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# Common Time Frames

Reducing the Options for  
a Decision in Glasgow

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# Key Messages for Policy Makers

## The Current Situation

The ‘**Ambition Mechanism**’ of the [Paris Agreement](#) is currently given by two interlocking 5-year cycles:

- A **communication cycle**: All Parties *must* communicate a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) *every five years* (Art. 4.9).
- A ‘**Global Stocktake**’ review cycle: To *take stock of the implementation* of the Paris Agreement, and to *assess the collective progress* towards achieving its purpose (Art. 14.1).

## The Challenges

### Accounting

At present, there are NDCs ending in (‘with a time frame up to’) 2025 and others in 2030. Not having the same end-years makes global accounting very difficult, if not impossible. This applies not only to the Global Stocktake, with its backwards review of the state of implementation and its forward assessment of the collective ambition, but also to issues such as the avoidance of double counting in global emission trading (Art. 6).

### Enhancing Ambition

There are currently no instructions in the Paris Agreement or its rulebook about reconsidering the level of ambition of one’s NDCs once they have been communicated, other than an acknowledgment that Parties can enhance the level of ambition, if they wish to do so (Art. 4.11).

This is sub-optimal because Parties are unlikely to ‘spontaneously’ enhance the ambition of their previously communicated NDCs on their own – or at least not as much as they would be willing and able to in coordination with their international partners and competitors, and such a coordinated ambition enhancement requires an advance notification of the initially proposed levels of ambition.

## The Solution

Addressing these challenges requires:

- a single universal Common Time Frame – in other words, simultaneous end years for all NDCs;
- a sufficient advance notification of NDCs;
- a timetable for regular consideration of enhancing the level of ambition of previously communicated NDCs.

## **The Glasgow Ambition Cycle**

All this can be provided by adopting the following very simple Decision – to complete the Ambition Mechanism of the Paris Agreement in Glasgow:

“The CMA

- *requests* Parties to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035, and to do so every five years thereafter;
- *also requests* Parties to consider in 2025 updating/adjusting their existing nationally determined contributions with a view to enhancing levels of ambition, and to do so every five years thereafter.”

For a more comprehensive formulation, see Section 3.c *The Glasgow Ambition Mechanism*

# I. Background

At COP 21 in Paris (2015), it was agreed that the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) “shall consider common time frames for nationally determined contributions at its first session” [Art. 4.10]. In Marrakech, the year after, the CMA agreed to refer the matter to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) which, in 2017 in Bonn (SBI 47), “invited Parties and observers to submit, by 31 March 2018, their views on common time frames for NDCs ... including on, but not limited to, the usefulness of and options for common time frames and the advantages and disadvantages of those options, for consideration at SBI 48 (April–May 2018)”[[SBI 47 conclusions](#)].

By May 2018, 15 Parties had made submissions, which were analysed in an OCP/ecbi [Discussion Note](#), but the SBI deliberations didn’t progress beyond a [List of Bullet points by the co-facilitators](#) (SBI.48.2, September 2019).

The first, and hitherto only, decision on the matter was taken at CMA.1 in Katowice, when it was decided “that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onward” ([Decision 6/CMA.1](#)).

SBI.50 (June 2019) resulted in an informal note listing [6 options](#), which was picked up and expanded to [10 options](#) at SBI.51 in Madrid (December 2019) where, however, the deliberations were rolled over under Rule 16 and have not been taken up since, due to the COVID pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

Since then, an Informal and a [Technical Dialogue](#) took place in November 2020, and an Informal Consultation of heads of delegations by the COP Presidencies in April 2021; all of which pointing to a desire by Parties to settle this issue at COP 26 in Glasgow and, consequently, to reduce the number of options that are under consideration.

On 29 May 2021, ahead of the 2021 mid-year SBI session, the SBI Chair Marianne Karlsen (Norway) issued an [Informal Note on Common Time Frames](#) for NDCs (see Annex B). This contained the SBI.50 6-option note together with possible elements for consolidating the options; on 16 June, at the end of the session; this was followed by an [Informal Note](#) (the ‘Chair’s Note’, see Annex A) with *Reflections on possible elements and Proposals submitted by Parties*, which will be analysed in Section 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Rule 16 Any item of the agenda of an ordinary session, consideration of which has not been completed at the session, shall be included automatically in the agenda of the next ordinary session, unless otherwise decided by the Conference of the Parties.”[[Draft Rule of Procedures](#)]

## 2. Framing the Issue

It has become increasingly clear since COP 25 in Madrid that an ever-increasing number of Parties to the Paris Agreement are intent on finishing the negotiations on ‘common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement’ at COP 26. Indeed, the UK COP 26 Presidency has made this one of their top three priorities regarding the completion of the Paris Rule Book in Glasgow.

### a. Action Language and Content

One of the main obstacles to progress in the CTF (Common Time Frame) negotiations has been that Parties do not have a common understanding on what ‘time frame’ actually refers to.

In June 2018, OCP published an in-depth analysis of this situation, on the basis of the Party submissions requested at SBI.47 ([Müller 2018.a](#)). It showed that Parties were essentially using two types of interpretations of ‘time frame’: a material and a procedural one. The material interpretation is about time intervals associated with the NDCs – to be precise, about *target- and implementation periods* – and mostly involves references to their lengths. The procedural interpretation is about timetables for the processes of communicating and updating NDCs.

Subsequent work based on this analysis (see Annex E) did suggest a way to ‘synthesize’ CTF proposals, such as those contained in the SBI Options Notes, by describing their *specific action content*, that is to say: the concrete instructions they contain with regards to *who* does *what*, *when*, and with respect to *which NDC* (as identified by its endpoint<sup>2</sup>).

The paradigm formulation of this type of specific action content is given in paragraphs 23 and 24 of [Decision 1/CP.21](#), and the same language is used in formulating the Glasgow Ambition Cycle proposal, to be discussed in the next section, as synthesizing *inter alia* these two paragraphs into a single Common Time Frame proposal in a way which preserves the advantages of both while avoiding the disadvantages of either:

#### **Decision 1/CP.21 (Adoption of the Paris Agreement):**

“23. *Requests* those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2025 to communicate by 2020 a new nationally determined contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Agreement;

24. *Also requests* those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2030 to communicate or update by 2020 these contributions and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Agreement;”

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<sup>2</sup> There are many diverse conceptions of the nature of target periods and periods of implementation of a particular NDC, but in practice, they always have the same end-year, which is why they can be identified by reference to this end year, as is the case in para. 23 and 24 of [Decision 1/CP.21](#): ‘containing a time frame up YYYY’ means, in practice, the same as ‘ending in YYYY’.

