



BLOG POST January 29th 2016

IDDRI influential in shaping key elements of the Paris Agreement

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🕒 Reading time: 7 min



The Paris Agreement adopted on December 12, 2015 establishes a framework for international cooperation on climate action. While the Agreement's ultimate test of success will be its implementation and strengthening, it has been rightly praised as an undeniable historic landmark in international efforts to address climate change.

IDDRI was strongly implicated in the intellectual preparation leading up to the COP21. Throughout 2014 and 2015, IDDRI released seven research papers that dug into the critical areas of the negotiations (i.e. mitigation, adaptation, finance, transparency, legal form) and proposed ways in which these issues could be developed to reach an ambitious agreement. These papers were widely disseminated to negotiators and served as the basis for several of

the dozen dialogues between negotiators and experts that IDDRI organised over the past two years. In addition, IDDRI released over 10 publications on relevant related issues, including [analysis on the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (INDCs), [long-term deep decarbonization pathways](#) as part of the DDPP project, and on the [climate-oceans nexus](#).

This note details where and how IDDRI's work was influential in shaping the Paris Agreement.

Ambition

The two papers that IDDRI jointly wrote with the Chinese think tank National Center for Climate Strategy and International Cooperation (NCSC) in [2014](#) and [2015](#) proved highly influential in shaping the following key mitigation elements in the Paris Agreement:

- **Cycles of contributions:** The Agreement obligates countries to communicate every five years an NDC, extended in time and ambition. At a time when the idea of regular, coordinated cycles of new contributions was still controversial among many important countries, the IDDRI-NCSC papers provided a basis for the eventual agreement on this crucial part of the Paris Agreement. The 2015 joint paper developed in greater detail how this novel concept of 'cycles' could work in the agreement, notably arguing the importance of an early start date (2020), coordinated, collective and predictable timeframes for revision, and national determination of subsequent NDCs. Over time, the concept of cycles gained adherence in the negotiations, and during COP21 overcame the reticence of a few major countries, to find its way into the final version of the Agreement text.
- **Deep decarbonization pathways and long-term goals:** The Agreement establishes an ambitious long-term mitigation goal (see below) and invites all countries to formulate and communicate low emission strategies to 2050 or beyond. This concept was lent great credibility by the [Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project](#), an ongoing global collaboration of research teams co-coordinated by IDDRI which develops and analyses national long-term low emission strategies. The project demonstrated the feasibility of deep decarbonization, helped to underpin ambitious INDCs, and laid the foundation for the Paris Agreement's recognition of the importance of long-term pathways to guide action (see below). More broadly, the objective of this project is to deepen the understanding among governments, business and civil society of the depth, nature and feasibility of the transformation required to reach the 2°C target. The concept of deep decarbonization was taken up in several international declarations including the US-China declarations, the France-China declaration, the G7 declaration, and the Brazil-Germany declaration, and helped to pave the way for consensus on the need for deep transformation as reflected in the Paris Agreement's long-term net zero emissions target.
- **Global stocktake:** The Paris Agreement establishes a periodic, 5-yearly global stock-take to assess collective progress toward achieving the Agreement's objectives, and which will inform subsequent NDCs. The IDDRI-NCSC 2015 paper analysed what shape such a global stock-take should take. It notably demonstrated why this review should assess global collective ambition, rather than individual countries' actions or lack thereof. This played a key role in assuaging countries that saw the cycles and review as potentially infringing on their national sovereignty, and thus bringing on board countries that might have otherwise been opposed.
- **Net-zero emissions long-term goal:** The Agreement operationalizes the 2°C goal by establishing the aim of peaking emissions as soon as possible and reaching net-zero emissions in the second half of the 21st. In the run-up to Paris, civil society organisations actively campaigned for a zero-emissions goal, pushing it into the Agreement at COP21. A [2013 IDDRI paper](#) by guest authors Farhana Yamin *et al.* was the first to argue for and explain the basis for a net-zero goal in the Paris Agreement.

