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Research Report

The case for connecting the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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The Case for Connecting the Implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Summary

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the conclusion of the Paris Agreement in the closing months of 2015 represented a significant moment in the global movement towards sustainability. There is enormous potential for co-benefits to arise from the mutually supportive implementation processes of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) elaborated in the 2030 Agenda and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) underpinning the legally binding Paris Agreement.

Countries' NDCs, their climate plans, include not only commitments to mitigate emissions but also address many other themes relevant to sustainable development. We present key findings of a fine-grained analysis of how climate activities in the NDCs contribute to SDGs and their targets.

Under the provisions of the Paris Agreement, countries will submit an updated NDC every five years, the intention being that they scale-up their ambitions. The first full review ("global stocktake") will occur in 2023, but an initial stocktaking exercise will take place in 2018 ("facilitative dialogue"). Implementation of the 2030 Agenda is based on national sustainable development (SD) strategies that vary from country to country. At the global level, Follow-Up and Review mechanisms take place during the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the United Nations in New York.

As a rule, these two implementation processes are kept separate, despite the many existing thematic overlaps and

the shared objective of achieving global SD, but our analysis emphasises that the climate activities in the NDCs can support the achievement of a multitude of SDGs and their targets. They not only cover themes relevant to SDG 13 but also many other important fields of sustainable development. NDC climate activities also underline the interlinked character of the SDGs. In fact, numerous NDC climate activities entail synergies that can promote several SDGs at once. To generate co-benefits, NDC and SDG implementation processes should be coordinated 1) to prevent duplication and thereby reduce the costs, and 2) to achieve a more systematic implementation of the 2030 Agenda at country level that utilises already committed activities in NDCs to leverage synergies between both agendas.

Moving forward, the opportunity to connect the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda should be considered in order to promote policy coherence by maximising co-benefits and systematically mediating trade-offs for a more efficient implementation:

- In the context of the Paris Agreement, countries should use future NDC updates to more closely align their climate activities with the SDGs.
- In the context of the 2030 Agenda, SD strategies should meaningfully complement NDCs.
- Co-benefits have the potential to increase the motivation for countries to fulfil commitments, but trade-offs should be anticipated early on in order to implement both agendas more effectively.

Exploring the connections between NDCs and SDGs

This briefing paper presents key findings of an analysis of more than 7000 climate activities, contained in 161 NDCs, through the lens of the 17 SDGs, which are visualised in the interactive tool *NDC-SDG Connections*. The aim is to show to what extent, where and how these NDC activities can contribute to reaching SDGs (Fig. 1) and their targets (Fig. 2). The findings are based on highly disaggregated NDC analyses that allow users to go beyond the target-level and explore which SDG-relevant climate measures are contained in the NDCs (Fig. 2). Moreover, *NDC-SDG Connections* is unique in that it allows users to investigate the networked character of the SDGs in the context of the NDCs (Fig. 3).

