

COP21 to COP22: From Solutions to Implementation

by Aisha Khan



In November 2016, the Ochre city hosted the COP22 to mobilize action on decisions taken in Paris for the battle against climate change. The emphasis was on maintaining momentum gathered at the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, where the world endorsed the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address climate change. The task in Marrakech was to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of achieving these goals, making it possible for countries to implement the commitments reflected in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs).

The key elements of the Paris Agreement were discussed in Marrakech to find implementation modalities acceptable to all. 97 countries had ratified the Paris Agreement just before the talks started. By the time negotiations wrapped up at the Bab Ighli conference site, 111 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement, covering 77 percent of Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The response and participation post Paris can be called the “Dawn of a New Climate Age”.

However while reviewing outcome of COP22, it is important to bear in mind that it took the world 20 years,

from 1995 to 2015, to reach agreement in Paris, and as such, it will take a few more COPs after Marrakech to make the agreement fully operational.

Mitigation

Climate change mitigation lies at the heart of the Paris Agreement. Signatories to the Paris Agreement have already submitted their INDC. Once submitted, the INDC becomes a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). NDCs are the foundation of the Paris Agreement. They are pledges that countries laid out ahead of last year’s negotiations, setting out how they would tackle climate change over the coming years. These include a diverse and comprehensive range of actions and targets, serving as a testament to the seriousness with which the world is approaching climate change.

NDCs are mitigation actions committing countries to limit emissions to a certain level through a variety of actions within a given timeframe. All parties must report biennially on their national emissions and progress in implementing their national mitigation measures to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate



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Change (UNFCCC). This requires dedicated institutional capacity mandated to design and implement national strategies to reduce emission intensity over time as well as to deal with the collection and reporting of data.

In Marrakech, the developing countries asked for a “higher level of ambition”, a euphemism for more drastic reduction of emissions by the developed countries given their role and responsibility for historic emissions and climate change. The most potent argument advanced by the developing countries was anchored in the UNEP “Emissions Gap Report 2015-2016”, which points out that the reduction commitments made by all the countries would not lead to limiting increase in temperature to 2 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. For the period before 2020, developing countries called on the developed countries to decrease their emissions in pursuance of the letter and spirit of the Kyoto Protocol that was extended through the Doha Amendment.

NDCs provide the roadmap for GHG emission reduction. However the diversity and conditionality in the NDCs makes it difficult to measure the cumulative impact. Each country faces different challenges and has its own set of constraints that make transition to low carbon pathways difficult to achieve while keeping pace with its development needs. In Marrakech, deliberations took place on how to make NDCs as clear and transparent as possible, with a more uniform set of features, with consistent terminology and methods to ensure that actions taken are traceable.

Adaptation

Adaptation measures seek to reduce vulnerability and facilitate adjustment to expected change in climate and its effects. The Paris Agreement says that every country should submit an adaptation communication as appropriate. These include vulnerability assessment, long-term objectives, plans and actions and support needs. In Marrakech, the framework of these communications was fleshed out. Developing countries reiterated their stance that given their relatively small emissions, they were more concerned about the consequences of the inevitable changes in climate that are already affecting them. They sought more funds for adaptation before 2020, and half of the 100 billion to be mobilized by the developed countries. The developed countries did not accede to these demands

Global Stocktaking

The second most important element of the Paris Agreement was Global Stocktaking, which will periodically assess collective progress towards meeting the long-term goals of the deal. Stocktaking is part of the ratchet mechanism that is designed to raise nations’ ambitions on climate change over time, recognizing that current pledges will not meet the temperature goals submitted in the NDCs. The first one will take place in 2023, with a facilitative dialogue in 2018. In Marrakech, the form and content of this new feature in the UN climate talks was discussed. According to a summary of the informal consulta-