

## How to unlock the Glasgow COP

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### A proposition.

The key to unlocking the climate talks in Glasgow is for emerging economies to be much more demanding than at Paris in offering conditional commitments dependent on rich country support and action. At Paris, the difference between conditional and unconditional pledges for 2030, the Nationally Determined Contributions, was only 2 Gt, less than 4% of global pledges and about 8% of current emissions by developing countries. It could be much greater next time, with better plans and more stringent conditions.

### Why is this important?

Because emerging economy emissions are still (mostly) rising while those of developed countries are now (mostly) falling. Because emerging economies still lag behind developed countries in development (by definition), and have legitimate expectations, ceteris paribus, of being allowed to continue emitting GHGs. And because the transition costs in emerging economies are no less demanding than in developed countries, and harder to finance and manage.

### Caveat.

Of course, this does not let rich countries off the hook, in terms of meeting current pledges for 2030, or announcing more stringent targets. Australia, Canada, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the US are all G20 developed countries which need to do more to reach their 2030 commitments. All rich countries need more ambitious 2030 targets.

It is [not mandatory](#) that all countries should make new pledges, but there was [strong encouragement in Madrid to 'increase ambition'](#). Commitments to net zero by 2050, as called for by the UNSG for the [Climate Summit](#) in September 2019, are not enough. The Paris agreement foresaw five year cycles, and the focus will be on commitments to 2030. These commitments, by all countries, will determine the success or failure of the Glasgow COP.

### What should happen next?

I work through the argument in ten steps. The conclusions are

- Radical increases in emission reductions are needed to stay on the least-cost pathway to all temperature targets;
- Developing country commitments will be key to the success of the Glasgow COP;
- China and India are swing states, but other emerging economies will need to make weighty contributions;

- Better NDCs are needed from developing countries, with more attention to global conditions and to the social costs of transition;
- Adding these up will provide the basis for a Global Green New Deal and a Just Transition;
- Developing countries have ethical and practical reasons to ask for support in delivering the new NDCs;
- Hence, a substantial spread between conditional and unconditional NDCs is justified – an opening bid is of 5Gt Co2e;
- And developed countries have a lot to do, including by delivering ambitious plans of their own, and by supporting the implementation of the next generation of NDCs.

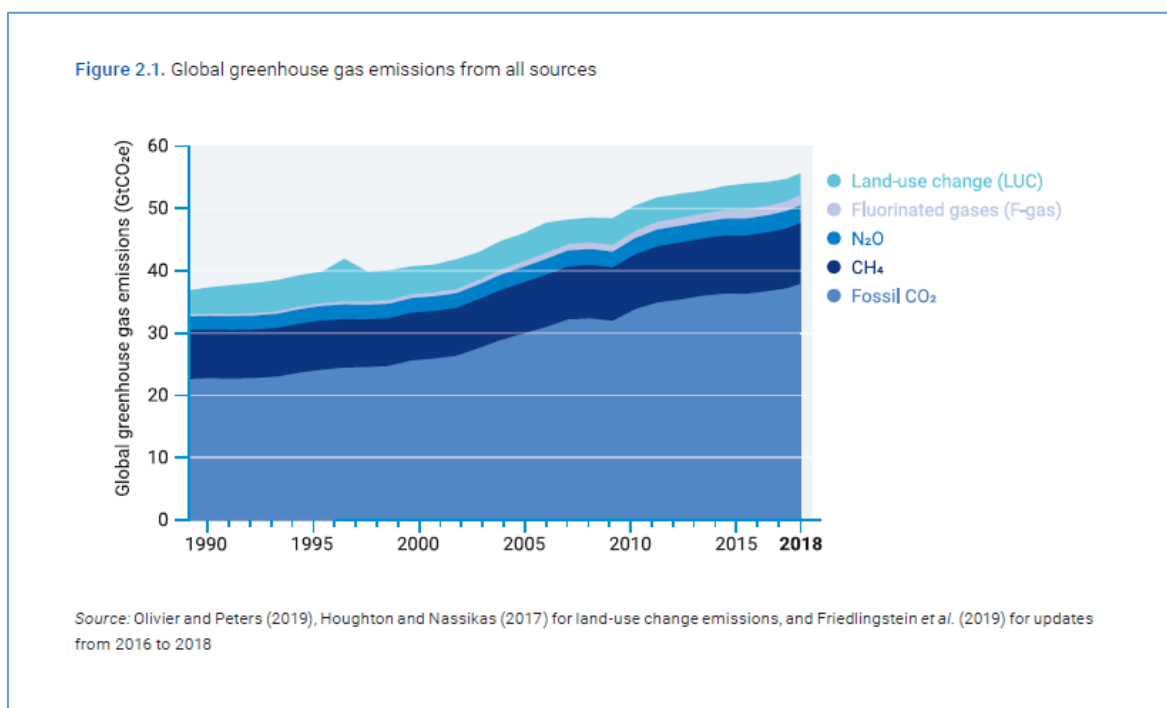
There are gaps in the data, which need to be filled. More work is also needed on the guidelines for NDCs.