## b. Procedural Prerequisites for Accounting and Maximizing Ambition

Accounting, under the Paris Agreement – including the assessment of ‘double counting’ under Art. 6, and the taking stock of implementation and assessment of collective progress of the Global Stock Takes (Art. 14) – requires **synchronized NDC end-years**, in the sense of all NDCs having the same end-years, which is what we mean by ‘having a *common* time frame’.

Moreover, it has been shown<sup>3</sup> that if one wishes to maximize the potential of the process to facilitate maximum ambition, then there is also a need for:

- **synchronized updating** (ambition enhancement), and
- a **notification window** – in other words, the time between the communication year and the end year of the preceding NDC – for (first-time) communications **of at least 5 years**, in order to maximize the potential of the synchronized ambition enhancement.

It is important to highlight the difference between this line of argumentation and the long-standing debate as to whether 5-year time frames or 10-year time frames are more likely to generate ambition in NDCs. The point here is purely procedural. It is about **how the process can facilitate, or for that matter (unintentionally) stifle, NDC ambition**.

## 3. Informal SBI Consultations June 2021

During the June 2021 virtual SBI Session there were three scheduled informal CTF consultations, co-facilitated by Kishan Kumarsingh (Trinidad and Tobago) and Andrew Rakestraw (US). In the second consultation, the co-facilitators posed the following four guiding questions (framed purely in action language):

Q1. For NDCs communicated by 2025, what time frame should Parties apply? Having heard the various options placed on the table, what option or hybrid option can work for all parties?

Q2. How strong should the call be (e.g., shall, invite, encourage)?

Q3. For NDCs communicated in 2030, 2035, 2040, etc., what guidance should the common time frames decision provide? Specifically, for those supporting the option of a ten-year time frame (whether 10, "5+5," or "5 or 10"), what happens in 2030?

Q4. Should there be a call for Parties to review and update existing NDCs every five years?

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, [Müller and Kumarsingh \(2020\)](#).

## a. The Chair’s Note: Reflections on Possible Elements (Annex A)

- [a] **5 years:** Parties to communicate by 2025 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2035, communicate by 2030 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, and so forth every five years thereafter.
- [b] **5+5 years:** Parties to communicate by 2025 an NDC with a time frame up to 2035, plus an additional NDC with a time frame up to 2040, and, by 2030, an NDC with a time frame up to 2040, plus an additional NDC with a time frame up to 2045, and so forth every five years thereafter.
- [c] **10 years:**
  - [c.1] Parties to communicate by 2025 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, communicate by 2035 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2050, and so forth every 10 years thereafter.
  - [c.1.i] Some proposals were to invite Parties to communicate in 2025 an indicative waypoint/target for 2035, communicate in 2035 an indicative waypoint/target for 2045, and so forth every 10 years thereafter.
  - [c.2] Parties to communicate [c.2.2] or update [c.2.1] by 2030 their NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, communicate or update by 2040 their NDCs with a time frame up to 2050, and so forth every 10 years thereafter. Some Parties also suggested that, in doing so, Parties would be urged to increase the ambition of their NDCs.
- [d] **5 or 10 years:**<sup>4</sup> Parties to communicate by 2025 an NDC with a time frame up to either 2035 (5 years) [d.1] or 2040 (10 years) [d.2], by 2035 an NDC with a time frame up to either 2045 (5 years) or 2050 (10 years), and so forth every 5 or 10 years thereafter.

Note: The square bracket labels are used for cross-referencing in the Action Content Figures below.

## b. Action Content

Before turning to the ‘action content’ of the elements and options in the Chair’s Note, a word of caution about using references to the start of implementing an NDC (such as in: ‘to be implemented from 2031’). It is not self-evident when the implementation of an NDC starts; in particular, it is not a given that ‘implementation periods’ cannot overlap (it could well be argued that the implementation period starts with the communication, meaning that the implementation of the second NDC in a ‘5+5’ communication would start before the first one ends).

What is self-evident is that implementation ends with the end of the period used to define the target that is being implemented, which in turn is before the end-year of the NDC – that is,

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘5- or 10-year’ listing contains two further options (see Annex A), but since the first of them is identical in action content with [c.2], and the second one does not have an action content, they are omitted here.

the year referred to in the ‘original’ use of the term in para. 23 and 24 of [Decision 1/CP.21](#): “contains a time frame up to [end-year]”. This is why the following ‘action content’ analysis only refers to end-years to identify NDCs.

## Proposals submitted by Parties

Annexed to the Chair’s 16 June Reflections are 8 proposals (‘Options’) as submitted by Parties, namely the 6 Options of the SBI.50 Options Note (Annex B), together with two new Options, submitted by the LMDC Group during the June informal consultations (Annex A) all of which summarised in Table 1.

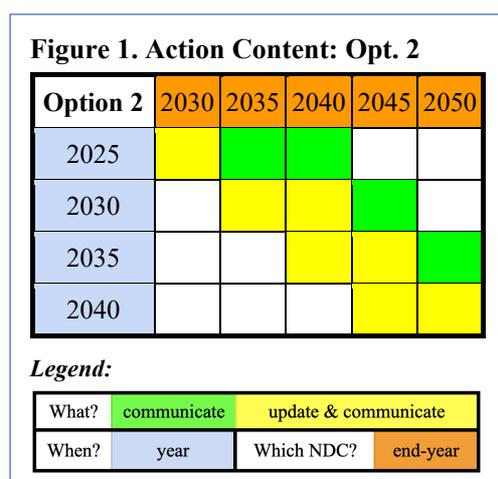
When analysing the Options submitted by Parties as Annexed to the 16 June Note, the first thing that needs to be highlighted is that not all of them actually have a specific action content: Options 1, 4, and 7 do not contain references to specific NDCs or communication/ updating years. All others, as reflected in Table 1, do contain information as to *who* is meant *to do what, when*, and with respect to *which NDC*.<sup>5</sup>

Given that with respect to action content, Option 3 covers Option 6 (which is the same as sub-Option 8.b) and sub-Option 8.a (which is the same as 3.a), and Option 5 is covered by Option 2, there are really only two distinct Options with respect to actions they refer to, namely Options 2 and 3.

