

# D+C

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## COVID-19

In pandemic, human rights are restricted far too often

## USA/NATO

Afghans feel left alone in view of international troops' withdrawal date

## TRADE

African opportunities grow due to continental agreement



# Climate action

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In response to the climate crisis, national governments must cooperate with subnational authorities on drafting and implementing policies **32**

## FOCUS

### Climate action

#### “Matter of life and death”

Small island states are suffering devastating impacts of climate change – and the worst is yet to come. Kavydass Ramano, Mauritius' minister of environment and climate change, told D+C/E+Z in an interview that he wants advanced nations to honour their pledges. **PAGE 18**

#### Two-pronged approach

Well-targeted weather forecasts and crop insurance can help to manage risks African smallholders face in the climate crisis. It makes sense to link both services. Till Below and Nkumbu Nalwimba, who are involved in a GIZ project in Zambia, share their personal views. **PAGE 20**

#### “Build forward better”

Ahead of the climate summit in Glasgow in November, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner discussed how humankind's transition to prosperous low-carbon economies is progressing in a D+C/E+Z interview. In turbulent times, he sees many reasons to stay hopeful. **PAGE 22**

#### Growing US ambitions

US President Joe Biden is eager to reassert his country's global leadership. He knows that his administration must solve problems. As freelance consultant Katie Cashman writes, tackling the climate crisis is high on his agenda. **PAGE 26**

#### “Science matters”

In global climate talks, vulnerable countries want to see progress in three areas: more ambitious emission reductions, the fulfilment of existing funding pledges and solidarity in view of increasing losses and damages. The Bangladeshi scholar Saleemul Huq assessed matters in an interview. Katja Dombrowski and Sabine Balk of D+C/E+Z report how experts debate the merits of carbon taxes and the risks of worsening health. One lesson is that it makes sense to use additional revenues to tackle social disparities. **PAGES 28, 30, 31**

#### Multi-level cooperation

In the response to global warming, national governments must cooperate with subnational authorities. Monika Zimmermann, an independent consultant, elaborates what “collaborative climate action” means and how policymakers can bring it about. **PAGE 32**



## Negative emissions to get to net zero

One of the climate movement's slogans is: "The time to act is now." Indeed, scientists agree that it is high time to scale up ambition. In the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the nations of the world committed to limiting the increase of global temperature to an average of 1.5°C. That is feasible, but only if sweeping measures are taken fast. So far, the share of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere has kept rising – in spite of Paris and much nice-sounding rhetoric. The Covid-19 pandemic has only dented the curve marginally.

In regard to the climate, 2021 is expected to be a decisive year. Ahead of the UN climate summit COP26 in Scotland in November, governments must update their national determined contributions (NDCs). What they have promised to date, does not come anywhere close to what is needed for achievement of the Paris goals. The targets spelled out in the updated NDCs will guide the global community's response to the climate crisis. Obviously, ambitious targets are not enough; leaders must also make sure they are met. Governments must rise to their responsibility.

It is a good sign that an increasing number of governments have pledged to make their economies carbon neutral. Leading emitters have made such commitments – China, the number one, by 2060, and the USA, number two, by 2050. India, number three, is signalling it may strive for 2050 as well. The EU, the members of which collectively would be in the third place, wants to achieve net zero by mid-century. Even Russia, number four among nation states, is working on a sustainable-development strategy in spite of its well-deserved reputation of climate obstruction. However, only one small and developing country has actually made its economy carbon neutral: Bhutan.

Every country must aspire to get there, and they must take action now, not in a few decades. Experts say we need ambitious reduction targets for the year 2030. In late April, several top leaders scaled up their pledges in that direction at a virtual climate summit hosted by US President Joe Biden. The USA, Canada and Japan will now act faster. Shortly before, the EU and the UK had – independently of each other – adopted higher emissions-reduction targets for 2030 and 2035 respectively. However, all promises summed up are still insufficient to reach the Paris climate goals.

Accelerated action is imperative. Moreover, poor nations deserve more support, and that applies especially to those that are particularly climate vulnerable. Typically, they lack the needed know-how, technology and funding. Advanced nations must shore up their act. They must fulfil their pledges, set good examples and prove reliable partners – all of which will serve their self-interest.

Without negative emissions, net zero will nonetheless prove unachievable. It has become indispensable to capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and store it permanently because the international community will certainly exceed the carbon budget that is left to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Moreover, some emissions from agriculture and industrial processes are inevitable. Though technologies such as direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS) may be controversial, they have definitely become indispensable. Large-scale facilities are being built in Iceland, Norway and the USA. Such infrastructure, however, is no substitute for ambitious climate action. There is no alternative to a global transformation to sustainability.

► You'll find all contributions of our focus section plus related ones on our website – they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.



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### Dieter Brauer †

Dieter Brauer passed away at the age of 85 on 3 February in Starnberg near Munich, as we have belatedly learned. He was born in Hannover on 18 October 1936. From 1976 to 2002, he

edited the English-language edition of D+C Development and Cooperation. He also headed Deutsche Welle's English-language shortwave radio service. Brauer was an excellent journalist who paid close attention to what was happening in the developing world and was particularly interested in Africa and South Asia.

## Debate



### Left alone

US President Joe Biden has announced he will withdraw US troops from Afghanistan by 11 September. As political scientist Nawid Paigham writes, Afghans feel abandoned and fear that the extremist Taliban will rise to power once more.

PAGE 10

## Tribune



### Milestone for African trade

On 1 January 2021, the go-ahead was given for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It offers huge opportunities for the continent and raises hopes that many trade barriers will gradually come down. That is the assessment of Christoph Kannengiesser of the German-African Business Association.

PAGE 15



Human Rights Watch emphasises the need for global action for vaccine equity: Kenyan nurse.

COVID-19

## Human rights during pandemic

**Governments must end excessive repression. Too many have used health concerns as a pretext to breach fundamental rights, according to Human Rights Watch. Moreover, issues of social welfare deserve more attention, the international non-governmental organisation insists.**

By Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi

In one year, the Covid-19 pandemic has claimed the lives of 2.5 million people and infected at least another 110 million. It has had other impacts as well. In a recent report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documents the damage in regard to human rights. “Future choices – Charting an equitable exit from the Covid-19 pandemic” sends a message to governments to change course.

The pandemic was used as an excuse by governments to crackdown on free speech and peaceful assembly in more than 90 countries, the authors argue. They document incidents of state agencies targeting journalists, activists and political opposition groups. Authorities also stifled dissent

unrelated to the pandemic. There was an increase in internet blackouts and restrictions on access to information in several countries around the world.

The HRW activists also demand that people who are detained in prisons, jails and immigration centres must be better protected from Covid-19. They are said to frequently being held in over-crowded and sometimes improvised facilities, typically lacking adequate sanitation, hygiene and access to medical care. The HRW report acknowledges that many governments have decongested such spaces by releasing some detainees, but adds that the numbers were generally too low. Moreover, they often excluded political activists.

Freedom of movement has been restricted in general. According to HRW, quarantines, lockdowns and travel bans often made sense, there were cases of excessive enforcement and discrimination.

The HRW report goes far beyond assessing only civil liberties. It considers other human rights as well. For example, it stresses issues such as health care, social

protection and labour rights. The authors emphasise the need for global action for vaccine equity by ensuring equal distribution among all nations.

It is necessary to strengthen resilience of health-care systems around the world, the HRW authors state, given that the pandemic has exposed cracks in many places. More must happen to ensure people’s right to health, but actually less is being done, according to the international non-governmental organisation. For example, some governments – including those of Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea or Bangladesh – focused entirely on Covid-19, suspending vaccine programmes for preventable diseases that affect millions of people.

Health workers are highly at risk and need to be better protected since they are engaged at the frontline of the pandemic around the world. Most of them are women, the report points out. It also wants to see better protection for people in nursing homes and other shared spaces where the virus spreads fast. Older persons and people with disabilities are particularly at risk, after all.

The report bemoans that many governments cut back on sexual and reproductive health care. Relying on data from the International Planned Parenthood Federation, a global non-governmental organisation, the authors point out that many family-planning facilities were closed.

### FAMILY LIFE

Gender-based violence has increased during the pandemic, HRW points out. There were more reported cases of domestic violence. Lockdown policies put many women and girls in harm’s way when frustrated male relatives turned aggressive. The report says that domestic violence helplines across Pakistan, recorded a 200% increase in cases from January to March 2020, with the trend worsening when lockdown was implemented. In Italy, Indonesia and Russia, calls to domestic violence helplines are said to have at least doubled during lockdown.

The pandemic disrupted access to education moreover, as schools were closed. According to the HRW report, an estimated 1.4 billion children and teenagers in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools were shut out in 192 countries. Those who lost access to education due to Covid-19 may fall behind their peers in the long run, the

human-rights experts warn. Making matters worse, kids may be pressed into child marriage or child labour, diminishing their chances of returning to school. The shift to online and distance learning, moreover, has excluded members of households that lack digital devices and internet connectivity.

The report also notes a housing crisis. As people lost work and income, housing became more insecure and less affordable for millions in both high- and low-income countries.

The HRW report adds that the working class in particular has felt economic and social impacts of Covid-19. Business closures led to devastating economic hardships. Low-income workers in retail businesses and the informal sector suffered most. The report notes that women were disproportionately likely to lose their jobs. If, however, they could keep working, they could not keep social distance and were especially prone to be infected.

Workers' rights matter in a pandemic, the authors insist, and the need for guaranteed sick and family leave has become ever more obvious. Proper social-protection

systems would ensure that workers who are sick with coronavirus or must take care of sick family members can stay at home. That would also minimise the spread of the virus.

With the restriction on movement and the desire to reduce physical human contact, governments turned to the use of technology. Digital surveillance was enabled through contact tracing apps. These technologies collected and analysed a wide range of personal and sensitive data, from GPS and Bluetooth to cell-site location data. HRW insists that these technologies generally pose serious risks to privacy and human rights.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted conflict and humanitarian emergencies and made it harder for governments and the international community to respond. In South Sudan, restrictions in place to stop the spread of the virus also slowed the implementation of the peace deal and the delivery of aid to populations in need.

According to the report, the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the importance of environmental regulations. Data from Europe and North America shows that the mar-

ginalised communities who are especially exposed to pollution also tend to be most affected by Covid-19. The report insists that renewable energy supply must be prioritised and regrets that environmental regulations have been rolled back during the pandemic.

LINK

**Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2021: Future choices – Charting an equitable exit from the Covid-19 pandemic.**

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/03/04/future-choices/charting-equitable-exit-covid-19-pandemic>



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LIBERIA

# Well-meant, not well done

**In spite of fertile land and abundant natural resources, a devastating civil war made Liberia a broken country. Reconstruction is proving difficult, and many internationally supported development projects fail. In a book, a long-serving UN official explains why.**

By Dagmar Wolf

Many of Liberia's problems today have deep historical roots. The country was founded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by former slaves from North America and the Caribbean. Known as Americo-Liberians, they settled mainly on the coast of their new homeland, ensuring they had exclusive access to the country's natural resources. They modelled their world on the USA and behaved like a master race, suppressing the heterogeneous indigenous communities of the coun-

try's interior. As long-serving UN official Doris Kleffner explains in a recent book, they showed no interest in indigenous culture or language. Instead, they exploited the local peoples in ways that were "just as bad, if not worse, than what they had experienced themselves" on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The desperately poor native population grew increasingly resentful of the Americo-Liberians. In 1979, a price hike for rice triggered violent protests and power struggles. This crisis escalated into a full-blown civil war that went on for 14 years. It was fuelled by ethnic divisions and attempts to secure political power in order to control natural resources.

A quarter of a million Liberians lost their lives, a million were displaced. All sides used child soldiers; barely imaginable

atrocities were committed. In 2003, a peace agreement was finally reached with the help of the UN. Nonetheless, the war and its consequences were dreadful. Kleffner points to an economy in ruins, a rapidly growing population and unemployment soaring at an estimated 85%.

## LACK OF CULTURAL AWARENESS

Many projects that were supposed to help rebuild the country have failed, the author argues. She was involved for several years in the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia – amongst other things supporting former combatants' reintegration into society. Kleffner accuses the international community of not just a lack of cultural awareness but sheer neocolonialism in its attempts to impose western standards. In her eyes, political, economic and social systems were introduced without regard for local traditions. Such approaches, she claims, are doomed to fail.