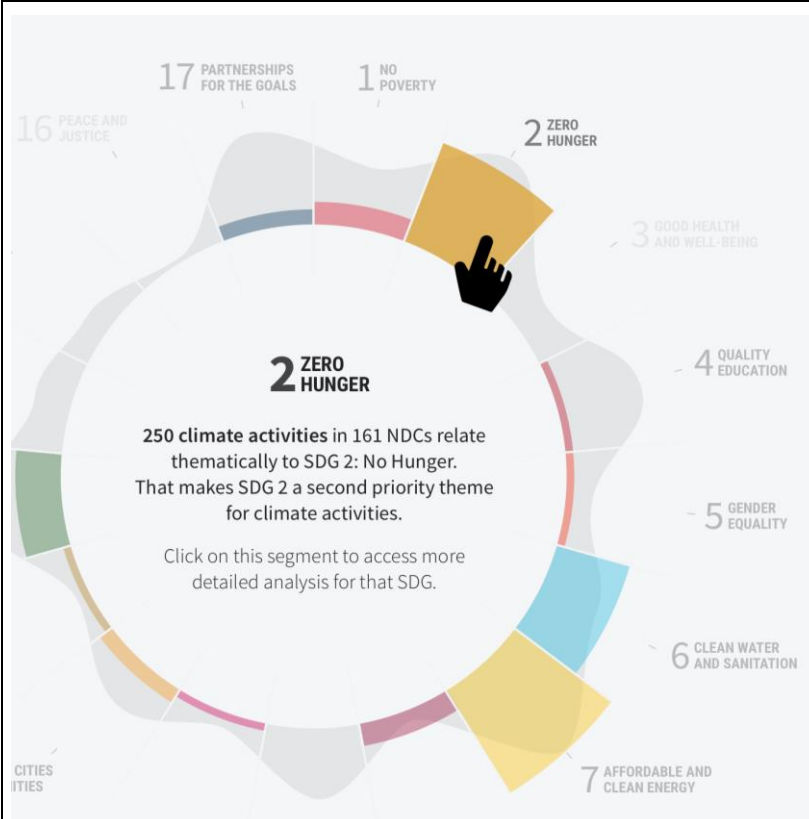
NDCs and SDGs: The analysis demonstrates that many NDCs contain climate activities that can contribute to achieving the SDGs. In Figure 1, the coloured pie bars, corresponding to the 17 SDGs, depict the total number of climate activities formulated in the NDCs that are of relevance to the respective SDG. Figure 1 shows that the NDCs cover – and thus have the potential to contribute to – all 17 SDGs. The NDCs therefore entail synergies not only regarding SDG 13 but regarding all other goals of the 2030 Agenda as well. As the size of the respective pie bar shows, in addition to SDG 13, the activities contained in the NDCs cover most intensively the following SDGs: SDG 2 (zero hunger – food security and sustainable agriculture), SDG 7

(affordable and clean energy), SDG 6 (water availability and sustainable water management), SDG 11 (sustainable cities), SDG 15 (natural resources and biodiversity) and SDG 17 (means of implementation and partnerships).

The strong connection between NDC activities and SDG 7 emphasises that the expansion of renewable energies helps to fulfil the goal and tackle climate change. Our findings also underline the significance of the ecological dimension of the 2030 Agenda and of maintaining the ecological foundations for human life by reducing competing demands for natural resources as well as climate-induced resource scarcity (e.g. SDGs 2 and 15). Moreover, the data show many connections between the NDCs and SDG 11, which is commendable, since managing urbanisation is crucial both for achieving the 2030 Agenda and for the success of the Paris Agreement, with over 70 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions generated by cities. Since many countries make certain NDC commitments conditional on receiving additional finance, the data also show many pertinent connections between the implementation of the Paris Agreement and SDG 17, which, among other things, seeks to mobilise financial resources for developing countries.

The interactive tool *NDC-SDG Connections* not only provides an overview of SDG coverage in the NDCs at the global level (Fig. 1) but also enables users to zoom in to individual countries to explore to what extent and how their NDC activities are con-

Figure 1: Climate action coverage of the 17 SDGs



Source: NDC-SDG Connections (www.ndc-sdg.info)

Figure 2: Zooming into individual SDGs – SDG 2 (“Zero Hunger”)

Source: NDC-SDG Connections (www.ndc-sdg.info)

nected to the SDGs. For example, Figure 1 depicts the number of NDC activities for Zimbabwe and the grey, freely drawn shape provides the comparison to the globally pertinent number of SDG-related climate activities.

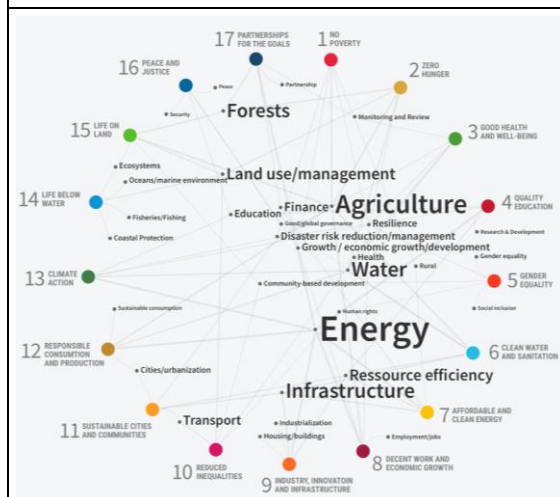
NDCs and SDG targets: NDC-SDG Connections also enables users to identify the most important connections between NDCs' climate activities and targets across the 17 SDGs. This pinpoints how the two agendas thematically correspond to each other at the target level. The data show that while all SDGs are relevant to countries' climate activities, not all SDG targets carry equal weight.