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>What action?</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Which NDC?</i>
<b>Option 1</b>	all	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Option 2</b>	all	communicate	2025	2035 and 2040
<b>Option 3</b>	all	communicate	2025	2035 or 2040
<b>3.a</b>	with 2035 NDC	communicate	2030	2040
<b>3.b</b>	with 2040 NDC	update	2030	2040
<b>Option 4</b>	all	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Option 5</b>	all	communicate		5+5
<b>Option 6</b>	all	communicate	2025	2030, 2035 or 2040
<b>Option 7</b>	all	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Option 8</b>				
<b>8.a</b>	developed countries	communicate	2025	2035
<b>8.b</b>	developing countries	communicate	2025	2030, 2035, or 2040

<sup>5</sup> ‘YYYY NDC’ = ‘NDC with end-year YYYY’ = ‘NDC containing a time frame up to YYYY’.

## Option 2:



- “Decides that common time frames ... shall be five years between the end points of two successive NDCs.”
- “Further decides that Parties should communicate two successive nationally determined contributions, starting in 2025, with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively.”
- “Urges Parties to communicate and update their nationally determined contributions in 2025 and every five years thereafter, consistent with progression.”

## Option 3 (= continue with status quo):

“Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040.”

“Requests:

- those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2035 to communicate by 2030 their respective new nationally determined contributions with a time frame up to 2040; and
- those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2040 to communicate or update by 2030 these nationally determined contributions”.

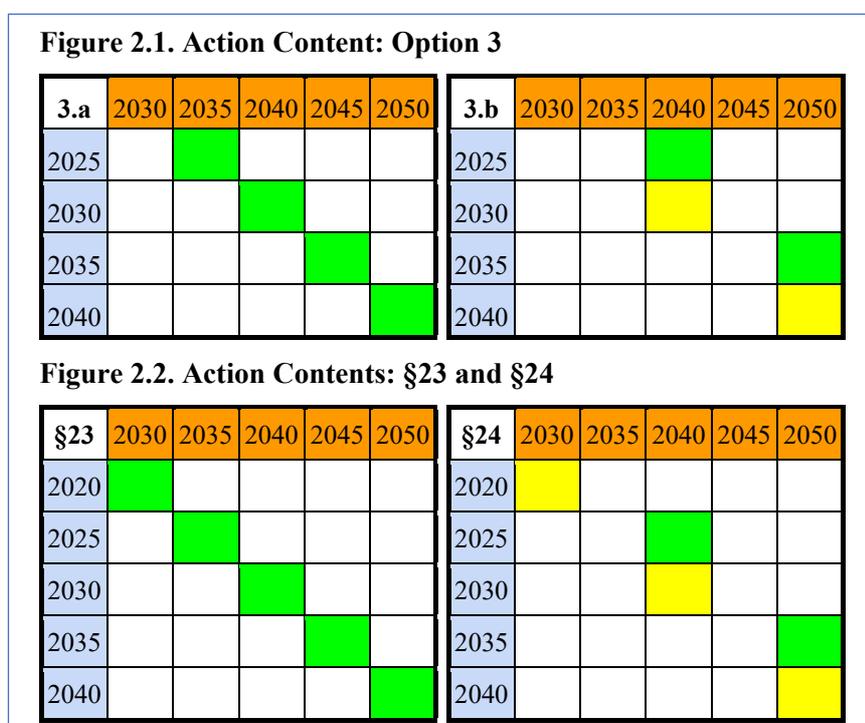


Fig. 2.1 illustrates the action content of Option 3, with its two simultaneous sub-options (a) and (b), and Fig. 2.2 illustrates at first sight that Option 3 is simply the continuation of the status quo as prescribed in §23 and §24 of Decision 1/CP.21.

It is important to highlight in this context that the two sub-options here are meant to be available simultaneously, and that consequently, Option 3 does *not contain a common time frame*, as conceived above (Section 2.b Procedural Prerequisites for Accounting and Maximizing Ambition).

### **The Chair's Elements**

Action-wise, the four 16 June elements ([a] to [d], see Section 3a The Chair's Note) are, essentially, a disaggregation of those listed in the 29 May Note (see Annex B). Figure 3 illustrates the action content of these four elements, together with the (essentially) two Options ([2] and [3]) in the annexed Proposals submitted by Parties (as identified above). It shows graphically the relation between these elements and options. For one, it shows the following action content identities:

- Element [a] = Option [3.a].
- Element [c.2.1] = Option [3.b].
- Element [d.1] = Element [a].
- Element [d.2] = Element [c.1].

It also shows how they can be transformed into each other by adding some activity:

- Option [2] is Element [b] with an added request for updating existing NDCs.
- Element [c.1.i] is Element [c.1] with the added communication of a midway target.
- Element [c.2.1] is Element [c.1] with an added request for updating existing NDCs.

Last, but not least, it illustrates which of the Options/Elements have a common time frame, as conceived above (Section 2.b), namely:

- Elements [a], [b], and Option [2] (2035, 40, 45, 50, ...)
- All the sub-Elements of [d] (2040, 2050, ...)

As well as the fact that they do not share a common time frame between them, and nor do the sub-elements of [d].