One of many examples the author cites is an income-generating project in which the farmers were given a large num-





Disarming a former child soldier in Liberia 2003.

ber of chickens. Within a day, the villagers had killed all of the birds. They believed the people of a nearby village had turned into chickens to spy on them. Programmes need to take account of such traditional superstition.

### PATRONAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

Widespread corruption and nepotism similarly obstruct reconstruction according to Kleffner. Even during the peace talks, parties haggled to secure as many lucrative positions as possible for relatives and friends. Kleffner points out that patronage networks have deep roots in Liberian society. Success and prosperity do not depend on individual achievement, but on status and social networks. People thus have few incentives to develop skills or get a formal education.

The patronage system made it easy for the warlords to recruit unemployed young men. Sometimes simply offering a hot meal was enough. However, the task of demobilising ex-combatants is all the more difficult. Training programmes and projects aimed at creating sustainable alternative sources of income often fail.

Kleffner claims that misdirected international aid exacerbated the problems. Here are three examples:

- In addition to formal schooling or vocational training, ex-combatants were given a one-off payment of \$300 plus an additional monthly \$30 during training. The money attracted them to participate, but warlords took the weapons from their fighters and handed them to relatives and friends. Many people thus ended up in the demobilisation programme – including frail old women – who had nothing to do with the warring parties. Moreover, the steady monthly income meant there was no incentive to complete a training programme.

- In another case, families stopped growing their own food because aid organisations distributed food to schoolchildren. It was enough for entire families to live on.

- Some employers, including the American tyre manufacturer Firestone, gave plantation workers sacks of imported white rice as part of their payment. The local brown “country rice” was then considered inferior and was hardly grown any more.

Kleffner writes that many Liberians are used to living hand to mouth and do not think long-term. Accordingly, aid programmes are misused for personal profit. They only run as long as external support is provided. In the author’s eyes, Liberia’s government is interested in growth but not national development. It attracts foreign

investors who plunder the country’s natural resources. Liberian elites benefit, but masses of people do not.

Taking Liberia as an example, the former UN official points out the problems of international aid and calls for radical reform. Since the 1960s, she calculates that \$600 billion in aid has flowed to sub-Saharan Africa. In her eyes, it has made practically no difference to people’s standard of living, so she wants western policymakers to reconsider their relationship with governments in developing countries. Kleffner concludes that the millions paid to corrupt elites have strengthened dysfunctional state systems, hindered development and has thus become the primary cause of migration.

### BOOK

Kleffner, D., 2020: *Liberia – Paradies auf Abwegen. Kritische Einblicke in die internationale Entwicklungspolitik („Liberia – Paradise on the wrong trail. Critical insights into international development policy“*, in German only). Frankfurt, Brandes & Apsel.



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UN 2030 AGENDA

## Demanding binding rules

**Experts are calling for more consistent implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda. They believe UN sustainable development governance is in need of reform and see a role for a powerful new body, such as a UN Sustainable Development Council, with the power to demand binding rules.**

By Sabine Balk

In Germany, the government is advised on sustainable development policy by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE), an independent body made up of people from different areas of public life, including civil society, business, science and politics. The authors of a recent RNE policy paper stress that sustainable development is not just a national issue; indeed, it is first and foremost a global one.

The UN created the framework with its 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But the RNE experts criticise the fact that decisions at UN level take far too long. They warn that fast decisive action is particularly needed to address urgent global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pandemics. Anything else risks coming too late.

The key UN body coordinating global sustainable development policy is the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). In the eyes of the authors

of the RNE policy paper, however, the HLPF has a number of shortcomings. It is used by UN member states and stakeholders as a platform for exchanging experiences. At present, countries primarily report successes; they rarely present accounts of failures or strategies for addressing them. But that, according to the RNE, is precisely what is needed so that lessons can be learnt and acted upon.

Problems at present include:

- There is currently no international body with the power to set binding rules and impose penalties on those who fail to abide by them. The HLPF works on the principle of consensus, which makes decisions very difficult to reach. There are no binding or institutionalised follow-up processes, nor is even legal action taken to sanction those who commit offences or crimes against the environment.
- Countries are not currently required to account for the amount of progress they make on enhancing the coherence of their policies for sustainable development.
- After five years of reporting and institutional adaptation to promote implementation of the SDGs at national level, the UN declared a Decade of Action in 2019 to speed up SDG implementation. However, international sustainable development governance does not provide sufficient effective instruments for sustainable development. Peer

learning, self-commitment and voluntary reporting are not enough. Moreover, there is a lack of funding for projects in low-income countries and for action targeting changes in economic and financial policy.

- There needs to be more effective accounting for progress on sustainable development. UN reports and voluntary national reviews are not analysed. There is thus no evaluation of transformation issues and no quantification of target achievement.

The RNE offers concrete reform proposals to address these problems. It calls for the creation of a UN Sustainable Development Council on a par with the UN Security Council. This will require an amendment to the UN Charter as well as approval and ratification by two-thirds of all member states, including the five permanent Security Council members. In the medium term, upgrading the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to function as a sustainable development council could create a centre-piece for UN sustainable development governance. A council with a chamber system is conceivable, similar to the International Labour Organization (ILO). Before this lengthy undertaking is implemented, the authors of the RNE policy paper recommend immediate moderate reform of existing institutions.

This includes making the best use of ECOSOC capacities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and expanding them where necessary to provide guidance and recommendations for further reform at the HLPF. The UN should ensure the effectiveness and coherence of policy decisions, regularly evaluate all reports to the HLPF and systematically involve civil society in all UN processes relevant for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, at a meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the UN headquarters in New York.

### LINK

German Council for Sustainable Development, 2021: Reform options for effective UN sustainable development governance. [https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/RNE\\_policy\\_paper\\_for\\_effective\\_UN-Sustainable\\_Development\\_Governance\\_1\\_March-2021.pdf](https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/RNE_policy_paper_for_effective_UN-Sustainable_Development_Governance_1_March-2021.pdf)



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## Keeping girls in school

Girls starting primary school in Malawi face daunting odds. According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), only about 25% of them actually complete primary school. Nearly 60% drop out for a variety of reasons related to poverty, lack of motivation and poor sanitary facilities. Another 15% leave school specifically because of pregnancy and/or marriage.

On top of this, about 20% of Malawian girls under 18 experience rape or other sexual violence, the UN agency says in a report titled “Mother groups – underutilised resource in girls’ education in Malawi”. The agency aims to improve maternal and reproductive health worldwide.

To improve the odds that Malawi’s schoolgirls will stay the course, UNFPA and the Malawi Education Ministry sponsor “mother groups” – circles of about 10 adult female volunteers attached to schools, which advise girls to remain in class and help them to do so.

The mothers use a variety of methods. They explain the importance of education, serve as role models and arrange referrals for reproductive health services. They counsel girls on how to resist pressures to drop out. Some girls face pressure from their own parents to quit school, especially if they are married and their husbands help to support their parents.

The mothers show girls how to care for themselves, including how to make sanitary pads out of scraps of cloth which can be washed and re-used. They also make

such pads and give them to girls who forgot to bring their own, says Lloyd Mtalimanja, a programme coordinator at WaterAid Malawi. The NGO upgrades sanitation facilities in schools, including improving toilets and basins for washing hands.

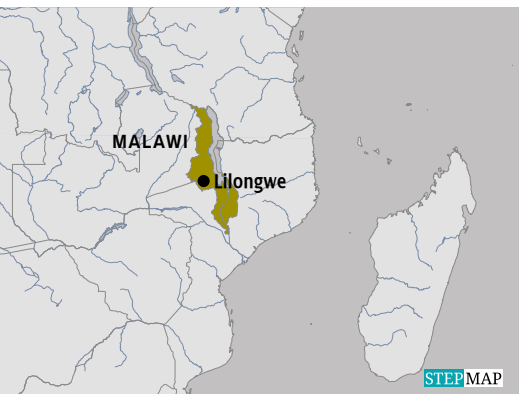
Menstruation is a major factor in the dropout rate. “When girls are menstruating they prefer to stay at home,” says Bright Sibale, Head of Centre for Development Management, a consulting firm. He carried out a study on child development, funded by World Relief Malawi, which finds that girls’ absence from school correlates strongly with their menstrual cycles.

“Most girls drop out because of bullying from boys, especially when they have their periods,” says Ellen Phiri, a teacher. “The mother groups help many girls to stay in school or to return if they have left. Many of those girls are doing better than before, and some are being selected for secondary school.”

Data on the success rate of mother groups in reducing dropout rates are incomplete. However, some local statistics point to a significant impact. According to Thokozire Livuza, a primary education advisor in the Mulanje district, the number of primary school pupils in the district’s Mombo Zone rose from nearly 11,900 in the 2017/18 academic year to nearly 14,400 in 2018/19. Most of that increase was due to the efforts of mother groups, she says in a Malawi News Agency article titled “Mother groups improving school attendance”.

Mother groups are active in about 350 Malawian primary schools. Those groups receive “supportive supervision” from the Education Ministry, as well as some of the funds that the ministry provides to schools. But the 350 schools represent only a fraction of Malawi’s 6,400 primary schools.

Fewer than half of the 350 mother groups are active in schools that participate in the UNFPA’s Joint Programme on Girls’ Education, which aims to keep girls in school.



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## MASTHEAD / IMPRINT

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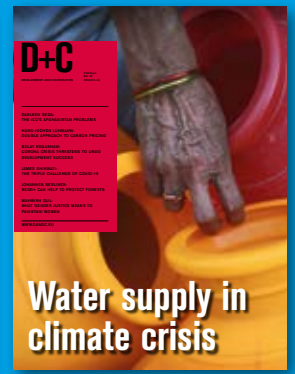
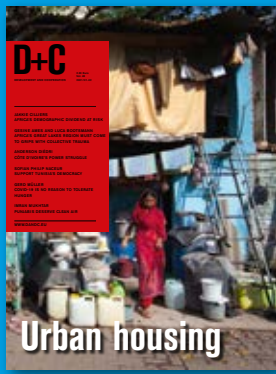
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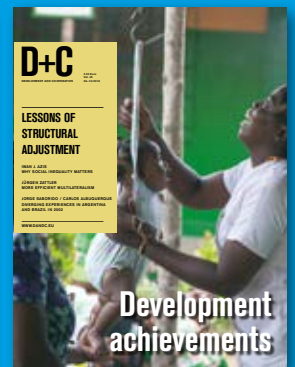


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Afghan police officer and US soldier in Kabul in 2015.

AFGHANISTAN

## Left alone

**US President Joe Biden has announced that he will withdraw all military personnel from Afghanistan by September 11<sup>th</sup> this year. For Afghans, this is worrisome.**

By Nawid Paigham

US troops have been in the country for 20 years. In 2001, the 9/11 terror attacks on New York and Washington had drawn the USA into war. Now President Biden says: “We cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result.”

Troops from other NATO member countries have been supporting the US-led intervention. The governments concerned have announced that they will also bring their soldiers home.

For Afghans, this is terrible news. They feel abandoned by the powers that promised to bring about a better future marked by prosperity, democracy and the rule of law. It does not comfort people that Biden considers these goals somewhat unrealistic. The concerns Afghans are now sharing on vari-

ous media show that they expect the influence of the Taliban extremists to grow. Their Islamist government was toppled by the US invasion in 2001 and they evidently hope to return to power.

It is true, of course, that the international troops have not achieved what they were supposed to. Critics have a point when they argue that, given that Afghanistan does not have the strength to stand on its own feet after 20 years of heavy military, political and financial support, it hardly makes sense to simply extend that support. On the other hand, there has been civil, democratic and political progress in Afghanistan. Much – if not all – of it is now likely to be undone.

According to Biden, the main goal has been achieved since Afghanistan does not expose the international community to terrorist threats anymore. The president who launched the invasion had greater ambitions. “Our war on terror begins with Al-Qaeda, but it does not end there,” George W. Bush said in 2001. “It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” None of the 9/11 terrorists were of Afghan origin, of course, but the Taliban had granted a safe

haven to Al-Qaeda, the terrorist organisation led by Osama bin Laden.

The depressing truth is that Bush focused on fighting terrorists and criminals. That made the NATO presence ambiguous to Afghans. On the upside, it gave some scope for peaceful reconstruction and constructive development, but on the downside, special forces killed a great number of people in attempts to hunt down bin Laden. Innocent civilians died, and that did not help US troops to win “hearts and minds”.

