

**Climate Change Expert Group**  
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# **Establishing Cycles for Nationally Determined Mitigation Contributions or Commitments**

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## OECD/IEA CLIMATE CHANGE EXPERT GROUP PAPERS

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## FOREWORD

This document was prepared by the OECD and IEA Secretariats in response to a request from the Climate Change Expert Group (CCXG) on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The CCXG Expert Group oversees development of analytical papers for the purpose of providing useful and timely input to the climate change negotiations. These papers may also be useful to national policy-makers and other decision-makers. Authors work with the CCXG to develop these papers. However, the papers do not necessarily represent the views of the OECD or the IEA, nor are they intended to prejudge the views of countries participating in the CCXG. Rather, they are Secretariat information papers intended to inform Member countries, as well as the UNFCCC audience.

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## ABSTRACT

### Establishing Cycles for Nationally Determined Mitigation Contributions or Commitments

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are currently negotiating a climate change agreement scheduled for adoption at the 21st Conference of the Parties in December 2015. At the centre of the new agreement are nationally determined contributions (NDCs). These are the objectives and actions relating to mitigation or other aspects of climate change responses that countries are willing to put forward internationally and be bound by in some way. This paper seeks to clarify and discuss ideas contained in the draft agreement and draft decision text for the 2015 agreement that may serve to enhance the dynamism and ambition of nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments (NDCs). Provisions for ambition and dynamism are included in the procedures framing NDCs, namely common, regular communications and the requirement that NDCs become more ambitious over time. Several multilateral processes are also proposed, which might influence the ambition of NDCs in terms of their content and implementation. The paper discusses proposals for a clarification exercise, a regular global stocktake, and individual assessment and review processes contained with the transparency system and a potential facilitative compliance and implementation system. There are implementation challenges associated with all proposals, though overall these could encourage countries to maximise effort, and provide an opportunity for countries to revise and update their contributions and commitments at regular intervals.

**JEL Classification:** F53, H87, Q54, Q56, Q58

**Keywords:** climate change, mitigation, UNFCCC, 2015 agreement, greenhouse gas.

## RÉSUMÉ

### Établissement de cycles pour les contributions ou les engagements en matière d'atténuation déterminées au niveau national

Les Parties à la Convention-cadre des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques (CCNUCC) négocient actuellement un accord climatique qui devrait être adopté à la 21e Conférence des Parties en décembre 2015. Au centre de ce nouvel accord figurent les contributions déterminées au niveau national (CDN). Il s'agit des objectifs et mesures ayant trait à l'atténuation ou d'autres aspects des actions que les pays sont disposés à proposer au niveau international pour faire face au changement climatique, et pour lesquels ils sont prêts à prendre une forme d'engagement. Ce document vise à clarifier et examiner les idées contenues dans le projet d'accord et le texte du projet de décision concernant l'accord de 2015, qui pourraient servir à renforcer le dynamisme et l'ambition des contributions ou engagements en matière d'atténuation déterminés au niveau national. Des dispositions relatives au niveau et au rythme des efforts sont inscrites dans les procédures encadrant l'établissement de ces contributions ou engagements, à savoir des communications régulièrement présentées par toutes les Parties, et l'obligation de relever progressivement le niveau d'ambition des contributions. Plusieurs processus multilatéraux sont aussi proposés, qui pourraient influencer sur le degré d'ambition des contributions ou engagements en matière d'atténuation, en termes de contenu et de mise en œuvre. Ce document examine diverses propositions : un exercice de clarification, un bilan régulier à l'échelle mondiale, et des processus d'évaluation et de révision individuels liés au cadre de transparence et à un mécanisme potentiel de facilitation du respect et de la mise en œuvre. Si des difficultés de mise en œuvre sont associées à toutes ces propositions, dans l'ensemble, celles-ci pourraient inciter les pays à pousser leurs efforts au maximum, et leur offrir l'occasion de réviser et d'actualiser leurs contributions et engagements à intervalles réguliers.

**Classification JEL :** F53, H87, Q54, Q56, Q58

**Mots-clés :** changement climatique, atténuation, CCNUCC, accord de 2015, gaz à effet de serre.

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## Executive summary

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are currently negotiating a new agreement, under the auspices of the Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). This new agreement is to be adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in December 2015, and to take effect from 2020. At the centre of the new agreement are nationally determined contributions (NDCs). These are the national objectives and actions that countries are willing to put forward to the international community, and be bound by in some way. To date, all proposed *intended* NDCs (INDCs) include a mitigation component, most an adaptation component as well, while only some quantify the financial support required for implementation. The mitigation component of INDCs generally cover five to ten year periods. For the post-2020 period, the current ADP draft agreement text distinguishes between nationally determined *mitigation* contributions or commitments (NDMCs), and other types of undertakings, actions and communications in non-mitigation areas, such as adaptation, or the provision and mobilisation of climate finance.

Within the climate negotiations, Parties are discussing mechanisms that would allow NDMCs to be updated and communicated regularly. Such regular communications may be accompanied and bolstered by one or more multilateral processes, some of which may play the role of assessing whether NDMCs are collectively or individually consistent with collectively-agreed climate objectives. The process of submitting a national contribution or commitment, and its potential passage through these international processes, is referred to as a “cycle”. The aim of having a cycle is to encourage greater ambition from NDCs over time, and to enable an agreement that remains dynamic in the longer term. Dynamism is understood as a process that allows mitigation contributions or commitments under the new agreement to respond and adapt to changing needs, circumstances, technology changes, and knowledge.

This paper focuses on nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments. The “cycle” primarily refers to the phases of NDMCs, e.g. how they are communicated internationally, and what multilateral assessment processes they may be subject to. Discussions during the course of the ADP negotiations in 2015 have sought to balance the national flexibility inherent in NDMCs with international responsibility and environmental integrity, by setting out a process for how and how often NDMCs are put forward, and proposing potential multilateral review or stocktake exercises.

Ways of encouraging the dynamism and ambition of NDMCs can be grouped in three broad categories that are currently included in different articles of the draft agreement text:

- The international procedures applied to the mitigation contributions or commitments themselves, such as when they are formulated and communicated, whether they can be adjusted, and any conditions or requirements they should meet (Article 3).
- Multilateral processes that would examine NDMCs collectively, such as an aggregation exercise (Article 3) and the global stocktake (Article 10).
- Multilateral processes that would examine individual NDMCs, such as a clarification exercise (Article 3), various exercises as part of the transparency or measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system (Article 9), and potential review processes included in any facilitative compliance and implementation system (Article 11).