**Figure 3. Action Content: 16 June Elements and Options**



**Legend:** 'ind-T' = indicative Target/Waypoint

What?	communicate	update & communicate	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
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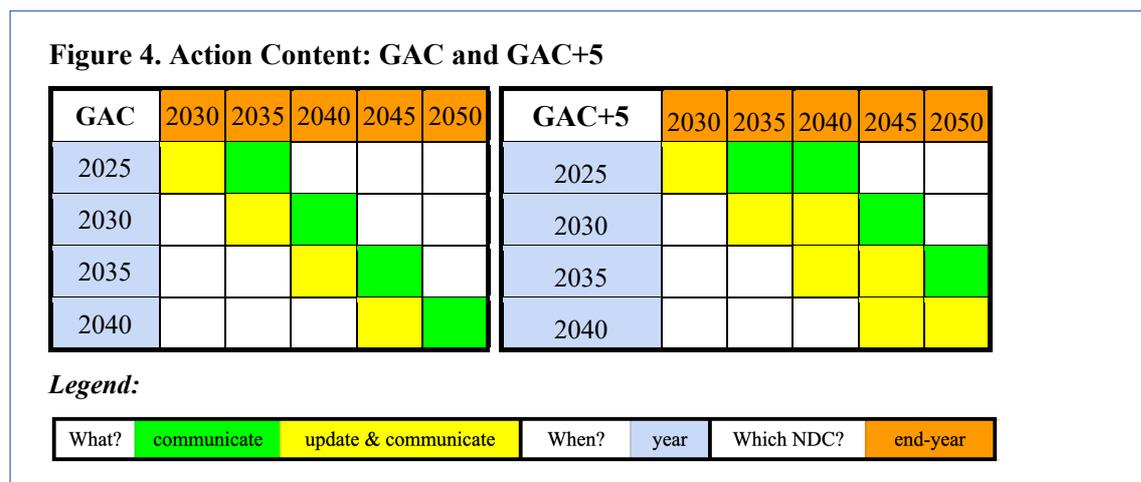
## c. The Glasgow Ambition Cycle

### The Glasgow Ambition Cycle (GAC) language:

1. *Decides* that after 2030, the sequence of end-years of all nationally determined contributions shall be 2035, 2040, 2045, and so on without exception.
2. *Requests* Parties to communicate (i) by 2025 *inter alia* a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035, (ii) by 2030 *inter alia* a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2040, and to do so every five years thereafter.
3. *Also requests* Parties to consider in 2025 updating/adjusting their existing nationally determined contributions with a view to enhancing levels of ambition, and to do so every five years thereafter.

Figure 4 illustrates not only the ‘core’ application of the GAC instructions with just one new NDC being communicated in each round, but the ‘5+5’ variation (‘version’) with an additional communication of a second NDC with a time frame up to 2040.<sup>6</sup>

While nothing in the GAC formulation prohibits these additional actions, it needs to be stressed that they are optional and not required by the GAC language.



Two points are worth highlighting in this context:

- The GAC, together with its 5+5 variation GAC+5, *satisfy all the above-mentioned pre-requisites for maximizing ambition*:
  - (i) they do contain a single common time frame;
  - (ii) they request synchronous updating; and
  - (iii) they all involve a notification window of at least 5 years.
- The 5+5 version of the GAC is nothing but Option 2 (see Figure 1).

<sup>6</sup> For more on this version, see ‘[The case of the European Union](#)’ in Müller *et al* (2021).

## 4. Conclusions

Figure 5 illustrates how the Glasgow Ambition Cycle instructions (action content) – either in their basic version, or in their ‘5+5 version’ (‘GAC+5’ = Option 2) – relate to the options and elements included in the Chair’s Note of 16 June 2021 as discussed above (see Annex B).

Following the line of argument in [Müller and Kumarsingh \(2020\)](#), the GAC proposal harnesses the advantages of all the Chair’s elements and the SBI.50 Options while avoiding their disadvantages.

**Figure 5. Action Content: Chair’s Elements [a] to [d] and Glasgow Ambition Cycle**

GAC	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	[a] (= [3.a])	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	yellow	green				2025		green			
2030		yellow	green			2030			green		
2035			yellow	green		2035				green	
2040				yellow	green	2040					green

GAC+5	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	[2]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	yellow	green	green			2025	yellow	green	green		
2030		yellow	yellow	green		2030		yellow	yellow	green	
2035			yellow	yellow	green	2035			yellow	yellow	green
2040				yellow	yellow	2040				yellow	yellow

GAC+5	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	[c.1.i]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	yellow	green	green			2025		ind-T	green		
2030		yellow	yellow	green		2030			green		
2035			yellow	yellow	green	2035				ind-T	green
2040				yellow	yellow	2040					green

GAC+5	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	[c.2.1] (= [3.b])	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	yellow	green	green			2025			green		
2030		yellow	yellow	green		2030			yellow		
2035			yellow	yellow	green	2035					green
2040				yellow	yellow	2040					yellow

**Legend:** ‘ind-T’ = indicative Target/Waypoint

What?	communicate	update & communicate	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
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# Annex A. Informal Note, SBI Chair, June 2021

## a. Reflections on possible elements

### Elements of the time frames

Parties expressed different views on the legal nature of common time frames for NDCs (e.g. whether Parties shall, will, should or may apply common time frames for NDCs).

In terms of common time frames for NDCs, Parties expressed a range of views, while recognizing that NDCs are nationally determined, which can be structured as follows:

#### Five-year time frame:

- Parties to communicate by 2025 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2035, communicate by 2030 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, and so forth every five years thereafter;

#### 10-year year time frame:

- Parties to communicate by 2025 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, communicate by 2035 their new NDCs with a time frame up to 2050, and so forth every 10 years thereafter;
- Parties to communicate or update by 2030 their NDCs with a time frame up to 2040, communicate or update by 2040 their NDCs with a time frame up to 2050, and so forth every 10 years thereafter. Some Parties also suggested that, in doing so, Parties would be urged to increase the ambition of their NDCs;
- Some proposals were to invite Parties to communicate in 2025 an indicative waypoint/target for 2035, communicate in 2035 an indicative waypoint/target for 2045, and so forth every 10 years thereafter;

#### Five-year + five-year time frame:

- Parties to communicate by 2025 an NDC with a time frame up to 2035, plus an additional NDC with a time frame up to 2040, and, by 2030, an NDC with a time frame up to 2040, plus an additional NDC with a time frame up to 2045, and so forth every five years thereafter;

#### 5- or 10-year time frame:

- Parties to communicate by 2025 an NDC with a time frame up to either 2035 (5 years) or 2040 (10 years), by 2035 an NDC with a time frame up to either 2045 (5 years) or 2050 (10 years), and so forth every 5 or 10 years thereafter;
- Some Parties also suggested that NDCs with a 10-year time frame up to 2040 would need to be communicated or updated in 2030, and NDCs with a 10-year time frame up to 2050 would need to be communicated or updated in 2040, and so forth every 10 years thereafter;
- Some Parties noted that ambition is related to the length of the time frame.