Adding to the problem, western governments never came to grips with opium being Afghanistan’s main export commodity. It is, of course, an illegal drug, but merely “fighting crime” was not a promising approach in a context where the black economy offers many people the most promising livelihoods. It was, moreover, naïve to believe that corruption would somehow be contained in a country aflush with black money.

Under President Obama, the approach changed somewhat, especially after bin Laden was killed in Pakistan. Obama’s generals preferred counter-insurgency tactics to chasing terrorists, but their approach failed. Eventually, President Donald Trump started negotiations with the Taliban – and now Biden has decided to withdraw.

War has been tearing Afghanistan apart for 40 years. NATO was involved for only half of that time span. Nonetheless, this has become the longest war the USA has ever fought. Biden wants to end it. But will war end in Afghanistan?

History does not inspire optimism. When the Soviets left the country in the late 80s the result was civil war and an emergence of insurgent groups. Now that the US and its allies want to leave the country for good, one cannot expect a miracle to happen. Biden wants to focus on other global issues such as China’s growing military clout, Russian assertiveness and Iran’s nuclear programme. Things may go terribly wrong, however, and he may end up sending troops back to the country rather soon. That happened in Iraq when ISIS terrorism escalated there after the US military had pulled out.



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## DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

# Healthy competition

**Chinese lending is reducing the clout of the IMF. That may be a good thing.**

By James Sundquist

When developing countries ran into economic trouble 20 years ago, they had only one place to turn to: the consortium of western-led institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Things have changed because China has emerged as a key player. It sometimes works in cooperation with the western-led institutions and sometimes independently. Scholars have been pondering for years what this means for developing countries. The focus is typically on China's long-term loans for infrastructure projects and whether they are worth the financial and political risk for borrowers.

However, other impacts deserve scrutiny as well. A case in point is China's potential role as a rival to the IMF in providing emergency lending. Financial journalists have reported on real or rumored Chinese financial lifelines in dozens of countries. Anecdotes prevail as serious research has lagged behind. Important questions include:

- Is there evidence of Chinese lending replacing IMF programmes?
- How prevalent is this phenomenon?
- Has it strengthened developing countries' bargaining position in talks with the IMF?

Some western policymakers like to warn that China is pursuing a "debt-trap" policy, trying to ensnare low and middle income countries in dependency. An equally interesting question, however, is whether Chinese lending is reducing those countries' dependency on the IMF. My research shows that Chinese loans have indeed enabled some countries to avoid turning to the IMF and enabled others to negotiate deals with fewer attached conditions. My findings are based on data for 104 countries from 2001 to 2017.

This trend is healthy given that IMF programmes have often not delivered the expected results. Critics argue that the poor track record results from excessive free-market orthodoxy. Some even speak of an assault on sovereignty. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel laureate, has compared IMF condi-



**Top leaders: Kristalina Georgieva of the IMF with Xi Jinping, President of China, in Beijing in 2019.**

tionality to bloodletting, arguing that loan conditions may be well-intended, but ultimately only harm the patient.

## NO TRAPS

By empowering borrowers to negotiate for fewer or even zero conditions from the IMF, Chinese loans may be doing more to free developing countries than even the loudest and most prominent IMF critics have achieved so far. It is important to note, moreover, that these loans appear to be less risky than some fear. China has typically de-

nied bailouts to countries without reliable sources of foreign exchange, such as Zimbabwe. The implication is that China is paying attention to debt sustainability rather than trying to ensnare them in debt traps. My data show that countries that export large volumes of natural resources are the most likely to benefit from Chinese loans. Quite clearly, these borrowers see China as an alternative to the IMF.

China is not the first country to undercut the IMF when it suits its strategic interests. In the wake of the Gulf War in 1990, for example, the USA provided emergency assistance to Egypt over the protests of the IMF. France similarly propped up its former colonies in West Africa during the 1980s.

Today, China is providing such options to a new and wider range of countries. Defenders of the IMF will counter that its policy conditionality has softened in the past two decades. They will add that the IMF does more to set nations on a path to long-term prosperity than China does. Among other things they will accuse China of many things, including:

- prioritising borrowing governments' short-term domestic needs over long-term sustainability and efficiency,
- non-transparent lending with little regard for issues such as corruption and illicit financial flows and
- promoting infrastructure that benefits China's economic interests (including commodity imports and exports of manufactured goods).

These points may be true in many cases. Borrowing governments will have to weigh the respective benefits of IMF and Chinese loans diligently. They will, however, be happy to have the choice.

## LINK

**Sundquist, J., 2021: Bailouts from Beijing – How China functions as an alternative to the IMF.**

<https://www.bu.edu/gdp/2021/03/08/bailouts-from-beijing-how-china-functions-as-an-alternative-to-the-imf/>



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MALAWI

# Democratic achievements, but insufficient growth

In December, the London-based magazine *The Economist* declared Malawi to be its “country of the year 2020”. The reason for choosing Malawi was the judicial nullification of the presidential elections followed by a peaceful change of government, thereby “reviving democracy in an increasingly authoritarian world region.” Such praise is well-deserved! The new government, however, must now succeed in kickstarting economic development as well.

By Rolf Drescher

In May 2019, presidential elections confirmed incumbent Peter Mutharika in office in Malawi (see my essay in Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/04). Nationwide protests erupted fast. The two leading opposition parties, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the United Transformation Movement (UTM), went to court. In early 2020 the judges annulled the election in view of systematic fraud. The Constitutional Court ordered new elections to be held. They took place on 23 June 2020.

MCP and UTM formed an alliance, which also involved some smaller parties. It was called “Tonse Alliance” (all of us) with MCP leader Lazerus McCarthy Chakwera as its presidential candidate. His share of the vote was 59%. His electoral victory, and inauguration on 28 June 2020, set the course for fundamental political and economic reforms. The long-term strategy “Malawi 2063” sets the ambitious goal of making Malawi an upper-middle-income country by 2063.

The challenges are huge. Today, 70% of the people live in poverty. According to the UNDP, Malawi’s Human Development Index has hardly improved in the past 10 years. Rainfed subsistence agriculture is the bedrock of the economy and most peoples’ livelihoods. The foundations for a sustained poverty-reducing growth are not in place. The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively af-

ected the economy and exacerbated inequality.

In the election campaign, the Tonse Alliance convinced voters by promising to



In Malawi, most people depend on subsistence agriculture.

fight corruption, create jobs, subsidise seeds and improve social services. However, the new government’s fiscal space is limited. It cannot spend massively to live up to its election pledges.

In view of the rising budget deficit and sovereign debt, improved governance with a comprehensive reform of the country’s public financial management system is a prerequisite to pave the way for the implementation of development-oriented and poverty-reducing policies. The four key structural budget problems that need urgently to be tackled are:

- The domestic revenues do not cover the government’s recurrent expenditures and need to be partly financed by loans.
- The high share of statutory expenditures (including debt servicing) leaves no leeway to finance priority projects or emergency measures.
- To achieve a structural transformation of the economy, the government’s investment expenditures must increase significantly, and so must domestic and foreign direct investments. Government agencies’ spending efficiency needs to be enhanced; this may have a greater effect than raising more revenues.

The government is aware of the challenges. Its policies aim to reform the public service and boost its capacity and effectiveness. Modernising the public financial management system is a key element. President Chakwera has made fighting corruption a top priority.

He has now been in office for almost one year. Critics say his Tonse Alliance government is not following up its forceful rhetoric with action. Nonetheless, the government’s clear analysis of the challenges and the steps taken so far give reason for optimism. Malawi voted for political change, conclusive reforms and strict anti-corruption policies. There are no indications yet that the government is deviating from the voters’ mandate. If it does, it will quickly lose the peoples’ trust and support. It will be difficult, though, to reconcile the high expectations with the fiscal and economic reality.



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**Autocratic leaders like the Russian President Vladimir Putin felt encouraged by former US President Donald Trump.**

out that the USA, the EU and Britain can get a grip on them, if they act with determination in close cooperation.

It is high time to do exactly that. Many people in Europe may no longer worry about the future of democracy because Biden is now in the White House. Nonetheless, there still is ample reason for concern, at least if you trust Freedom House, another Washington-based think tank. The title of its annual report 2021 is: “Democracy under siege”. The findings include that only 20% of the world population currently live in a country that is considered to be “free”. That is the lowest share since 1995. Moreover, 75% of the world population live in countries where things deteriorated last year. It makes a huge difference, of course, that India has dropped to the category “partly free” under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Hindu-supremacist. With close to 1.4 billion people, India accounts for about 18% of humankind – but matters have deteriorated for 75%.

Protest movements demand (more) democracy in many places, including Hong Kong and Belarus. Some prevail, but all too often, they are crushed. The report was finalised too early to mention Myanmar or Uganda, but it does consider other depressing recent developments, including the flaring up of military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh or the civil war in Ethiopia, where Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had seemed to endorse more democracy.

Autocrats, warlords and their cliques depend on illicit financial flows. To protect democracy at home and promote it internationally, western governments would do well to fight kleptocracy.

#### LINKS

**Center for American Progress, 2021: Turning the tide on dirty money.**

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2021/02/26/495402/turning-tide-dirty-money/>

**Freedom House, 2021: Democracy under siege.**

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege>



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GLOBAL AFFAIRS

## Democracy, not kleptocracy

**Western nations have an interest in promoting democracy. A good place to start is fighting illicit financial flows.**

**By Hans Dembowski**

By definition, democratically governed societies are pluralistic. The reason is that if authorities are responsible to their citizens, they are likely to take a broad range of interests into account. By contrast, autocratic strongmen (rarely women) typically serve oligarchic interests. While they may claim to be acting on behalf of “the” nation, their idea of nationhood excludes anyone who disagrees with them.

In the USA, the presidency of Donald Trump was marked by his self-enriching tendencies and his disregard for institutions both at the national and international level. He did nothing to promote democracy and even tried to overturn an election. Autocratic rulers around the world felt encouraged. Unfortunately, leaders from other western countries never filled the gap that opened up internationally. The EU, of course, has democracy deficits of its own, including right-wing populist governments in Poland and Hungary. US President Joe Biden is taking a different approach, once again seeing democracy as a guiding principle in global affairs. He needs allies, and elegant rhetoric will not do. To convincingly preach good governance, leaders must be seen to be striving for good governance themselves.

To set the right example, western powers should do much more to fight illicit financial flows. That way they can improve matters at home and have international impacts at the same time. While autocrats and oligarchs like to disparage liberal democracy, they have a keen interest in western countries’ capital markets. To feel safe, they want to stash away some wealth in places where assets are denominated in dollars, euros, yen or other internationally accepted currencies. They thrive on money laundering, excel in shady deals and make ample use of tax havens. Western governments can do a lot to make those things harder. They should do their best to fight white-collar crime, enforce tax laws and close loopholes.

As a result, their revenues increase, with more money becoming available for public-good investments. Social disparities could be reduced. The better an example they set, the more trust in institutions will grow – at home and abroad. At the same time, they would reduce opportunities that autocrats and their cronies love to grasp.

As the Center for American Progress, a Washington-based think tank, convincingly argues, international corruption is a growing threat to western democracies. Its policy paper “Turning the tide on dirty money” deserves attention. According to the authors, the international anti-corruption measures that were taken in recent decades were valuable, but did not keep pace with dangerous trends. On the other hand, the paper points



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The African Continental Free Trade Area creates opportunities for Africa: Workers of a factory producing sodium silicate in Kenya.

CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA

## A milestone for African trade

**On 1 January 2021, the go-ahead was given for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It offers huge opportunities for the continent and raises hopes that many trade barriers will gradually come down.**

By Christoph Kannengießer

The agreement comes into force at a time when much of the world is turning its back on cooperation and free trade. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the global economy is in a lurch between stagnation and recession. For Africa, the creation of the massive regional AfCFTA market is a great opportunity: it should help countries diversify their exports, accelerate growth and attract foreign direct investment.

Many African countries still rely on revenues from commodity exports. Industrialisation is progressing only slowly. Africa predominantly imports capital goods and even food products from outside the conti-

ment. Accounting for less than three percent of global trade, Africa has yet to diversify its exports. Moreover, only 17% of African exports are intracontinental. In the EU, the comparative share is 68%.

The untapped potential for intra-African trade thus remains great. Major scope for improvement lies in the removal of non-tariff barriers, which include uncoordinated bureaucratic procedures, long waiting times at borders and obstructive, time-consuming export regulations. Obstacles of this kind push up trading costs across the continent. The situation is made worse by inadequate transport and logistics infrastructure. As a result, Africa has been connecting faster with the rest of the world than within itself.