Provisions for the dynamism and ambition of NDMCs are currently contained mostly in two provisions: first, a requirement that NDMCs become more ambitious over time, and represent a Party’s highest level of ambition; second, the option that NDMCs are communicated at regular intervals, with every five years proposed in the text. There are implementation challenges associated with both elements, including how the notion of ambition and progression can concretely be defined or determined. Overall, these provisions could encourage countries to increase their mitigation efforts, and provide a formal opportunity for countries to revise and update their contributions and

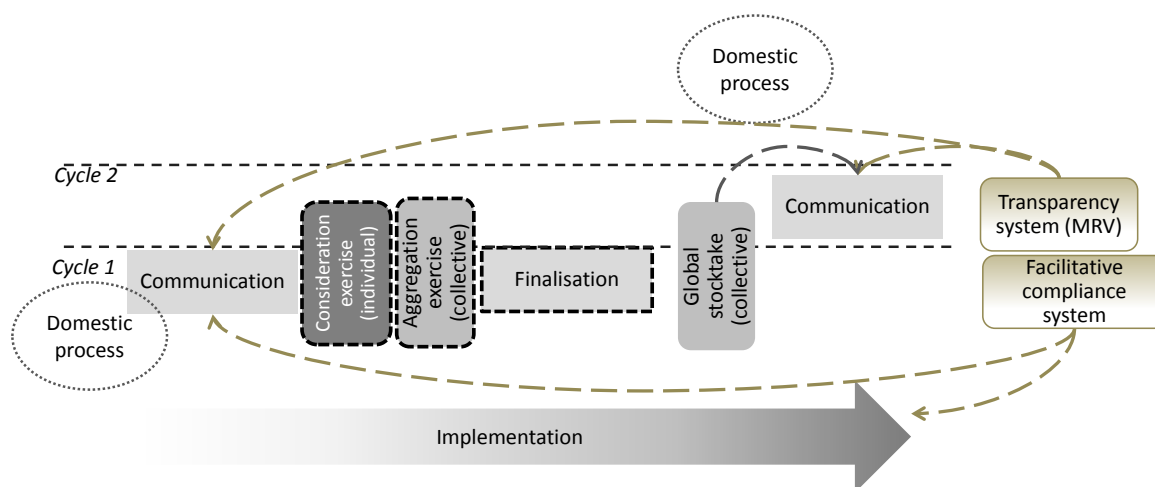
commitments at regular intervals. Already, several Parties have indicated that they may unilaterally revise their INDCs.

One of the multilateral processes proposed at the collective level, the aggregation exercise, does not appear aimed at influencing the individual NDMCs. The terminology used is similar to that of the current synthesis report on INDCs, which despite significant information gaps, presents the aggregate effect of INDCs on future emissions trajectories. The global stocktake is described as a process to examine how Parties are implementing the agreement and meeting its objectives. There are proposals in the draft text that accounting for the outcomes of the global stocktake should be a feature of NDMCs. Meant to cover all aspects of the agreement, including mitigation, the specifics of how the global stocktake will consider all elements is unclear. An assessment of collective progress towards mitigation objectives should help guide action at a national level, though may not provide specific insight into how an individual country might adjust its objectives and maximise mitigation opportunities. Currently, the existing 2013-2-15 Review process – designed to assess both the adequacy of the long-term global temperature goal and progress towards achieving it – may provide a basis for parts of a global stocktake exercise.

In terms of multilateral processes for individual NDMCs, the draft agreement text proposes that these undergo a clarification exercise once they are communicated, but beyond this individual review processes are mentioned mostly within text on a transparency framework. Current review and consultation processes under the UNFCCC provide a basis for tracking progress with the implementation of NDMCs, notably through biennial reporting, technical review of reports, and peer-to-peer consultations. Such processes will likely evolve going forward, and could assess the implementation of individual NDMCs, as well as feed into their potential adjustment or revision. Assessment and review processes can be thought of as opportunities for feedback and reflection, aligned with moments within a cycle when countries have the opportunity to adjust or update their NDMCs. They may play an important role within a potential facilitative compliance and implementation system, though how specifically this would operate remains to be decided.

Figure ES-1 presents a possible simplified process for communicating NDMCs, and the multilateral processes that could support both communication and implementation of these NDMCs. Boxes in dashed outlines represent possible options, as these are currently proposals among others within the text. The dotted lines represent potential lines of influence. Where the text proposes a time interval between communication and finalisation of a NDMC, this would likely not be long enough to allow a country to adjust its NDMC. Any multilateral processes taking place in this time interval are therefore not presented as potentially influencing individual NDMCs.

**Figure ES-1: Options for international processes within a NDMC cycle**



The processes outlined in the draft agreement text apply to contributions and commitments after 2020; different processes may apply to INDCs, given the lack of common guidance and rules surrounding their elaboration. Some countries have already made slight adjustments to their INDCs, and others have indicated these may be updated as new information becomes available. Lessons learned from any review, assessment and adjustment of INDCs could usefully feed into the design of procedures and processes for post-2020 NDMCs.

At COP 21 in December, Parties will need to set a framework for the procedures and processes applied to NDMCs. Clarity will be needed rapidly for countries to understand and feel comfortable with the assessment and review processes they establish for the post-2020 period. In Paris, Parties will also need to decide on the status and processes for INDCs, including how these may be adjusted or updated prior to 2020.

Having a dynamic cycle for NDMCs is important; countries will be starting from very different points, and should be able to revise and adjust actions according to evolving circumstances. Apart from exceptional circumstances, adjustment or revisions should occur within the context of NDMCs reflecting a Party's highest possible ambition, and becoming progressively more ambitious over time. Ambition also requires continuous learning and experimentation, to adequately respond to the climate challenge and consistently improve national policies. Dynamic NDMCs could contribute to the longer-term, transformational changes required for sustainable, resilient, low-emission development.



## 1. Introduction

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are currently negotiating a new agreement under the Convention, to be adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in December 2015, and to take effect from 2020. This negotiation is taking place under the auspices of the Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). The new agreement aims to provide a framework for enhancing and accelerating implementation of UNFCCC, in all relevant areas, namely adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology, capacity building and transparency. An important element of this new framework is that its provisions will apply to all Parties (unlike the Kyoto Protocol for example); it therefore needs to allow for diversity. This has led to a “bottom-up” approach, whereby countries determine the actions they are willing to be bound by. If the agreement is to be durable over time, it will also need to be flexible and dynamic, and be able to evolve. It is in this context that current negotiations have discussed various ways of ensuring that climate goals undertaken by Parties are dynamic and progressively more ambitious over time.

At the centre of the new agreement are nationally determined contributions (NDCs). These are the objectives and actions relating to mitigation or other aspects of climate change responses that countries are willing to put forward internationally and be bound by in some way, as part of the 2105 agreement (pending decisions on legal form). In the course of 2015, countries have been submitting *intended* nationally determined contributions (INDCs), ahead of a decision on how they will be formalised and anchored in the new agreement. The mitigation component of current INDCs cover either a five- or ten-year time period starting from 2020, setting a greenhouse gas (GHG) target to be achieved in either 2030 or 2025, with most selecting a 2025 target.

This paper focuses on nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments (NDMCs)<sup>1</sup> for several reasons. First, because the notion of “progress” and “greater ambition” are easily understood in these terms. This is in part because there is experience with expressing a collective, long-term objective for mitigation that progress can be assessed against. It is also easier to understand the general direction of travel implied by “greater ambition” in a mitigation context, i.e. fewer GHG emissions. Second, mitigation is an area in which collective action problems are most pressing.

