

BLOG POST October 17th 2024

BAKU: Bearings of Ambition need a King-size U-turn

Auteur

Marta Torres Gunfaus
Director, Climate Programme

🕒 Reading time: 7 min



COP29 is a pivotal moment leading up to COP30, marking a critical phase in the Paris Climate Agreement's 10-year journey. It must deliver on key issues, particularly the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, and serve as a turning point for the interpretation of ambitious climate action. The Global Stocktake was hard fought, it now needs to be followed on with action both domestically and internationally. Expectations for NDCs and adaptation action need to be clarified, and G20 countries have a particular responsibility in collectively stepping up, respecting different starting points and circumstances.

Why is COP29 an important COP?

COP29 is a critical COP, not just a tollgate on the road to Belém at the end of 2025, where the Paris Agreement will reach its 10th anniversary. It carries the weight of the stakes involved in the mandated agenda items, particularly the [new climate finance goal \(NCQG\)](#), and also the pressure of bringing climate closer to security and peace agendas by calling it the “Truce COP.” Additionally, hosted by a country highly dependent on oil and gas exports, it forces the necessary follow-up discussions of the historic agreement to [transition away from fossil fuels](#), with the opportunity to address supply perspectives on the just, orderly and equitable manner of doing so.

This is the unavoidable setting for COP29, and its outcome should reflect the reality too, i.e. climate and biodiversity crises; *years of turbulence and significant volatility in global economic output*, including recent aggressive interest rate hikes by major central banks and the escalation of conflicts with international repercussions; global goal for eradicating extreme poverty slipping further away, with more than 8% of world's population in this situation by the end of 2022; resurgence of hunger levels and rise in between-country inequality.¹ Hence, new bearings for ambition are essential.

What is the required ambition?

Ambition at COP29 means in large part securing a sound agreement on the NCQG. Most of the delegations' attention should rightfully be focused on this; and it will become a defining element of COP29's legacy.

However, with new NDCs formally due by February 2025, COP29 also plays an important role in the mitigation ambition mechanism cycle of the Paris Agreement, which means supporting the effective consideration of the hard-fought outcomes of the Global Stocktake into new NDCs and enhanced international cooperation. It also means relating collective mitigation goal with means of implementation, including the NCQG, and creating shared understanding and momentum for the expectations on NDCs. A concrete way for contributing to this is for COP29 to call G20 countries to duty given their collective capacity to make a difference. Baku needs to create space for the necessary political stance from G20 countries regarding upcoming NDCs, as well as their joint ability to take leadership on the roadmap to COP30 in the face of expected misalignment between the global ambition imprinted in the new NDCs and the short-term action required to align to 1.5°C goals, including for transitioning away from fossil fuels. G20 countries are extremely diverse, yet together they represent more than 75% of global GHG emissions. Not only does global mitigation depend on their action, but the capacity of most developing countries to achieve sustainable development goals depends on them too.

Ambition also means incorporating equity and fairness. Without a doubt, industrialized G20 countries must take the lead, and each country needs to find its own pathways to the goal of carbon neutrality, which most of them have already committed to. A few days ago, the [G20 Ministerial Meeting for Energy Transitions](#) agreed on common principles for just and inclusive transitions, and numerous efforts are taking place in each of these countries to find a politically resilient path. No effort should be spared in planning for and demanding higher levels of ambition, as this is essential to progress toward global commitments, while expanding the just transition principles to focus on the need to anticipate and mitigate negative externalities to third countries derived from the profound structural and distributional impacts of accelerating green transitions ([IDDRI, 2024](#)).

For NDCs, a higher level of ambition takes various forms, often encapsulated by the term ‘good NDC.’ Firstly, we can no longer afford to separate ambition from implementation; the ambition we need must trigger the necessary transformative short-term action. A good NDC is, by and large, a commitment that aligns the long-term structural transformations that the country must undertake to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the short-term actions that can realistically lead to those goals. Expert practitioners recognize the difficulty of this alignment task and

encourage countries to view it as a process, which can typically fit as part of the development of a Long Term-Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS). Beyond emissions reduction targets, NDCs could track the evolution of absolute per capita emissions at the sectoral level to illustrate this coherence, while also highlighting where emissions persist, giving the world a clearer picture of the remaining challenges. Ambition is also the ability to clearly articulate the conditions needed to meet both commitments and aspirations, therefore NDCs could highlight where international cooperation should be put in place to enhance ambition. Finally, ambition includes [adaptation efforts](#), which offer an opportunity for G20 countries to set a high standard.

