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Review and regular contributions in the 2015 agreement: what does new data show?

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At the climate talks in Bonn, countries were discussing, among other issues, the timeframe and dynamic implementation of the new climate agreement. Many countries are for a system of periodic review of progress, leading to new, strengthened contributions. Other countries are more reluctant about this idea, and would prefer an agreement with a limited and static lifespan, i.e. to 2030. In which case, in this view, there would not be need for regular contributions.

In any case, at the negotiations in Bonn, there were many discussions on the very detailed practical modalities of review and regular contributions. The objective of this blog is more to highlight why this concept is so important.

In recent weeks, new data has arrived regarding the climate performance of several major economies. What does snapshot into their climate performance mean for the discussion on review and dynamic contributions in the new agreement?

2014 data has come in for the European Union, suggesting that the EU energy related CO₂ emissions were 21.3% below 1990 levels last year. The EU is thus on track to overachieve its 2020 pledge. Its own projections put the EU's emissions at 24% below 1990 levels by 2020; other projections see EU emissions being even lower. This is due in part to lower economic activity; but more importantly to the roll-out of renewables and improvements in energy efficiency.

The same can be said for China. The carbon intensity of Chinese GDP dropped by 8 percentage points between 2013 and 2014, based on preliminary statistics. This is well above the average for the last five years, which was an improvement of 3.9%/yr. If China continued the rate of carbon intensity improvement of the last five year (2010-14), it would achieve a reduction of 48% compared to 2005 levels by 2020. This compares with its Copenhagen pledge of a reduction of 40-45%.

What does this mean for cycles? Firstly, it shows that national policies can deliver significant transformations, including overachievement of adopted targets. These transformations can be seen already, five years after Cancun. So a cycle of five years appears sufficient to assess progress and adopt the next round of actions. Secondly, it highlights the importance of having a real-time vision of progress, at the individual and aggregate level, to create confidence for the next round of contributions. If countries can see that movement is taking place, they may re-evaluate their interest to join it more strongly in the next round of contributions. Here strengthened review processes have a key role to play, as shown in [a recent paper](#). Thirdly, it underscores the importance of the timeframes for new contributions. The EU and China are likely to over-deliver in 2020 thanks (largely) to policies devised and implemented at least 3-5 years ago.

Over or under-delivery on 2020 is already to a large extent 'in the pipe', although further initiatives can still drive further reductions. But really transformational change requires a longer term effort. Thus, in 2020 it will be the right time to consider new targets to 2035.

A new [discussion paper](#) by IDDRI explores how the regime can be based on a system of regular review and new contributions every five years. It is hoped that it can help negotiators to unpick these issues in the coming months.