## Other elements

- Some Parties considered that the decision on common time frames should provide clarity on the starting dates of NDCs.
- Some Parties expressed that in the decision Parties should be invited to communicate in 2025 new NDCs with a time frame up to 2030, while others noted that decision 6/CMA.1 provides that Parties are to apply common time frames to their NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward.
- Some Parties expressed the view that developing countries should have flexibility when applying common time frames for NDCs.
- Some Parties expressed that the decision on common time frames should be revisited at a later point in time, and that a possible decision taken in the near future would only apply to NDCs communicated in 2025 or 2030.

## b. Proposals submitted by Parties

Options 1-6: Options Note SBI.50

Options 7-8: LMDC

### *Option 7*

*Recalling* the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Articles 3, 4, 7, 9, 10 and 11, and 6/CMA.1

1. *Decides* that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for the mitigation component of nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be [X] years.
2. *Also decides* that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for the adaptation component of nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, if applicable, shall be [X][Y] years. *{the same or different time frame(s) with/from the mitigation component}*
3. *Further decides* that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for the provision of finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building support component of nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, if applicable, shall be [X][Y][Z] years. *{the same or different time frame(s) with/from the mitigation and/or adaptation component}*
4. *Urges* developed country Parties to communicate the support component of nationally determined contributions, referred to in paragraph 3 above, with a time frame consistent with the nationally determined contributions by developing country Parties, with a view to promoting the coherence between support and actions.

5. *Encourages* developing country Parties to maintain the consistency of the timeframes for their mitigation and adaptation components, referred to paragraphs 1 and 2 respectively, as much as possible when communicating their nationally determined contributions, with a view to facilitating a balanced allocation of the support between mitigation and adaptation.

#### *Option 8*

Recalling the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Articles 2, 3, 4.4, 4.5, 7.13, 9.1, 10.6 and 11.3, and 6/CMA.1

1. Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated by developed country Parties in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be 5 years. [Option 8.a]
2. Requests each developed country Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035. [Option 8.a]
3. Also decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated by developing country Parties in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be 5 or 10 years, to be nationally determined by that developing country Party concerned. [Option 8.b]
4. Recommends developing country Parties to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2030, 2035 or 2040.

## Annex B. Informal Note, SBI Chair, May 2021

### a. Possible Elements in consolidating the Options, May 2021

#### Language

On 29 May 2021, the SBI Chair issued an [Informal Note on Common Time Frames](#) for NDCs, containing the SBI.50 6-option note together with possible elements in consolidating the options:

1. *Nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement and communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, to be communicated from 2025 and every five years thereafter shall/will/should/may have common time frames of*

[a] **5 years.**

[b] **5 years plus 5 years.** *For NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward, Parties shall/will/should/may communicate two successive NDCs with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036, respectively*

[c] **10 years.** *Parties whose NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward contain a 10-year time frame shall/will/should/may include an indicative [waypoint] [target] at the five-year mark or shall/will/should/may update their NDCs five years after they were communicated so that their NDCs can be informed by the latest global stocktake.*

[d] **5 or 10 years.** *Parties may choose either*

[d.5] *a 5-year time frame, or*

[d.10] *a 10-year time frame for their NDCs*

The language of the four elements [a]-[d] put forward in the Chair's Note contains both material and procedural concepts: it uses the material concept of timeframe length to distinguish the four elements but adds procedural explications to the second and third of them.

#### Action Content

Fig. A illustrates the action content of elements [a] to [d] and the (essentially) two options listed in the SBI.50 Note. It shows clearly how the elements relate to the (sub-options): element [c] is sub-option 3.b (namely §24) with an additional communication of indicative mid-term targets, while element [d] is essentially Option 3.

**Figure A. Action Content: Elements [a] to [d], and SBI.50 Options 2 & 3**

[a]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate			
2030			communicate		
2035				communicate	
2040					communicate

Option 2	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	update	communicate	communicate		
2030		update	update	communicate	
2035			update	update	communicate
2040				update	update

[b]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate	communicate		
2030			update	communicate	
2035				update	communicate
2040					update

[c]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		ind-T	communicate		
2030			update		
2035				ind-T	communicate
2040					update

Option 3.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025			communicate		
2030			update		
2035					communicate
2040					update

[d.10]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025			communicate		
2030					
2035					communicate
2040					

[d.5]	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate			
2030			communicate		
2035				communicate	
2040					communicate

Option 3.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025			communicate		
2030			update		
2035					communicate
2040					update

Option 3.a	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate			
2030			communicate		
2035				communicate	
2040					communicate

**Legend:** 'ind-T' = indicative Target/Waypoint

What?	communicate	update	nothing	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
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## b. SBI.50 Options Note

### Language

#### **Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement**

##### *Option 1*

- (5 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five years.
- (10 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be ten years.
- (5 and 10 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five or ten years.

##### *Option 2*

*References to paragraphs are in APA-SBSTA-SBI.2018.Informal.2.Add.1(part 2)*

Option 1 (5 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five years between the end points of two successive NDCs.

4. alt and 7 alt, merged: Further decides that Parties should communicate two successive nationally determined contributions, starting in 2025, with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively;

3. alt Urges Parties to communicate and update their nationally determined contributions in 2025 and every five years thereafter, consistent with progression;

##### *Option 3*

#### **Draft Decision -/CMA.X**

#### **Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement**

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, Recalling the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Article 4, paragraphs 9 and 10,*

*Also recalling the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CP.21, in particular its paragraphs 22-25,*

1. *Welcomes* the progress made in the consideration of common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10 of

- the Paris Agreement (hereinafter referred to as “common time frames”) by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement at its first session;
2. *Decides* that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onwards;
  3. *Invites* each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040;
  4. *Requests*:
    - (a) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2035 to communicate by 2030 their respective new nationally determined contributions with a time frame up to 2040; and
    - (b) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2040 to communicate or update by 2030 these nationally determined contributions;
  5. *Requests* the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its [X] session, to consider common time frames for nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2041 onwards, with a view to making a recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its [Y] session (*month year*);

#### *Option 4*

#### **Draft Decision -/CMA.X**

#### **Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement**

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, Recalling* the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Article 4, paragraphs 9 and 10,

*Also recalling* the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CP.21, in particular its paragraphs 22-25,

*Decides* that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be [5][10][5 and 10] years.

