



THE PARIS TARGETS

TARGETS AND THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Escalating global warming is threatening the very existence of life on our planet and must be contained. The 2015 Paris Agreement sets an absolute upper limit of 2°C on increase in global mean temperature by the end of this century. It also calls for ample efforts to limit the warming to a less risky 1.5°C.

In order to make progress towards meeting these targets, countries are bound to submit emissions reduction plans called 'Nationally Determined Contributions' (NDCs) every five years. While the Agreement speaks of the 'highest possible ambition', and specifies that every plan must be more ambitious than the one that preceded it, **there is no mechanism to ensure that these voluntary NDCs are geared towards limiting warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C.**

Countries announced their first NDCs in 2015; the next round is due in 2020.

UNAMBITIOUS TARGETS UNDERWHELMING RESULTS

UNEP's 2019 *Emissions Gap Report* has estimated that if current national policies the world over persist, **global mean temperature will rise by 3.2°C** by the end of this century.

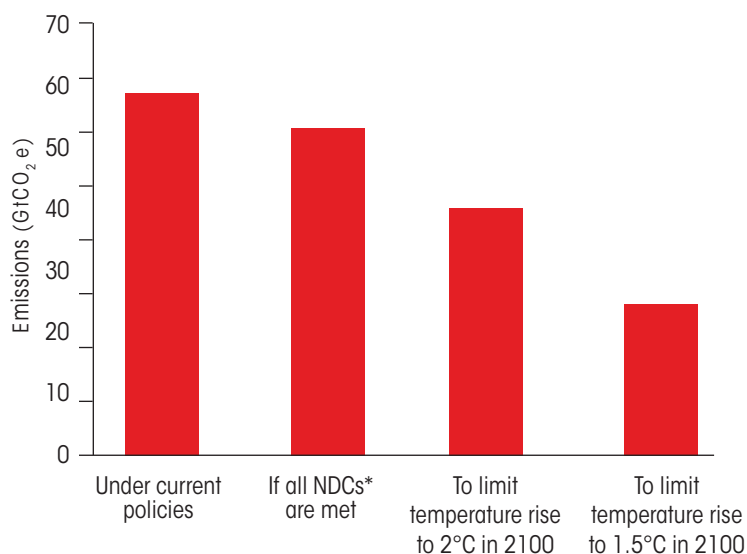
In this business-as-usual scenario, GHG emissions in 2030 will exceed the limit corresponding to warming of 2°C by 45 per cent and the limit corresponding to warming of 1.5°C by a whopping 140 per cent.

Even if all NDCs are met, global emissions in 2030 will still be 30 per cent higher than the 2°C limit and 120 per cent higher than the 1.5°C limit.

Thus, over two-thirds of the emissions gap in 2030 will be due to poorly set targets, rather than failure to achieve those targets. **Woefully inadequate ambition is set to lead to a 3.2°C world.**

What leads where

Global emissions in 2030 under various scenarios



*Nationally Determined Contributions; Source: UNEP 2019, Emission Gap Report





ETHICS OF NDCs RESPONSIBILITY AND CAPABILITY?

An assessment of any country's fair share of mitigation efforts needs to have at its heart the doctrine of **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities**, enshrined in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the bedrock of all global climate action, and reiterated in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The EU, the US and other developed countries are responsible for a lion's share of historical emissions. Therefore, they have a higher share in the **responsibility** to reduce emissions. Higher historical emissions have allowed them to accumulate wealth, enabling them to do much more to mitigate climate change. Thus, they have a higher **capability** to reduce emissions.

Moreover, rich countries have exorbitant per capita

emissions and must work harder to reduce them to a level of equitable parity with the rest of the world. This is vital as countries in the global South desperately need carbon space to meet the subsistence needs of their teeming millions.

However, three decades after the UNFCCC, unambitious and inequitable assessments of climate ambition, which require the same percentage emissions reductions from developing countries as from developed countries, persist. Developed countries regularly invoke rising emissions in India and other developing countries to justify their own failure to reduce much higher per capita emissions. Such self-serving arguments merely perpetuate the dominance of bigger historical and current polluters.

HOW (IN)ADEQUATE ARE NDC TARGETS?

Operational visions of equity differ. So Climate Action Tracker (a collaborative effort between Climate Analytics and the New Climate Institute, both based in Germany), used a large base of 40 studies referred to by the IPCC, as well as its own analysis to construct a rating to measure climate efforts. The rating reflected many varying visions of how the Paris Agreement's emphasis on 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances' should be put in practice.

India is the only major economy whose climate efforts have been rated as 2°C-compatible. No major economy's plan is compatible with a 1.5°C world.

Nevertheless, India too can—and must—enhance its climate ambition. But it is absolutely critical for other major economies to shoulder a fair share of the burden. This is particularly true for countries such as the US and Russia, which are on track to contribute to warming in excess of 4°C, but also for the EU, Australia and Canada, whose targets fall far short of being compatible with the 2°C limit.

How ambitious are G20 climate targets?

Rating of G20 countries' climate targets and actions based on their fair share of the burden. The EU's 'Insufficient' rating, for example, implies that if all countries acted like the EU, global mean temperature would rise by 2–3°C by 2100.



2°C COMPATIBLE

India



INSUFFICIENT (2–3°C RISE)

EU, Australia, Canada, Brazil and Mexico



HIGHLY INSUFFICIENT (3–4°C RISE)

Argentina, South Korea, South Africa, China, Japan and Indonesia



CRITICALLY INSUFFICIENT (MORE THAN 4°C RISE)

Saudi Arabia, the US, Russia and Turkey

Source: Climate Action tracker



Centre for Science and Environment