### Some numbers to illustrate the argument.

First, overall emissions are still rising, driven mostly by increases in emerging economies. The [2019 Emissions Gap Report](#) (EGR) from UN Environment has the details (Figures 1-3). (Declaration of interest: I sit on the Steering Committee).

Figure 1 shows that overall GHG emissions rose by 1.3% p.a. on average over the decade 2009-2018, and by 2% in 2018, reaching 55.3 Gt.

Figure 1

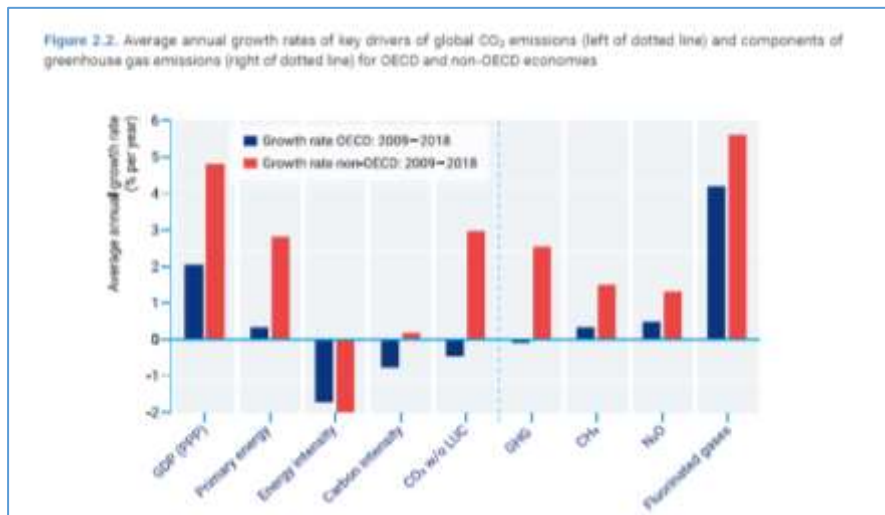


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Figure 2 shows that emissions from OECD countries fell slightly, in aggregate, but that those from non-OECD countries rose quite sharply. Energy intensity fell in both groups, but GDP growth in non-OECD countries drove a large increase in demand for primary energy.

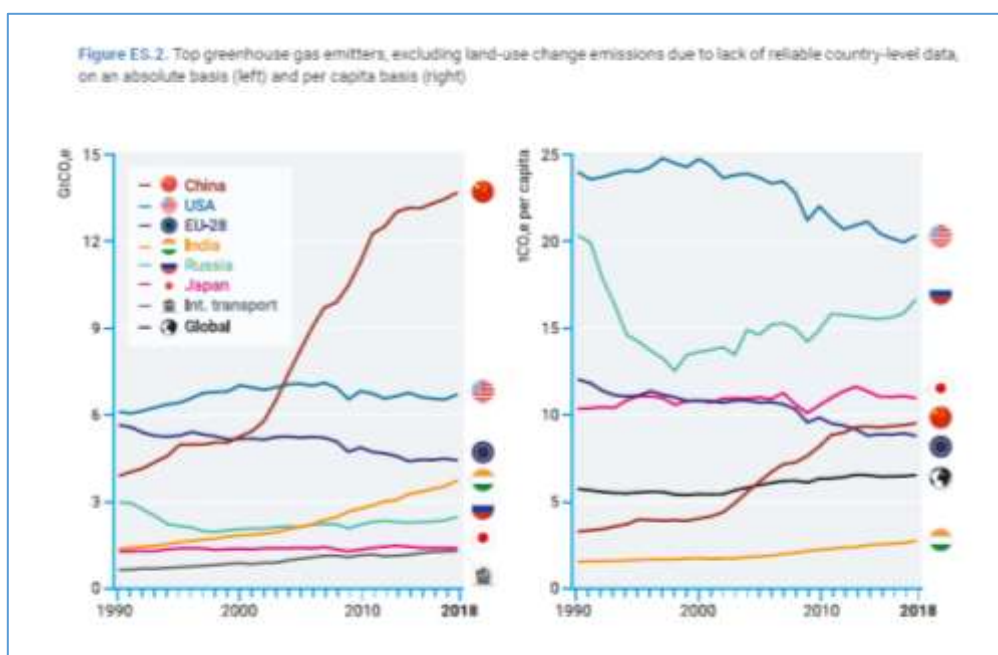
Figure 2



Source: [http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018\\_FullReport\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018_FullReport_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Figure 3 shows that national emissions have been static or falling in selected OECD countries, especially in per capita terms, but rising in India and, especially, China. The latter's per capita emissions now exceed those of the EU.