That is now set to change due to AfCFTA. It will be the largest free trade area in the world in terms of the number of member states. The agreement creates a market of 1.3 billion people in 54 countries with a com-

bined gross domestic product (GDP) of \$3.4 trillion.

AfCFTA aims to lower trading costs and make it possible for African partners to more successfully become involved in global supply chains. More than 90% of intra-African customs tariffs will be eliminated, non-tariff trade barriers will be dismantled and the result will be a single internal market with free movement of goods and services. At the same time, bureaucracy will be reduced and customs procedures simplified. These measures will make for significant gains in revenue. But AfCFTA covers more than just trade. It will also have helpful impacts on the movement of people and workers, competition, investment and intellectual property.

### TRANSCONTINENTAL TRADE

In the long term, this free trade area will benefit not only intra-African trade but also trade with other continents. It will facilitate investment and trade with partners in the EU for example. It will also promote sustainable economic growth and regional integration across what is today a highly fragmented continent. Properly implemented, it has the capacity to boost Africa's economic



Africa needs more trade: containers at the port of Conakry in Guinea.

growth and create sustainable employment for millions of people. By addressing the structural economic causes of underdevelopment, AfCFTA should thus help drive down poverty.

The World Bank takes the same view. It reckons that AfCFTA will raise regional income by 7% or \$450 billion by 2035 and that the anticipated wage growth could lift more than 30 million people out of extreme poverty. At the same time, it expects wages for skilled and unskilled workers to be boosted by around 10 percent.

### CREATING JOBS

Successfully implemented, the agreement would increase African exports by \$560 billion, mainly in the important manufacturing sector (see World Economic Forum, 2021). This would create much-needed jobs for Africa’s young populations. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation estimates that if AfCFTA works as intended, it could generate combined consumer and business spending of \$6.7 trillion dollars by 2030. It will also transform markets and economies across the region, leading to the creation of much-needed downstream processing industries and the expansion of key sectors. Ultimately, African countries will become more competitive globally.

But a successful AfCFTA could do even more than that. The concept of “trade integrity” gives an opportunity to promote good governance in many African countries

in an entirely new manner. Trade within the free trade area will be on a uniform legal basis built on the principles of lawfulness and transparency, so the marketing of illicitly procured or produced goods will become more difficult. This applies to the sale of illegally mined commodities as well as goods produced by child labour, for example. AfCFTA member states, in turn, will themselves have to monitor compliance with the agreed standards more strictly, which will improve the quality of their governance.

### CHALLENGES AHEAD

At the same time, the historic AfCFTA accord still faces challenges. Good intentions are not enough. What counts is implementation. So, first and foremost, steady progress needs to be made on implementing the agreement. A recent article by the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) shows how the agreement will speed up economic development, helping Africa to “escape the colonial legacy”. However, ACET stresses that “the devil is in the implementation” and recommends a bottom-up approach focusing on national problems that require transborder solutions such as sharing water resources as well as other regional infrastructure projects.

Adequate infrastructure will be essential for AfCFTA success. According to the African Development Bank, Africa’s infrastructure requirements are substantial, ranging from \$130 billion to \$170 billion

a year. The funding gap is between \$68 and \$108 billion dollars. Europe should seize the opportunity to help close that gap and contribute to the realisation of the necessary infrastructure projects. The EU could set up a joint infrastructure fund for the purpose.

Such a fund could not only provide effective support for the further development of the African Free Trade Area; German and European companies could also play an active part in infrastructure projects in Africa. At present, they are still too often deterred by uncertainty over funding conditions for potential projects, which results in investments not being made.

Germany and the EU should step up their efforts to help AfCFTA strengthen intra-African trade. For example, the African Union Commission – as the responsible body for the implementation of the AfCFTA – should be strengthened in further negotiations so national governments will implement AU decisions faster. The implementation of the agreement, the progressive integration of the free trade area and the negotiations to reduce trade barriers will remain crucial for some time to come.

In order to achieve tangible results, however, it is also important to ensure that the private sector can take advantage of the new market opportunities presented. To attract investment – whether it be local, regional or from third countries – African states need to further improve the environment for business and take steps to facilitate trade. Here, too, the EU can assist the AU. A fully implemented AfCFTA will be more than an inner-African milestone. It will be the way for an entirely new chapter in African-European relations.

#### LINK

**World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021: 6 reasons why Africa’s new free trade area is a global game changer**

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/02/afcfta-africa-free-trade-global-game-changer>



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# Climate action

In regard to global heating, 2021 will prove to be a decisive year. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change obliges all nations to scale up their nationally determined contributions ahead of the climate summit COP26 in Scotland in November. The commitments made so far do not suffice for achieving the goals that the international community adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. Every country

must act fast and do more to make its economy climate-neutral. Moreover, the countries that are exposed to great climate risks need more support.



Climate action, the topic of this focus section, is the United Nations' 13<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). It has a bearing on all other SDGs.



Climate protest in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2019.



SIDS

## “It is a matter of life and death”

**Small island states such as Mauritius are suffering from devastating impacts of climate change – and the worst is yet to come. Kavyass Ramano, Mauritius’ minister of environment and climate change, urges advanced nations to honour their pledges under the Paris Agreement, emphasising that we cannot afford to lose time.**

Kavyass Ramano interviewed by Katja Dombrowski

**Mauritius is a small island developing state (SIDS) and thus particularly vulnerable to climate change. In which ways is Mauritius affected today?**

Indeed, Mauritius is amongst the most vulnerable countries to climate change and one of the most exposed to natural hazards due to its geographical location in an active tropical cyclone basin. We are affected in many ways. For example, the sea level is rising at a rate of 5.6 millimetres (mm) per year at mainland Mauritius and 9 mm per year at the island of Rodrigues, while the global average is 3.3 mm per year. The sea-level rise impacts our beaches that are sustaining the tourism industry – which is a major pillar of our economy. In some places, erosion has reduced beach width by up to 20 metres over the past decade. The frequency of storms reaching at least tropical cyclone strength has increased. It is also noteworthy that a study conducted by the US National Academy of Sciences has underlined that the chances of a major tropical cyclone occurring in the southern Indian Ocean basin will increase by 18% every decade. We are also experiencing ever more frequent and devastating extreme weather events such as flash floods, which severely hurt the economy, the ecosystem and livelihoods. Thus, we are suffering many impacts of climate change.

**What are the greatest risks your country is facing in the near future?**

Projections for Mauritius are bleak. The projected reduction in rainfall and an increase in evapotranspiration may make agricul-

tural production decline by as much as 15 to 25% by 2050. With a decrease in rainfall of 10 to 20% and a temperature increase of 2°, sugar yield is expected to decline by one half to two thirds. The Mauritius Sector Strategy Plan on Tourism estimates that over the next 50 years, half of the beaches will be lost to the point of supporting no visitors. Extreme weather events, including heavy rains, storms and flash floods, are likely to become ever more frequent and intense in Mauritius.

**What are you doing on the national level in terms of adaptation to – and mitigation of – global warming?**

Climate change is a high-priority issue on the government’s agenda. We emphasise building a climate-change resilient nation and are committed to leave no stone unturned to meet adaptation and mitigation objectives. We are fulfilling the obligations of every climate-related multilateral agreement. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, we have mobilised considerable resources at the domestic level. We have spent some Rs 6 billion (the equivalent

of \$150 million) in support of our climate agenda in the past five years. In 2018, the government revamped the National Environment Fund by providing around Rs 2 billion (\$50 million) in support of measures to mitigate flooding and water accumulation, rehabilitation of degraded coastal zones and solid waste management, amongst others. Mauritius is spending about two percent of its GDP (around \$265 million) on environment and climate-change related policies. We are looking forward to having more ambitious targets in our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which is presently under review.

**In many countries, including Germany, the Covid-19 pandemic – which considerably slowed down the economy – has helped to achieve national emissions-reduction targets. Is that the case in Mauritius as well?**

The Covid-19 outbreak has made the interconnections between the economy, environment and society more evident than ever. While creating havoc on the economic and social fronts, the pandemic is having some beneficial impacts on the environmental front. In Mauritius, the National Environment Laboratory has recorded a decrease of 52% and 78.5% respectively in the average daily concentration of Particulate Matter (PM-10) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) during the 2020 curfew compared to figures recorded in the same period in 2019. These



Mauritius is losing its beaches to erosion, as here in Belle Mare at the east coast.

pollutants are usually emitted by vehicles. The greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions for 2020 are still being compiled, but we are expecting a decrease here too. Mauritius was in its first lockdown period from March to May 2020. The second lockdown started in March this year and is still ongoing.

**What must the international community do to protect people in SIDS?**

Climate scientists are unanimous: the world is currently heading towards a 3° temperature rise, with disastrous consequences for millions of vulnerable people around the globe. SIDS and Africa are affected in particular. In 2014, the 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasised the specific vulnerability of Small Island States. In particular, that vulnerability is the result of:

- risks of livelihood disruption in coastal communities,
- systemic risks linked to extreme weather events with the potential breakdown of critical services such as health care and
- risks to food security as marine and coastal ecosystems are lost.

In 2018, the IPCC published its Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°. According to it, some of the worst impacts are expected to be felt among people and ecosystems in SIDS. Mauritius has a number of inherent limitations. Our landmass is small, we have no economy of scale, but must bear huge investment costs for greening the power sector. Ironically, SIDS are the least responsible for climate change: we collectively emit less than one percent of global greenhouse gases. It is of utmost importance that key elements of the Paris Agreement such as financial support, technology transfer and capacity building be provided to SIDS and developing countries in Africa. Also, we urge advanced nations to scale up their mitigation targets, act accordingly and provide reliable funding to SIDS and African countries.

**What do you expect from this year's climate conference of parties (COP26) in Glasgow?**

We hope that, despite the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, COP26 will be held as scheduled given the urgency to finalise and agree upon the rulebook for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The summit has already been delayed by one year, and there is no more time to lose. We hope that all parties will be present at this crucial phase of



**Building a light-rail transportation system is one of Mauritius' measures to curb emissions. Construction site of the Metro Express in Port Louis, the capital city.**

climate negotiations, and that together we will be able to deliver on key issues to bring the global climate-change agenda forward. Mauritius would align itself with positions of the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN), the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the G77 and China (developing countries group). As such, our key positions are:

- We urge developed-country parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to enhance their mitigation action and provide support in terms of technology development and transfer as well as capacity building.
- Predictable finance is critical for SIDS and African countries. We must set up new global goals on finance and on more robust finance framework. This will also significantly advance our global efforts to address adaptation as promised in Paris in 2015.
- Advanced nations must honour their pledges of mobilising \$100 billion per year to support developing countries to achieve their adaptation and mitigation pledges and targets.
- Advanced nations should scale up emission reductions and achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. Moreover, they must commit to achieve 45% GHG emission reduction by 2030.

Mauritius supports steps to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change in a comprehensive, integrated and coherent manner.

Developing countries such as SIDS and African countries should be given priority access to support from institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, and procedures should be made less burdensome.

**2021 is often said to be crucial for reaching the Paris goals. Why is that?**

This year is crucial because it marks the start of the operationalisation phases of the Paris Agreement. Five years after adoption, we reached the milestone where parties must review their NDCs. We are observing aggravating trends of climate-change impacts. Climate change is happening faster than we are able to adapt. For many people, regions and even countries, this is already a matter of life and death. Actually, 2020 was the hottest year on record and at this pace, it is likely that the 1.5° threshold will be reached as early as 2024. We must act fast. We can – and must – take a build-back-better and green-recovery approach to emerging from Covid-19 and limiting global warming at the same time.



**KAVYDASS RAMANO**  
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<https://environment.govmu.org/Pages/Index.aspx#en>



## AGRICULTURE

## Two-pronged approach

**Smallholder farmers in Africa are subject to many risks, some of them made worse by climate change. Well-targeted weather forecasts and crop insurance can help to limit losses and improve food security. It makes sense to link both services.**

By Till Below and Nkumbu Nalwimba

Droughts, storms and floods are threats to farmers everywhere. But the damage caused by extreme weather events can be reduced if farmers are forewarned by accurate weather forecasts. That allows them to adjust their practices accordingly.

Farmers in developed countries benefit from sophisticated weather forecasting services. These services boost their resilience because they help them to make better decisions. Farmers in poor countries are not so fortunate: Europe's per capita annual expenditures on weather information services are about \$16. In Africa, the figure is a mere two dollars. In developing countries, weather forecasts thus tend to be less accurate, less timely and less useful.