Dynamism in this paper is understood as a process that allows contributions or commitments under the new agreement to respond and adapt to changing needs, circumstances, technologies and knowledge. Dynamism includes the notion of flexibility, acknowledging that countries are starting from different places and need the flexibility to appropriately enhance and adjust their contributions.

This paper seeks to clarify and discuss ideas contained in the draft agreement and draft decision text for the 2015 agreement that may serve to enhance the dynamism and ambition of NDMCs. This paper does not deal with differentiation, a broader political issue that will shape all aspects of the 2015 agreement. Further, it does not address areas directly related to the legal nature of contributions and other “undertakings” within the 2015 agreement, such as compliance and enforcement, nor does it focus on adaptation or support.

Section 2 of the paper provides some background and context to how and why dynamism and ambition have emerged as important elements within negotiations toward the 2015 agreement. Section 3 examines the procedures applied to mitigation contributions or commitments, and how these can impact dynamism and ambition. Section 4 looks at how various multilateral assessment and review processes may also enhance the ambition of mitigation contributions or commitments. The paper aims to explore the various concepts proposed, and indicate key questions and options to guide decision

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<sup>1</sup> The draft agreement text more comprehensively provides the option of: mitigation contribution; mitigation commitment; a nationally determined contribution with a mitigation component, or the mitigation component of the contribution referred to in Article 2 bis (i.e., a nationally determined contribution)

making. Section 5 concludes with some initial thoughts on areas that will require decisions from Parties at COP 21 and shortly thereafter.

## **2. Dynamism and ambition in the current negotiations**

The need of diversity and flexibility is integrated into NDCs, as these are “nationally determined” and therefore vary according to the capacities and circumstances of each individual Party. The notion commonly referred to as “cycles” in the negotiations has centred on NDCs, referring to procedures and processes that would allow NDCs to evolve, and encourage them to become more ambitious, thereby allowing countries to meet collectively-agreed climate objectives.

The scope of NDCs themselves will influence these cycles. Current INDCs cover mitigation, and several also cover adaptation and other aspects. For example, some countries specify the amount of financing, including external support, needed to implement their INDCs (e.g. Benin, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago). No submission to date includes the amount of support (financial, technology and capacity building) that a country might provide over the INDC’s time period, which some Parties had suggested should be included in the NDCs of developed countries (FCCC/ADP/2015/1).

Following the adoption of the 2015 agreement, more specific terminology may emerge that distinguishes mitigation contributions or commitments and other types of contributions, commitments or actions, such as on adaptation or support. The current draft agreement text suggests that “nationally determined” mitigation contributions or commitments (NDMC), or the mitigation component of nationally determined contributions, would be distinct from adaptation “communications” or “undertakings” that could include adaptation plans, priorities and needs (ADP, 2015a). Processes for determining how commitments, contributions and communications are updated, and at what frequency, will likely also differ for mitigation and adaptation.

Some countries have explicitly reserved the right to adjust their INDCs prior to 2020 (e.g. Morocco, New Zealand). There are many reasons countries might wish to do so. For developed countries, most conditionality in current INDCs is related to the finalisation of rules governing the initial round of NDCs (on accounting, for example), which should be addressed by the second round of NDCs. Several developing countries have also presented INDCs that are wholly or partly conditional on the provision of support. In addition, some countries may adjust their INDCs pending political decisions (e.g. Swaziland, Lao PDR) or when more information becomes available (e.g. Philippines). Countries with mitigation targets set against business-as-usual emissions may also wish to update these scenarios and assumptions. Even where the mitigation component of an INDC is presented as a package of policies and measures, the short timeframe in which many countries have had to develop their INDC means ensuring its coherence and implementability may also be a challenge. As such, many may benefit from being able to clarify, update, augment or otherwise hone their INDC ahead of its expected implementation date.

Discussions during ADP negotiations in 2015 have sought to balance the “bottom up” national flexibility inherent in NDCs with international credibility, responsibility and environmental integrity, through more “top down” procedures for how and how often NDMCs are put forward, along with multilateral review or stocktake processes. A range of ideas on different processes were put forward in February 2015, some of which are now reflected in the draft agreement text. The means put in place to encourage the dynamism and ambition of NDMCs can be grouped in three broad categories that are currently included in different articles of the draft agreement text:

- The international procedures applied to the mitigation contributions or commitments themselves, such as when they are formulated and communicated, whether they can be adjusted, and any conditions or requirements they should meet (Article 3).
- Multilateral processes that would examine NDMCs collectively, such as an aggregation exercise (Article 3) and the global stocktake (Article 10).
- Multilateral processes that would examine individual NDMCs, such as a clarification exercise (Article 3), various exercises as part of the transparency or measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) system (Article 9), and potential review processes included in any facilitative compliance and implementation system (Article 11).

Maximising the potential of NDMCs to increase in ambition over time is important for several reasons. First, because based on the mitigation component of current INDCs, the first set of NDMCs will likely be insufficiently ambitious from a mitigation perspective (Hood, Adkins and Levina, 2015). The new climate agreement would therefore aim to set a basis for action that would become more ambitious over time. Second, countries will be starting from very different points; as such, it is important that countries are able to revise and adjust actions in line with changing circumstances, priorities, technologies, capacities and needs. Some countries have already revised some aspects of their INDCs (e.g. Benin), and the current draft agreement includes the option for countries to adjust their NDMCs at any time so long as ambition is increased. Flexibility is enhanced if countries can update or revise their contributions regularly, e.g. every five years, and potentially have the opportunity to adjust them at other times as well. Implementing ambitious climate policy is a continuous learning process. Economic circumstances change and are dynamic, and so effective policy responses will also be dynamic. International review and stocktake processes can act as feedback points to support the revision and updating of national policies, to account for successes, new challenges, and evolving priorities, as well as identify areas for improvement.

Third, at a collective level, it is useful for countries to know whether nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments are broadly consistent with what is needed to meet longer-term collective climate objectives. Dynamic NDMCs would ideally fit within longer-term indicative pathways, such as low-emission development strategies, and allow for shorter term actions that would lead to the longer-term, transformational changes required (Hood, Briner and Rocha, 2014; Spencer et al., 2014). NDMCs and longer-term pathways should generally be consistent with any global, long-term climate objective expressed within the 2015 agreement. For mitigation this could be the previously stated objective of limiting average global surface temperature warming to 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century, or a different formulation of this objective (e.g. net zero emissions over the course of the century).

### **3. Procedures applied to mitigation contributions or commitments**

While the current draft negotiating text remains under debate (ADP, 2015a), options for the framework and procedures applying to nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments include ideas that impact their responsiveness and their evolution.

The substance of NDMCs themselves may be framed in such a way as to encourage ambition over time. For example, the draft text contains language that would require or expect each NDMC to reflect a given country's highest possible ambition, reflect a progression beyond the Party's previous efforts, or be progressively more ambitious over time. Contributions or commitments would therefore need to become more ambitious as part of how they are formulated. Other framing elements also present both opportunities for enhancing action, as well as challenges in terms of their implications for implementation and their feasibility (Table 1).