Figure 3

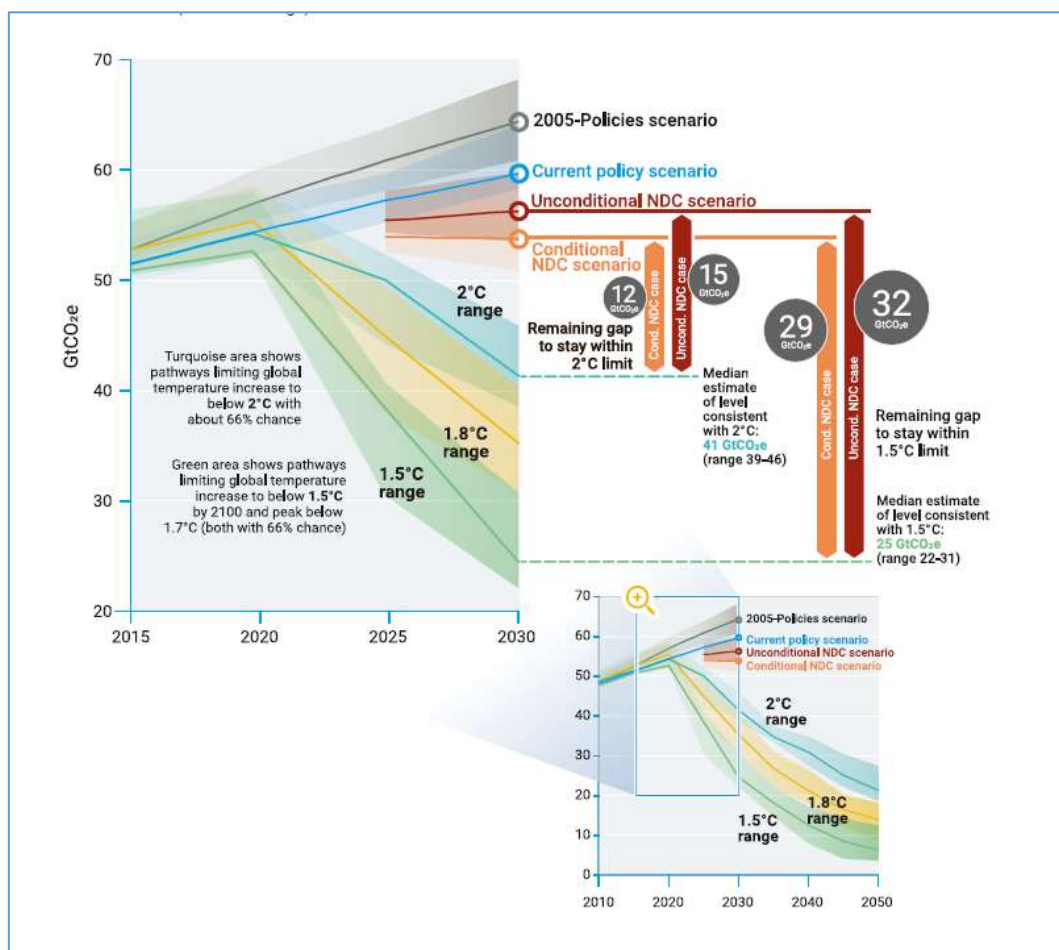


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Second, much more needs to be done to limit warming to 2 degrees, let alone, as per the [Paris Agreement](#), ‘well below 2 degrees’ or ‘pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees’, all below pre-industrial levels. From EGR 2019 again, Figure 4 shows that the gap between current 2030 commitments and the least cost pathway to 2 degrees is 12-15 Gt. There are various ways of presenting this. The EGR [press release](#) states that efforts have to be tripled to reach 2 degrees and multiplied by five times to reach 1.5. I prefer to say that the even the Conditional NDCs offered only a third of what was needed for the least cost pathway to 2 degrees, and only 17% for 1.5. The Unconditional NDCs offered only 21% of the need for 2 degrees and 11% for 1.5. These are big gaps, however they are presented.

