

BLOG POST December 12th 2014

What does nationally-determined contributions to collective action mean?

Auteur

Teresa Ribera

Minister for the Ecological Transition of Spain

🕒 Reading time: 2 min



LIVE FROM LIMA *If there is something Lima needs to clarify, it is what we mean when we ask countries to share their “contributions” to climate collective action.*

The contributions which countries will submit in the context of the 2015 climate agreement are a new kind of tool, which demonstrate a rethink of the approach to multilateral negotiations. National contributions are the entry point for negotiations. The negotiation then needs to construct an agreement capable of pulling contributions towards the 2 degrees target. Beyond the numbers, contributions should allow us to understand the transformations envisaged, in order to make the path ahead more tangible for all actors.

The definition of rules for the submission of this new kind of tool (national contributions) is one of the priority issues for the Lima conference, the last before Paris.

One of the key issues is the scope of contributions. Should they include just mitigation or also adaptation and means of implementation (finance, etc.)? Many countries want to include adaptation and finance, in order to show-case the action that they are already taking on adaptation, but others are worried that broadening the scope of contributions will result in them being vague and non-quantified with regard to emissions reductions.

In fact, we need both. Special detail needs to be paid to mitigation action, but that does not mean that we should exclude these other priorities for action.

So, what if all could agree that contributions should also include adaptation and means of implementation? Yes, the first contributions on adaptation will be diverse and difficult to quantify. It's true, we don't yet have adequate metrics for adaptation. Much still needs to be built and learnt in this regard: we need to construct a common understanding on what it means and implies, what indicators and resources are involved, etc.

But to include adaptation in the contributions would be very useful, for at least three reasons. Firstly, this information would allow us to have a better understanding of adaptation needs. Secondly, it would allow us to prioritize actions. Thirdly, adaptation and mitigation are characterized by many overlaps as well as a strong mutual dependency, so, it would be good not to disassociate them arbitrarily.

In parallel, we need to make mitigation contributions as useful as possible for the process, both in terms of rules as well as in terms of the procedure for examining them.

Such an agreement would be an important step to operationalize this new approach of international negotiations based on the dynamic iteration between national contributions and collective objectives; between all types of climate action we need to take.