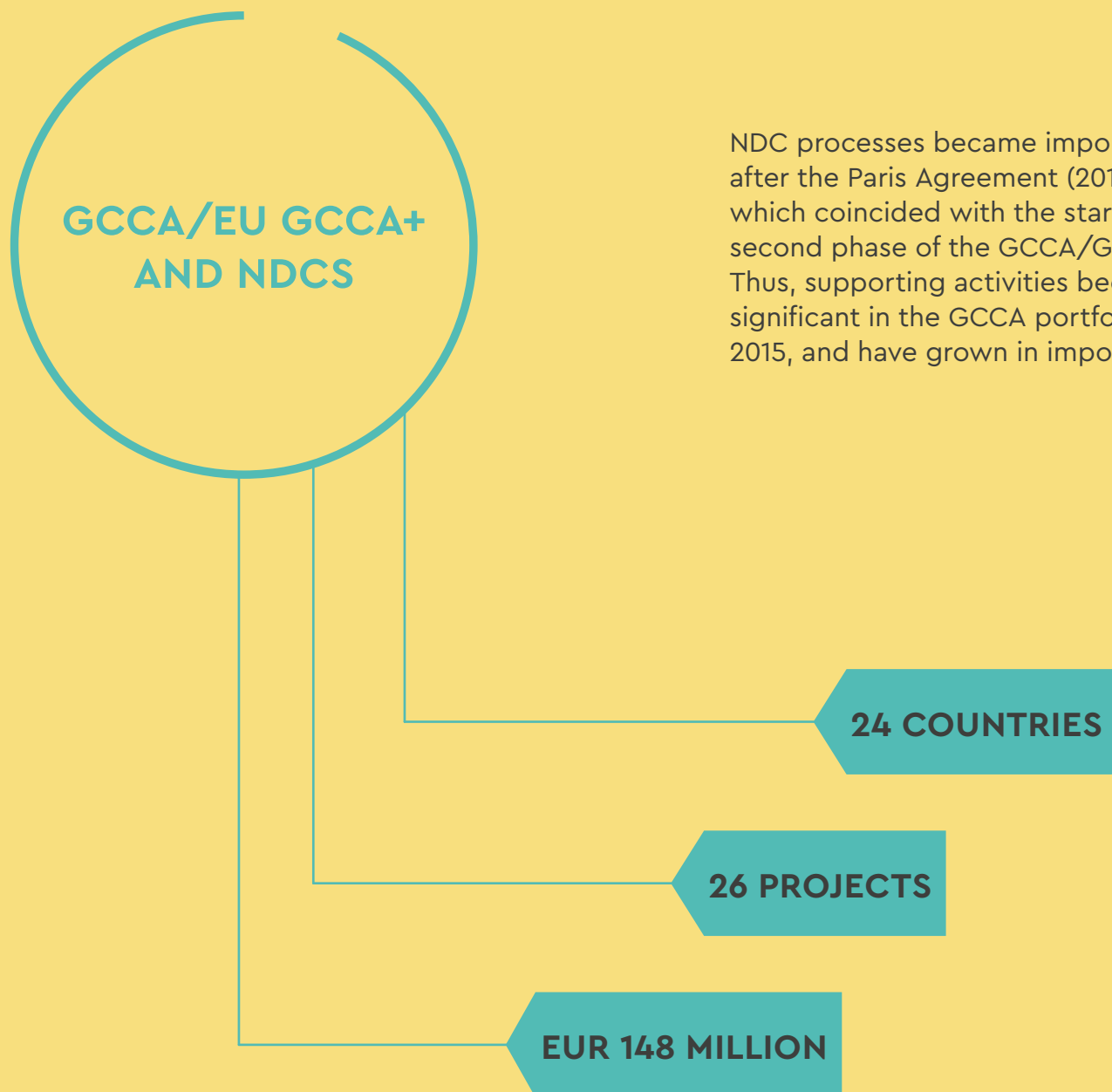
A dedicated section on NDC reporting and tracking is currently under preparation and expected to be finalised after further guidelines from COP26.