Figure 4

The Emissions Gap



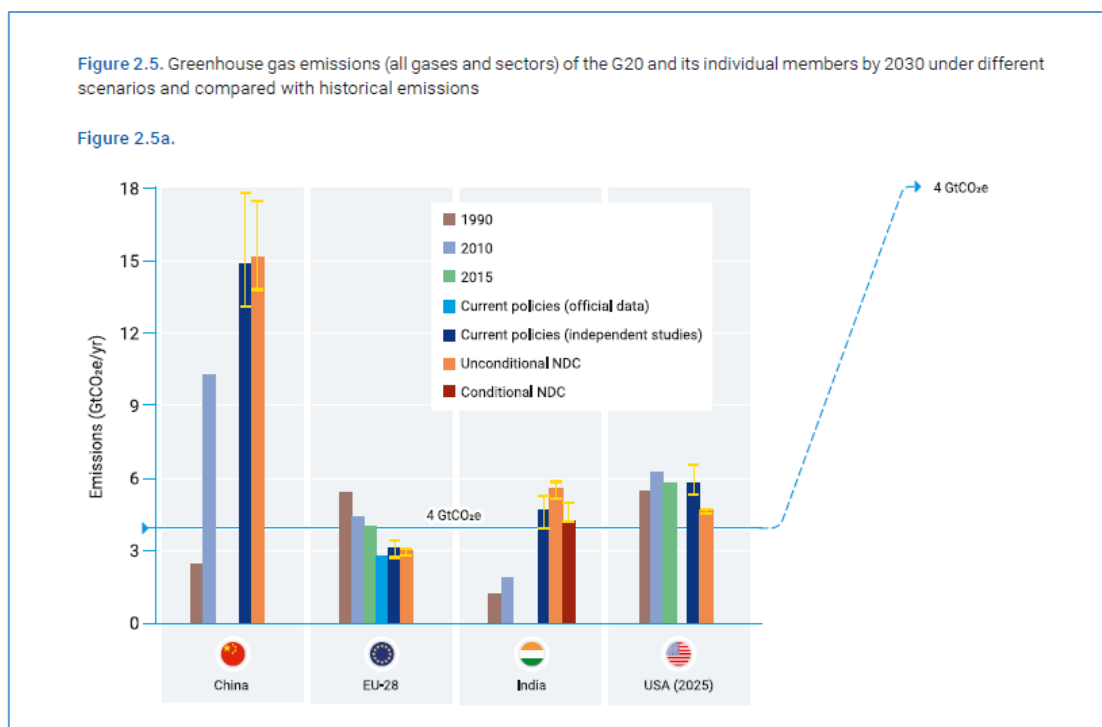
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Third, the emissions of most developing countries are expected to increase significantly to 2030, even taking account of NDC commitments. G20 data are available from EGR (Figures 5 and 6). Figure 5 gives the data for China and India, Figure 6 for Argentina, Brasil, Indonesia,

Mexico, South Africa and Turkey. The G20 accounts for 78% of global emissions. Developing country members of the G20 account for 44% of total emissions (29% excluding China).

This particular data set is not complete, but Figure 5 shows that both China’s and India’s emissions are expected to rise significantly on current policies, certainly from 2010 levels. China’s emissions are expected to increase compared to current policies even if the NDC target is achieved, though India’s emissions will be below current policies if the unconditional NDC is fully implemented.

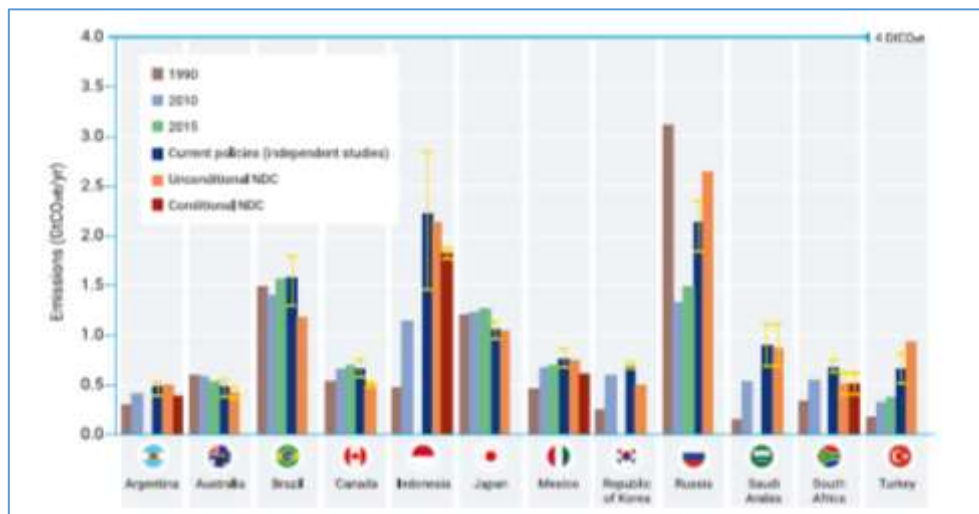
Figure 5



Source: [http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018\\_FullReport\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018_FullReport_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Figure 6 shows that current policies imply an increase in all the developing countries shown, moderated in some cases if Unconditional and especially Conditional NDCs are delivered.

Figure 6



Source:

[http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018\\_FullReport\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018_FullReport_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Putting these figures together, developing country members of the G20 are expected to have 2030 emissions of 26 Gt on current policies, about 11 Gt without China. NDCs change these figures somewhat, but in some cases, expected emissions are lower with current policies than with NDCs, so the net is not very different. For comparison purposes, 26 Gt amounts to 63% of the least cost budget in 2030 for 2 degrees, and is greater than the budget for 1.5 degrees. By contrast, OECD members of the G20 are expected to have emissions of 15 Gt on current policies and only 13 Gt if NDC targets are reached.

There are some significant actual or potential developing country emitters not in the G20. In terms of current emissions ([2017 data](#), excluding land use change and forestry), Iran emits over 700 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, 1.6% of global emissions, about the same as Mexico. Other significant countries to watch are: Thailand (0.8% of the total), Pakistan, Nigeria and Malaysia (all 0.7%), and Iraq, Venezuela and Vietnam (all 0.6%). No full estimates are available for 2030, but [Climate Action Tracker](#) has data for a selection of countries, including 2030 estimates. For example, Vietnam's emissions are expected to rise by as much as 500 Mt from 2020 to 2030.

