

COP23, Bonn, Germany & Implementation of the Paris Agreement
Evaluating NDCs for Sustainable Development: Environmental & Planning Methodology

Dr Ted Christie, 04 November 2017 (Update of article posted 28 August 2015)



Disclosure Statement

Ted Christie does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations

The next [UN Climate Change Conference](#) will convene in Bonn, Germany, from 6-17 November 2017. It will include the development of ***guidelines*** on how the Paris Agreement’s provisions can be implemented across a wide range of issues.

Advancing climate action under Sustainable Development Goal 13 (“SDG 13”) of the UN 2030 Agenda, as well as mitigation under the Paris Agreement’s NDCs, will be addressed at COP23.

Both the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement](#) provide a clear framework for action towards a better world for every person and for the planet.

The interconnectedness between the UN 2030 Agenda’s *SDG 13 for Climate Action* and the *Paris Agreement* is reflected in the aim of Article 2.1 of the Agreement: To strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of “*sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty*”.

NDCs are a cornerstone of the Paris Agreement for transitioning to a low carbon economy and ultimately, to a decarbonisation of the global economy.

*A problem for implementing the Paris Agreement
is how to evaluate whether an NDC
is not only consistent with sustainable development,
but also, whether it is
the best of the available options
in securing as much available value as possible for each Party?*

This problem arises because the framework for sustainable development under *SDG 13 and its Targets* in the *UN 2030 Agenda* is quite different from the accepted environmental and planning methodology for finding sustainable solutions for environmental problems.

Contemporary environmental and planning methodology for evaluating sustainable development has its basis in principles and concepts from both science and planning (***“Multi Objective Analysis¹”***) as well as conflict resolution (***“Principled Negotiation”***).

Multi-objective analysis is widely used as a decision-making aid for resolving public interest environmental problems involving multiple and competing objectives e.g. *co-existence between competing land uses and natural resource management; environmental policy; energy; and water resources.*

Evaluation of *NDCs* in the context of *SDG13* and climate action, needs to ensure that future risks to people, economies, and ecosystems, from climate change, have been effectively addressed when *implementing the Paris Agreement*. It requires the multiple and competing objectives of sustainable development: –

- **Ecological** e.g. *emission reduction targets;*
- **Economic** e.g. *cost competitiveness;*
- **Social** e.g. *protecting the most vulnerable; and*
- **Cultural** e.g. *providing financial and technology capacity-building support for developing countries for preparing their NDCs*
to be assessed and balanced equitably.

The potential for multi-objective analysis to evaluate the compatibility of *NDCs* with sustainable development and action for climate change warrants consideration at *COP23*.

A problem-solving approach based on multi-objective analysis to climate change would incorporate two key elements of *“principled negotiation”* as part of its *environmental dispute resolution* framework: -

- i. The NDC prepared by each Party must be seen by all other Parties as a “*creative option for mutual gain.*” For an NDC to be a “*creative option for mutual gain*”, it should be climate change-effective, it should enhance and promote the cost-effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures and be equitable² relative to other NDCs;
- ii. The need “*To insist on the use of objective criteria*” is a pre-condition for evaluating each NDC. Evaluation of NDCs based on “objective criteria” requires the multiple objectives for sustainable development to be framed, agreed to and endorsed before negotiations commence.
- iii. The same objectives are used for evaluating each NDC for its compatibility with sustainable development.
- iv. Compatibility could be assessed as “*compatible*”, “*non-compatible*” or “*uncertain*”; reasons should be given for these conclusions.

*The following examples of multiple objectives
for achieving sustainable development,
which could be framed for COP23,
are based on decisions and recommendations
arising from past UNFCCC Conferences and publications.*

I Ecological Objectives

- (a) To ensure that the combined total of contributions in all NDCs are effective in stabilizing atmospheric CO₂ concentrations at a level that comply with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement: *To hold the increase in global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C*
- (b) “**Green growth** that is efficient in its use of natural resources, clean in that it minimizes pollution and environmental impacts, and resilient in that it accounts for natural hazards and the role of environmental management and natural capital in preventing physical disasters.

II Economic Objectives

- (a) To enhance and promote the cost-effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce CO₂ emissions whilst ensuring that these measures do not aggravate existing inequities within and across Parties to the Paris Agreement; &
- (b) To develop a strong, growing and diversified economy together with maintaining and enhancing international competitiveness that enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

III Social Objectives

- (a) To minimize the extent environmental costs and economic benefits are shared disproportionately between all Parties to the Paris Agreement (“*climate justice*”); and
- (b) To protect the most vulnerable, alleviate poverty and create a future with prosperity for all.

IV Cultural Objectives

- (a) To provide financial and technology capacity-building support for developing countries for preparing their NDCs to reduce CO₂ emissions for moving to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future and for achieving sustainable development; and
- (b) To provide funds for vulnerable developing countries through an “*Environmental Performance Bond*” to cope or to adapt with any projected risks of climate change. If environmental damages occur, the bond would be used to rehabilitate or repair their environment.

End Notes

¹ At pages 118-126.

² The [plain](#) and [legal](#) meanings of ‘equity’ are similar: “fairness”, “justice”.