



Swiss Working Paper on Climate Change in the Post-2015 Agenda

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1 Introduction

Climate change affects humans and nature. It directly threatens the livelihood of the population in less developed parts of the world. In developed countries, infrastructure and particular branches of the economy are especially exposed. Climate change also affects animals, plants and ecosystems such as mountainous areas and oceans through changing temperature and precipitation patterns. In order to mitigate the risk of a disturbance of the global climate system with all its serious effects, human kind has to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions drastically.¹

The consequences of climate change influence the development path of countries in general and most clearly of those most vulnerable and less rich. Efforts towards sustainable development include decoupling economic growth from emissions and reducing greenhouse gases in general, promoting green economies and helping societies to adapt to the effects of climate change. International cooperation through finance, technology transfer and capacity building is supporting countries with limited capacities in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, to facilitate their transition to low-carbon and climate resilient development and to help them adapt to climate change. Therefore, climate financing is an important contribution to sustainable development.

Recent scientific results provide strong evidence that humans are influencing the climate system².

The contribution of Working Group I (The Physical Science Basis) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) provides unequivocal evidence of the unprecedented changes occurring to the climate system since the 1950s, such as the warming of oceans and atmosphere, diminishing amounts of snow and ice, sea-level rise, and the increase in concentration of greenhouse gases.³

The report says that human influence on the climate system is clear. This is evident from the increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, positive radiative forcing, observed warming, and understanding of the climate system.

Today, the twenty biggest emitters are responsible for approximately 80% of global greenhouse gases of which eleven are so called developed and nine are so called developing countries (Data: CAIT2.0, 2010, including the land sector⁴). Nearly half of the global greenhouse gas emissions are accountable to China (21%), the United States (14%) and the European Union (EU-27) (10%). Switzerland is responsible for 0.11% of global emissions (rank 92) with yearly per capita emissions of 6.4 t CO₂eq (rank 88). In comparison, China has yearly per capita emissions of 7.5 tCO₂eq (rank 78), the United States 21.9 tCO₂eq (rank 18) and EU-27 9.5 tCO₂eq (rank 62). In the decades to come, emissions are expected to grow strongly, particularly in emerging economies.

¹ FOEN Website about climate change: <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/klima/index.html?lang=en>

² For the full report, see http://ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/docs/WGIAR5_SPM_brochure_en.pdf, for the Summary for Policymakers (SPM), see http://ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/docs/WGIAR5_SPM_brochure_en.pdf

³ SPM (p. 2): http://ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/docs/WGIAR5_SPM_brochure_en.pdf

⁴ <http://cait2.wri.org>

2 International Climate Change Regime

2.1 Overview of Current Negotiations

Since the 1980's, the international community is dealing with climate change issues and is looking for global solutions. In 1992, countries agreed to establish the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The aim of the Convention is a "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".⁵ The Convention stipulates the common responsibility for the prevention of dangerous, anthropogenic climate change. Since 2010 (COP-16 in Cancun) parties furthermore acknowledged the long-term goal to limit the increase in global temperature to less than 2°C compared to preindustrial times. Through the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, the Convention addresses all country parties while emphasising the particular responsibility of industrial countries (Art 3.1). Moreover, industrial countries have committed to support developing countries in their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The Kyoto Protocol is a supplement to the Convention and requires its signatories and ratifying industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. In the first Kyoto period (2008-2012), industrialized countries committed to reduce their overall emissions by minus 5% compared to 1990 (Switzerland as well as European Union: minus 8%). These obligations are legally binding but covered only about 25% of global emissions.

Since 2005, the climate regimes for the period 2012-2020 and after 2020 are being negotiated. The following cornerstones have been agreed upon:⁶

- a legally binding second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol (2013-2020) as a transition period, where in fact only 14% of global emissions are legally bound. With the second Kyoto period, the principles of the Kyoto approach are meant to be upheld as a 'bridge' for the post-2020 regime;
- to broaden the engagement of member states to the Convention through voluntary, non-binding pledges of countries (80% of the global emissions are covered by the so-called pledge and review system), to validate the implementation of commitments through a review mechanism, and to scale-up their financial support for developing countries for measures to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change;
- to develop a new legally binding agreement by 2015 under which all countries (irrespective of their stage of development) will have a duty to contribute and that comes into effect by 2020.

