

## Developing countries exploring pathways to climate compatibility

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### How low can you go? Climate talks in Lima

Climate negotiations in Lima<sup>[1]</sup> last week decided on national contributions – with light information and very weak scrutiny. It did put together the elements of a deal in Paris, though differences on detail remain large. But with lack of adequate long-term finance, and a refusal to balance support of adaptation and mitigation, Lima did not make reaching in a deal in Paris easier.

#### INDCs: Intended nationally determined contributions

A major outcome expected from Lima was to specify “contributions” by countries – the language of “commitments” being a bit too hard for some. They are known as “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions” or INDCs. A major issue of contention was whether the INDC deal with mitigation only, or also with adaptation and support (“support” meaning finance, technology and capacity-building)

#### Balanced support for adaptation and mitigation

The INDC decision gives some rhetorical reassurance to supporting adaptation. But it is in preambular language, as a “determination to strengthen adaptation action” in the Paris Agreement. That reassurance belies the actual decision taken, which focuses INDCs very clearly on mitigation.

The ‘heart of the bargain’ on climate change has been seen by major powers as being a deal on mitigation and finance. Lima seems to have reconfirmed again that the interests of smaller countries – including the Africa Group – which are primarily in adaptation – are not taken seriously.

#### INDCs only on mitigation

Loss and Damage is what happens when adaptation as a gradual response to impacts no longer suffices. But again, there was no flexibility shown by developed countries to include this core concern, except in some preambular reassurance.

#### Light information and very weak assessment

So at least we get hard mitigation commitments, right? Wrong – we get mitigation contributions, and those only specified by weak information and even weaker assessment.

A big focus in Lima was called “UFI” – the upfront information required to present a country’s (mitigation) INDC. So you’d think there would be clear tables to be filled in, specifying precisely how many tons are to be produced over a period of years, how accounting works, and so on.

Not the case. The final negotiations ditched an Annex that specified information in more detailed, leaving a single paragraph. Parties presenting their INDCs “may include, as appropriate, inter alia, quantifiable information ...”. The details after so much fudge-language barely matter. But since I care about good information, let me make the most of what is in paragraph 14:

If you took it seriously, the mitigation INDC would specify a base year, and time frame; the scope and coverage of GHG emissions. Quite helpful is the inclusion of planning processes, as this can link into sectoral plans such as electricity that are hotly debated in SA and many other countries. Then assumptions and methodologies may be stated. A good reference that SA fought for is to have accounting for emissions from sources and removals (sinks) – that will require additional decisions to accounting rules after Paris.

#### Equity and Ambition

The information on INDCs must indicate “how the Party considers that its intended nationally determined contribution is fair and ambitious, in light of its national circumstances, and how it contributes towards achieving the objective of the Convention as set out in its Article 2”. In the last sentence lies some remnant of consideration of science and equity – actually assessing what countries are doing against two key questions

- Is it enough, when all INDCs are added up?; and
- Are the contributions fair in relation to each other?

Some Parties, such as the US, seem bent on redefining ambition. Ambition has a clear meaning in climate change – limiting temperature increase. The US argues that ambition should include the best it is able to do. That may be a common sense definition – but it does not make sense when it is already clear that the combined efforts of countries will not be sufficient. You cannot negotiate with the climate, no matter how constraining your political economy.

A concession wrung by developing countries in the late hours of Lima was to explicitly refer to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR & RC). Operationally, though, each Party will present what it considers fair – and no Party is likely to indicate that it’s contribution is unfair or inadequate, is it? So that is not a very clear yard-stick.

#### Pledge and chat

A process of “ex ante assessment” was to be another key outcome of Lima. After Copenhagen – and the failure to agree a top-down treaty – we had entered a pledge-and-review world. The pledges are now called INDCs, pushing strongly to the bottom-up with major players insisting on their autonomy and that contributions be “nationally determined”.

Lima agreed that contributions are circulated, and put on a web-site. So it is now “pledge and chat”. Many proposals for a stronger review, with technical papers, assessment by experts, and a multi-lateral dialogue on the results were deleted from the final draft. The only remnant is a synthesis paper, to be ready a month before Paris.