*Further decides* that Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a 10-year time frame shall include an indicative waypoint at the 5-year mark;

*Further decides* that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onwards;

*Requests* the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its [50th][51st] session, to continue its consideration of the common time frames for nationally determined contributions with a view to making a recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its [3rd][4th] session (*month year*);

### *Option 5*

(5 plus 5 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five plus five years. Parties shall communicate an NDC for an initial five year period, plus an additional NDC for the subsequent five year period.

### *Option 6*

1. Reiterates the request:
  - a) to those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2025 to communicate by 2020 a new nationally determined contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Paris Agreement;
  - b) to those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2030 to communicate or update by 2020 the contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Paris Agreement;
2. Option A. Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2030, 2035 or 2040.  
Option B. Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to [X], unless the Party concerned decides otherwise on timeframes.  
Option C. Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a new nationally determined contribution.

## **Action Content**

See Section 3.b

## Annex C. SBI.5I Options Note

### Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement

SBI 5I – this version saved 6 December 2019 @ 23:08

#### Option 1

- (5 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five years.
- (10 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be ten years.
- (5 and 10 years): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five or ten years.

#### Option 2

1. Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five years between the end points of two successive NDCs.
2. Further decides that Parties should communicate two successive nationally determined contributions, starting in 2025[, with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively and ending in 2040];

##### **Suboption 2.1**

3. [Urges Parties to][Decides that Parties shall] communicate and update their nationally determined contributions in 2025 [with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively] and every five years thereafter, consistent with progression;

##### **Suboption 2.2**

3. Urges each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040 including an indicative waypoint in years ending in 0 and 5.

#### Option 3

##### **Draft Decision -/CMA.X**

##### **Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement**

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, Recalling the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Article 4, paragraphs 9 and 10,*

*Also recalling* the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CP.21, in particular its paragraphs 22-25,

1. *Welcomes* the progress made in the consideration of common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement (hereinafter referred to as “common time frames”) by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to this Agreement at its first session;
2. *Recalls* decision 6/CMA.1, paragraph 2, which provides that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onwards;
3. *Invites* each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040;
4. *Requests*:
  - a) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2035 to communicate by 2030 their respective new nationally determined contributions with a time frame up to 2040; and
  - b) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2040 to communicate or update by 2030 these nationally determined contributions;
5. *Requests* the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its [X] session, to consider common time frames for nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2041 onwards, with a view to making a recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its [Y] session (*month year*);

#### **Option 4**

##### ***Draft Decision -/CMA.X***

##### ***Common time frames for nationally determined contributions referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 10 of the Paris Agreement***

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, Recalling* the relevant provisions of the Paris Agreement, in particular its Article 4, paragraphs 9 and 10,

*Also recalling* the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CP.21, in particular its paragraphs 22-25,

*Decides* that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be [5][10][5 and 10] years.

*Further decides* that Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a 10-year time frame shall include an indicative waypoint at the 5-year mark;

*Recalls* decision 6/CMA.1, paragraph 2, which provides that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onward.

*Requests* the Subsidiary Body for Implementation at its [xx] session, to continue its consideration of the common time frames for nationally determined contributions with a view to making a recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement at its [3rd][4th] session (*month year*);

## **Option 5**

(5 plus 5 years with most recent information): Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five plus five years. Parties shall communicate NDCs for the immediate five year period (whose implementation starts within 9 to 18 months of the communication) as well as for the subsequent five year period.

## **Option 6**

Reiterates the request:

to those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2025 to communicate by 2020 a new nationally determined contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Paris Agreement;

to those Parties whose intended nationally determined contribution pursuant to decision 1/CP.20 contains a time frame up to 2030 to communicate or update by 2020 the contribution and to do so every five years thereafter pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 9, of the Paris Agreement;

### ***Suboption 6.1***

Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2030, 2035 or 2040, and to do so every five years, unless otherwise decided by the Party.

### ***Suboption 6.2***

2. Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to [X], unless the Party concerned decides otherwise on timeframes.

### ***Suboption 6.3***

2. Invites each Party to communicate by 2025 a new nationally

## **Option 7**

Recalling decision 6/CMA.1

Noting that the timeframes of domestic policies and measures, as well as planning processes, respond to national circumstances and legislation

Reaffirms that Parties shall apply common time frames to their nationally determined contributions to be implemented from 2031 onwards;

Invites each Party to communicate such NDCs by 2025, informed by the 2023 Global Stocktake.

### ***Suboption 7.1***

Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2035.

Parties may further include an [indicative] 2040 target.

### ***Suboption 7.2***

Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2035 or 2040

Should a Party communicate a NDC with a time frame up to 2040, such a Party shall include an [indicative] 2035 target [and][or] adjust its NDC by 2030[, informed by the 2028 GST].

### **Suboption 7.3**

Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2040.

[Invites the CMA to reconsider the periodicity of the Global Stocktake.]

### **Option 8**

Requests those Parties whose nationally determined contribution contains a time frame up to 2025 to communicate by 2020 a nationally determined contribution with a starting point of 1 January 2026 and a time frame up to 2030.

Requests all Parties to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a starting point of 1 January 2031 and a time frame up to 2035, and to do so every five years thereafter.

### **Option 9**

Decides that common time frames referred to in Article 4, paragraph 10, of the Paris Agreement for nationally determined contributions communicated in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 9, shall be five years between the end points of two successive NDCs.

Further decides that Parties should communicate two successive nationally determined contributions, starting in 2025, with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively;

Urges Parties to communicate and update their nationally determined contributions in 2025 and every five years thereafter, consistent with progression.

### **Option 10**

Request all Parties by 2025 to communicate 2035 NDCs informed by the 2023 global stock take, and to do so every 5 years thereafter.

## Action Content of SBI.51 Options

Turning now to analysing the proposals listed in the SBI.50 Options Note (appended below) with regard to their specific action content, the first thing that needs to be highlighted is that not all of them actually have this sort of specific action content: Neither Option 1 nor Option 4 contain references to specific NDCs or communication/updating years, that is to say information on *who* is meant *to do what, when*, and with respect to *which NDC*.