At the same time, crop insurances can contribute to managing financial risks. A very important option is called "weather-based index insurance". It means that pay-outs depend on pre-defined weather conditions. This approach is especially important in developing countries because it requires much less administrative efforts than other kinds of insurance that are tied to actual damages, which, of course, have to be documented and assessed.

Various kinds of insurance against crop-damaging natural disasters are common in developed countries. For example, in the US more than 80% of the major grain growing areas are insured. Smallholder farms in developing countries, by contrast, are typically uninsured.

### DISTINCT STRATEGIES

Climate information services and insurance are two distinct strategies. Both help to manage the increasing risks that farmers face due

to more frequent extreme-weather events. Climate-information services do not only generate relevant data, they also spread them in meaningful ways that support farm management. Insurance can help protect individuals, small businesses or entire countries from damage. For these reasons, the Global Commission on Adaptation – a 2018 initiative by 23 countries including Germany – calls on governments and the private sector to expand climate-information services and to explore climate-risk insurance for smallholders.

In developing countries, weather-based index insurances are a particularly useful option. The insurer pays when rainfall stays below a certain pre-defined minimum level in a specified time period for example. That is equally the case when rainfall exceeds a pre-defined maximum level. Similar indices can be defined for storms, heat waves et cetera. Insurance payments are triggered as soon as local weather stations or satellite surveillance prove that such a pre-defined limit has been breached.

It matters very much that farmers do not have to prove actual crop losses in order to receive the payment. It means that administrative costs are lower since no

claims-investigation process is needed to assess crop damage. Accordingly, pay-outs to farmers tend to be faster. Lower administrative costs, moreover, imply that farmers pay lower premiums.

On the other hand, index-based crop insurances have some downsides. One is that the insurance pay-outs will differ from actual losses. That happens, for example, when rainfall on the insured plot differs from the regional estimates. Moreover, this kind of insurance does not protect farmers from losses caused by other reasons.

### MULTIPLE RISKS

"Farmers usually deal with multiple risks," explains Claudia Ringler of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Relevant risks include pests, spikes in input prices, health problems or the death of a relative. Yet insurance policies usually deal with a narrowly defined range of weather events. Ringler insists that more must be done to link index insurances with other risk-management practices.

As a first step, it would make sense to combine the promotion of weather-index crop insurance to the improvement of climate information services. The point is that these services can be mutually reinforcing. A better understanding of weather risks will make more farmers buy crop insurance, but also improve their decision making. As a result, their probable losses will be reduced,



Smallholder farmers in Chibisa, a village in Zambia.

so insurance premiums could become less costly as well. More affordable premiums, of course, are an incentive to buy insurance.

## ZAMBIA'S INITIATIVE

Zambia's government – along with entrepreneurs and donors – is working towards establishing a closer link between climate-risk insurance and climate-information services. About 1.5 million Zambian farmers are smallholders who depend on rain-fed agriculture. Climate change is gradually reducing their yields and increasing their post-harvest losses.

Zambia's Meteorology Department has been working toward delivering more reliable climate and weather information. However, the national climate policy does not prioritise meteorology, and the network of weather stations is not dense enough to provide sufficient coverage.

"At the moment, we have about 41 manually operated weather stations and 107

automated ones across the country," says Micah Namukoko of Zambia's weather service. More are needed, the senior meteorologist points out: "We should have one manual station in each of our 117 districts, and an automated station in each of our over 1,800 agricultural areas."

In Zambia, index-based weather insurance for smallholder farmers is still relatively new. The system faces many shortfalls in technical knowhow and insurance monitoring systems. There are also not enough programmes to educate farmers about crop insurance. More farmers would buy this insurance if they were better informed about what insurance policies are available, and if those policies better matched the farmers' needs.

Improving the link between climate services and crop insurance is a focus of "Climate Risk Insurance and Information in Zambia" (CRIIZ), an initiative funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Germany's bilateral devel-

opment agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit).

In collaboration with the Zambian Ministry of Agriculture and other public and private-sector groups, the project aims to improve the access of 100,000 Zambian farmers to information about climate-related risks and bring climate-related insurance to 30,000 farmers.

The project emphasises involvement of the private sector. For example, CRIIZ supported several agribusinesses to provide climate-risk insurance to several thousand farmers in the past farming season. By increasing the number of such private-sector solutions, project managers hope to create a sustainable ecosystem for weather-based crop insurance.

One Zambian company working to reduce its exposure to climate risks is Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), a social enterprise that supports wildlife conservation and trains small-scale farmers in sustainable agriculture. With support

## Waiting for rain – and advice

Elinat Daka's farm in Chipangali, in Zambia's Eastern province, relies on conservation farming – a set of practices to preserve soil properties and natural biodiversity. Her farming methods emphasise moisture retention, crop rotation, agroforestry and organic fertilisers.

Daka grows groundnuts (also called peanuts), soybeans, maize, sunflower, cowpeas (black-eyed peas) and vegetables – all without chemical fertilisers. Her yields are comparable to those obtained with conventional farming, she says. She was inspired to use conservation farming by her cooperation with Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO), a social enterprise (see main article).

Yet her rain-fed farm faces major weather risks.

Droughts and delayed rainfall can destroy crops, particularly groundnuts and soybeans. "Last year we did not get good profits from groundnuts because the crop was attacked by the rosette virus," she says. The groundnut rosette virus is spread by sap-sucking insects called aphids. Plants that are infected early cannot be saved and will produce no yield.

The most effective prevention measure is to plant crops as soon as there is enough moisture in the soil. Farmers use a variety of signs to determine the onset of the rainy season: a proliferation of centipedes, the sprouting of specific trees or the appearance of spider webs moistened with dew. In addition, farmers receive weather forecasts via radio broadcasts and telephone



Elinat Daka in her field.

apps. COMACO also provides weather updates.

These forecasts help, but do not go far enough. "The forecasts are sporadic," Daka says. She would prefer them to be regular, and even daily and at the beginning of each rainy season.

In addition, she needs more specific, weather-related farming advice: "When they

give advice, they should not only inform me about the rainfall but also tell me that I should plant late-maturing varieties if the rains are good. If it will not rain a lot, then they should tell me to plant early varieties – rather than just send a message that it will rain a lot or it will not rain a lot."

Daka says this information would best be sent via text message, as this would create a direct link with the providers and ensure that she receives the message. Relying on extension services to send information is less reliable; sometimes the message does not get through.

Dina Mambwe and TB

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from the BMZ-funded “Green Innovation Centres for the Agriculture and Food Sector” project, COMACO has supported over 130,000 farmers since 2015 and earned a profit of \$890,000 in 2020 (see box, p. 21).

COMACO buys raw crops such as groundnuts and soybeans, processes them and sells higher-value food products across Zambia. But in recent years, weather extremes caused major yield losses, especially in groundnuts. Accordingly, the company’s interest in improved weather forecasts has grown.

### FEEDBACK FROM FARMERS

Designing a well-targeted weather service and creating an effective climate-insurance product both require a good understanding of farmers’ needs. However, Zambia does not have strong mechanisms for collecting feedback from farmers. To close the gaps, CRIIZ is surveying groundnut and dairy farmers in Zambia’s Eastern and Southern Provinces. The goal was to find out what



Groundnut farmers have suffered major yield losses in Zambia.

kind of information they need to better adjust their practices. The survey relies on an evaluation system called Participatory In-

tegrated Climate Services for Agriculture (PICSA). It has delivered good results in 20 countries according to Peter Dorward, who teaches at the University of Reading and contributed to developing the system.

In light of the unfolding global climate crisis, it makes sense to link better weather-information services with more targeted weather-based crop insurance. That is obviously true far beyond Zambia.



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### MULTILATERAL POLICYMAKING

## “We must build forward better”

**Ahead of the 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner discussed how humankind’s transition to prosperous low-carbon economies is progressing in a conversation with Hans Dembowski. In turbulent times, he sees many reasons to stay hopeful.**

**Achim Steiner interviewed by Hans Dembowski**

**In a D+C/E+Z interview in 2010, you emphasised the need to take action to tackle climate change and the loss of biodiversity. What does it tell us that matters are worse today, not better?**

It means that we are not moving fast enough. However, we are getting a lot of things done – some of those achievements would have

seemed almost impossible back in 2010. The leaders of all major economies are setting – or are considering – dates to achieve net-zero carbon emissions. Some of the most important emitters want to achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2050. Today, a country like Germany gets over one-third of its electric power from renewable sources. 10 years ago, that ratio was still science fiction. Humankind has begun to truly decouple carbon emissions from economic growth. Now is the time to become more ambitious and go much faster.

#### **What about biodiversity?**

The sad truth is that we have made much less progress when it comes to getting a grip on the loss of habitats and the extinction of species. That is partly because the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems is com-

plex where local specifics matter greatly. That makes it more difficult to define a global policy framework. Moreover, our present economic systems essentially attribute a “zero value” to the net loss of biodiversity. So, we should not be surprised that our economies continue to treat nature as a free good instead of a public good. That approach has to change before we can see any significant change in current trends. The good news is that the lessons learned in responding to the climate crisis will most likely be applicable to the action we now need to take to protect and restore our planet’s biodiversity and ecosystems.

**Carbon emissions have gone down because of Covid-19. Is this a blip or sustainable change?**

We cannot expect that there will be any kind of automatic recalibration of the global economy in terms of carbon emissions after the pandemic. One of the main lessons of the financial crisis of 2008 was that economies rebounded fast. The stock markets did well, and economic growth resumed. However, the crisis left deep, lasting scars



“Approximately 600 million people living in Africa still do not have access to electricity”: Ethiopian village.

in terms of debt and rising inequalities. This time, countries need to use this incredible window of opportunity to build forward better. The European Union “Green Deal”, the recent commitments by the new US administration, China, Japan, Korea and a growing number of countries all clearly point to a stronger effort to drive forward a green recovery. However, a recent study by Oxford’s Economic Recovery Project and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), indicates that just 18% of the announced recovery spending can be considered “green” to date. That should be a warning sign. There is a tendency to go back to where we were before, rather than to pivot forward. This is a critical moment – and we now need to help countries to fully embark on a pathway to a greener, more sustainable future.

**In contrast to prosperous nations, the fiscal space of low- and middle-income countries is quite restricted. Can they build forward better?**

Sovereign debt is a serious and growing problem in many countries. It is undermining economic stability. It also radically limits governments’ scope to invest in a green recovery from Covid-19. When the pandemic began, the group of 20 leading economies (G20) took important steps to enable developing countries to suspend servicing their

debts, but its decisions so far only provide temporary relief. The underlying problem has not been solved. Indeed, a new UNDP study has analysed the fiscal and debt situation of approximately 120 developing countries – it has categorised 72 economies as “vulnerable,” of which 19 are “severely vulnerable”. And 23 of these 72 countries are not eligible for existing debt relief channels through the G20’s Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) or the Common Framework. The report argues that indebted developing economies need access to stable, low-cost finance, preceded for some by debt restructuring. In the medium- to long-term, redirecting of expenditures, increased spending efficiency and boosting domestic revenue collection are essential to regain decades of progress toward ending poverty – and to properly address the climate crisis.

**The need to build infrastructure is particularly great in developing countries.**

Yes, it is. In many ways, it is a “double challenge”:

- Firstly, approximately 600 million people living in Africa still do not have access to electricity. That must change.
- The second challenge is that Africa needs to put in place a new energy infrastructure that is low-carbon and compatible with the global climate response.

Doing so will bring enormous benefits. Expanding access to sustainable, clean energy will create new green jobs. It will also improve livelihoods and social mobility, gender equality, women’s empowerment, and people’s health. To achieve this, bold investment decisions are needed. However, limited fiscal space and growing debt overhangs are making it extremely difficult for any economy in the developing world to take the level of transformational investment decisions that we now need. Therefore, just as we are developing a global response to the Covid-19 crisis, we need to take a global approach to the financing of low-carbon strategies at the country-level.

**But won’t national governments always prioritise their own economies?**

To some extent, yes, of course. However, we live in a global economy in which the prosperity of all depends on exchange and cooperation with others. Even the world’s largest economies – the US, China and the European Union are dependent on international trade. It is a fallacy to believe that it is possible to focus only on the fate of one’s own nation, leaving the rest of the world to take care of itself. Indeed, the climate crisis proves that the world is not taking care of itself. In an unsustainable global environment, every nation will suffer. To a consid-



erable extent, national and multilateral interests converge. Pragmatic world leaders keenly understand this reality.