In sum, developing countries (including China) already emit more than developed countries, and the difference is likely to grow during the 2020s. Leaving China aside, developing countries emit more than a third of emissions currently, and this share is also very likely to grow.

Fourth, some information about Conditional and Unconditional NDCs. The UNFCCC has a [registry of NDCs](#). As noted, the aggregate difference between the two reported by EGR was 2Gt, but I cannot find a detailed breakdown for all countries. For the G20, the EGR database has four countries showing differences, amounting to 1.9Gt. These are Argentina, India,

Indonesia, and Mexico (Table 1). India is by far the biggest contributor, offering 70% of the total.

Table 1

Country	Unconditional NDC 2030 (Interpolation 2025-2050 for the US)	Conditional NDC	Difference (Mt)	Difference (%)
Argentina	501	383	118	24
India	5629	4320	1309	23
Indonesia	2137	1828	309	14
Mexico	750	616	134	18
Total	9017	7146	1871	21

Source: EGR background spreadsheet, courtesy of Michel del Elzen

To obtain more information about the conditions proposed, a useful source is the set of summaries provided for selected countries by [Carbon Action Tracker](#). Table 2 reproduces the conditions reported by Carbon Action Tracker for the countries mentioned earlier. The main themes are money and technology, but also with several mentions of the need for effective international agreements.

Table 2

Argentina	International finance, support in transferring, innovating and developing technologies, and capacity building for an effective implementation
India	Transfer of technology and low cost international finance, incl. from GCF
Indonesia	International Support
Mexico	Global agreement, financial and technological support
Brasil	None
South Africa	A fair, ambitious and effective agreement under the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto protocol, and the provision of support from the international community
Turkey	No conditional NDC (check)
Thailand	Not in CAT data base
Pakistan	Not in CAT data base
Nigeria	Not in CAT data base
Malaysia	Not in CAT data base
Iraq	Not in CAT data base
Venezuela	Not in CAT data base
Vietnam	International support

Source: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/>

The Tracker provides a country summary. More detail is available in [countries' own NDCs](#), including for several not in the CAT tracker (including Thailand, Pakistan, Nigeria, Malaysia and Vietnam). Probably the most complete set of conditions in this set of countries is provided by India (Box 1), with specific costings for both mitigation and adaptation, as well as capacity-building. Note the figure for \$US 2.5 trillion in total (domestic and international) to 2030. And remember that India's emissions, other things being equal, are expected to rise by nearly 3 Gt from 2015 to 2030.

### Box 1 Conditions in India's NDC

CLIMATE CHANGE FINANCE REQUIREMENT . . . Estimates by various studies vary in projecting precise requirements but converge on the enormity of funds that would be needed. Preliminary estimates indicate that India would need around USD 206 billion (at 2014-15 prices) between 2015 and 2030 for implementing adaptation actions in agriculture, forestry, fisheries infrastructure, water resources and ecosystems. Apart from this there will be additional investments needed for strengthening resilience and disaster management. An Asian Development Bank Study on assessing the costs of climate change adaptation in South Asia indicates that approximate adaptation cost for India in energy sector alone would roughly be about USD 7.7 billion in 2030s. The report also projects the economic damage and losses in India from climate change to be around 1.8% of its GDP annually by 2050. Mitigation requirements are even more enormous. Estimates by NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) indicate that the mitigation activities for moderate low carbon development would cost around USD 834 billion till 2030 at 2011 prices. India's climate actions have so far been largely financed from domestic resources. A substantial scaling up of the climate action plans would require greater resources. . . A preliminary estimate suggests that at least USD 2.5 trillion (at 2014-15 prices) will be required for meeting India's climate change actions between now and 2030.

5.2 REQUIREMENT FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER & SUPPORT In the rapidly and ever evolving realm of technology development, it is difficult to project future requirement of technologies. Transfer and grounding of technologies and their knowhow would be key to enhancing adaptation and mitigation measures in developing countries. It also calls for meaningful and adequate financing for the required cutting edge technologies. It is in this context that India has advocated global collaboration in Research & Development (R&D), particularly in clean technologies and enabling their transfer, free of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) costs, to developing countries. IPR costs can also be borne from the GCF through a separate window. . . . One of the important areas of global collaborative research should be clean coal and fossil fuel, energy management and storage systems for renewable energy. Given the current stage of dependence of many economies on coal, such an effort is an urgent necessity..

5.3 CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS While no firm assessments have been made, it is evident that substantial resources will be required to implement capacity building programmes both nationally and across the states to address climate change challenges. It is expected that the international mechanism will support such initiatives including formation of Thematic Knowledge Networks, further expand activities under Global Technology Watch Group, establishing more intensive state centric knowledge and awareness creating activities and training of professionals in different aspects of renewable energy and supporting research and development institutions for pre-competitive research. Though a firm projection is difficult, rough estimates indicate that around 2.5% of Government's salary budget would be required for capacity building initiatives, while some part of it would need to be financed internationally.

