

#Parliaments4thePlanet

10 actions for stronger national climate commitments



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Countries' national climate commitments, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), are essential components of the global response to climate change under the Paris Agreement, an international treaty aimed at limiting global warming to 1.5°C. An NDC serves as a country's climate action plan, outlining its commitments to reduce emissions, adapt to climate impacts and secure financing.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has developed this practical guide to help parliaments and parliamentarians understand their countries' NDCs and exercise effective oversight. The guide includes detailed background information about NDCs and sets out 10 actions that parliaments can consider taking in order to enhance or complement their existing oversight practices.

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Nationally determined contributions: background information

Who is responsible for developing NDCs and what should the process entail?

Responsibility for developing and submitting NDCs rests with the government, and in particular with relevant departments such as the ministries of the environment, energy and finance. The process should be consultative, inclusive and participatory. In order to maintain transparency and reflect diverse perspectives, it should involve broad engagement with a variety of stakeholders, such as academia, civil society, the private sector, affected communities including Indigenous groups, and non-governmental organizations.

Why should parliaments and parliamentarians be involved in NDC development and implementation?

Parliaments must ensure that governments act on their climate commitments, including NDCs. They play a key role in turning climate pledges into policies supported by appropriate budgets, in holding the government to account, and in integrating climate action into national plans. Engaging in the NDC process can increase parliamentarians' political influence, as well as enabling them to gain support from constituents, foster economic growth through green jobs, secure funding for local projects and strengthen community resilience.

What does an NDC contain?

An NDC contains a number of key components that are essential for climate action. These include the following:

- Climate risk and impact analysis: a projected analysis of both climate risks and impacts
- Mitigation targets: plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- Adaptation measures: strategies to address climate impacts

- Implementation plans: details of how these targets and strategies will be achieved
- Estimated budgets: an estimate of the financial resources required
- Transparency: mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and verifying progress

Many developing countries distinguish between targets that they can achieve without external financial support (known as “unconditional” targets), and those that depend on financial aid, technology transfer, capacity-building or other forms of support from other countries or international organizations (known as “conditional” targets). This approach allows these countries to set more ambitious goals and seek the necessary international support to meet global climate objectives.

How often are NDCs updated?

NDCs are updated every five years, with each update expected to be more ambitious than the last. Countries can, however, update their NDCs at any time in order to raise their level of ambition.

When will the next NDC updates be submitted?

The next NDC updates are expected by early 2025, following the submission of Long-Term Strategies (LTS) due in November 2024. An LTS outlines a country’s approach to achieving low-carbon, climate-resilient development over several decades, often targeting net-zero emissions by 2050. It sets out the long-term vision and direction that guide the development of NDCs, ensuring that short-term climate actions are aligned with broader, long-term goals.

Where can I find my country’s NDC?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change website (UNFCCC) maintains a [registry](#) of all NDC submissions, including submission dates and updates. You can also request a draft of your country’s upcoming NDC directly from the relevant government ministry or ministries. Engaging with your government early in the process allows you to provide input into the NDC before it is finalized and submitted.

What are the characteristics of a good NDC?

A good NDC is ambitious, setting challenging but achievable targets for reducing emissions and adapting to climate impacts. It is transparent, with clear reporting on actions and progress. It is also robust, feasible and inclusive, engaging all of society in the process.

Are NDCs legally binding?

The Paris Agreement requires countries to prepare and update their NDCs. However, the specific targets they contain are not legally binding, so there are no legal penalties if a country fails to achieve its stated goals. Parliaments therefore have an important role to play in turning NDCs into national legislation and holding governments to account for their implementation.

What is the relationship between NDCs and national legal and policy frameworks?

Your country's NDC should align with its climate policies, development plans and legal frameworks, as well with its LTS. This alignment ensures that climate action is integrated into the broader legislative framework, and into national socioeconomic development strategies.

How is progress measured?

Progress is measured through national reporting and independent assessments. Every five years, there is also a [global stocktake](#), which evaluates collective progress towards the Paris Agreement goals. This process, along with public, media, and civil society engagement, applies additional pressure on countries to fulfil their commitments. National efforts are publicly compared, which increases scrutiny on those countries that are falling behind.

How are transparency and accountability ensured?

The Enhanced Transparency Framework was established under the Paris Agreement to ensure transparency and accountability. Every two years, countries submit Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs) on their NDC progress, which undergo technical review and multilateral consideration processes. There is greater flexibility in BTR reporting time frames for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. All BTRs can be accessed via the UNFCCC registry.

Ten actions parliaments and parliamentarians can take

With the 2025 deadline for NDC submission fast approaching, parliaments face a critical window of opportunity to shape their countries' climate futures. The following section lists 10 actions that parliaments and parliamentarians can take in this regard, setting out a practical approach to strengthen oversight of NDC development and implementation processes. Parliamentary committees with a mandate to address climate issues are particularly well-positioned to lead many of these efforts, leveraging their specialized focus to ensure effective oversight.