**Tensions between the US and China have been growing in recent years, and nationalist tendencies have been becoming stronger elsewhere too. Will the dangers of climate change have a similar benign effect as the threat of mutually assured destruction (MAD) had during the Cold War?**

The leaders of the US and the Soviet Union were well aware of the futility of a nuclear war. My sense is that common sense will prevail again. President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping have shown that they understand how devastating the climate crisis will become without global partnership on climate action. More generally speaking, climate denial is firmly in retreat amongst the top world leaders. Moreover, the experience of the Paris Climate Summit shows that both Washington and Beijing can achieve a lot by cooperating in spite of their differences. We are living in turbulent times, but there are many reasons to be hopeful for the future.

**Does it make sense at all anymore to distinguish development policies from environmental ones?**

No, it does not. That was, in fact, the message of the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – otherwise known as the UN Conference on Environment and Development. It is clear that the economy, society and the natural environment are not separate spheres. What happens in one, affects the others. That is precisely why we need

sustainability in both social and environmental dimensions. For instance, the World Health Organization, estimates that approximately seven million people die prematurely every year due to air pollution. This air pollution mostly results from the use of fossil fuels. This is a crystal-clear illustration of the intrinsic link between the environment and human wellbeing.

**What is the UNDP doing to promote the cause?**

The United Nations is committed to raising global awareness on sustainability through the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. For UNDP’s 2020 Human Development Report, we adjusted the Human Development Index (HDI) – which measures a nation’s health, education, and standards of living – to include two more elements: a country’s carbon dioxide emissions and its material footprint. With the resulting Planetary-Pressures Adjusted HDI – or PHDI – a new global picture emerges, painting a less rosy but clearer assessment of human progress. For example, more than 50 countries drop out of the very high human development group, reflecting their dependence on fossil fuels and material footprint. This was an important innovation, and the feedback received has been promising, including from policymakers and international institutions.

**Are you involved in climate negotiations in a more narrow sense?**

Yes, we are. Two years ago, the UNDP Climate Promise was launched – our commitment

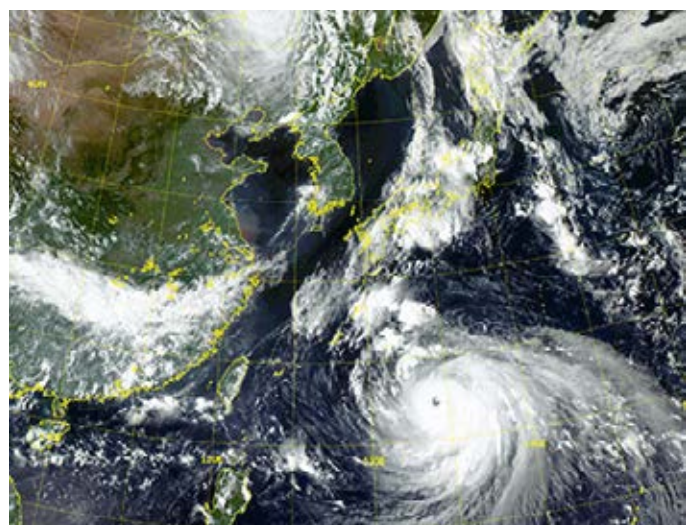
to support at least 100 countries to enhance their national climate targets under the Paris Agreement – known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Today, we are working with 118 countries to make their NDCs more technically robust and include new ways that governments can step up their climate actions, as well as finance these bold new goals. The Climate Promise is the world’s largest offer of support for the enhancement of countries’ climate pledges. Spelling out meaningful NDCs is not simply about counting emissions – it is more complex. For NDCs to work, governments need to have a good understanding of – and solid plans for – transportation, electric power generation, industrial development, social services and so on. Indeed, awareness of climate change issues is increasingly permeating policymaking in general. The simple truth is that humankind will either share a low-carbon future or have no future at all. An increasing number of people understand this harsh truth.

**What difference does it make that central banks have begun to discuss climate issues?**

Central banks are increasingly important players, partly because they are confronted with two trends. On the one hand, the ever more visible impacts of climate change have introduced a new degree of risk that central banks need to take into account. At the same time, they are recognising the incredible benefits associated with investing in a green, sustainable future.

**It is noteworthy, moreover, that debate on these matters is going on at the international-level.**

Yes, the most important forum is probably the Network for Greening the Financial System. It includes all major central banks and financial regulators from around the world. And, it is no accident that the IMF and the European Central Bank have shown unprecedented leadership on these matters given that they are both led by two women who are at the forefront of global efforts to progressively align global climate action efforts with our financial systems.



**“In an unsustainable global environment, every nation will suffer”: Typhoon Haishen on 4 September 2020.**



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**Campaigning in Pittsburgh last year: Biden is known to like trains and, as a senator, used to commute by rail from Delaware to Washington for 36 years.**

USA

## Scaling up climate ambitions

**US President Joe Biden is eager to reassert his country's global leadership. He knows that, in order to do so, his administration must solve problems. Tackling the climate crisis is high on his agenda – both domestically and internationally.**

**By Katie Cashman**

Unlike his predecessor Donald Trump, Joe Biden does not deny climate science. He accepts the indisputable fact that global warming is driven by human action. Since the Industrial Revolution, global temperatures have already risen by more than 1°C. The decade from 2010 to 2019 was the warmest on record. To stop the planet from heating further, humankind must phase out the use of fossil fuels.

The scientific consensus is that humankind must halve CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. The clock is ticking.

The USA is one of the largest greenhouse-gas emitting countries in the world, and it has been slow to reduce emissions.

Some progress was made when Barack Obama was president, but the Trump years were a disaster. He withdrew from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, reversed policies introduced by his predecessor and actively promoted fossil fuels.

Biden wants to repair the damage – and not only in regard to environmental issues. He understands that only nations that solve problems have a claim to global leadership. Obviously, the impacts of climate change are devastating. In recent years, wildfires in the West, floods in the Midwest and hurricanes in the South and East have caused massive harm in the USA itself.

The public in the USA and around the world, however, is paying attention to other issues as well. That includes deepening social disparities in the USA as well as serious political divisions, which became most obvious when Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in Washington on 6 January. The Biden administration knows that the better it manages to rise to these challenges, the stronger its international influence will become.

Within 100 days of taking office, Biden launched three massive spending programmes: the American Rescue Plan (\$1.9 trillion), the American Jobs Plan (\$2.2 trillion) and the American Families Plan (\$1.8 trillion). The first primarily tackles the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also includes some infrastructure spending. The focus of the second is on creating employment and opportunities by building infrastructure, and climate protection is a top priority. In many ways, the American Jobs Plan is a response to environmental activists' demands for a "Green New Deal" (see box next page). The third plan has little climate relevance and is designed to reduce social disparities.

On his first day in office, Biden committed to rejoining the Paris Agreement. By executive order, he declared that the US will scale up its nationally determined contributions in time for the upcoming climate summit in Glasgow in November (COP26 – 26<sup>th</sup> conference of parties of United Nations framework convention on climate change). At the same time, the president wants to promote environmental justice by channelling 40% of the federal government's sustainability-related spending to disadvantaged communities. Moreover, Biden officials understand that China is leading in many areas of sustainability, such as renewable energy and transport. The USA has nothing that compares to the People's Republic's excellent high-speed railway network.

The new US administration is keenly aware of China's progress having resulted from government action, not unregulated free-market competition. They know that inequality has become worse in recent decades and that unguided market forces, as such, do very little to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous presidents of the Democratic Party worried about intervening in markets too much. By contrast, Biden officials worry they may not be doing enough.

Biden is taking a "whole of government" approach. Twenty-one departments of the federal government are involved in his new National Climate Task Force. It is in charge of promoting relevant policies such as eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels and drafting a plan for emissions free electricity in 15 years. The Task Force is led by Gina McCarthy, the national climate advisor, who headed the Environmental Protection Agency under Obama.



**Climate impacts are getting worse: blizzard-hit highway near the Gulf of Mexico.**

as part of the New Deal. The new CCC would pay some 200,000 young volunteers to take care of public lands, waters and community resources, for example supporting the National Parks system. The approach fits a long history of Americans rallying together to overcome crises. Moreover, it would help to solve the unemployment crisis.

The Biden administration has been fast to reach out to international partners, moreover. In early April, Kerry visited China, and both sides agreed to cooperate on climate action. In late April, Biden hosted a virtual climate summit with 40 world leaders. At the summit, Biden committed the United States to cutting 50% of greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030 compared to 2005 and set the precedent for other global leaders to scale up climate ambition.

Biden’s leadership appointments convey his climate ambitions. John Kerry, former Secretary of State, has become the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, ranking as a cabinet member. Deb Haaland, an indigenous woman, is Biden’s secretary of the interior. She is in charge of halting drilling for oil on public lands and other important

land-management issues. Observers agree that Biden’s team consists of highly qualified individuals with proven competence and strong track records.

Biden plans to establish a Civilian Climate Corps (CCC). This proposal mimics the Civilian Conservation Corps that President Franklin D. Roosevelt created in the 1930s



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## Responding to activists

Throughout the 2020 election cycle, Biden was criticised for his lack of climate ambition, especially compared with his primary rival, Senator Bernie Sanders. Sanders backed environmental activists’ demands for a Green New Deal, a \$16 trillion plan to create 20 million jobs within 10 years. The guiding idea was to generate employment and broad-based prosperity by reconstructing the economy in environmentally sustainable ways.

Biden’s approach to climate issues seemed timid in comparison. However, once he became the democratic nominee, he sought counsel from

climate activists, including Sanders and his supporters. As president, he still does not endorse all of the environmentalists’ spending demands, but he has moved in that direction.

His American Jobs Plan (worth about \$2.2 trillion in eight years) includes many climate-relevant items, including the phasing out of fossil fuels in power generation in 15 years, investments in public transport, support for electric cars et cetera. It also foresees spending on broadband connectivity as well as research and development in general, all of which can have useful climate impacts. At the same time, the

anticipated expansion of care services makes sense in view of daunting social challenges, but may not do much to stem the climate crisis.

As the name “American Jobs Plan” shows, White House rhetoric is emphasising employment rather than the environment. The idea, however, is to stimulate the economy by mitigating global heating and adapting to the phenomenon. Green investments will generate employment, disadvantaged groups will get special attention, and society as a whole will become more climate resilient.

The American Jobs Plan is now in the hands of legislators. Many details must yet be worked out. The good news is that the slim Democratic majority in the Senate should

be strong enough to pass it. In principle, Republicans can block laws that do not get 60 of 100 votes in the Senate. However, there are exceptions when laws have impacts on spending and revenue. In cases of “budget reconciliation”, a simple majority in the Senate can do.

It is promising, moreover, that market forces are increasingly backing away from fossil fuels. Even the United Mine Workers have now officially accepted that the use of coal must be phased out. This trade union wants to see new jobs – especially in renewables technology – to be created in mining regions as well as skills training and other kinds of support for miners who lose their jobs. Biden’s policy is designed to deliver that. KC



## CLIMATE IMPACTS

## “Science matters”

At the climate summit in Glasgow, climate vulnerable countries want to see progress in three areas: more ambitious emission reductions, the fulfilment of existing funding pledges and solidarity in view of increasing losses and damages. The Bangladeshi climate expert Saleemul Huq explained why in a D+C/E+C interview.

Saleemul Huq interviewed by Hans Dembowski

**Bangladesh is especially exposed to climate risks. What kind of results must the climate summit in Glasgow deliver in your eyes?**

Well, let me say first that Bangladesh is currently leading the Climate Vulnerable Forum of about 50 countries, so our government has a special role, representing not only our nation, but speaking for others too. While Bangladesh may be the most climate vulnerable country, we have been taken many steps to adapt to climate impacts. Our Delta landscape is prone to flooding, and cyclones regularly hit our coast. Thanks to our dramatically improved cyclone-warning system, only a few dozen Bangladeshis

died when cyclone Amphan struck in 2020, while some 3 million people fled to shelters and survived. In 1991, a comparable cyclone killed over 100,000 people. We have set up a Climate Trust Fund with €100 million of our own money, and our government spends about eight percent of its budget on climate-related efforts. Both climate mitigation and adaptation have become mainstream issues, and the general public is keenly aware of them too. Most recently, young Fridays for Future activists have been agitating against additional coal-fired power stations, and the government actually scrapped plans, though it did decide to complete projects where construction had already begun. According to the national climate strategy, Bangladesh will be one of the most climate resilient countries by 2030.