The large economies of the world, which are also the largest emitters, are not willing to subject their intended contributions to any close scrutiny. Essentially, the rest of the world is told to take what they submit. To call for enhanced transparency when refusing to submit contributions to any serious examination is not credible. The US-China announcement shortly before Lima did not lead to sufficiently large positive momentum. Unless something changes next year, that does not bode well for Paris. That change might be finance – since we were told it won’t be adaptation, or loss and damage.

### Fuzzy pathways towards long-term finance

On finance, the INDC urges developed countries to mobilise finance for both mitigation and adaptation. But one has to read it as a legal text: “Urging” is merely an encouragement, and much weaker than what political leaders of developed countries said in Copenhagen in 2009, when they “committing to a goal” to jointly mobilise \$ 100 billion per year by 2020. *Instead of a clear pathway towards that goal of long-term finance,*

A separate decision on long term finance does not contain clear numerical steps, but rather requests reporting “to enhance the available quantitative and qualitative elements of a pathway”. The initial capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund was \$ 10 billion – that is a significant amount of money, representing efforts to contribute and finance flows not only through the GCF. Claims were circulating in Lima that simply applying a leverage factor of ten meant – hey presto! – that \$100 bn was done – simply not a credible claim. In fact, \$10 billion is spread over four years, so \$2.5 billion per year. That is 2.5% of \$100 billion. Despite all mention of other flows and leveraging, the pledges were not sufficient to build sufficient trust for a strong decision in Lima.

### Elements of a Paris deal

The Lima negotiations did succeed in identifying elements for the Agreement in Paris. A major task was to outline the key elements of a draft negotiating text. Starting as a “non-paper”, a complex document is attached to the main decision in Lima. It can be read both positively and negatively.

The positive reading is that the elements have been identified a year ahead of Paris, structured into key themes and issues. So there is a better understanding of shape of the Paris deal emerging. And the elements capture the views of all Parties. In the last lies the negative – the views captured are very widely diverging, and the ability to bridge wide differences was not demonstrated in Lima. If Parties continue to stick rigidly to positions, and delay on process issues, then the unwieldy 38-page document will not be trimmed down to a strong Agreement. If Paris is like Lima, a much weakened version would be produced in the end.

But a year still remains. Another negotiating session in February will further refine the elements, before it becomes a formal negotiating text by May 2015. And then three more meetings will negotiate the text of the Agreement. They will be needed, as there are large differences to bridge.

### Prospects

The overall trend, then, was of a continued swing from top-down setting of targets to an almost entirely bottom-up system of global climate governance. Commitments are determined nationally, there is very little prescription of what information to present, and only the lightest-touch of multi-lateral consideration. Many commentators have been arguing for a hybrid agreement, between top-down and bottom-up. After Lima, it seems likely it may be almost entirely bottom-up.

In my view, the pendulum has swung too far. Greater action at the national level is a good thing. So is action by cities, and host of initiatives outside of the UNFCCC. But there is currently no way of knowing what all these initiatives are adding up to – either in tons reduced, or dollars invested, or any other metric. So we are asked to take a leap of faith that the actions, once started, will ‘somehow’ scale up to what is needed to solve the problem. And we are not even being given clear means to track whether that is a happening, given the very light information and even weaker assessment. The onus is on those relentlessly driving this bottom-up approach to demonstrate that broad participation can deliver a solution to climate change.

But most worrying, in my view, is the clear refusal by most rich countries to accept adaptation as a global responsibility. Developing countries are asked to take mitigation commitments – that is quite right, as part of our responsibility for the future and to the planet. But if at the same time, developed countries are reducing their own financial obligations, and leaving the most vulnerable to adapt by themselves, that does not seem like a fair deal.

[1] The meetings in Lima were formally the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP20) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP10), and took place from 1 to 12 December 2014, in Lima, Peru.

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How low can you go? Climate talks in Lima : MAPS

Read [#MAPSProgramme](#) Director [#harrywinkler](#) blog on recent climate negotiations in Geneva <http://t.co/SNvxzdzuq>

[#Mapsprogramme](#) team meeting, planning the year ahead and post 2015. What is the next narrative that MAPS can put down?

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