Source:

<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/India%20First/INDIA%20INDC%20TO%20UNFCCC.pdf>

## Arguments and reflections

It is hard to know where to start with all this. I guess at the beginning, and taking one step at a time. There are ten steps in total, but with many uncertainties.

**Step 1.** It is important to hang on to the idea of a least-cost pathway to temperature targets – but there are some problems with the concept. On the one hand, the least-cost pathway gives an unambiguous target for 2030: 41 Gt for 2 degrees and 25 Gt for 1.5 degrees. This challenges activists and political parties who are calling for zero or net zero by that date. On the other hand, the calculation of the least-cost pathway excludes the cost of extreme weather events, which are mounting rapidly and might be thought to imply more rapid emission reductions than would otherwise be the case. Furthermore, the calculation is based on having concentrations of GHGs in the atmosphere which promise only a two thirds chance of keeping temperatures below the specified level. That leaves quite a substantial risk. It seems to me a pity that [Integrated Assessment Models](#) with [damage functions](#) cannot be brought more into the mainstream. And also, do we know what is the cost of deviating from the least-cost pathway?

**Step 2.** To reiterate an earlier point, focusing on developing countries does not let rich countries off the hook. Indeed, it should increase the pressure. If developing countries are going to be ‘allowed’ to increase emissions during the forthcoming decade(s), then the global rates of reduction required need to be exceeded by developed countries. This is a serious issue, because the average global rates required exceed even the best rates achieved by developed countries on a sustained basis. The EGR concludes that emissions need to fall by 2.7% per annum during the 2020s to reach the 2 degree target, and by 7.6% p.a. to reach 1.5 degrees (remember, without taking account of extreme weather events, and with only a two thirds probability). By contrast, the UK, which has had world-leading reductions in national emissions, [has managed](#) only a 40% reduction in total since 1990, or 1.75% p.a. on average. Averchenkova et al have talked of the need to ‘[tame the beast](#)’ of burden-sharing. Does there not need to be more work on [comparability of effort and ‘fair shares’](#) of the remaining carbon budget?

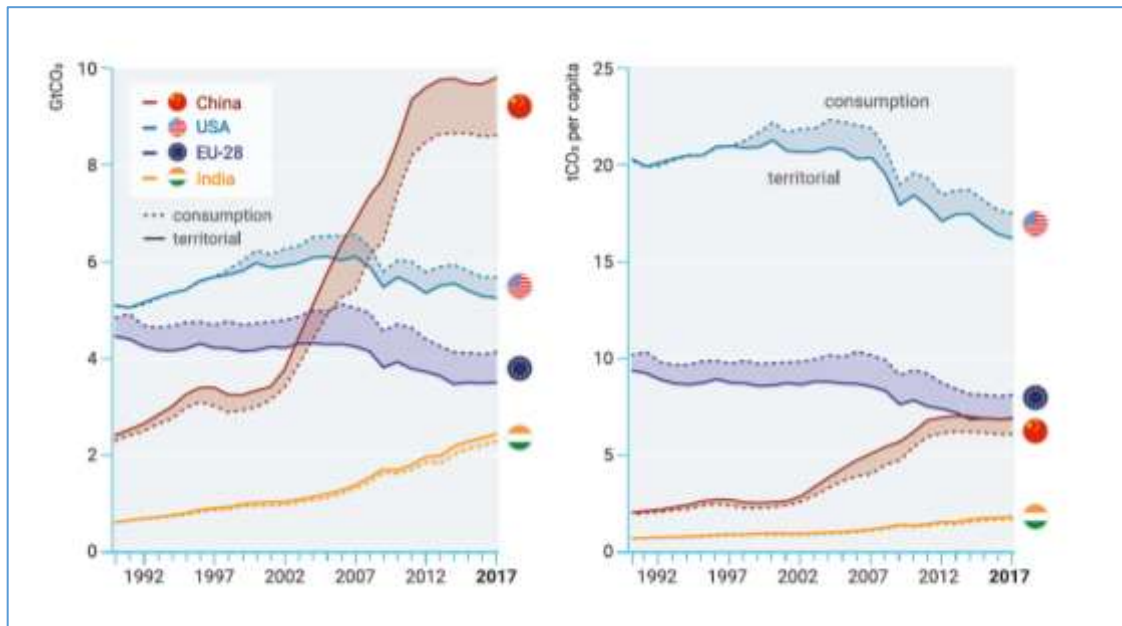
**Step 3.** Developed countries, and indeed the UNFCCC, also need to think about imported emissions – and as they do so, there will be implications for developing countries. Aarti Krishnan and I have [explored this](#). The UK is not the only country where increased emissions embodied in imports mean that the overall footprint has hardly changed, despite rapid falls in national emissions (look at [Denmark](#), for example). The [latest UK figures](#) show that between 1997 and 2016, territorial emissions fell by over a quarter but imported emissions rose by 20%, with the net result that the UK’s total carbon footprint fell by only 9%. Imported emissions now account for 45% of the UK’s footprint. The EGR has a figure to illustrate the issue (Figure 7): in developed economies, consumption emissions usually exceed territorial emissions; in industrialising developing countries, the reverse is true.