**So what do you and the other member countries of the Climate Vulnerable Forum want to happen in Glasgow?**

We need progress in regard to three things:

- Polluters must make and live up to more ambitious commitments to reduce carbon emissions.

- The advanced nations must finally fulfil long-standing funding pledges.
- As the harm caused by climate impacts is increasing, the international community has to tackle the controversial issue of loss and damages.

In the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, parties committed to keeping the global temperature increase below 2°C, and if possible below 1.5°C. The big polluters, some of which are major emerging markets, have talked the talk. Now they must walk the walk. It has become obvious that a 2°C increase is intolerable, moreover, so the Glasgow summit must endorse the 1.5°C goal. Global temperatures have already risen by 1°C, and we are witnessing disasters like wildfires, heat waves, droughts, floods, hurricanes, blizzards and so on. Extreme weather is becoming worse and increasingly affecting areas where it used to be very rare. Let me be very clear: not achieving the 1.5°C goal means death and destruction. Yes, it is difficult to stay within that limit, but it can be done. Humanity has the technology, the money and other resources. What we need on top of that, is the political will.

**What funding do climate vulnerable countries require?**

Well, the most important issue is that the advanced nations must live up to their pledges. There is a long-standing promise that they would make available an annual \$100 billion for climate mitigation and adaptation from 2020 on. The promise was first made at the COP in Copenhagen in 2009 and formally included in the Paris Agreement in 2015. It was not fulfilled. Last year, the sums actually paid out amounted to somewhere between \$70 billion and \$80 billion. We do not have a precise number because these flows are not tracked systematically. The pledge included all sorts of transactions, moreover, from private sector investments to official development assistance and charitable action, which makes it hard to compile statistics. The failure to pay is disappointing and has undermined trust. The data we have, moreover, show that 80% of the funding to date has gone to climate mitigation, not adaptation. That means that emerging markets with comparatively high emissions have received more money than the vulnerable countries with the greatest adaptation needs. We say that 50% of the money must be used for adaptation. In any



Cyclone Amphan devastated livelihoods: shopkeeper in front of the ruins of her shop in June 2020.



Cyclone shelters saved lives: rural women seeking refuge on 20 May 2020.

case, Glasgow should ensure that the promised \$100 billion for 2021 are actually disbursed and that last year's shortfall is fully compensated.

**And on top of that, you would probably like to see compensations for losses and damages?**

Yes, we would, but we are not allowed to raise that demand. In Paris in 2015, the US delegation insisted that liability and compensation must not be on the agenda. That was the price we paid for getting the item "losses and damages" included in the outcome document. Including it was very important because it had become evident that efforts to mitigate global warming and adapt to it were not protecting masses of people from climate-induced harm. The victims deserve support. Consider, once more, the example of cyclone Amphan. As I just said, Bangladesh managed to radically reduce the death toll, but the impact on livelihoods was still devastating. Not only individual homes were destroyed, entire villages were wiped out. Fields were flooded with saline water, so farming has become impossible there. Farmers lost their livestock; fisherfolk lost their boats; artisans lost their workshops. Masses of people therefore moved to urban areas, and very many of these climate refugees still cannot return home.

**In strictly legal terms, it would make sense to make polluters pay for the damages they cause.**

Yes, indeed, and court cases, in which victims demand compensation for climate-induced damages, are going on in the USA itself. Losses and damages are increasing, so they have to be dealt with. If we focus on solidarity, I think we can do so without litigating liability and compensation in legal terms. The point is to acknowledge that there are victims, and they must not be left to themselves. Quite obviously, those who have caused the problem have the responsibility to do something. If all parties are serious about rising to this challenge, solutions are possible.

**China is now earth's greatest emitter of greenhouse gases, but its regime likes to claim to be leading the developing world. How do you assess its role?**

China is emerging as the leader of the world, not just the developing world. In the past four years, US President Donald Trump accelerated that trend. I doubt President Joe Biden will be able to re-establish the old balance. The cat is out of the bag, and the picture is a bit ambiguous. On the upside, for example, the People's Republic has been scaling up renewable-energy supply domestically fast. On the downside, it has been supporting fossil-fuel projects abroad. Some recent developments, especially the oppression of Muslim Uighurs, are worrisome. At the same time, China has become a very important, if not the most important partner for many developing countries. Done well, China's support for infrastructure in the

context of its Belt and Road Initiative can do massive good. Done badly, it will cause massive harm. Overall, however, I am optimistic. In future climate negotiations, I think China will prove a force for good.

**Why do you think so?**

There are two reasons:

- The leadership in Beijing is pragmatic. They see that renewable energy supply is becoming increasingly affordable while fossil options are becoming more expensive. Indeed, their investments in wind, solar and storage technologies have made prices fall fast. At the same time, it is becoming ever more expensive to find and produce fossil resources. So renewables are the better business choice. China will not phase out its existing fossil-based facilities immediately, but it is fast building cleaner infrastructure.
- China itself is actually extremely vulnerable to climate change. The models show that draughts will increasingly threaten its rice and wheat harvests if temperatures keep rising. The Chinese authorities are listening to the scientific community and understand that any 2°C scenario will be very bad news.

**In the past 18 months, the Covid-19 pandemic has distracted global attention from the climate crisis. Are there any lessons?**

Well, I think the most important lesson is really that science matters. Governments that followed scientists' advice largely managed to protect their people from the virus – most spectacularly so in New Zealand. Science denying governments, by contrast, literally killed their citizens, Trump being the most prominent example. For four decades, climate scientists have been telling policymakers what is happening. Nonetheless, action has been too slow to prevent foreseeable harm. It is high time for policymakers to accept evidence-based science and pay less attention to vested interests.



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Higher gas prices led to mass protests in Ecuador in 2019.

#### DECARBONISATION

## Use carbon tax for redistribution

**Carbon pricing is a much-discussed climate-protection measure that many countries have already introduced. Experts think it makes sense for developing countries in particular. Nevertheless, the poor must be protected from negative consequences.**

By Katja Dombrowski

According to Ottmar Edenhofer, the director and chief economist of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PiK), a carbon tax would benefit low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in many respects. For one thing, it could counter rising greenhouse-gas emissions by making goods and services that are associated with high emissions more expensive. Edenhofer believes that this steering effect is especially important in LMICs, since they are the main drivers of the global increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

At the same time, such a tax could also boost these countries' total tax revenue, which is often very low. "This is a big opportunity," Edenhofer said at the digital conference "Climate risks and policies – Towards resilient low-carbon economies" of the Poverty Reduction, Equity and Growth Network (PEGNet) in March. He argues that

the revenue could be used for investments in renewable energy, as well as to achieve other goals, like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Carbon taxes in LMICs should be progressive in order to burden rich people more than poor. Often that happens simply because the rich consume more, their mobility is more energy-intensive, or they – unlike the very poor, at any rate – possess electrical appliances like air conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines. However, Edenhofer also believes that compensation mechanisms are needed in order to ensure that the impact of carbon pricing on poor households is kept to a minimum.

The climate scientist argues that the global transformation to carbon-neutral lifestyles and economies could be made significantly more just overall if industrialised countries would better support LMICs. For example, multilateral banks could work to reduce capital costs, which are very high in many LMICs. According to Edenhofer, interest rates could be subsidised and other financial incentives could be created. "We have to focus on coal-dependent countries," he says. These are primarily Asian countries, above all China and India, but also,

for example, South Africa. Edenhofer points out that coal-dependent countries make up almost half of the global population and also global greenhouse-gas emissions.

If all of the coal-fired power plants that are currently under construction go into operation, the carbon budget that remains in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius would already be exceeded. "We would then be much closer to the two-degrees goal," emphasises Edenhofer. He sees hope in the fact that coal, as an energy source, is increasingly coming under pressure, because it is becoming less and less competitive, for instance as a result of the falling cost of renewable energies. Nevertheless, the transformation will not occur on its own. "Policy action is needed."

#### MASS PROTESTS

The example of Ecuador shows that reforms to energy subsidies can meet strong opposition among the people. The government withdrew its push to end subsidies for fossil fuels after protests against the plan turned violent in the fall of 2019. According to experts, the reform did not fail because of its content, but rather because of poor communication: in a study, researchers at the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC) came to the conclusion that the country could end all energy subsidies and increase the real income of the poorest fifth of households by ten percent through the additional tax revenue. There would even be money left over.

According to the researchers, the most important key to success is understanding and steering the distributional impacts. In countries like Senegal and Ghana, which have dismantled energy subsidies without providing for redistribution or compensation, negative impacts have occurred. Because diesel and liquefied natural gas became more expensive, poor households in particular increasingly switched to coal or firewood, as Jan Lay of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) explained at the conference. Jan Steckel of the MCC added that although, on average, poverty did not rise as a result of the reform, the poorest experienced job losses and even changed their eating habits, ultimately consuming fewer calories.

Jörg Peters of the Leibniz Institute for Economic Research (RWI) does not believe

that carbon pricing is the optimal climate protection instrument in developing countries. He argues that only a small portion of emissions would even be affected. For example, he points out that in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa), most emissions stem from land-use changes, followed by energy and agriculture. But only CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the energy sector would be taxed. Furthermore, Peters believes that the progressive concept is poorly suited to developing countries, since one per cent of the income of a rich person there is not comparable to one per cent of a poor person's

income. He feels there is a risk that the very poor would be trapped in poverty as a result of a carbon tax.

According to Peters, cash transfers could provide relief. Nevertheless, their effectiveness is strongly dependent on institutional capacities. These tend to be weak in developing countries, and the risk that the money will seep away, land in the pockets of the elite or be embezzled is correspondingly high. That being said, the researcher is not opposed to carbon pricing in general. On the contrary, he argues that climate change calls for quick action and

many instruments ought to be used simultaneously.

#### LINK

**PEGNet conference: Climate risks and policies – Towards resilient low-carbon economies.**  
<https://www.pegnet.ifw-kiel.de/conferences/climate-risks-and-policies/>

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## More malaria and infectious diseases

Climate change is increasingly impacting human health. That is true above all in developing countries, since they are particularly affected by weather changes and extreme weather events. They also have weak health-care infrastructures and small economies. Moses Kabangi, the Assistant Commissioner of the Inspection, Sanitation and Hygiene Division of Uganda's Ministry of Health, is concerned with the health situation in his country.

"Health protection is a major challenge for us," he explains. Climate change is already significantly noticeable in Uganda. According to Kabangi's data, since 1960, the annual average temperature has climbed by 1.3 degrees, and temperatures are predicted to be 2 degrees warmer by 2030. As a result, the glaciers in the Ruwenzori Mountains, the third-highest mountain range in Africa, have disappeared by more than half since 1987, and they are expected to continue their rapid melting. Kabangi reports that annual precipita-

tion has declined by an average of 3.4 millimetres per month within a single decade. That means that there will be more flooding and landslides, the expert explains, which in turn will create favourable conditions for certain diseases.

In Uganda, Kabangi says, there are more and more cases of malaria, including in areas that were once malaria-free,

like high altitudes. "Malaria is also becoming deadlier", he stated in March at the online conference of the Poverty Reduction, Equity and Growth Network (PEGNet) on the topic of "Climate risks and policies – Towards resilient low-carbon economies". One reason for the increased incidence of the disease are the higher temperatures, which support the growth of malaria mosquitoes.

More swarms of mosquitoes are also fuelling the rise of lymphatic filariasis (LF), a tropical disease that is triggered by an infection with various spe-

cies of parasitic worms (filarial worms), which are transmitted to humans by a mosquito bite. According to estimates, cases of LF will increase by 17% in Uganda between 2000 and 2050. The Ministry of Health is also expecting an uptick of infectious diseases like cholera and typhus, which are caused by contaminated water.

Kabangi also points to the risk of increased malnutrition among the poorest groups, since the harvest of staple foods has declined as a result of extreme weather. Malnutrition, in turn, causes many other diseases (see Simone Welte in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2020/11, Focus section).

According to Kabangi, the government's preventive health measures are as follows:

- policy action: integration of climate protection and adaptation measures into health policy and all affected policy fields,
- involvement of communities and expansion of local capacities,
- development of early warning systems to prevent natural disasters and
- promotion of renewable energies like solar and hydroelectric power plants.