**Table 1. Options for NDMC framing elements along with opportunities and challenges**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Common timeframe for NDMCs? (Option in text for common timeframe from 2030)	Make communicating along regular timeframe simpler; momentum created if all Parties formulating and implementing NDMCs at similar moments.	Could be difficult to agree upon, may infringe on “nationally determined” aspect of NDMCs. May not be essential if regular intervals for communication, independent of NDMC length, given current INDCs span 5 or 10 years.
NDMCs linked to long-term collective goal?	Can help ensure coherence of NDMCs and long-term objectives. Even if not directly linked, countries could be encouraged to link NDMCs to their own relevant long-term goals (low emissions, sustainable development, poverty reduction, etc.), or indicate how domestic long-term goals are consistent with collective ones. Could be a feature of NDMCs, or included in the information provided with their communication (e.g. reporting on how the NDMC links to long-term goals).	Quantitatively establishing such a link can be challenging, and is less relevant for small emitters.
NDMCs to have specific features?	List of various features in the text, some of which may facilitate monitoring of NDMC (e.g. should be quantifiable, have real and verifiable data for baselines), or encourage linking these to multilateral processes (e.g. take into account global stocktake, process to facilitate implementation).	Given the diversity of NDMCs and national circumstances, could be difficult to agree on a list of features. May also imply that reporting and review processes will also consider whether NDMCs do actually contain these features, which could be complex (e.g. assessing whether the NDMC maximises adaptation co-benefits).
Requirements for progression and ambition in successive NDMCs?	Important for steady increases in ambition over time; allows for different starting points and diversity of action.	How specifically the notion is expressed, and how broad or narrow the meaning of “more ambitious” or “highest possible ambition” is, can have a significant impact (e.g. An increase in headline numbers? Expanding coverage of activities? Addressing gaps in previous implementation?). May have implications for transparency system, if answering such questions included in consultation or review processes. Parties may need reassurance that there can exceptions to the rule, in cases of <i>force majeure</i> .
Adjustments at any time?	Can be important to allow countries to refine and update NDMCs in light of changed circumstances, shifting priorities, previous implementation, etc. Option currently included in the text allows for updates to NDMCs so long as they meet the requirement of progression in ambition.	An adjustment or update process may need accompanying transparency provisions. While potentially sensitive, the agreement may also benefit from allowing countries to decrease the ambition of their NDMCs in certain circumstances, to allow for a more flexible and durable regime (Briner, Kato and Hattori, 2014). Special provisions are likely needed in these cases.

The primary means by which dynamism is introduced is the notion that contributions or commitments are communicated along regular intervals, every five years. These intervals could be independent of the length of each contribution or commitment, with either a successive NDMC communicated if its period length is five years, or an updated NDMC communicated if it spans ten years. The text includes the option of communication occurring either before the end of the period of implementation (e.g. before 2030 for the period 2021-2030), or after the completion of the current implementation cycle (e.g. after 2030 for the same period). These options appears distinct from that of regularly communicating NDMCs every five years; as such, if the time periods covered by contributions or commitments vary (either five or ten years), this would mean countries would communicate their

NDMCs at different moments in time. Different options for the communication of NDMCs, along with the advantages and challenges they present, are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2. Options for the communication of NDMCs**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Communication and finalisation single step	Simpler process; may not negatively impact dynamism and ambition if occurs at regular intervals and Parties have ability to update NDMCs at any time.	May require prior agreement on framing elements for NDMCs or clear set of accompanying information, to promote clarity and trust between Parties.
Interval of time between communication/ submission and finalisation	Provides a formal opportunity for countries to adjust or revise their NDMCs, and potentially time for a consultation or clarification exercise.	Time interval would need to be quite long for a country to realistically be able to adjust NDMC following input from a multilateral process. Timeline suggested makes both substantive review or associated adjustments unlikely. May not be essential if clear guidance on NDMC framing elements and/or information provided during communication, or if clarification exercise integrated into transparency system in future.
Communication to occur every five years (independent of NDMC length)	Encourages and allows for dynamism; more flexibility to adjust NDMCs if formal opportunity to communicate at regular intervals. Does not require NDMC lengths to be harmonised; countries with longer NDMCs could re-communicate these, to present any revisions.	Given the time needed to prepare and consult on national climate policy, some countries may find it challenging to meaningfully assess and update a NDMC at five-yearly intervals.
Indicative/intended NDMC to also be communicated, for period after submitted NDMC	Longer-term policy objectives helpful for national planning and investments; can facilitate assessment of global progress through more information on potential future emissions pathways.	Challenging to put forward longer-term mitigation objectives, particularly for countries with rapid and uncertain growth trajectories.
Communication to occur before end of NDMC period	Potentially simpler for Party, can follow timing of internal evaluation and revision of climate objectives.	Could be nearly ten years between communications depending on NDMC length; no “nudging” Parties to examine their NDMCs sooner. Parties may communicate at differing intervals, reducing collective momentum.
Communication to occur after end of NDMC period	Potentially simpler for Party, as above. In addition, may have more information on implementation and outcomes of previous NDMC period.	Risk of a gap between NDMC periods, with no formal contribution or commitment in place. As above, could be long intervals between communications, which would vary by NDMC length.

Note: These options apply to NDMCs that are not all of the same length, e.g. some span five years and others ten.

Within the draft agreement text, one option is for communication to be a fully integrated step, automatically leading to listing in a registry or annex. Alternatively, an intended or proposed commitment or contribution may first be communicated, which would then be finalised after a given amount of time (e.g. 12-18 months, proposed in the text). In turn, finalisation would take place a certain amount of time before the meeting of the Parties at which NDMCs are “inscribed”, with proposals for this length of time to be “at least three months” or “well before”. The concrete timing of these procedures therefore remains unclear, but suggests that any distinct communication, finalisation and inscription procedures would occur within a relatively short time period, e.g. one to two years.

This condensed timeframe is somewhat different from previous mitigation pledges, as well as from current INDCs. As mentioned above, to date Parties have communicated mitigation pledges or objectives five years ahead of their start date, in 2015 for INDCs that generally cover a five to ten-year time period starting in 2020. Pledges under the Cancún Agreements were made in 2009 or 2010, with most having target end dates of 2020. Having a long lead-time to plan and prepare for

implementation of mitigation contributions or commitments remains important, including for guiding domestic policy and economic activity (see e.g. OECD, 2015). Various analysts had suggested a similar procedure for NDCs under the 2015 agreement, with countries determining their contributions or commitments several years before their official implementation date. Spencer, Zhang et al. (2015) suggested Parties propose new contributions for the 2030-35 period in 2019-20, and Morgan, Dagnet and Tirpak (2014) similarly suggested that Parties communicate contributions for the 2025-30 period in 2018-19, and then formalise or anchor these by 2020. The text does retain the option for Parties to provide an indicative or intended NDMC for the period after the submitted contribution or commitment, e.g. for the 2035-40 period if a NDMC for 2030-35 has been communicated.

