



Complete the Ambition Mechanism

Why an Ambition Cycle under the Paris Agreement matters, and why it matters now

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The Paris Agreement is a landmark multilateral treaty, demonstrating unprecedented world-wide political will at the highest level to combat climate change. The Agreement sets out an ‘Ambition Mechanism’ – an ongoing periodic process to increase climate action. Its purpose is to enable countries to do as much (to be as ‘ambitious’) in their nationally determined contributions as they possibly can. This mechanism makes the Agreement effective, dynamic and lasting, responsive to the best available science, to economic and technological opportunities, and perhaps most importantly, to public calls and support for climate action.

While the majority of rules enabling the implementation of the Agreement have been finalised, a few key issues remain outstanding. As 2020 marks the start of implementation and the enhancement of ambition to achieve the objectives of the Agreement, these issues must be dealt with as a matter of urgency at the next climate conference (COP26) in Glasgow. One such outstanding key issue is the completion of the Paris Ambition Mechanism with a multilateral modality to fully enable governments to be as ambitious as they can be under the Agreement. Ambition is nationally determined and is therefore raised by national, not multilateral, political decisions. Yet governments need to assure domestic stakeholders that an envisaged ambition enhancement would be fair, in order to raise ambition effectively at the national level.

Unfortunately, technical negotiations on such a modality have come as far as they can, leaving some issues that can only be resolved politically. Political intervention and leadership are needed to break the deadlock, or the Agreement may not be able to deliver on the political will and momentum demonstrated in the past five years. COP26, which was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will already mark year-one into the crucial first decade of implementation. It is of paramount importance that the ambition modality be completed in Glasgow, not least to demonstrate to the world that the multilateral climate change regime is serious about enabling nationally determined ambition. Otherwise it risks potentially undermining public confidence, and the effective operation and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The [Glasgow Ambition Cycle](#) provides such an ambition-enabling modality by setting a cyclical timetable for these ambition milestones to take place in a meaningful manner, synchronised with the communication, implementation and stocktake cycles of the Agreement. Its most important characteristic is that it supports governments in determining their ambition levels nationally, and provides a structure to facilitate national planning. It therefore generates mutual confidence and transparency among countries to ensure that ambition is raised fairly and equitably.

Governments around the world are listening to science to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the Glasgow Ambition Cycle there is an invaluable opportunity to respond to the climate change emergency by enhancing the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement, and to do so urgently now. We can quarantine against a virus, we cannot quarantine against climate change!