



The Commonwealth



Opinion Paper

Synergising Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030

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Climate action can help advance the SDGs

Climate action has been recognized as the most significant opportunity in the 21st century to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)². The Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change were both finalized in 2015, serving as comprehensive policy frameworks that promote country-led implementation processes. However, there has been limited coordination between the two frameworks until as recent as 2020.

The revision of Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, which are a country's climate commitments or plans under the Paris Agreement, provided countries with a chance to align their climate commitments with the targets outlined in the SDGs, and many countries have taken this opportunity.

Furthermore, nations are now mainstreaming climate change including NDCs into their national development plans and policies. This facilitates a more integrated, cohesive and comprehensive approach to addressing climate change while advancing national development objectives.

Pacific Islands aligning NDCs and SDGs

The impacts of climate change are reversing development gains and this is most evident in the Pacific region. This recognition led the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to adopt an integrated approach through the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2016) ([PIFL, 2016](#)).

This framework provides high-level guidance to the Pacific Islands region to build resilience to climate change and disasters in ways that contribute to and are embedded in sustainable development. In this regard, many PICs have begun aligning their NDCs with SDG targets, including Fiji and Tuvalu.

Both Fiji and Tuvalu's efforts to align NDCs with SDG targets, reflect their commitment to addressing climate change, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring policy coherence across sectors. These initiatives underscore the importance of integrating environmental and social considerations into national planning and decision-making

¹ *Opinion papers represent the views of the authors and not necessarily that of the Commonwealth Secretariat.*

² Hereinafter referred to as the Agenda 2030

processes, fostering a more holistic and comprehensive approach to sustainable development.

Fiji has aligned its NDCs with a range of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³, with linkages to 14 out of 17 SDGs ([Climate Watch, 2023](#)). Fiji's National Development Plan (2017) ([Govt. of Fiji, 2017](#)) has the overall objective to promote policy coherence, improve planning and implementation, enhance resilience and sustainability, and strengthen international cooperation.

The Parliament of Fiji stands out globally for taking notable strides in incorporating the SDGs into the legislative processes, including through a Guidance Note for parliamentary committees to effectively integrate the SDGs into their work and ensure a legal framework that enables the goals to be achieved through laws that are sensitive to climate change ([Govt. of Fiji, 2019](#)).

Similarly, Tuvalu, another vulnerable Pacific Island nation, is aligning its NDCs with the SDGs, primarily focusing on SDGs 7,8,12 and 17⁴ ([Climate Watch, 2023](#)). Tuvalu aims to establish synergies between climate action and sustainable development priorities by integrating SDG targets into its NDCs. Through this alignment, Tuvalu seeks to build a more sustainable and resilient future for its people while contributing to the global SDG agenda.

It is important to mainstream gender and youth perspectives into NDC and SDG because they are key stakeholders in climate action and sustainable development and many PICs have done so. Fiji's updated NDC was guided by the principle of gender-responsiveness as articulated in the National Climate Change Policy ([Govt. of Fiji, 2021](#)). Solomon Islands aims to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment in the implementation of the NDC, and to engage young people in climate change awareness and education ([Govt. of Solomon Island, 2022](#)). While Vanuatu's has gender and youth considerations in several areas, including promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in climate change adaptation and mitigation actions; enhancing the participation of women and youth in climate change decision-making processes at all levels; supporting the development of gender-responsive and youth-friendly climate change policies, plans and budgets and strengthening the capacity of women and youth to access climate finance, technology and information ([Govt. of Vanuatu, 2022](#)).

Aligning development and climate finance for building back better

For Fiji, development financing is seen as the vehicle for reducing vulnerabilities to climate change. While aligning NDCs and SDGs are important, this requires funding, and climate finance plays a crucial role for "building back better". It is evident that without sufficient climate finance, achieving global net-zero emissions or adapting to a changing climate and achieving development goals will be challenging, especially for countries in the Global South. Adequate funding is vital to support climate action, resilience-building, and sustainable development efforts. In order to build resilience and not have climate impacts reverse development gains, we also need to integrate climate action into development projects so that development finance provides the necessary climate change outcomes. In this regard, aligning development and climate finance is essential, to maximise impact. Alignment means development projects should access climate funding and that climate projects should access development funding.

³ Fiji's NDCs are aligned to SDGs 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.9, 6.1, 7.2, 7.a, 7.b, 9.1, 9.4, 10.7, 11.2, 11.5, 11.7, 11.b, 11.c, 12.5, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 14.2, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 16.6, 16.7, and SDG 17.

Source: Climate Watch <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ndcs-sdg?goal=6>

⁴ SDGs 7.2, 7.3, 7a, 7b, 8.4, 12.8, 17.7, and 17.9.

Source: Climate Watch <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ndcs-sdg?goal=6>

The Commonwealth Secretariat’s flagship programme the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) through deploying Commonwealth National Climate Finance Advisors so far supported this need for 19 vulnerable countries including Pacific islands such as Fiji and Tuvalu with accessing climate finance. To date approximately USD 40.75 million in climate finance has been secured for the region with CCFAH’s support. The dire need for ‘climate-resilient’ development initiatives necessitates the leveraging of development finance as a vehicle for financing climate responses and vice versa. “Impact Investing”, which aims to generate positive social and environment impacts while pursuing financial gains, has recently become popular as investors are utilising the SDG framework to address a variety of global issues including climate change.

2023 is a pivotal year

The year 2023 is a significant one, as it marks the midpoint for the Agenda 2030, when the SDG Summit will be held for reviewing progress and challenges in implementing the 17 SDGs. Additionally, the UNFCCC, 28th Conference of Parties (COP 28) to be held in United Arab Emirates in November 2023, will also conclude the first Global Stock Take, evaluating the progress of the Paris Agreement.

These events take place against the backdrop of alarming records of heatwaves, droughts, floods, and warnings about imminent disasters such as El Nino. Already, the preliminary results from the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York indicate that the world is off track in terms of achieving Agenda 2030. All the more reason for synergizing efforts to get back on track.

Synergistic and interlinked approaches needed

The 17 SDGs are integrated and recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others. Urgent action to halt climate change and deal with its impacts is integral to successfully achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The complex challenges we face today highlights the interconnectedness of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement and the importance of integrating and synergistically implementing both frameworks. Integrating these two frameworks enhances effectiveness, improves the quality of outcomes, promotes efficient resource utilization (including funding), fosters coherence across sectors and actors, avoids duplication and encourages the formation of new partnerships.

Thus, there is a dire need to address multiple challenges through concerted, co-ordinated and integrated action. One opportunity to do this is through multilateral action covered under the three ‘Rio Conventions’: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This “integration” is what the Commonwealth Living Lands Charter aims to do. The Commonwealth Call to action on Living Lands (Commonwealth CALL) was officially adopted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022. CALL safeguards global land resources and arrest land degradation while acting against climate change, biodiversity loss and towards sustainable management. Implementation the CALL will lead us to achieve multiple goals under the conventions including Paris Agreement and realize the SDGs while accelerating progress towards a climate resilient, net zero future ([Commonwealth, 2022](#); [WRI, 2023](#)).⁵

⁵ <https://www.wri.org/insights/2023-ipcc-ar6-synthesis-report-climate-change-findings>

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