2.2 Swiss Engagement

Switzerland strongly advocates a global climate regime that is effective, fair and legally binding. To this aim, Switzerland participates actively in the intensive international negotiations under the UNFCCC. Switzerland engages in its national capacity as well as a member and coordinator of the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG) which also includes Liechtenstein, Mexico, Monaco and the Republic of Korea. The EIG is the only formal negotiation group under the UNFCCC that includes developed as well as developing Parties. Furthermore, Switzerland is a member of the Cartagena Dialogue for Progressive Action, an alliance of Parties calling for a legally binding climate agreement with mitigation commitments for all Parties according to their responsibilities and capabilities.

Moreover, Swiss economic and development cooperation offers innovative programs which contribute to solutions to global risks such as climate change.

⁵ See Article 2 of the Convention: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> (page 4).

⁶ FOEN website about international climate policy: <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/klima/00470/index.html?lang=en>.

3 Existing Proposals on integrating Climate Change in a goal framework

3.1 Climate Change and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The link between development and climate change is well-known. In the context of the discussions about the SDGs, climate change is therefore often referred to and it is emphasised that it should be included in a new set of goals.

Climate Change was not integrated directly in the MDGs. However, in order to measure progress towards the achievement of MDG 7, the following indicator is used: 'CO₂ emissions, total, per capital and per \$1 GDP (PPP)'. The UN Development Group referred to the progress made in this respect in their thematic paper, published in 2010.⁷ They reported that energy production and consumption are responsible for about 80% of the global CO₂ emissions and that the elements contained in the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (energy access, energy efficiency, renewable energy) need to be integrated into national strategies.

For sustainable development, there are other important factors besides absolute CO₂ emissions such as political stability, good governance, reducing income inequality and education. Furthermore, technological progress increasingly decouples GDP growth from the increase of absolute emissions.

The central importance of decoupling greenhouse gas emissions from economic development has been emphasized in numerous studies including in the above-mentioned report of the UNDG task force. The report underlines the importance of developing green markets for promoting low-carbon development. Furthermore, the link between climate change and land and forest use is mentioned.

3.2 Existing Proposals for integrating Climate Change in future SDGs

In his report "A life of dignity for all", the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon highlighted that a number of transformative and mutually reinforcing actions need to apply to all countries in order to bring to life a vision for the development agenda beyond 2015. These actions are subsumed under 14 priority areas, of which addressing climate change is one of them. The Secretary General points to the importance of considering climate change mitigation and adaptation when assisting developing countries. Especially when providing support to adaptation action of the most vulnerable communities and nations, efforts should be carried out in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Furthermore, he highlights the importance of achieving a legally binding agreement by the end of 2015 and calls for effort and action in this regard in order to limit and reverse the increase in the average global temperature to 2°C above pre-industrial levels in line with international agreements.

In its report, the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda appointed by Ban Ki-Moon delivers 12 illustrative goals and targets. Furthermore, it defines cross-cutting issues that are not addressed through a stand-alone goal, climate change being one of them. Illustrative targets are formulated that address the most important contributors to a low-carbon trajectory.⁸ Furthermore, climate change directly affects several other targets and/or issues of the report such as poverty reduction, equitable growth, deforestation, food security and nutrition, and education. In its report, the panel strongly endorses the decision to limit the increase in global average temperature to under 2° C above preindustrial levels, in line with international agreements, and therefore include such a target in their Goal 12 "Create a Global Enabling Environment and Catalyse Long-Term Finance".