Providing a longer-term trajectory within which to place NDMCs, particularly if these span five years, can facilitate both domestic planning and a collective assessment of emissions trajectories. However, there can also be challenges associated with proposing targets ten or fifteen years ahead of time for many countries, especially when economic growth trajectories are rapid and uncertain. Successive NDMCs are likely to be communicated before the end of the current NDMC's implementation period. A country would therefore need to propose a contribution or commitment for a future period before knowing the final results of how its current NDMC had been implemented, due to delays in the production of official GHG emissions statistics. Allowing countries to adjust proposed contributions prior to and during their implementation period may therefore be necessary. The current text includes an option for Parties to be able to update their NDMC at any time, if it "represents a progression in ambition beyond its previous efforts". For INDCs, various proposals within the accompanying draft decision text propose or encourage updates or adjustments to INDCs prior to when the agreement takes effect.

How much time elapses between communication, finalisation and the contribution or commitment start date – and the prevalence of opportunities for deliberation, assessment and feedback – might impact the dynamism of contributions or commitments. Once a contribution is agreed upon domestically, it may be difficult to modify it in the short term. If countries are to finalise their NDMCs 12-18 months after initial communication, it is unlikely that any significant revisions to the contribution or commitment itself could be made. The focus would therefore be on successive contributions or commitments, and ensuring these are as ambitious as possible when communicated. However, assessment and feedback opportunities could also play a role in strengthening implementation of the NDMC, which is another means of enhancing ambition, for example, by facilitating over-achievement of NDMC objectives. Several assessment and review processes mentioned in the draft negotiating text could play this role.

## **4. Multilateral review and assessment processes related to NDMCs**

### **4.1 Existing multilateral processes under the UNFCCC and elsewhere**

Multilateral review and/or assessment processes could enable dynamism and encourage greater ambition of mitigation contributions or commitments, by providing opportunities for feedback and reflection that can assist with domestic policy processes. These processes can take various forms, and certain terms and ideas are distinguished in Box 1 for the purposes of this paper.

### **Box 1: Terms used for review processes and their working definitions**

**Assessment:** A process where the nature, quality, ability or value of something is evaluated or estimated. As such, it implies the use of an assessment framework or set of criteria. For example, the completeness and transparency of national reports for Annex I countries is assessed against a set of guidelines. Biennial Update Reports submitted by developing countries under the UNFCCC are also subject to a technical assessment. An assessment can therefore select different criteria against which to evaluate the nature or ambition of, for example, a national contribution or commitment.

**Review:** Commonly denotes a formal assessment undertaken with the intention of instituting or recommending change. In this sense, review generally denotes a process which looks at historical performance and produces an assessment that aims to guide any changes needed, including through explicit recommendations. For example, technical reviews of Annex I National Communications result in recommendations to improve the transparency and completeness of future reports, based on an assessment framed by the reporting guidelines.

**Stocktake:** The act of reviewing and assessing a given situation and associated options, often used to denote a reappraisal or reassessment of a situation, along with its progress and prospects. It suggests an exercise that looks forward, at future options and prospects, not only at historical performance.

**Clarification exercise:** In contrast to the assessment, review or stocktake processes, a clarification exercise aims to allow for a better understanding of countries' actions. It may be both a technical and political exercise, as it would allow for clarifying questions from other countries. For example, individual Parties made presentations and then responded to questions from other Parties under the work programme on clarifying developed country targets, and the work programme on understanding developing country mitigation actions.

**Technical vs. Political:** Processes can either focus on more technical issues (e.g. similar to current reviews and assessments of inventories and national communications) or be more "political", often peer-to-peer exchanges (e.g. similar to current international assessment or facilitative exchange of views). A political process is helpful where objective assessments are challenging, and where no established assessment frameworks are in place. It can be used to: better understand specific challenges and share experiences between countries; build trust; and create a space for discussing political issues, such as ambition and fairness. Terms such as "consideration", "consultation", "facilitative dialogue" and "facilitate understanding" may suggest political processes, though dialogue and peer-to-peer processes can also be a venue for discussing or clarifying technical issues.

Most of the processes described in Box 1 already exist, in some form, within the UNFCCC. The technical reviews of inventories (annually), Biennial Reports (biennially) and National Communications (every four years) for Annex I countries contain recommendations to improve the completeness and transparency of future reports. The Multilateral Assessment for developed countries is a biennial non-technical process conducted by all Parties, discussing progress towards achieving the Party in question's emissions reduction target. There is no set framework or basis on which an assessment is made, but Parties do ask questions to evaluate the quality and nature of the assessed Party's actions and accomplishments, including on additional actions needed to achieve targets, and the effects of policies and measures (UNFCCC, 2015a). To date, developing country National Communications and Biennial Update Reports are not subject to review; the latter are subject to a biennial technical assessment, and a non-technical process involving peer-to-peer exchange referred to as a "facilitative exchange of views". Established outside the regular MRV system, the 2013-15 Review is a form of global stocktake. This primarily involved taking stock of the latest science to determine the adequacy of the 2°C objective, but also assessed overall progress towards the Convention's objective.

Assessment and review processes under the UNFCCC can focus on both process and substance, in varying degrees. Current reviews of National Communications and Biennial Reports, for example, assess these documents against their respective reporting guidelines. Recommendations are mostly related to reporting provisions, such as on improving the completeness and transparency of reporting. However, in some cases reviews also comment on the content being reported, for example, indicating that a country is unlikely to meet its mitigation target based on the projections it has provided.

Various multilateral review processes exist in other international regimes; some examples are provided in Box 2. These focus on implementation of previously agreed commitments and do not seek to influence their content, since the commitments themselves are negotiated rather than proposed by each individual country. Most of these are neither constraining nor punitive. Where separate compliance processes are in place, they can play a facilitative role, flagging issues that are likely to develop into compliance problems. For example, issues identified under WTO Trade Policy Reviews can be an indicator of issues brought up under the Dispute Settlement Process (Chaisse and Chakraborty, 2007). An important question to consider is also that of resources: thorough assessment and review processes are expensive, time-consuming and require expertise (Ellis et al., 2011; Halle, Najam and Wolfe, 2014). Approximately half of the IMF's operating budget, for example, is devoted to surveillance activities (Pew Center, 2010).

### **Box 2: Multilateral review processes in other international regimes**

Many other major multilateral processes that examine countries' performances with meeting commitments and obligations use "reviews" to do so (Pew Center, 2010; Bell et al., 2012). This includes:

- The IMF Bilateral Surveillance (in which the Secretariat's report includes recommendations)
- The UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (under which countries are to implement recommendations)
- The Montreal Protocol Implementation Review (where the Implementation Committee can issue recommendations)
- The WTO Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM)

The TPRM does not result in specific recommendations, but aims to provide a factual evaluation of progress with national implementation of trade and investment policies, as well as their effectiveness and potential impact on the multilateral trading system. It includes a consultation process in which countries can ask questions of the country under review, which can be quite intense for major trading countries. The country must, within a specified deadline, answer all questions put forward in writing (bearing in mind that major trading countries can receive over a thousand questions), and a summary statement is prepared outlining the implicit assessment by the country's trading partners, highlighting progress, areas of improvement, concerns and questions.

All of the above processes apply to all countries without distinction; flexibility is provided through less frequent reviews in the case of the IMF bilateral surveillance and WTO TPRM (where frequency is based on share of world trade). Under the Montreal Protocol, developing countries benefit from more flexible phase-out schedule for controlled substances, but implementation remains subject to annual review. The Montreal Protocol review process is both collective and individual. Individual country reports are reviewed and specific issues can be referred to the Implementation Committee. At the same time, the Meeting of the Parties discusses collective, rather than country specific, implementation of the Protocol.