Sabine Balk



Refugee children in Uganda are waiting to be tested for malaria.

COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE ACTION

# Aspiration enhancing cooperation

In the fight against climate change, all governments around the world should grasp the chance to cooperate with subnational authorities on shaping climate policy. For this purpose, they must draft sensible rules, create adequate opportunities and facilitate an appropriate culture of decision making. Since 2019, Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment has been calling this cooperative approach Collaborative Climate Action (CCA).

By Monika Zimmermann

CCA is close cooperation across different levels of government. The idea is to define climate goals together and implement policies jointly. CCA is a precondition for ambitious climate action because there is no other way to grasp every opportunity that may arise.

CCA may seem obvious and even indispensable but it is far from standard practice. That is true in industrialised countries, emerging markets and developing countries. Across the world, there are only a few examples of all levels of government being assigned, by law and in practice, a role in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and adapting to climate change.

The political relevance of national governments is well understood. In order for action to be most effective, we need greater appreciation of subnational authorities, including municipal and regional governments. CCA takes account of that need.

A recent GIZ publication (2021) has spelled out why cooperation across all levels of government matters – and how to achieve such cooperation. The report includes documents from around the world (see box, p. 33), indicating how greater cooperation between national governments, regions and municipalities can be accomplished.

The GIZ report summarises why CCA is so important:

- If all levels of government coordinate their capacities, expertise, jurisdictional tasks, budgets, networks et cetera they will

achieve more together than each could on its own.

- By avoiding parallel efforts and supporting one another, their staff, time, funding et cetera will be employed more efficiently.
- CCA contributes directly to making climate policy more coherent, from the international to the local level.
- Collaboration is particularly important for efforts to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in urban areas. Such efforts are especially urgent and especially promising.
- The subsidiarity principle states that regulatory authority should always be situated “at the lowest level possible, but highest necessary level”. It is a sensible principle for governance in general and makes perfect sense in regard to climate issues.

According to the global initiative Coalition for Urban Transitions national and regional governments are fully in charge of about 35% of the urban potential for abatement, while municipal governments are responsible for about 28%. However, 37% of the potential can only be tapped in joint action. These data from the Coalition’s 2019 report “Climate Emergency – Urban Opportunity” reinforces the relevance of CCA.

The GIZ publication identifies and categorises measures that need to be taken.

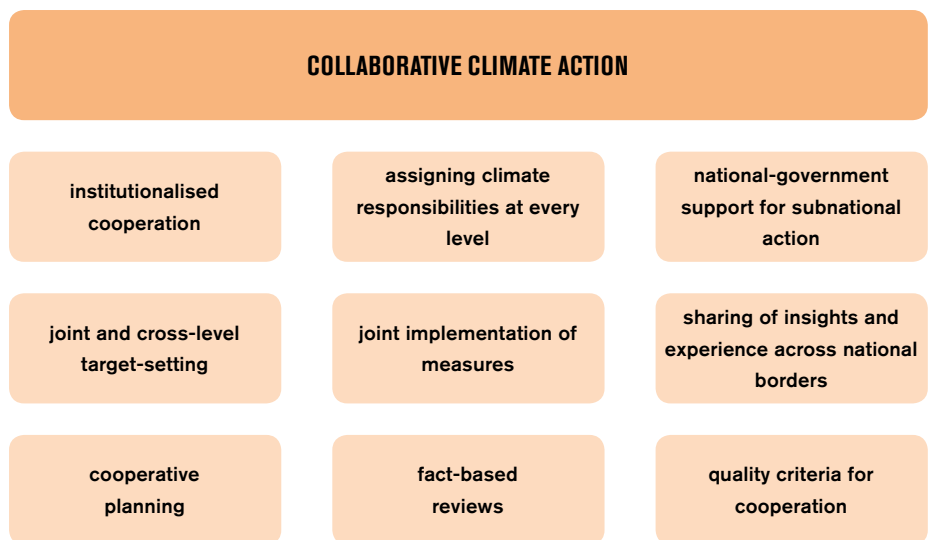
Among other things, they include (see illustration graph):

- institutionalised cooperation,
- joint and cross-level target-setting,
- cooperative planning,
- assigning climate responsibilities at every level,
- joint implementation of measures,
- fact-based reviews,
- national-government support for subnational action,
- the sharing of insights and experience across national borders and
- defining criteria for successful collaboration.

Of course, horizontal cooperation – between ministries, sectors or thematic areas – is an equally important precondition for successful climate action. Moreover, civil society, the private sector, academia and the media must be involved too.

## INTERNATIONAL CCA INITIATIVES

International climate collaboration offers many opportunities for enacting climate policies across government levels. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change requires all signatory states to submit so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and input from all levels of government is needed to draft them. They spell out targets and duties. In the best case, an NDC will include a monitoring and reporting system, so all relevant governments agencies could submit data. Moreover, an NDC should include mechanisms for the close cooperation of agencies at different levels.





Apart from NDCs, nations are obligated to draft long-term strategies (LTS) for climate protection. The goal is to show how they will make their economies greenhouse gas-neutral by mid-century. In this context, opportunities arise for national governments, regions and municipalities to draft strategies of their own and, on that foundation, move on to collaborative policymaking.

Regional governments and authorities have much to contribute to an LTS. They can establish regulations within their jurisdictions, involve stakeholders, provide incentives and network among their municipalities. They can establish regional energy and climate-protection agencies, support model projects and ensure that information is passed on systematically. Local governments can spell out how they will use their authority over land use, building, infrastructure, transport systems et cetera to enable low- and zero-carbon development.

Since in 1995, the first annual Summit of the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) took place in Berlin, local governments were involved in these summits. More recently, regional governments have been accompanying the proceedings as well. They all share their climate-protection goals, strategies and activities. Organised through the “Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency”, they have suggested the motto “Multilevel action COP26” for the upcoming UNFCCC conference (26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties – COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021. Scotland is supporting this approach.

More and more international projects, declarations and committees are based on the conviction that only true collaboration between government levels will bring about a fast and far-reaching transformation to carbon neutrality. At the end of 2020, this idea was also laid out in the New Leipzig Charter, which is intended to guide urban development in Europe.

**LINKS**

**Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019: Climate emergency, urban opportunity.**

<https://urbantransitions.global/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Climate-Emergency-Urban-Opportunity-Priorities-for-National-Governments-FINAL.pdf>

**GIZ, 2021: Collaborative Climate Action – a prerequisite for more ambitious climate policy. Berlin, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).**

<https://collaborative-climate-action.org/cca-report/>

**New Leipzig Charter:**

<https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/faqs/EN/topics/building-housing/leipzig-charta-en/leipzig-charter.html>



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## Connecting all dots

Tangible examples of climate collaboration across government levels deserve policymakers’ attention.

Several of Germany’s sub-national Länder (states) enacted climate-protection laws long before the federal law was passed in 2019. They are now revising the sub-national laws to adapt to higher targets. Municipal decision-making is bound to these regional regulations in Germany.

Since 2008, the Federal Ministry for the Environment has spent over €1.2 billion in support of 35,000 municipal projects relating to climate-friendly planning and infrastructure. The expenditure is part of Germany’s National Climate Initiative. According to the German constitution, the Federal Government has little

bearing on municipalities, but it has gained traction by providing financial incentives.

Colombia, Fiji, Indonesia, Mongolia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tonga have set examples by combining two things:

- drafting explicit national urban development policies and
- referencing them in their nationally determined contributions.

They want to boost the potential of cities and improve living standards by reducing emissions.

As early as 2008, British Columbia, Canada’s westernmost province, introduced a carbon tax. It foresees reductions in other government taxes, providing balancing mechanisms to facilitate a revenue-neutral transition to a low-carbon economy. This CO<sub>2</sub> tax

has been very successful, and Canada’s Federal Government has built on that success by introducing a nationwide carbon tax. The example shows how a sub-national initiative can eventually define the national standard.

Indonesia’s web-based platform “Aksara” compiles data on greenhouse-gas emissions. It shows how much they could be reduced if all of the country’s climate programmes

– including those of sub-national authorities – were fully implemented. MZ

**LINKS**

**Example of Colombia, Fiji, Indonesia, Mongolia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tonga:**

<https://urbantransitions.global/en/publication/climate-emergency-urban-opportunity/Aksara>:

[https://pprk.bappenas.go.id/aksara/aksara\\_home\\_english](https://pprk.bappenas.go.id/aksara/aksara_home_english)



**Columbia’s climate commitments make explicit reference to urban spaces: street scene in Medellín.**

"The economy, society and the natural environment are not separate spheres. What happens in one, affects the others." UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner in our interview.

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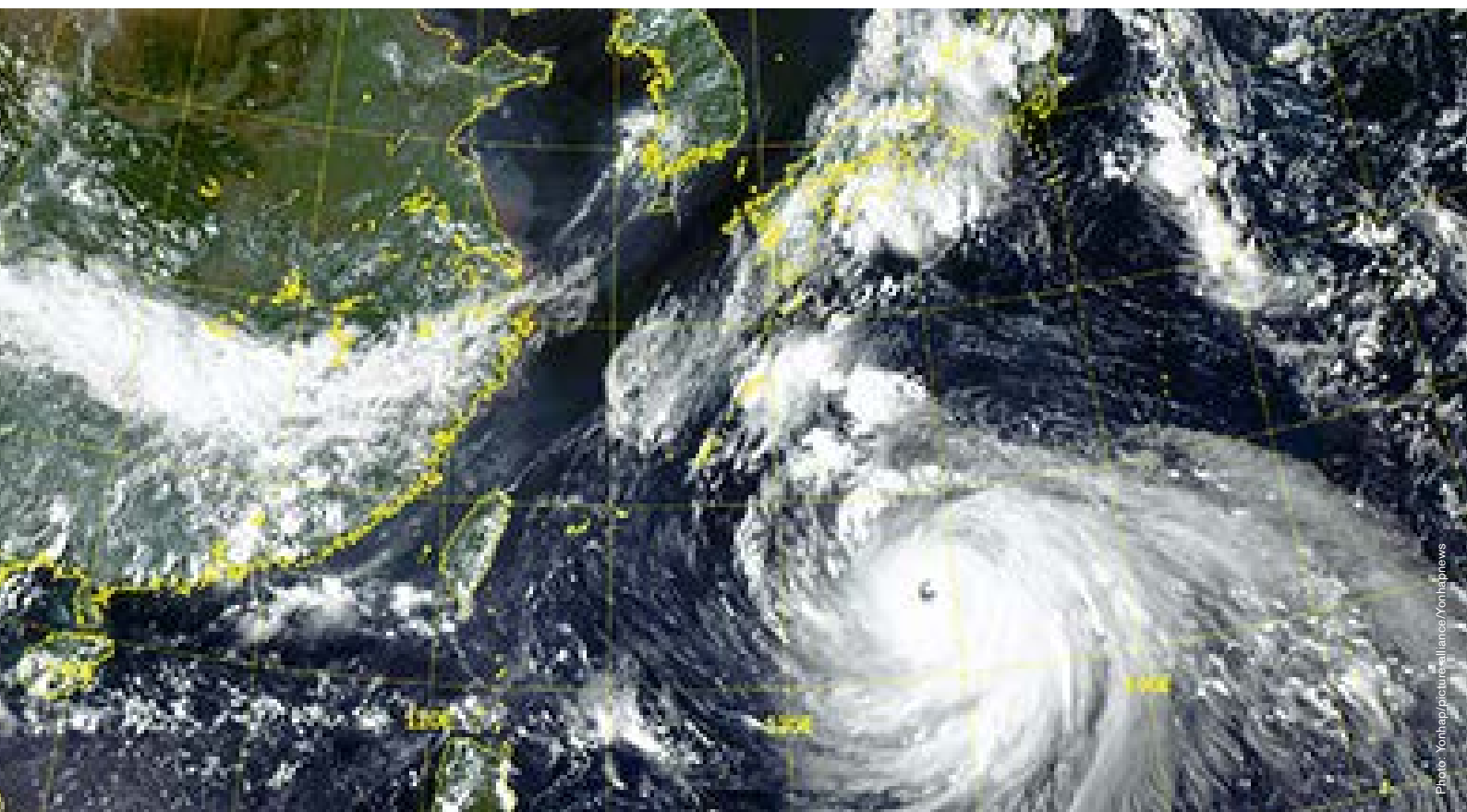


Photo: Yonhap/Pictures-alliances/Yonhapnews