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Long-term strategies: a key tool for climate action

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The Paris Agreement laid the foundations for a new era of climate action, enabling the progressive convergence of nationally determined contributions towards an ambitious collective target for temperature rise. How can we ensure this convergence occurs as rapidly as possible? How can we make certain that short-term pressures do not prevent us from tackling the climate challenge?

The Paris Agreement stipulates that a global stocktake must be carried out every five years, followed two years later by compulsory ratcheting up of national contributions. This is positive, but may not be enough. However, another provision reinforces this mechanism. The Paris Agreement also invites the Parties to “formulate and communicate

long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies" (article 4.19). This is not just a new form of red tape or a means of postponing action. On the contrary, these long-term strategies have the potential to become a key tool in facilitating international discussions aimed at increasing the level of ambition, as well as in ensuring the effectiveness of action at the domestic level.

At the international level

Long-term strategies have three key advantages in terms of facilitating international discussions aimed at increasing the level of ambition. First, by proposing a sequenced decarbonisation strategy until 2050, they provide a useful benchmark for existing national contributions, representing commitments for 2025/2030. They thus bridge the gap between the medium and long term and help to identify what could be improved in the next round of national contributions. The more these strategies are detailed at the sectoral level (building, transport, industry, etc.), the more successful the exercise will be as it will help to accurately identify leverage for change. Last week, IDDRI and a consortium of seven European research institutes published the [results of a similar exercise conducted at the European Union level](#). Second, communicating strategies at the national level will help, particularly with a view to the five-year stocktake, to reconstruct global trends. This approach, from the national to the global level, has at least two advantages: conducting a collective exercise that makes sense from the viewpoint of individual action; and observing individual needs in terms of investment, technology and trade, among others, in order to pinpoint the priority actions to be conducted in the field of international cooperation. Third, long-term strategies are a means of potentiating the valuable pooling of forces—which has been underway since 2015—between countries (signatories to the Agreement) and the other key actors in the implementation of the Agreement, especially cities, regions and companies. Such strategies are useful to non-state actors to ensure their decisions are based on the right anticipations. In particular, companies need to anticipate markets, investments, etc. For their part, non-state actors have made and are continuing to make their own commitments in support of climate action. Some are also conducting long-term exercises at their own level (Science Based Targets Initiative, C40, etc.). The dialogue between countries and non-state actors on national decarbonisation strategies is a means of fostering this mutual enrichment, with an exchange of views, expertise and feedback in order to build strategies that are both relevant and shared. [A number of conditions must be met](#) to gain maximum benefit from conducting and communicating long-term strategies: transparency, sectoral breakdown, etc. Above all, the development of these strategies should be seen primarily as a strategic exercise rather than as a complex modelling exercise.

At the national level

Long-term strategies are also a valuable tool for dialogue between stakeholders at the domestic level. They enable planning at the level of a national economy as a whole, providing a tool for coordination and transversality. They reflect different possible scenarios, representing a basis for dialogue between stakeholders with different viewpoints and skills. Long-term strategies thus provide a unique opportunity for catalysing commitments around the nature and conditions of desirable change. [They have already been used in some countries](#), especially in France within the framework of the debate on the energy transition that took place prior to the drafting of the law. After discussion, long-term scenarios enable governments to make decisions on cross-cutting sectoral policies in order to implement the changes needed for the deep decarbonisation of their economies. With regard to the international community, they can support the official process of national contribution revisions. In an [analysis published today](#), IDDRI and the DDPP network demonstrate the benefits that may be derived from establishing long-term strategies at the national level:

- Building pathways that are consistent with both national circumstances and the global climate target;

- Identifying the actions to be implemented;
- Selecting the key short-term actions needed for deep decarbonisation;
- Determining robust strategies in a context of uncertainty;
- Ensuring socioeconomic goals are achieved;
- Highlighting the key leverage for support in terms of international cooperation.

The role of IDDRI and the DDPP network

This analysis is derived from research conducted by IDDRI with the DDPP network. For several years, this unique [network of research teams in 16 countries](#) has contributed, through long-term pathways, to the international and domestic debates in each of the countries studied. This research represents a large-scale proof of concept and has enabled us to refine our dialogue processes and methodologies in order to use them in support of ambition, appropriation and cooperation. The tools developed by the DDPP network are freely available to all on its [website](#), and are being continually refined. They can be used by all types of actors, in all countries, whatever their technical abilities. Moreover, the DDPP network teams are happy to share their experience with the different actors concerned. They are also pursuing their research in order to continue to contribute to the debate at both the domestic and international levels and to support the effective implementation of development and deep decarbonisation strategies.