These actions encompass parliamentary oversight activities and direct interventions in the NDC process, as well as efforts to enhance the broader enabling environment necessary for successful NDC development, update and implementation. By engaging in these steps, parliaments can help ensure their countries meet climate commitments and contribute to global climate goals.

1. Establish a baseline

Understand the performance of past NDCs and stay informed about current developments in order to effectively guide future actions.

Possible actions:

- Request a hearing with, and regular updates from, government officials on the new NDC, including the NDC development plan, progress reports, timelines and challenges.
- Review the previous NDC to establish a baseline for the 2025 update. Assess progress, policies and areas where targets were missed, in order to identify gaps and areas requiring improvement.
- Obtain and review recent climate risk and vulnerability information for inclusion in the NDC.



2. Put people front and centre

Ensure a consultative, inclusive and participatory approach to NDC development and implementation, while promoting public awareness and engagement in climate action.

Possible actions:

- Review the NDC development process to ensure that it was inclusive and participatory, and that it involved consultation with relevant stakeholders: experts, government agencies, the private sector, civil society, and affected communities including Indigenous and marginalized groups.
- If consultations were limited in the initial NDC development stage, encourage follow-up public dialogues and update the NDC in line with any new information so that it reflects the public's priorities.
- Increase public understanding of NDC commitments and climate science by hosting outreach activities, disseminating simple informational materials, and using media, civil society and social media channels to educate and engage the public and to build support for climate action.



3. Scrutinize for quality

Review the NDC to ensure that it is ambitious, comprehensive and actionable, and that it meets high standards of feasibility and transparency.

Possible actions:

- Check whether the NDC is robust and ambitious, with well-defined, measurable targets and clear implementation plans. Committees can also review the NDC to ensure that it includes mechanisms for transparency, monitoring and verification.
- Engage local experts, and partner with active organizations or local universities, to determine whether the NDC incorporates sound scientific data for evidence-based decision-making. Experts can offer insight as to whether the NDC's targets are realistic in light of your country's economic, social and technological capabilities.
- Ensure that the NDC reflects gender, age and other social considerations, such that it ensures inclusivity and addresses the needs of all demographic groups.



4. Ensure alignment with national policies

Ensure that the NDC and subsequent updates are aligned with national policies in order to support a cohesive approach to climate action.

Possible actions:

- Conduct a review to check that the NDC and any subsequent updates are aligned and consistent with key national policies such as development plans and green recovery initiatives.
- Establish systems to monitor how NDC goals are integrated into national policies in order to ensure that climate objectives are effectively embedded in all relevant sectors.
- Draw up policy guidance and recommendations – partnering where necessary with local policy experts, international organizations or academic institutions – on aligning the NDC with national priorities and international commitments.



5. Monitor alignment with international commitments

Ensure that the NDC and subsequent updates are consistent with global climate goals and international agreements.

Possible actions:

- Stay informed about international climate negotiations, such as those taking place under the auspices of the UNFCCC, in order to understand their impact on global goals and NDCs. This can include participating in online climate briefings from the IPU, subscribing to updates and following relevant social media accounts.
- Periodically review your country's NDC and national policies to ensure they are aligned with international climate commitments and goals. Review updates from international climate conferences and ensure the relevant aspects are incorporated into your national strategies.
- Organize briefings for parliament, including for relevant parliamentary committees, in the lead-up to major climate events such as UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs). Responsible ministers/negotiators can be invited to provide updates on the key issues that will be discussed at the upcoming COP.
- Actively engage in international climate forums and negotiations such as COPs. Advocate to join national delegations and/or participate in related events in order to stay engaged in global climate discussions.
- Once international agreements are reached, ensure that your country's NDCs, national policies and legislation are adjusted in line with these commitments. This might include updating targets, timelines or strategies in response to global decisions.



6. Strengthen legal and institutional frameworks

Strengthen the legal and institutional foundations that support the integration and effective implementation of NDCs.

Possible actions:

- Review existing national laws and regulations across sectors to ensure they align with and support your country's NDC.
- Identify gaps or weaknesses in current legal and regulatory frameworks that could hinder NDC implementation and the enforcement of climate commitments. If necessary, consult legal experts to identify key areas where laws or regulations are lacking.
- Amend existing legislation or develop new laws in order to create an enabling legal environment for NDC implementation. Pass laws to hold the government to account for your country's NDC.
- Evaluate the capacity and effectiveness of national institutions responsible for climate action (e.g. by gathering feedback from relevant agencies or using simple assessments), and advocate for reforms and capacity-building initiatives.
- Encourage coordination between different government agencies, institutions and committees engaged in climate action (e.g. through regular meetings or by forming working groups) in order to improve communication and collaboration, and to strengthen NDC implementation.