## **4.2 Proposals contained within the draft agreement text**

The draft agreement text (ADP, 2015a) proposes that NDMCs may be subject to various multilateral processes. Some of these might examine NDMCs at a collective level (aggregation exercise and global stocktake), and others at the individual level (clarification exercise; transparency system; facilitative compliance and implementation system). Previously, the Geneva negotiating text contained proposals for multilateral review or assessment processes that would explicitly aim to influence or encourage greater ambition in NDMCs themselves, and some analysts suggested that contributions or commitments be reviewed ex ante for this purpose, prior to their inscription and implementation (Morgan, Dagnet and Tirpak, 2014). No such language is included in the current draft agreement text.



The current draft agreement text does not propose a review or assessment process for communicated NDMCs themselves; nor would the interval proposed between communication and finalisation in any case appear sufficient for a Party to adjust its contributions or commitments during the interval. A country could potentially, however, adjust its NDMC at any time, and may formally be encouraged to do so every five years in the case of a regular communication cycle, though not within the context of multilateral process allowing for feedback and reflection.

Only two multilateral processes mentioned in Article 3 of the draft agreement text on Mitigation appear expected to have an impact on the content of successive NDMCs: the global stocktake (Article 10), a collective assessment, and the process to facilitate implementation (Article 11), which could include individual assessments. These are potentially to be taken “into account” as part of the features of a NDMC.

In terms of collective processes, an assessment of the aggregate effect of communicated NDMCs in light of the temperature goal is proposed. The language used, “production of an aggregate synthesis report”, suggests the recent synthesis report prepared by the UNFCCC Secretariat, examining the aggregate effect of INDCs (UNFCCC, 2015b). Producing such a report in the future would be greatly facilitated by greater clarity on NDMCs and the common use of metrics and accounting. The global stocktake is presented in a separate article of the draft agreement, underlining its importance. The role of the global stocktake will likely require some more detailed thinking. It is important because it links aggregate longer-term goals with individual NDMCs, which are shorter term. Overall, such an assessment would be greatly facilitated if individual countries also linked their NDMCs with their own long-term low emission development strategies, or other relevant long-term development strategies (e.g. sustainable development, green growth, poverty reduction). The use of non-GHG metrics to track the actual drivers of low-emission development, as mentioned in Hood, Briner and Rocha (2014), could be usefully integrated into NDCs, long-term strategies, and global assessments (e.g. average emissions intensity of new power plants installed during the contribution period, implementation of low-emission urban planning guidelines). Some design questions regarding a global stocktake in relation to mitigation are presented in Table 3.

As described in the draft agreement text, the global stocktake would be a broad exercise, taking stock of the implementation of the agreement, and assessing Parties’ progress with achieving the purpose of the agreement. It may be difficult to determine whether and how to either combine or distinguish mitigation and non-mitigation areas, such as the implementation of mitigation actions and their effects, alongside progress with actions conditional on support, and the provision or mobilisation of such support. Currently in non-mitigation areas, the UNFCCC’s Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) undertakes a biennial assessment on global climate finance flows, identifying gaps and areas for further work (SCF, 2013). Ideas for a collective adaptation objective are being explored, as well as how progress against this can be tracked in some way (UNEP, 2014; Magnan et al., 2014; Fisher and Craft, 2015), despite this being both conceptually and practically challenging (Ellis and Helgeson, 2015). It is unclear how progress with any global objective would be assessed, but the Adaptation Committee’s current examination of how the Cancun Adaptation Framework has been implemented might offer some lessons (UNFCCC, 2013). The monitoring of progress with implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals may also usefully provide a global stocktake of progress with reducing risks and enhancing resilience<sup>2</sup>. The monitoring of global progress with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, may also provide helpful inputs.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems and implementing water resource management (within Goal 6), building resilient infrastructure (part of Goal 9), and strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries (part of Goal 13 on combating climate change and its impacts).

**Table 3. Key questions for global stocktake of mitigation**

Question	Options for design elements	Observation
Individual vs. Collective?	Collective, though inputs needed from most individual countries (all large emitters + several others)	May not need detailed GHG data and projections for all countries <sup>3</sup>
What type of process?	Look at historical data (emissions levels) as well as future estimates of emissions (projections) Assess emissions levels and trends compared with scenarios consistent with meeting long-term objectives Aggregate information on implementation and/or projections to identify areas where more collective efforts are needed, such as certain sectors (e.g. agriculture) or types of emissions (e.g. fluorinated gases)	Any recommendations stemming from collective assessment likely not specific enough to guide individual efforts  Assessment framework(s) required
Technical vs. Political?	Technical	A political process may also be useful, including in relevant non-mitigation areas
What is being assessed or reviewed?	Inputs could be varied; for NDMCs, based on information available at the time of the stocktake. Could include: <b>Communicated NDMCs, and indicative /intended future NDMCs</b> , their potential GHG outcomes, and what this would mean for meeting collective objective The <b>implemented NDMCs</b> , their outcomes, and what this means for meeting collective objective (after or during implementation)	Stocktake may be most useful for spurring collective action if it takes place ahead of NDMC communication, e.g. every five years, it could also be independent of NDMC communication cycle, simply providing a snapshot at regular intervals
Similar to existing processes?	<b>2013-15 Review</b> of long-term goal: includes assessing adequacy of progress with achieving long-term goal (recurring) <b>Secretariat synthesis report</b> on aggregate effect of INDCs (ad hoc) (1/CP.20) <b>External assessments</b> of collective mitigation efforts and implications for long-term temperature goal (e.g. UNEP Gap Report) (recurring)	<b>2013-15 Review</b> did not undertake an assessment, but presented existing ones (UNEP, IPCC, etc.). Arena for dialogue and exchange. Recommendations generic <sup>4</sup> . <b>Secretariat synthesis report</b> based on information presented in INDCs and previously published FCCC documents; significant data gaps.

Multilateral processes could potentially facilitate implementation of NDMCs, which could in turn increase ambition, for example, if a country was able to over achieve its NDMC targets. Other than a “preparatory process” to facilitate the clarity of communicated NDMCs, most multilateral processes examining individual NDMCs could potentially provide insights and feedback to improve implementation, and indirectly impact the content of successive NDMCs. Proposals for the transparency system (Article 9) include provisions for review of progress made in implementing and achieving nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments. This would allow for regular feedback on implementation, particularly if a biennial review process continued to be in place. It is suggested that outcomes of a system to facilitate implementation, proposed in Article 11, be accounted for in NDMCs. Review processes within such a system could also help with addressing challenges that hinder achievement of NDMC objectives. Depending on how this was designed, it might do so only on an ad hoc or irregular basis, when Parties have problems with implementation or with fulfilling their NDMCs, rather than providing regular, in-depth assessment that might facilitate enhanced national action. Table 4 provides an overview of some advantages and disadvantages associated with proposed multilateral processes that may impact the dynamism and ambition of NDMCs, whether in their development/revision or implementation.