**Table 2: SBI.51 Options Action Content**

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>What action?</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Which NDC?</i>
<b>Option 1</b>	n/a			
<b>Option 2</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035 and 2040
<b>Option 3</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035 or 2040
<b>(a)</b>	with 2035 NDC	communicate	2030	2040
<b>(b)</b>	with 2040 NDC	update	2030	2040
<b>Option 4</b>	n/a			
<b>Option 5</b>	All	communicate		5+5
<b>Option 6</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035 or 2040
<b>Option 7</b>				
<b>7.1</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035 (+ indicative 2040)
<b>7.2</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035 or 2040 – with (ind.) 2035
<b>7.3</b>	All	communicate	2025	2040
<b>Option 8</b>				
	All	communicate	2020	2030
	All	communicate	2025	2035
<b>Option 9</b>				
	All	communicate	2025	2035 and 2040
	All	communicate and update	2025, 30 ...	
<b>Option 10</b>	All	communicate	2025	2035

Table 1 clearly shows that:

- Option 9 has the same action content as Option 2, and
- Option 8 the same as Option 10 (namely the communication procedure of the GAC).

Given that with respect to action content, Option 3 covers Option 6, and Option 5 is covered by Option 2, *there are really only three distinct Options in the SBI.51 Note* with respect to

actions they refer to, namely Options 2, 3, and 7 (with their action content graphically represented in Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively).

**Option 2:**

1. *Decides* that common time frames ... shall be five years between the end points of two successive NDCs.
2. *Further decides* that Parties should communicate two successive nationally determined contributions, starting in 2025, with starting points of 1 January 2031 and 1 January 2036 respectively and ending in 2040.
3. *Urges Parties*
  - (a) to communicate and update their nationally determined contributions in 2025 and every five years thereafter, consistent with progression.
  - (b) to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040 including an indicative waypoint in years ending in 0 and 5.

**Figure A. Action Content: Option 2**

2.a	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025	yellow	green				2025		ind-T	green		
2030		yellow	green			2030			yellow		
2035			yellow	green		2035				ind-T	green
2040				yellow	green	2040					yellow

**Legend:** ‘ind-T’ = indicative Target/Waypoint

What?	communicate	update	nothing	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
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**Option 3 (‘Continue-with-Status-Quo’ Option):**

1. *Invites* each Party to communicate by 2025 a nationally determined contribution with a time frame up to 2035 or 2040.
2. *Requests:*
  - (a) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2035 to communicate by 2030 their respective new nationally determined contributions with a time frame up to 2040; and
  - (b) those Parties whose nationally determined contributions contain a time frame up to 2040 to communicate or update by 2030 these nationally determined contributions.

Table 3.a illustrates the action content of Option 3, and Table 3.b illustrates at first sight that Option 3 is simply the continuation of the status quo as prescribed in §23 and §24 of Decision 1/CP.21.

**Figure B. Action Content: Option 3**

3.a	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	3.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate				2025			communicate		
2030			communicate			2030			update		
2035				communicate		2035				communicate	
2040					communicate	2040				update	

**Figure C. Action Content: §23 and §24)**

§23	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	§24	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2020	communicate					2020	update				
2025		communicate				2025			communicate		
2030			communicate			2030			update		
2035				communicate		2035				communicate	
2040					communicate	2040				update	

What?	communicate	update	nothing	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
-------	-------------	--------	---------	-------	------	------------	----------

## Option 7.

### *Sub-option 7.1*

- (a) Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2035.
- (b) Parties may further include an [indicative] 2040 target.

### *Sub-option 7.2*

- (a) Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2035 or 2040
- (b) Should a Party communicate a NDC with a time frame up to 2040, such a Party shall include an [indicative] 2035 target [and][or] adjust its NDC by 2030.

### *Sub-option 7.3*

Agrees that the NDCs referred above will have a time frame up to 2040.

Table D shows that sub-option 7.1 is the same as §23 (Table C) with the addition of optional indicative (+5) targets, and sub-option 7.2 the same as Option 3 (with mandated additional indicative mid-term targets for §24 Parties). Sub-option 7.3, finally, is the §24 (Option 3.2) without the updating.

**Figure C: Action Content: Option 7**

7.1.a	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	7.1.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate				2025		communicate	ind-T		
2030			communicate			2030			communicate	ind-T	
2035				communicate		2035				communicate	ind-T
2040					communicate	2040					communicate

7.2.a	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	7.2.b	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025		communicate				2025		ind-T	communicate		
2030			communicate			2030			update		
2035				communicate		2035				ind-T	communicate
2040					communicate	2040					update

7.3	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
2025			communicate		
2030					
2035					communicate
2040					

**Legend:** 'ind-T' = indicative target

What?	communicate	update	nothing	When?	year	Which NDC?	end-year
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## Annex D. Selected Publications

Reverse chronological order.