7. Reinforce implementation and oversight with sufficient funding

Approve and advocate for sufficient funding to support NDC implementation and oversight, ensuring that national budgets are aligned with climate commitments.

Possible actions:

- Review the financial requirements outlined in your country's NDC, ensuring that all mitigation and adaptation targets and measures – both unconditional and conditional – are covered.
- Review national budget proposals and lobby within parliament for adequate funding for NDC implementation, focusing on key priority areas.
- Request regular updates from relevant government ministries on how financial resources are being allocated to, and spent on, climate activities.
- Hold public hearings for government officials, experts and other stakeholders to discuss the alignment of budgets with the NDC and the appropriateness of planned financial allocations.



8. Track and report

Ensure that systems are in place for continuous monitoring of, and regular reporting on, NDC progress, and that these systems promote accountability, transparency and adaptability.

Possible actions:

- Review how the government tracks and reports on NDC progress to parliament, ensuring that this process is clear and transparent.
- Set specific NDC progress reporting intervals to ensure that updates are provided on a regular basis.
- Conduct periodic hearings for the government to present NDC progress reports, and ensure that all reports are made publicly accessible.



9. Promote timely and inclusive NDC updates

Encourage the development of a clear and inclusive process for NDC updating, enhancement and timely submission.

Possible actions:

- Support and monitor the development of a clear, inclusive NDC update process that follows a set timeline and ensures thorough stakeholder consultation.
- Ensure that the NDC development timeline includes sufficient time for consultation with climate experts, and encourage the use of the latest data and research on climate hazards, impacts and vulnerabilities in order to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Advocate for regular NDC updates in order to raise your country's level of ambition and strengthen its commitments in line with global climate developments and international agreements.



10. Empower and unite

Strengthen NDC oversight through active parliamentary engagement, collaboration and capacity-building.

Possible actions:

- Participate in COP parliamentary events, including the annual IPU Parliamentary Meeting. Contribute to the outcome document and work to implement it within your national context.
- Leverage opportunities for capacity-building support from the IPU and other parliamentary organizations. Request tailored national support, access available tools, and attend IPU webinars and regional seminars on climate change science and policy in order to strengthen your parliament's knowledge and skills in the areas of climate action and NDC oversight.
- Participate in IPU regional seminars in order to collaborate on global sustainability efforts, help develop resolutions and apply insights to strengthen national NDC oversight.
- Work across party lines to build consensus on climate action and ensure unified parliamentary support for NDC oversight.
- Build partnerships and facilitate knowledge-sharing with regional and international counterparts in order to learn from each other's NDC oversight processes.



Useful tools and resources

- [Climate Action Tracker](#): This tool monitors and assesses national climate actions, evaluating how well countries meet their GHG reduction targets and Paris Agreement goals. The tracker provides ratings and reports to help parliaments judge the ambition and effectiveness of their NDCs.
- [Climate Change Laws of the World](#): This database, hosted by the London School of Economics, includes global climate laws, policies and litigation cases, helping parliamentarians identify best practices and develop legislative frameworks.
- [Climate Promise](#): This initiative, hosted by the United Nations Development Programme, supports countries in developing and enhancing their NDCs. It offers tools and resources including a [quality assurance checklist](#) that parliaments can adapt for NDC oversight.
- [Climate Watch](#): This platform, hosted by the World Resources Institute, provides data, visualizations and resources to support climate action and the development of NDCs. A new “2025 NDCs Tracker” will launch in 2024.
- [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#): This section of the UNFCCC website provides information about the Paris Agreement and NDCs. It includes the [NDC Registry](#), allowing parliamentarians to review national and international NDC commitments and updates.
- [Next Generation NDCs: Tracking Progress of Countries’ Nationally Determined Contributions](#): This section of the World Resources Institute website provides research, tools and policy guidance to help countries effectively create, enhance and implement their NDCs.
- *Parliaments and the Paris Agreement*: This guide, developed by ParlAmericas, GLOBE, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and INTER PARES, offers practical recommendations for strengthening parliamentary oversight of international climate commitments and includes examples of good practices from around the world.
- [Climate TRACE](#): Discover more than 350 million sources of GHGs in this independent online emissions tracking inventory.

#Parliaments4thePlanet

My parliament, my planet!

At the IPU we believe that climate action begins at home. Parliaments and parliamentarians must lead by example before preaching to the people.

That's why we launched a campaign called **Parliaments for the Planet** to mobilize parliaments and parliamentarians to act on the climate emergency.

My parliament!

Part 1 of the campaign encourages parliaments and those who work in them to reduce their carbon footprint and become greener.

My planet!

Overlapping with Part 1 of the campaign, Part 2 helps parliaments step up action through legislation, budgets and, in particular, scrutiny of government measures to implement the Paris Agreement.

Write to press@ipu.org and tell us what your parliament is doing for the planet!

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