<sup>3</sup> Twenty countries accounted for approximately 80% of emissions in 2012 (Friedrich, Ge and Damassa, 2015)

<sup>4</sup> For example: “successful mitigation policies are known and must be scaled up urgently” (UNFCCC, 2015c)

A “preparatory process” or clarification exercise, for example, may be less useful if Parties agree to specific types of information that will need to accompany communication of NDMCs. This information could be reviewed as part of regular transparency system processes. It is unclear, however, if the clarification is also meant as a political process to discuss the information provided, or to gauge how well Parties’ NDMCs also meet other requirements, such as being as ambitious as possible, or representing a progression from their previous contribution or commitment.

**Table 4. Proposed multilateral processes impacting NDMCs**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Features*</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages / Challenges</b>
Consultative preparatory process	Applied to communicated NDMCs, potentially prior to their finalisation.  Purpose to enhance clarity, transparency and understanding.	Useful where there is lack of accompanying information.	May be less useful if there is an agreed set of information to accompany NDMCs, or an agreed set of criteria they should meet.  Unclear if aim is also to clarify whether NDMC meets required features (e.g. NDMC represents a progression, takes into account the global stocktake, has sound baselines).
<i>Aggregation of NDMC</i>	Mentioned in the context of a consultative preparatory process; examine aggregate effect of NDMCs in light of the long-term temperature goal	Useful for gauging collective direction of travel in terms of GHG emissions, potential impetus to maximise implementation (e.g. emissions ranges, conditional NDMCs).	Unlikely to impact the ambition of NDMC itself.  More feasible if common units, metrics and accounting methodologies used for NDMCs
Global stocktake	Stocktake of implementation of the agreement in terms of overall progress with meeting ultimate objective of the Convention  Covers all issues, e.g. adaptation, mitigation, support, with different specificities of each issue to be taken into account.	Usefully consider all elements that play a part in meeting the Convention’s ultimate objective.  Provides insight into general pathways and trajectories to guide Parties’ objectives.  Regular assessment of how the agreement is performing could inform any amendments that may be needed.	Challenge to consider each element distinctly, but also together, in terms of understanding the links between them.  Because of collective nature, may be difficult for outcomes of global stocktake to be sufficiently specific for individual Parties to incorporate into their NDMCs.
Transparency system	Provide a clear understanding of Parties’ emissions and removals, and track progress made in implementing and achieving individual contributions or commitments.  Parties are to provide information consistent with acquiring understanding of the above, and the information provided to potentially undergo technical review.	Requires or encourages regular monitoring of implementation and outcomes, allowing Parties to assess whether adjustments to their NDMCs are needed.  International reporting and review allows for information sharing, feedback, and identification of areas where financial support or other forms of cooperation may be needed.  Could help enhance implementation, and provide inputs into successive NDMCs.	Options in text include a less robust system of limited reporting for developing country Parties.  A strong transparency system, that can provide individual reviews useful for domestic policy processes, is resource intensive.
Compliance and implementation system	A body would review implementation and/or compliance; assist in finding ways to improve implementation (developing countries), make specific recommendations (developed countries).	Country-specific assessment and recommendations to assist countries with implementation challenges; could help identify more specific areas where greater capacity or resources are needed.	As an ad-hoc mechanism, wouldn’t provide regular technical assessments that might encourage enhanced implementation and potential over-achievement of NDMCs.

\* As presented in the draft agreement text (ADP, 2015a).

The INDCs submitted in the course of 2015 may be subject to different multilateral processes, given they were developed in the absence of a common framework and guidelines, and often in relatively short time periods. The draft decision to accompany the agreement includes, for example, the option

that INDCs undergo a clarification exercise after which they may be finalised, that the secretariat’s synthesis report on INDCs be updated, or that a facilitative dialogue take stock of collective progress with INDCs in relation to long-term goals (ADP, 2015a). Proposals for different ways of accelerating implementation of pre-2020 commitments, contained within the draft decision on workstream 2, could also potentially lead to new assessments and revisions of post-2020 contributions and commitments (ADP, 2015b). Experience with the potential future assessment and revision of INDCs could helpfully feed into the design of procedures and processes for post-2020 NDCs and NDMCs.

At the individual country level, once a policy or programme is agreed nationally, it can be difficult for this to be modified or adjusted in any significant way. This is because it is often the fruit of much debate, negotiation and compromise at the domestic level. The advantage of an international cycle is that it can trigger a process to launch or revise climate policy, no matter what the country’s starting point is, and this at regular intervals. Rather than a dedicated review process for the contribution or commitment, the current ADP draft agreement text suggests that the transparency system, and potentially a facilitative implementation and compliance system, could provide regular reviews and assessments. These could potentially seek to encourage and facilitate greater ambition. Existing reporting and review processes could be used as a basis, though it is likely that they would need to be modified to fulfil this function (Ellis and Moarif, 2015).

Understandably, countries may be uncomfortable deciding on individual reviews and assessments that may need to be revised or introduced as part of the transparency system, or as part of the compliance and implementation mechanism. Countries will wish to know what processes their NDMCs may be subject to. It is therefore important to clarify different understandings of what any individual assessment and review process(es) would entail; a set of key questions is presented in Table 5.

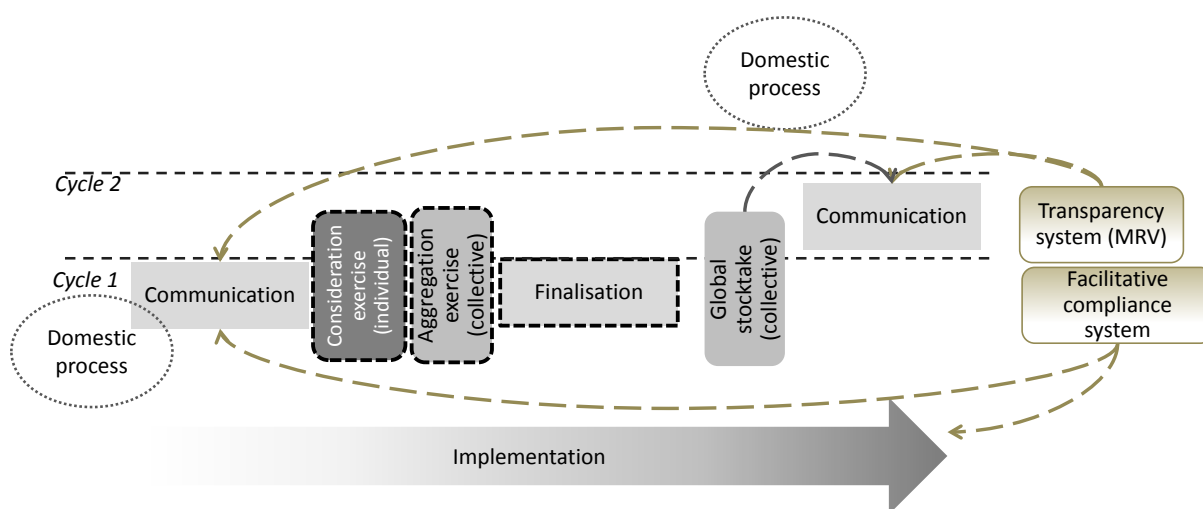
**Table 5. Key questions for individual assessment or review process**