[GCCA+ Intra-ACP online tool](#)

Jean-Rémy Dave

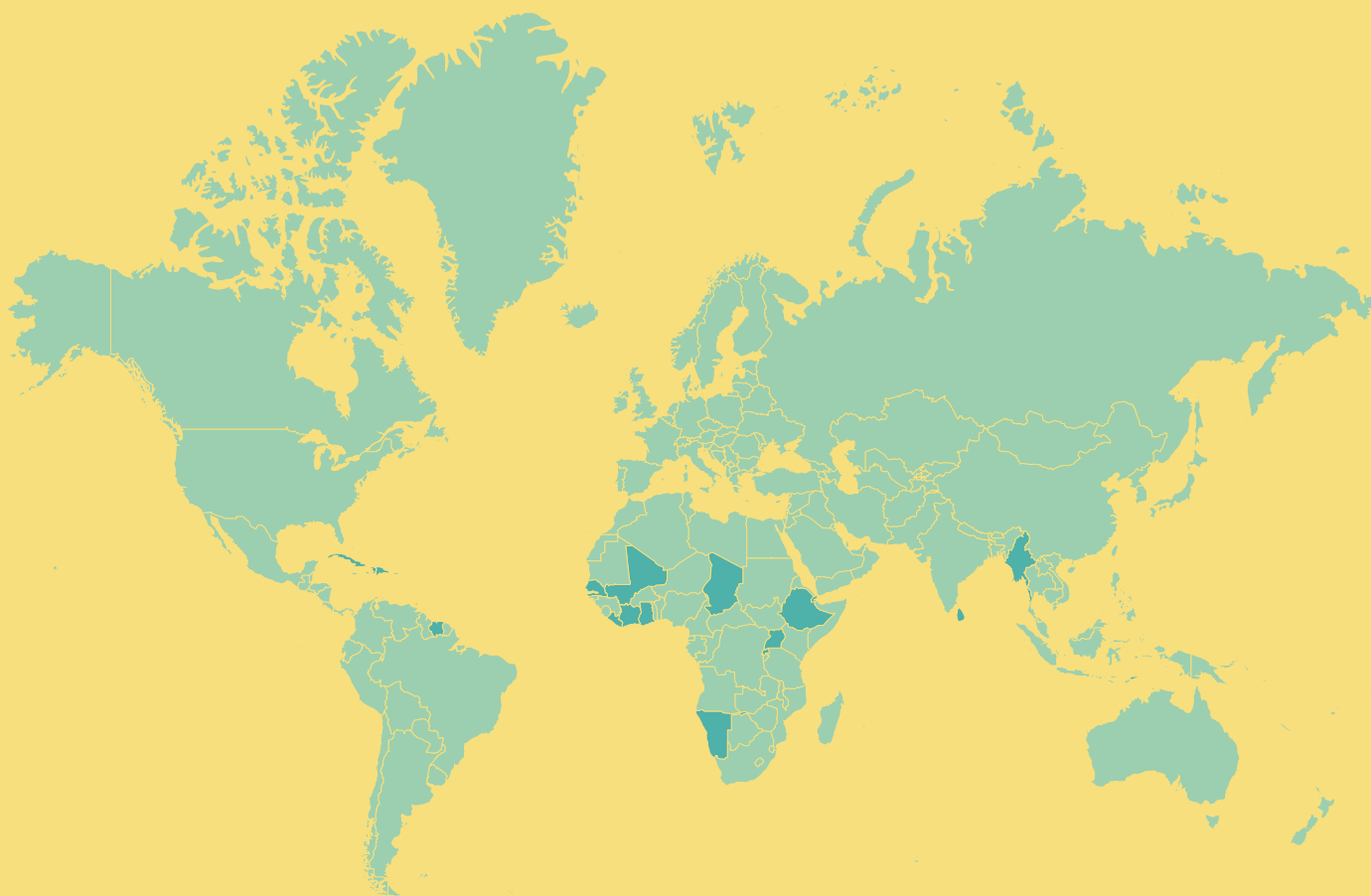
*Intra-ACP GCCA+ Support Facility
Communication & Knowledge Management
expert*

THE EU GCCA+ BAROMETER













NDC processes became important after the Paris Agreement (2015), which coincided with the start of the second phase of the GCCA/GCCA+. Thus, supporting activities became significant in the GCCA portfolio after 2015, and have grown in importance.