Developing countries will be under pressure to reduce the carbon intensity of imports. In earlier work, I suggested that developed countries could [encourage, incentivise and enforce](#)

faster action. Enforcement is a last resort, but there is [growing interest](#) in border carbon adjustments, which could harm developing countries. There is also a risk of a [‘green squeeze’](#) on developing country producers. All the more reason, therefore, to pre-empt enforcement by offering ambitious conditional pledges.

Figure 7

Territorial and consumption emissions



Source: [http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018\\_FullReport\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26895/EGR2018_FullReport_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

**Step 4.** The trade dimension highlights the point that countries need to think globally when preparing national plans. This was a core message of [CDKN work on climate compatible development](#), which emphasised that there were three circles, not two, in the Venn diagram of climate thinking and action. Mitigation and adaptation within a country provided two obvious circles, but the third was equally important: the impact of action elsewhere on markets and prices. This could be the impact of border carbon taxes, but could equally be the opportunity to make and sell new products (solar panels, lithium batteries), the impact of carbon taxes on the costs of trade, or changes in competitive advantage associated with investments in energy efficiency or the roll-out of new technologies. Should every NDC in 2020 not include an introductory chapter on the opportunities and challenges for the country in question associated with the disruption caused by climate action?

**Step 5.** Climate action means disruption. Disruption means social dislocation. It needs to be repeated often that climate change and climate action have losers as well as winners: not just those who are affected by extreme weather events or long term changes to temperature and rainfall, but also those whose jobs in carbon-emitting sectors are at risk. It is no surprise that the fate of coal mining communities in Germany and Poland has featured prominently in [European climate plans](#), nor that the [German Government has allocated €40 bn to coal-](#)

[mining regions](#), to ease transition by paying for new infrastructure and research on alternative energy.

The debate about the social dimensions of climate action has been most active in developed countries, especially in terms of a '[just transition](#)' or a '[green new deal](#)'. As [E3G have argued](#) with respect to a just transition:

- A transition is only just if it is a Just Transition for all. It needs to consider the effects of both the transformation through climate action, and the impacts from global warming due to inaction on all vulnerable communities and sectors.
- A transition is only just if it is fast enough to keep 1.5°C in reach. It is a time-limited opportunity to shape the social and economic changes that will enable a successful transformation. The transition must limit future climate impacts through a preventive approach to climate risk and protect impacted communities and sectors.
- Just Transition debates are needed in all sectors of the real economy and finance. The IPCC 1.5°C report is clear about the necessity of transformative change throughout our economic system. This will impact workers, supply chains, consumers and affected communities worldwide.
- Climate ambition and Just Transition are not a question of either/or. Governments have the responsibility to shape change: giving citizens greater certainty about the transition while protecting them from the worst impacts of climate change.'

In [my own work on a Global Green New Deal](#), I have commended the inclusion of social issues, but also argued that 'Green New Deal' is a portmanteau term covering many different options: a 'socialist' green new deal is different from a market-based new deal. There is also a risk in throwing everything into the pot, with a need to distinguish the 'climate must-haves' from the 'climate like-to-haves'. In the end, there are three tests of any new deal proposal: Is climate action SDG compatible, maximising synergies and avoiding making the achievement of other SDGs harder? Is it bottom-up, building climate compatible development planning into national strategies? And does it recognise the urgency of climate action? Those three tests lay down a challenge for the next generation of developing country NDCs.

**Step 6.** The need to take better account of global issues, as well as the need to bolster the social dimension of climate action, both suggest that more comprehensive NDCs are likely to be required in 2020. I don't know that there has been a systematic analysis of the quality of the first round of NDCs (has there?), but CDKN has [distilled the lesson of ten years' work on mainstreaming climate compatible development](#), with chapters on planning and resourcing, and has produced a variety of materials on NDC preparation and implementation (including on [integrating climate change commitments into national development planning](#), and a [quick-start guide on NDC implementation](#)).

The Guidelines on how to prepare NDCs do not seem to have been updated yet in the Paris rule-book. IIED produced a [Pocket Guide to NDCs](#) in 2018, which sets out the history and summarises the requirements (mainly covering different ways of presenting mitigation targets, but also noting the importance of tackling adaptation). The World Resources Institute has recently published a guide to '[Enhancing NDCs](#)', again dealing mostly with mitigation and adaptation. Neither of these documents has much to say about the 'third circle' of global

disruption, nor about the social costs of climate action. It would be good to update guidelines along these lines.