- Müller, B., C. Bhushan and X. Li (2021), '[The Glasgow Ambition Cycle - Domestic Considerations](#)', *Oxford Climate Policy*, [[web blog](#)], 16 March 2021
- Kumarsingh, K., B. Müller, and A. Sharma (2020), '[Ambition Cycle on course to land in Glasgow](#)', *Oxford Climate Policy*, [[web blog](#)], 18 December 2020
- Müller, B., and K. Kumarsingh (2020), '[The risks of not adopting a Paris Agreement Ambition Cycle at COP 26 in Glasgow](#)', *Oxford Climate Policy*, [[web blog](#)], August 2020
- Kumarsingh, K. (2020), with G. Fremout, L. J. Arciniegas, P. Betts, J. Cordano, C. Fuller, V. Gundu, G. Jember, B. Müller, C. Nelson, X. Ngwalda, F. Perrez and T. Wangmo, [Complete the Ambition Mechanism Why an Ambition Cycle under the Paris Agreement matters, and why it matters now](#), Oxford ecbi InBrief, July 2020.
- Müller, B. (2020d), [A “Glasgow Ambition Cycle”?](#) OCP Blog Post, April 2020
- Müller, B. (2020c), [Here’s looking at EU again! The European Climate Law](#), OCP Blog Post, March 2020
- Müller, B. (2020b), [Leipzig in September: Birth of a new G2?](#), OCP Blog Post, February 2020
- Müller, B. (2020a), [Enhance Climate Ambition in 2020: Here’s looking at EU, kid!](#), OCP Blog Post, January 2020
- Dagnet, Y., and N. Cogswell, [“Setting a Common Time Frame for NDCs.”](#) Working Paper. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, November 2019.
- Müller, B., A. Sharma, Y. Dagnet, N. Cogswell (2019), [The Dynamic Contribution Cycle: Enhancing Ambition on the Basis of Equity](#), OCP/WRI In Brief, August 2019
- Müller, B. (2018b), [Common Time Frames: Creating Space for Ambition in the Paris Agreement Rulebook](#). ecbi. October 2018
- Müller, B. (2018a), [‘Common Time Frames’: What & Why?: A Contribution to the Debate on Article 4.10 of the Paris Agreement](#). OCP/ecbi Discussion Note, 2nd Ed., June 2018.
- LDC Group, [Submission by Ethiopia on behalf of the Least Developed Countries Group on common timeframes for nationally determined contributions](#); April 2018.
- [Submission on Common Timeframes for NDCs\\_ TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO\\_ BELIZE](#); April 2018.
- OECD/IEA, [Common time frames: Summary of discussions at the March 2018 Climate Change Expert Group Global Forum](#), March 2018
- Sharma, A. (2016), [Justice is still critical in the post-Paris world of “nationally determined” climate action](#), OCP blog post, October 2016
- Müller, B., and C. Shakya (2016), [Why an effective Ambition Mechanism is vital to deliver the Paris Agreement](#), OCP blog post, October 2016
- Müller, B., and X. Ngwadla (2016) [The Paris Ambition Mechanism: Review and Communication Cycles - Options Note](#), OCP/ecbi Options Note, October 2016
- Müller, B. (2016c), [From Contribution Framework to Ambition Mechanism: How to enhance mitigation ambition under the Paris Agreement](#), April 2016
- Müller, B. (2016b), [‘Maillot Jaune’ for the Dynamic Contribution Cycle](#), OCP Blog post, February 2016
- Müller, B., (2016a), [A Dynamic Ambition Mechanism for the Paris Agreement](#), OCP/ecbi Discussion Note, March 2016
- Brazil (2014), [Views of Brazil on the elements of the new Agreement under the Convention applicable to all Parties](#), November 2014
- Müller, B., X. Ngwadla, and J. Miguez (2014), [A Dynamic Contribution Cycle: Sequencing Contributions in the 2015 Paris Agreement](#), October 2014

## Annex E. OCP Blog Post

### The risks of not adopting a Paris Agreement Ambition Cycle at COP 26 in Glasgow

by **Benito Müller and Kishan Kumarsingh**

'Ambition', or rather the lack of it, currently headlines most discussions on the Paris Agreement. The term refers to how much countries are willing and able to do to combat climate change and its adverse impacts through the pledges in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

According to Article 4.9 of the Paris Agreement, all Parties must communicate an NDC every five years starting in 2020. Each successive NDC has to "*represent a progression beyond the Party's then current nationally determined contribution and reflect its highest possible ambition*".[Art. 4.3]

While the ambition of an NDC is nationally determined, it can be internationally enabled or stifled. The importance of the latter should not be underestimated. The provision of finance, technology, and capacity is an important enabling factor, but countries will also peg their level of ambition on how much other countries (their peers) are willing to do. All countries have to do their fair and equitable share, as agreed in Article 4.3, reflecting "*common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances*".

The vast majority of the initial NDCs (over 80%) have a time frame up to 2030.[1] For them, paragraph 24 of [Decision 1/CP.21](#) applies, requesting the countries in question: "*to communicate or update by 2020 [these initial NDCs] and to do so every five years thereafter*". The problem is that this poses a number of significant risks.

#### **Locking in low ambition**

For one, there is the risk of locking in low ambition, for national and international reasons:

- At the national level, planning for the longer-term (more than 10 years) as required under paragraph 24, introduces greater uncertainty – and therefore Parties are likely to opt for risk-averse conservative (low) ambition.
- At the international level, there is no timetable for Parties to consider enhancing previously communicated ambition: everyone is waiting for everyone else, and there is no deadline for (informal) consultations to ensure a just and equitable distribution of ambition, with the effect that the initial risk-averse ambition remains unchanged.

#### **Thwarting Global Stocktakes and Replenishments of Climate Funds**

Under paragraph 24, there is a risk that every ten years, there is no information whatsoever on what Parties intend to do next. This not only introduces uncertainty for domestic stakeholders and hampers advance planning, but also thwarts:

- the *ex ante* component of every second Global Stocktake, and by extension the ability to assess whether the global community is on target to achieve the 2°C/1.5°C trajectory; and
- the ability to take into account the financial needs of developing countries as expressed in ('conditional') NDCs in the course of the replenishments of the multilateral climate funds. This may disadvantage developing countries in financing their NDCs.

#### **Additional political risks**

The further away a target, the greater the temptation to postpone action, with the intention of compensating later in the implementation period. This is a high-risk strategy.

Also, while longer-term targets can be updated in the mid-term, updating a previously communicated ambition may not generate the same public and political attention than the setting of a new target.

### **The Ambition Cycle: a simple and elegant remedy**

These currently prevailing risks to equitable ambition under the Paris Agreement can be mitigated through two simple process requests, for Parties:

- to communicate by 2025 their next NDC, ending in 2035 ('with a time frame up to 2035'), and
- in 2025, to consider enhancing ('updating') the ambition of their initial 2030 NDC; and to repeat these two steps *ceteris paribus* every five years thereafter.

This '[Ambition Cycle](#)' will:

- shorten the horizon of projections necessary to formulate NDCs;
- provide for a five-year assessment phase;
- create an ambition enhancement timetable that provides space for Parties to update their previously communicated ambitions in a fair and equitable manner, reflecting everyone's highest possible ambition as referred to in Article 4.3;
- enhance confidence in, and facilitate predictability for financing and means of implementation by ensuring that the periodic needs determination reports of the Standing Committee on Finance and the replenishments of the multilateral climate funds can be informed by, and take into consideration, the needs of developing countries as reflected in their NDCs;
- increase support for formulating NDCs by providing an NDC time frame common to all, and facilitate planning on how market mechanisms can be used to raise ambition and avoid double counting under Article 6; and
- reduce the temptation to postpone action.

It would thus remedy the shortcomings of the 10-year time frame without impeding its advantages. At the same time, it is compatible with the '5-year' and the '5+5-year' options tabled by Parties in the common time frame negotiations. The proposed Ambition Cycle can unite all the options on the table in a way that retains all their advantages, while avoiding the significant risks they pose on their own.