Which buttons exist in the COP29 ambition control panel?

The Paris Agreement provides tools to ensure progressive ambition. COP29 may see some of the first Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs), which are due for all Parties by 31 December, 2024. Agreed under the Enhanced Transparency Framework (Article 13 of the Paris Agreement), the BTRs require Parties to submit every two years information on national inventories, progress towards implementation of their NDCs, policies and measures, climate change impacts and adaptation, as well as levels of financial, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building support. Transparency is central to accountability, and country-level information in BTRs will be key to assessing the global state of progress, identifying blockages, and seizing opportunities to meet agreed goals, and serving as key inputs to upcoming Global Stocktake.

Secondly, the outcome of the First Global Stocktake (GST) at COP28 (['UAE Consensus'](#)) provides actionable signals for transformative action, which Parties are expected to reflect in an ambitious manner in their enhanced NDCs, and for enhancing international cooperation efforts (e.g., the Troika's [Mission 1.5](#)). COP29, including through the Troika, must echo these agreements and bring attention to potential mechanisms that will speak to the implementation of these commitments, including the mapping of roles and responsibilities across the international enabling ecosystem that can make them possible.

The development of BTRs and the in-country discussion of national contributions of NDCs to the collective GST signals are crucial for building the capacity needed to move swiftly into action, alongside transparent and inclusive NDC, NAP, and LT-LEDS country-driven processes.

What should be the COP29 exit strategy?

Countries, and particularly G20 members, should leave Baku committed to land this new bearings of ambition into their NDCs, LT-LEDS, and NAPs. Trends in fossil fuels production and consumption should be clearly outlined, as well as other elements that address key GST signals, including efforts to halt deforestation and the degradation of natural ecosystems by 2030, in order to conserve high-integrity natural carbon sinks and protect biodiversity. Recent scientific country-level pathways analyses show how these transitions can be done while meeting socio-economic objectives.

At the international level, delivering on this ambition will require to focus on creating the political conditions for the financial flows to reach where they are most needed—for both mitigation and adaptation—which is codified in the Paris Agreement's Article 2.1c. This is a conversation that extends beyond the new climate finance goal (i.e. the NCQG) to address the broader rules that shape markets, technologies, or value-setting paradigms. This discussion, which links international climate negotiations to 'real world' actors and addresses the intersection of domestic policies and international relations, needs to proof concrete progress by COP30.

The demand for the largest emitters to take the lead on stepping up ambitious mitigation action comes with a responsibility to avoid negative socio-economic effects on third countries, and to 'right-size' their future carbon dioxide removal (CDR) dependence to sustainable and feasible levels ([Deprez *et al.*, 2024](#)), down from current plans of 1 billion hectares of land for CDR by 2060 across all countries, [equivalent to two-thirds of the world's arable land](#). In essence, failing to urge G20 countries to embrace bolder ambition would sentence the developing world to an enduring development gap and greater climate risks (including greater adaptation costs and loss and damages).

In conclusion, COP29 is a key milestone of the roadmap to ambition which will conclude a cycle at COP30. Baku needs to deliver on mandated agenda item of NCQG and serve as a key moment for setting expectations from Parties to put good NDCs on the table. While Baku cannot guarantee sufficiently ambitious NDCs ahead of COP30, it will highlight the missing elements needed to support implementation and accelerate climate action beyond current international commitments. COP30 must be prepared to build on insufficient NDCs and large emitters should be ready to review their NDCs without delay. The roadmap to COP30 should address the political and economic conditions necessary for countries to collectively accelerate both mitigation and adaptation efforts, with special attention to aligning financial flows and enhancing international cooperation.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>