<b>Key questions</b>	<b>Observations</b>
1. What is being assessed or reviewed?	Politically sensitive. Decisions needed on scope, whether process will look at effort or impact, both, or neither (e.g. absolute GHG levels). Will need flexibility to ensure broad participation and a process that is useful for all countries.
2. Which Parties are being assessed or reviewed?	Given nature of 2015 agreement, likely that all Parties subject to some process, though with flexibility.
3. By whom? (which bodies or institutions?)	Will depend on scope and substance of process(es); likely involve an expanded Roster of experts.
4. Through what processes will the review(s) or assessment(s) take place?	Can be determined once purposes and outcomes are clarified. Should build as much as possible on existing practice, processes, and institutions.
5. What criteria will be used to assess or review relevant actions, contributions, and objectives?	Politically sensitive. Ideally the assessment framework would be flexible and evolve over time, would be useful to countries, and link to longer-term objectives (individual and collective). Could be minimal, such as meeting reporting requirements as set out in specific guidelines.
6. What happens if the criteria are not met? (what outcomes?)	Politically sensitive. It is unlikely outcomes will be punitive; various facilitative outcomes may be feasible. It is also possible that the answer to this question changes over time, or varies according to the scope of review.
7. What outputs will stem from the assessment or review?	A written record of any processes is likely necessary and could be useful. Outputs can be produced by different actors, e.g. Secretariat, Party undergoing process, external experts, etc. Quantity and nature of output can have resource implications.
8. When would the assessment or review occur?	Depends on answer to question (1), as well as logistical feasibility, e.g. data availability, timing of other related processes (reporting requirements, global stocktake, etc.).

Source: Adapted from Halle, Najam and Wolfe (2014).

A simplified diagram of multilateral processes within a cycle of commitments or contributions is presented in Figure 1, based on the proposals currently contained in the ADP draft agreement text. Processes with dashed outlines are those that are potential options in the current agreement text, while dotted lines represent potential lines of influence: the text suggests that the global stocktake, at a minimum, should aim to guide individual country actions. Regular assessment and review processes could play a role in influencing successive NDMCs, as well as the implementation of contributions or commitments. These interactions could either be formalised, i.e. stipulated as explicit objectives of a given process, or could be informal. Assessment and review processes can be thought of as opportunities for feedback and reflection, aligning with moments within a cycle when countries have the opportunity to adjust or update their NDMCs.

**Figure 1. Options for international assessment and review processes within a NDMC cycle**



## 5. Conclusions

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) put forward by Parties are at the centre of a new agreement to be adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015. Provisions for the ambition and dynamism of nationally determined mitigation contributions or commitments (NDMCs) are primarily contained in two options: first, that NDMCs be more ambitious over time, and represent a Party’s highest level of ambition; second, the proposal that NDMCs are communicated at regular intervals, every five years (ADP, 2015a). NDMCs could also be bolstered by one or more multilateral processes, primarily a global stocktake that would help countries see whether their contributions are consistent with collectively-agreed climate objectives. The passage of a national contribution through these processes is referred to as a “cycle”. Focusing on mitigation, this paper has clarified certain concepts contained in the revised draft agreement and decision text, and highlighted key questions to guide decisions on such a cycle.

In the very short term, at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in December, Parties will need to set the framework for the procedures and processes applied to NDMCs. The framework outlined in the draft agreement and decision texts contains options for NDMCs to meet specific features (e.g. that they become more ambitious over time) and technical requirements (e.g. use realistic and meaningful reference values, maintaining baselines). It also proposes a common timeframe for the communication of NDMCs (every five years), and multilateral processes related to NDMCs (clarification exercise and aggregation, and global stocktake).

After Paris, more detailed consideration will be needed of procedures and multilateral processes that impact the dynamism and ambition of NDCs and NDMCs. Parties will need to ensure there is a common understanding of what these elements mean, and how they will be implemented. This includes the aim of the clarification exercise, the role of the transparency system, and that of a future

facilitative compliance and implementation system. The global stocktake, meant to assess implementation and progress for all elements of the agreement, will need to be more clearly defined. It would somehow need to consider overall implementation of mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation provisions, while also taking into account the specificities of each issue. Future global stocktakes could potentially draw on the experience of the Standing Committee on Finance, the Adaptation Committee's ongoing work to examine progress with implementation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, the 2013-15 Review, as well as various external stocktaking processes (e.g. UNEP gap reports, implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai framework, IPCC, etc.).

Clarity on any international procedures and processes applying to NDMCs will be needed rapidly. This will enable countries to understand and feel comfortable with any assessment, review and stocktake processes they establish going forward, and can legally formalise the 2015 agreement as early as possible ahead of 2020. In particular, countries will need to understand:

- when multilateral processes will take place;
- their aim, i.e. whether they will be assessments, reviews, or other facilitative exchanges;
- their scope, i.e. if they apply to individual countries or in aggregate;
- what needs to be developed as stand-alone processes (e.g. global stocktake), what can be integrated into current transparency systems or a future facilitative implementation mechanism (e.g. review of implementation), and what could build on existing review processes (e.g. the review of the long-term global goal) ;
- what inputs they need (with potential implications for transparency systems); and
- what the outcomes of these processes might be.

As part of a cycle of mitigation contributions or commitments, Parties would require appropriate resources devoted to the type of assessment and review processes that could usefully facilitate NDMC implementation, and provide confidence to all that Parties are making progress. Such processes, which ideally need to link any assessment and recommendations to domestic decision-making processes, tend to be resource intensive and require expertise. Existing assessment and review processes may need to be adapted to better match the timing of NDMC implementation periods, and any new information needs raised by the global stocktake.

At COP21, Parties might also need to decide on the status of INDCs submitted in the course of 2015. Namely, on whether and how they may have the opportunity for international review, assessment or consultation (even if it may be different in nature than the process outlined as part of the agreement), particularly given that some countries have already indicated they will be revising or updating their INDCs.

Under an international agreement, it is essential that specific national mitigation contributions or commitments put forward be achieved (and ideally overachieved), and that progress with meeting these objectives be tracked. While contributions or commitments will be nationally determined, international procedures and processes that carry these through a "cycle" can help support and encourage increases in ambition over time. Over the next few years, Parties will need to agree on the technical details of such processes so these are functional from 2020. In doing so, the domestic benefits of well-designed international processes should be kept in mind. Systems that integrate reviews, assessments and consultations between Parties all offer opportunities to emphasise, highlight and encourage consistency with longer-term sustainable development pathways.

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## List of acronyms

ADP	Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
AF	Adaptation Fund
CCXG	Climate Change Expert Group
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IEA	International Energy Agency
INDC	Intended Nationally-determined Contributions
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MRV	Measurable, Reportable and Verifiable
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDMC	Nationally Determined Mitigation Contribution or Commitment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WTO	World Trade Organisation

[www.oecd.org/environment/cc/ccxg.htm](http://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/ccxg.htm)

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