For instance, in the representation of SDG 2 in Figure 2, the inner circle shows the total number of climate activities that might contribute to reaching the targets of that SDG. The data demonstrate that the NDC activities that relate to SDG 2 might advance the fulfilment of target 2.4: Ensure sustainable agricultural production systems for resource protection and climate change, while there is less overlap between NDC activities and target 2.2: End malnutrition in all forms.

NDCs and SDG-relevant climate actions: Our fine-grained analysis enables us to go beyond assessing coverage at the target level and to investigate which additional and more detailed SDG-relevant climate activities are contained in the NDCs. The outer circle of Figure 2 depicts different types of climate actions in the NDCs and shows how those types of actions might contribute to reaching the SDG targets. For instance, many NDC activities relevant to SDG 2 entail measures that relate to “climate-smart and sustainable agriculture” as well as “livestock management” and “food production”. This detailed assessment beyond the target level helps to identify which SDG-relevant climate measures show the most potential for leveraging mutual benefits during the NDC and the SDG implementation process.

NDCs and the networked nature of the SDGs: Figure 3 depicts key cross-cutting themes in the climate activities of the NDCs and shows that even within one NDC activity multiple SDGs and SDG themes are mentioned. The assessment of the connections between the NDCs and the SDGs thereby also illustrate the networked nature of the 2030 Agenda.

Some of the SDG themes shown in Figure 3 are closely related to particular SDGs, but may also encompass two or more SDGs at the same time (e.g. agriculture as a theme encompasses SDG 2 and SDG 15). By identifying these interlinkages, Figure 3 demonstrates how numerous NDC activities entail synergies that may promote several SDGs at once.

Figure 3: SDG themes: Sectoral categories that appear across numerous SDG-relevant NDC activities

Source: NDC-SDG Connections (www.ndc-sdg.info)

It shows that SDG themes such as energy, agriculture and water are particularly relevant in this context, representing the most important cross-cutting themes. However, this analysis only depicts interdependencies between SDGs in terms of synergies and not in terms of trade-offs, as these do not usually appear explicitly in policy documents. Trade-offs are equally important in decision-making, and their links to different goals have to be understood in order to mediate them in the short and the long term, at all levels of implementation as well as across regions.

Way forward

Moving forward, it is a unique opportunity to jointly implement the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda in a forward-looking and sound manner in order to make their activities complementary. Our analysis suggests the following approaches in order to promote effective implementation and policy coherence:

Implementation of the Paris Agreement: Since the NDCs process is cyclical, the SDG lens can help countries develop more comprehensive ambitions, which take into account how NDC implementation can contribute to achieving multiple goals of the 2030 Agenda. Countries should use the upcoming stocktaking exercises and future NDC updates to more closely align their policies and activities with the SDGs and provide clear, transparent, and measureable plans that

maximise the potential benefits and at the same time identify, minimise and mediate potential trade-offs.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Identifying the mutual benefits of NDC and SDG implementation helps to take them into account when planning the 2030 Agenda implementation strategies. For instance, through the knowledge of thematic overlaps, national sustainable development strategies can be designed more straightforwardly to complement and leverage mutual co-benefits with their NDCs. Moreover, a close thematic alignment of the periodical Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) within the 2030 Agenda Follow-Up and Review process with the NDCs allows tailored commitments to be provided in the future, tied to past challenges and achievements.

In short, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda review processes provide important instruments to monitor and advance the alignment of policies related to NDCs and SDGs. Connecting the thematic implementation of both agendas holds the potential to identify and support leverage points for both agendas, to identify critical gaps and shortcomings in implementation, and to foster a truly integrative implementation of the social, economic and ecological dimension of these two agendas. Ultimately, the analysis of interconnections between both agendas reaffirms that climate policy is crucial for human development, and that a sustainable development lens is indispensable for a climate policy with a human face.

NDC-SDG Connections is a joint initiative of the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). It aims at illuminating co-benefits between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The initiative is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). For more information, please visit www.ndc-sdg.info.

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