Adaptation

Several elements of the Agreement's adaptation article bear the influence of IDDRI's [2014](#) and [2015](#) papers on this topic:

- **The global adaptation goal** of increasing adaptation capability and fostering resilience. IDDRI's adaptation papers were some of the first to propose a concrete formulation and detailed rationale for such a goal.
- **Engaging in adaptation planning processes:** IDDRI's papers had argued for the importance of having all countries undertaking adaptation planning. The Agreement establishes countries shall engage in such planning, notably periodically submitting an adaptation communication, inviting them to monitor, evaluate and learn from this.
- **Elaboration of a comprehensive framework to evaluate adaptation efforts:** IDDRI's 2014 and 2015 papers argued that greater attention needed to be given to analysing and recognising progress on adaptation. Article 7.3 commits the UNFCCC to tracking and recognising the adaptation of developing countries, and Article 7.14 specifies that adaptation shall be included in the global stock-take referred to above.

Transparency

[IDDRI's transparency paper](#) profoundly influenced several of the key transparency provisions adopted in the Paris Agreement, including:

- **Acknowledgment of transparency's critical importance not just in keeping countries accountable to each other, but in building mutual trust and confidence:** IDDRI's paper had described in detail how a well-constructed transparency system can build trust among countries that collective action on climate is under way, thus enabling rising ambition over time.
- **Definition of the transparency system's main role being to track countries' progress toward achieving their NDCs:** IDDRI's paper provided a detailed rationale for why the transparency system should go beyond simply tracking changes in emissions, and track progress toward the implementation of countries' commitments. This implies the importance for countries to provide information on the policies they are undertaking to fulfill their commitments, as well as data on the progress in implementing their contribution.
- **Creation of a unified transparency system with in-built flexibility:** IDDRI's paper was the first to provide a detailed argumentation for why a common transparency framework which nevertheless acknowledges countries' different starting points provides the best basis for constructing a transparency system that keeps all countries accountable in an equitable manner. It drew from an assessment of the current UNFCCC transparency system and presented a detailed proposal for how to build on the experience of the current bifurcated (developed/developing countries) transparency system to construct a unified but flexible system which is effective and fair. This detailed outline proved very useful for providing negotiators with a vision of what the transition to a unified system could look like.

Finance

[IDDRI's paper on climate finance in the negotiations](#) helped pave the way to three crucial elements on this topic in the Agreement:

- **A collective objective to shift investment flows consistent with the 2°C goal:** The paper argued this should appear in the core legal text to signal long-term political commitment towards shifting trillions of investments in this direction.
- **Gradual enlargement of the donor base in a voluntary manner:** IDDRI's paper on climate finance argued that, in order to reflect the changing reality of international public investment, the Paris Agreement should gradually bring developing countries able to do so into the circle of contributors on international climate finance. Articles 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 reaffirm the leadership of developed countries on climate finance and invite developing countries to contribute to a global effort to mobilise the necessary financial flows.
- **Anchoring the \$100 billion and regular scaling-up of collective ambition on finance:** As per the IDDRI paper, the Paris Agreement anchors the \$100 billion goal as a floor for developed countries efforts from 2020, and commits countries to agreeing to a new collective objective for international climate finance in 2025, in the context of a global effort to mobilise the necessary financial flows.

Legal Form

The Paris Agreement reflects several of the options that [IDDRI's 2014 paper on legal form](#) identified as being the most desirable. This includes: a hybrid legal form, binding provisions to implement and regularly update nationally determined contributions, the housing of NDCs outside of the Agreement, strong provisions on transparency, accountability and facilitation, and a compliance mechanism covering procedural obligations.

Other IDDRI work relevant to COP21

Over the course of 2014 and 2015 IDDRI also produced numerous publications on other relevant topics to the Paris Agreement: analysis [on the paradigm shift the Paris Agreement marks with regards to the previous mode of international cooperation on climate change](#), [analyses of the INDCs](#), [the climate and ocean nexus](#), the [French energy transition debate](#), and [EU climate and energy policies](#). The entirety of IDDRI's climate related publications can be found [here](#).

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