

IKI networking and knowledge sharing workshop series
“Developing Building Blocks of a Global Mitigation Architecture”

“Intended Nationally Determined Contributions” as a corner stone on the way to a 2015 climate agreement

Bonn, 10 June 2014

Workshop summary – short version

Background

At COP 19 in Warsaw, Parties agreed to put forward their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) well in advance of COP 21 in Paris, by the first quarter of 2015 if they are in a position to do so.

Developed country governments were requested to provide support to developing countries for these domestic preparations; developed country Parties, the operating entities of the financial mechanism and any other organizations in a position to do so were urged to provide support for developing country Parties to initiate or intensify domestic preparations of their INDCs, as early as possible in 2014. Moreover, Parties agreed to decide on the up-front information that Parties need to provide when putting forward their contributions by COP 20 in Lima.

Since contributions are nationally determined, intended and without prejudice to their legal nature countries are starting with the preparation of their INDCs facing a high degree of uncertainty. However past experiences gathered, e.g. in the course of defining targets and pledges under the Copenhagen Agreement and in the development of LCDS, NAMAs and MRV systems, can all provide important building blocks.

Against this background, the Programme Office of the International Climate Initiative (IKI) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) organized a workshop that aimed at:

- Developing/enhancing a common understanding on INDCs by breaking down the concept into its (potential) elements and defining the relevant ones;
- Sharing insights and experiences on the current state of play in IKI partner countries with regard to INDC preparation, incl. related national political debates;
- Identifying enabling factors and early lessons learnt for INDC preparation, in particular focusing on possible elements to build on, such as LCDS, NAMAs, and MRV systems that are already at a mature stage of development;
- Identifying partner countries' needs and exploring possible options for support (country-specific, overarching analytical/conceptual);
- Discussing opportunities for coordinated action and generation of synergies.

The meeting was carried out as part of the workshop series “Developing Building Blocks of a Global Mitigation Architecture” that takes place twice a year back to back with the intersessional climate talks and the COPs, and brings together practitioners working on LCDS, NAMAs, MRV and closely related topics, e.g. Green Economy or New Market Mechanisms (NMM). While the regular meetings aim at strengthening the ties within the growing IKI community and sharing experiences on the ground through lessons learnt, discussion topics always remain embedded in the ongoing UNFCCC climate negotiations.

Summary & outlook

The workshop proved to be a valuable event that helped building a common understanding of the concept of INDCs. Having sketched the political background of INDCs and gained some insight into current debates around the topic in the framework of the UNFCCC negotiations, reflected also in the discussions taking place outside the official fora, workshop participants further approached the topic of INDCs on the basis of some conceptual deliberations with regard to possible elements of INDCs and finally from their experiences working on the ground on climate-related topics in IKI partner countries. Concluding, the following **findings and core discussion points** can be summarized:

- Though INDCs are a new term used within in the UNFCCC context, there is a broad range of international as well as domestic climate-related mechanisms, structures and procedures Parties can and should consider in the process of preparing their INDCs (development of LCDS, advanced NAMA concepts, MRV systems, inventories, etc.). INDCs can serve as an opportunity for consolidating the various climate-related processes taking place within a country ('putting the pieces together'). On the other hand, INDC preparation is more than adding up emission data. If INDCs are to serve as a valuable basis for defining a commitment under the 2015 agreement that will actually be implemented in terms of climate actions, INDCs will also need strong political backing as well as broad stakeholder buy-in.
- INDCs will most likely be very diverse in nature. To understand and assess their implications in relation to the respective national starting positions and capabilities as well as with regard to the international equity question and the concrete contribution to the global two degree goal, timely and comprehensible up-front information is key. Agreeing on the information to be provided with the INDCs will also be a valuable tool for Parties themselves to reflect progress and further needs in the process of preparing their INDCs.
- There seem to be various reasons for some Parties' reluctance in putting forward INDCs: doubts about the general reliability of INDCs that are defined under high time pressure as well as concerns that, once officially communicated to the UNFCCC, INDCs may automatically turn into commitments under the 2015 agreement. In this regard, review of INDCs shall facilitate trust, transparency and understanding and by that help to effectively address Parties' concerns.
- With regard to the commitments under the 2015 agreement, a mechanism for regular review, assessment and adjustment of commitments would ensure flexibility and help to avoid the "lock-in effect" experienced with the Copenhagen pledges. The design needs, however, to reflect the flexibility of the mechanism itself, avoiding that it becomes "over-engineered", but avoiding backsliding of parties' commitments. The possibility of adjusting commitments could also be a key element for raising their ambition ("ratchet-up mechanism"). Parties' starting positions vary extremely. Taking the countries' various capabilities into account and differentiating them accordingly, seems therefore an essential paradigm within the INDC process. Advanced countries should be asked to put forward other components and information along with their INDCs than less advanced countries or countries "in-between". However, the question of how to assign countries to one of these groups and by whom this is done remains open.
- With regard to assumed or already assessed support needs with regard to the INDC preparation, a broad range of conceivable needs was identified, reflecting the various starting positions mentioned before. While some countries search particular assistance on technical issues, other countries ask for support to the process as such. Technical support to partner countries, for example provided on a peer-to-peer basis, seems like a feasible approach to offer assistance also to such countries that understand INDC preparation as a genuine national task.

Since the debate on INDCs is a very timely one and the possibility of enhancing INDCs in terms of ambition and transparency is limited (time-wise as well as with regard to quality), the IKI community was encouraged to continue the expert exchange before the next in-person meeting in the framework of the IKI Building Blocks Workshop series. In this regard, IKIpedia serves as a valuable collaboration and knowledge management platform to share insights and lessons learnt throughout the year.