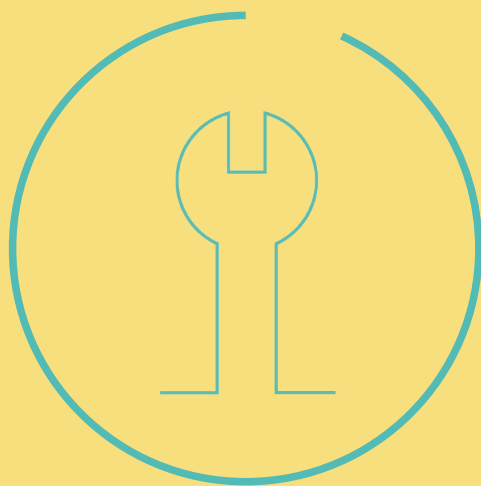
EU GCCA/GCCA+ AND NDCs - COUNTRIES OF INTERVENTION



CAPE VERDE, CHAD, CUBA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, DJIBOUTI, ETHIOPIA, GHANA, HAITI, LIBERIA, MALDIVES, MALI, MAURITIUS, MYANMAR, NAMIBIA, NIGERIA, RWANDA, SENEGAL, SRI LANKA, SURINAME, THE GAMBIA, TIMOR-LESTE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, UGANDA

EU GCCA+ ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING NDC PROCESSES

Projects	Action	Countries
Support to the development of NDCs		
 5	SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NDCS, NDC UPDATES AND NDC IMPLEMENTATION PLANS	CHAD, MYANMAR, NAMIBIA, SRI LANKA, UGANDA
Support to the implementation of NDCs		
 14	GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT (COORDINATION, OVERALL MRV SYSTEMS, ETC.)	CHAD, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, ETHIOPIA, GHANA, HAITI, LIBERIA, MALDIVES, NAMIBIA, NIGERIA, RWANDA, SRI LANKA, TIMOR-LESTE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, UGANDA
 7	ENERGY SECTOR	CHAD, GHANA, HAITI, MALDIVES, NAMIBIA, RWANDA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
 5	AGRICULTURE SECTOR	CHAD, CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, MAURITIUS, UGANDA
 6	FOREST SECTOR	CAPE VERDE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, MALI, RWANDA, SURINAME, TIMOR-LESTE
 4	COSTAL-ZONE MANAGEMENT	CUBA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, SENEGAL, THE GAMBIA
 2	WATER SECTOR	DJIBOUTI, SURINAME
 1	TRANSPORT SECTOR	CUBA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
 1	INDUSTRY SECTOR	SRI LANKA
 1	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	NIGERIA



The Best of Practice

NDC mapping by the EU GCCA+ Support Facility

Countries' strategies and levels of commitment towards climate change action has needed time to mature, given the drastic global cultural and behavioural changes required to respond to the unprecedented gravity of the environmental and meteorological phenomena.

The basis of current actions and ambition was laid down in Paris with the submission by 192 countries of the 'intended' NDCs. A constellation of support from bilateral and multilateral sources was provided to developing states, prioritising least-

developed countries and small island developing states, to help them present their 'voice' as regards the needs and challenges concerning the implementation of NDCs.