⁷ Thematic Paper on MDG 7, Environmental Sustainability, UNDG, 2010 (pages 9-13): http://www.undg.org/docs/11421/MDG7_1954-UNDG-MDG7-LR.pdf

⁸ such as more sustainable transport infrastructure; improved energy efficiency and use of renewable energy; the spread of more sustainable agricultural practices; tackling deforestation and increasing reforestation in the context of improving peoples' livelihoods, and food security, taking into account the value of natural resources, and biodiversity

In its report (“An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development”, 2013), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) formulates a stand-alone goal on curbing human-induced climate change and ensuring sustainable energy.⁹ The report highlights the importance of curbing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in order to ensure that global CO₂ emissions peak by 2020 in order to avoid the dangers of climate change. The report highlights several challenges for tackling climate change, with ‘de-carbonization’ of the world’s energy system being the most important one of them. The current rate of 34 billion tons of CO₂ per year from fossil fuel use should decline by more than half and CO₂ per dollar of world output must decline by more than 80% by 2050. Other proposed goals such as the increased resilience of cities and agricultural systems to climate change and governance rules for international finance are closely linked with climate change.

The report by the UN Global Compact addresses climate change mainly in conjunction with stand alone goals on energy (including issues such as clean energy, efficiency and new sources), but also in conjunction with food and agriculture, water as well as infrastructure. In Goal 5 on “Good nutrition for all through sustainable food and agricultural systems” they propose a target to “Stop and turn back annual increases in greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation resulting from farming and livestock production by 2020”. Other recommendations contained in the report include the implementation of pricing incentives such as carbon pricing in order to incorporate the external costs of climate change.

The UN System Technical Support Team’s Issue Brief on climate change and disaster risk reduction prepared by various UN agencies for the Open Working Group on SDGs highlights that climate change is a serious threat to sustainable development. It recommends focusing on the concept of resilience in order to pursue a cross-cutting approach which requires integrating climate change consideration and action at all levels of decision-making and across all policies and sectors. Because of its multidimensionality, climate change is intricately tied to different elements of sustainable development and therefore should not be isolated in a stand-alone goal.

4 Elements for a Swiss Position

Tackling climate change is of utmost importance in order to achieve sustainable development. It is a cross-cutting issue which affects and must be addressed across all sectors of the economy and society. It is therefore crucial that the SDGs integrate climate change issues.

Overarching commitments and goals such as the global goal to limit temperature increase to under 2°C (compared to pre-industrial levels), but also the review thereof, economy wide emission reduction commitments of countries, as well as the efforts in and support for preparation and implementation of adaptation action are being negotiated and anchored under the robust and legally binding framework of the UNFCCC. Accordingly, a standalone SDG in the area of climate change does not have added value. Rather, the SDGs must be well formulated to contribute to low carbon development and climate resilient economies and societies.

For the reduction of greenhouse gases, the proposal for a stand-alone goal on energy based on the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative is of specific importance. Such a goal should also integrate the crucial element of phasing out inefficient and unsustainable fossil-fuel subsidies. Equally important for greenhouse gas reduction are also other issues such as sustainable consumption and production, sustainable/green growth, sustainable agriculture and food security, as well as sustainable cities and infrastructure. Adaptation to climate change has to be taken up in goal proposals and thematic areas such as disaster risk reduction, food security and nutrition through sustainable agri-food systems,

⁹ GOAL 8: CURB HUMAN-INDUCED CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENSURE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Curb greenhouse gas emissions from energy, industry, agriculture, the built environment, and land-use change to ensure a peak of global CO₂ emissions by 2020 and to head off the rapidly growing dangers of climate change.⁷ Promote sustainable energy for all.

Target 8a. Decarbonize the energy system, ensure clean energy for all, and improve energy efficiency, with targets for 2020, 2030, and 2050.*

Target 8b. Reduce non-energy-related emissions of greenhouse gases through improved practices in agriculture, forestry, waste management, and industry.*

Target 8c. Adopt incentives, including pricing greenhouse gas emissions, to curb climate change and promote technology transfer to developing countries.*

water, biodiversity and forest, and sustainable cities and infrastructure. The concept of resilience will be useful for formulating concrete targets in this regard.

Acknowledgment of agreed language under UNFCCC can be anchored under the SDGs context – however, it must not open doors for renegotiation or prejudge any agreement under the UNFCCC. Therefore, the proposal made by some actors in the SDG process to formulate a target on the limitation of temperature increase to under 2°C as part of one of the SDGs would also need to recognize the decision that this goal is currently under review (discussions are focusing on reducing it to 1.5°C).