**Step 7.** It is important to have some idea of what might constitute a reasonable outcome in terms of Gt for conditional offers at the Glasgow COP. That needs to be a bottom up process (see Step 6 above) and also depends on how ambitious countries feel they can be with their unconditional offers, as well as the ethical arguments about fair shares (Step 2). But just to make a back of the envelope calculation:

- The least cost ‘target’ for 2030 is 41 Gt for 2 degrees, and 25 Gt for 1.5 degrees (but NB note the caveats in Step 1).
- The [world population](#) in 2030 will be 8.5 billion.
- That implies overall emissions per capita of 4.8 tons per capita for 2 degrees and 2.9 tons per capita for 1.5 degrees.
- Developing countries will account for 7.1 billion people (83.5% of the total).
- So developing countries’ arithmetic ‘share’ of global emissions would be 33.7 Gt for 2 degrees and 21.6 Gt for 1.5 degrees.
- That would leave 6.3 Gt for developed countries at 2 degrees and 3.4 Gt at 1.5 degrees.

I can’t work out what those numbers might mean in terms of individual developing country NDCs, nor what share of the overall commitment might be conditional. Can anyone else? It is obviously the case, however, that big emitters will play a bigger part than smaller ones. China has received a lot of attention, especially in view of the [China-EU Summit in Leipzig](#) later in 2020, touted as key to the success of the COP. India looks like the other swing state - Navroz Dubash has edited an [authoritative review of India’s climate policy and options](#).

I am guessing that a 2GT spread between conditional and unconditional NDCs is at the bottom end of the likely outturn. How about 5Gt as an opening bid?

**Step 8.** If there is a spread between conditional and unconditional NDCs, the question is what the conditions might be. In other words, what do developing countries want or need in order to commit to the additional 5Gt of emission reductions? We have seen that finance, technology and capacity-building feature prominently in conditional NDCs. Mexico and South Africa also made their conditional NDCs dependent on ambitious agreement at global level (another way of saying that developed countries should do their share). India provided detailed financial estimates, including for loss and damage, of course a contentious and [still unresolved issue](#) in the UNFCCC climate talks: in particular, the developing country demand for new and additional funding has not been agreed.

Again, it is impossible to put any detail on the support needed for unconditional NDCs until more detailed plans have been drawn up. However, it seems clear, in the spirit of a Global Green New Deal, or a Just Transition, that NDCs should take full account of the social costs of transition. What would it cost India, for example, to abandon coal, or perhaps more sensibly reduce coal even faster than currently expected? This is a country where coal is still a major source of energy, where coal is a source of tax revenue, and where transport of coal is the

largest source of revenue for Indian Railways (See Chapter 5 of [EGR 2017](#)). Navroz Dubash and colleagues have emphasised that India can expect a [disruptive transition](#).

**Step 9.** The way forward is easy to describe, and will need a big effort to deliver in the timeframe. Developing countries need better NDCs, with better understanding of global changes as well as national development priorities, as well as more detailed analysis of transition costs, both economic and social. This could be framed as a contributions to a Global Green New Deal, but in any case contributions need to be embedded into and consistent with national climate compatible development plans. The new NDCs need to be demanding in terms of conditionality. And they need to be coordinated, added up across countries, so that a coherent story can be told for the world as a whole. The [European Green Deal](#) is perhaps an example of what can be done in a trans-national context, with a target of being climate neutral in 2050, and initiatives in energy, buildings, industry, and mobility; there is mention of a just transition.

**Step 10.** Finally, what should developed countries do? First, develop ambitious NDCs on their own account. Second, help developing countries prepare better NDCs (as in Step 9). Third, resolve some outstanding issues in the climate negotiations, especially the vexed question of loss and damage, but also [Article 6 on carbon markets](#). Fourth, [restructure development programmes](#) to focus more on climate change (read my ten point programme for DFID [here](#)). And most important, prepare a generous package of incentives to support the implementation of conditional NDCs to 2030.

## Conclusion

I haven't made as much progress with the numbers as I hoped would be possible when I started writing this piece (see below). However, a number of conclusions seem justified, viz that

- Radical increases in emission reductions are needed to stay on the least-cost pathway to all temperature targets.
- Developing country commitments will be key to the success of the Glasgow COP;
- China and India are swing states, but other emerging economies will need to make weighty contributions;
- Better NDCs are needed from developing countries, with more attention to global conditions and to the social costs of transition;
- Adding these up will provide the basis for a Global Green New Deal and a Just Transition;
- Developing countries have ethical and practical reasons to ask for support in delivering the new NDCs;
- Hence, a substantial spread between conditional and unconditional NDCs is justified – an opening bid is of 5Gt Co<sub>2</sub>e;
- And developed countries have a lot to do, including by delivering ambitious plans of their own, and by supporting the implementation of the next generation of NDCs.

On the numbers, I have probably looked in the wrong place, but I would love to find, without having to construct it, a summary of current and expected future GHG emissions, including LULUCF, and for current policies and conditional and unconditional NDCs, for all developing countries, and by income group. WRI's [CAIT data explorer](#) has some information, as does the new [ClimateWatch data site](#), but not complete and not with the right country groups. For example, it would be very useful to be able to produce data analysis which matches the [OECD/DAC list of aid-eligible countries](#).

It would also be very helpful to have an analytical review of the last round of NDCs. Someone must have written that.

And there needs to be more work on guidelines for the current round of NDCs.

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January 2020