From 2015 until 2020, significant re-tailoring took place around NDC pledges. During this 'snip and fix', four main architects emerged as the central players: the NDC Partnership, NDC Support Facility by the World Bank, NDC Invest, and the Africa NDC Hub. Each player is working to enhance the buy-in towards NDC implementation and reduce the burden on states by facilitating

access to the tools and instruments they have designed and refined through use and reuse. The initiatives' actions do not overlap and have developed successful synergies, driven by the principles that led to the ratification of the Paris Agreement.

The NDC mapping table prepared by the EU GCCA+ Support Facility is available online and gives a thorough overview of this situation.

[NDC Mapping Table](#)

[Download the NDC Mapping Table](#)

LEADING SUPPORT FACILITIES FOR NDCs				
NDC PARTNERSHIP ¹	RATIONALE	NEWS	PROGRAMME: wrap-up of the main activities developed	TOOLS
	<p>1. The NDC Partnership is starting to produce promising country-led models that offer a pathway to low-carbon and climate-resilient societies.</p> <p>2. Partnership Plans are proving a key driver in the NDC process, encouraging and refining this approach, scaling up the engagement across a growing number of countries.</p> <p>3. To scale what's working on the ground.</p>	<p>1. Launch of the East African Alliance On Carbon Markets and Climate Finance: The Alliance National Focal Points, who are appointed by the member countries of the Alliance, endorsed the formal establishment of the Alliance and encouraged other countries in the extended region to seek membership. They further highlighted the importance of a common East African vision with regards to carbon markets and Article 6 as well as climate finance. (05 August 2019)</p> <p>2. Gender strategy: The NDC Partnership is committed to integrating gender equality into mitigation and adaptation actions as embodied in its new gender strategy. The Partnership's Gender Strategy supports the inclusion and implementation of gender-responsive actions in Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs).</p>	<p>1. Honduras first NDC partnership plan for climate action developed</p> <p>2. Partnership plan with Uganda developed</p> <p>3. Pacific nationally determined contributions hub (pacific NDC hub) established</p> <p>4. Namibia partnership plan for climate action developed</p> <p>5. Mongolia NDC partnership plan developed</p> <p>6. Dominican Republic action plan for NDC developed</p> <p>7. Colombia national development plan developed</p> <p>8. Saint Lucia's cabinet approved Saint Lucia's NDC partnership plan. It is the first country to have a plan validated at that high of a level.</p> <p>9. Grenada, in the Caribbean, partnership plan for NDC 2019/2023 developed</p> <p>10. Burkina Faso partnership plan developed</p> <p>11. Zimbabwe NDC partnership plan developed</p> <p>12. Seychelles NDC partnership plan developed</p> <p>13. Pakistan partnership plan developed</p> <p>14. Lebanon partnership plan developed</p>	<p>1. Climate toolbox²</p> <p>2. Knowledge portal³</p> <p>3. Good Practices database⁴</p>

¹ composed of 85 countries and 19 institutional members in 2018

² <https://ndcpartnership.org/ndc-toolbox>

³ <https://ndcpartnership.org/knowledge-portal>

⁴ <https://ndcpartnership.org/good-practice-database>

NDCs' main online tools and programmes

#EUGreenDeal #NDCs

NDCs
Nationally Determined Contributions

NDCs are the main process to keep track of progress in climate adaptation and mitigation

Click on the main online tools and programmes

Latest submissions
Alignment with SDGs
NDC analyses

Climate Watch – Data for Climate Action
2020 NDC Tracker Explore LTS
NDC-SGD Linkages Compare all targets

NDC Partnership
NDC content Historical emissions

UNFCCC
NDC Registry

#EUGreenDeal
Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent

The World Bank
NDC Platform

NDC Invest
NDC components support

Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (EU GCCA+)
NDC Mapping

EU GCCA+ Intra-ACP
ACP NDC online Tool

Support to public and private institutions

EU GCCA+ THE ALLIANCE FOR A CHANGING WORLD

The **Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (EU GCCA+)** is a flagship initiative of the European Union helping most vulnerable countries respond to climate change. It started in 2007 and has become one of the EU's major climate initiatives with a worldwide scope, with over 80 programmes in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific region.

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