

# Alignment to Advance Climate-Resilient Development

OVERVIEW BRIEF 3: Country Perspectives on Alignment of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)

This is the third in a [series of briefs](#) focusing on alignment of country efforts under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The brief explores country perspectives on alignment of national-level policy processes under the Paris Agreement—specifically, the NAP and NDC—as a basis for broader alignment toward climate-resilient development.

## 1. Introduction

As countries advance policy processes related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, there are considerable opportunities to pursue alignment, thereby increasing coherence, efficiency and effectiveness. This series of briefs aims to increase understanding of alignment at the country level, with previous briefs highlighting the benefits, different approaches and potential entry points for aligning different policy processes related to climate-resilient development.

### Key Messages

- Alignment of the NDC and NAP process under the Paris Agreement may represent a feasible starting point in many countries and can provide a strong foundation for alignment with other agendas.
- The NDC and NAP can be complementary and mutually supportive. In general, the NDC provides high-level direction and principles for climate action, while NAP processes elaborate adaptation options and strategies for implementation.
- Dialogue with countries highlighted both challenges and opportunities related to alignment of the NDC and NAP process.
- Many countries aspire to increase the alignment between the NAP process and their NDC and are able to identify concrete actions that can be taken to achieve this.
- Key actions toward alignment include using the NAP process to (1) inform the development of future NDCs, (2) improve the quality of the adaptation-related information and (3) add value and enhance a country's adaptation goal.

In this brief, we present country perspectives on alignment, focusing on the synergies between the NDC and NAP process as an example of alignment of policy processes under the Paris Agreement.

The perspectives in this third brief are informed by dialogues with countries during a Peer Learning Summit with 16 countries in October 2018 (see Box 1 for more details), as well as two national workshops in Grenada and Peru that explored alignment of the NDC and NAP processes in depth. During these events, country participants and representatives from international organizations explored the issue of alignment and exchanged knowledge and experiences across countries. They also worked together as country teams to reflect on their NDC and NAP processes, identifying concrete next steps they could take to increase alignment as the processes advance. In addition, this brief has been informed by a review of NAP documents and NDCs for all countries that have completed both documents and submitted them to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

### **Box 1. Peer Learning Summit: The role of the NAP process in advancing implementation of the adaptation goals under the Paris Agreement**

Co-hosted by the Government of Thailand and the NAP Global Network, this learning event brought country teams together to share experiences and lessons learned on linking the NAP and NDC. In particular, it aimed to explore how the NAP process can help operationalize the commitments to adaptation that have been communicated via a country's NDC. It was attended by government representatives from Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Uganda and Vietnam.

Over the course of two days, participants heard from different speakers who described approaches to achieving their country's adaptation goals as outlined in their NDC, with a particular focus on the role of the NAP process in advancing implementation of adaptation actions. A self-assessment process provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on current efforts to link the NAP process with adaptation information in the NDC in their own country context. It also supported the identification of potential entry points to coordinate future linkages between the NAP process and the NDC.

More information on the Peer Learning Summit, including the presentations made during the workshop, can be found on the [NAP Global Network website](#).

## **2. Why Start With NDC and NAP Processes?**

In the [second brief](#) in this series, it was noted that it may not be feasible or even desirable to align multiple policy processes at once in a particular country context (Dazé, Terton, & Maass, 2019). Given that the respective processes may involve different actors, operate on different timelines and have specific outputs, it may make sense to begin the alignment process by focusing on a limited number of policy processes.

For many countries, alignment of the NDC and NAP process represents a useful starting point, as both policy processes are linked to the Paris Agreement.<sup>1</sup> In countries where adaptation information is included in

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<sup>1</sup> The NAP process was established in 2010 in the Cancun Agreements (UNFCCC, 2010); however, its importance was reiterated in Article 7(9) in the Paris Agreement, which states that all countries should engage in a national adaptation planning process (UNFCCC, 2015).

the NDC, the two policy processes are interrelated. The NDC is a country's pledge for meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement, including for adaptation. In contrast, the NAP process is a domestic planning process that allows countries to identify, address and review their adaptation needs while advancing implementation of adaptation measures. This makes these two processes complementary and creates entry points that countries can use to act on alignment in a number of ways:

- The NAP process can elaborate **how adaptation commitments in the NDC will be achieved**.
- The NDC can provide an **overarching vision and framework for the NAP process**.
- The NAP can provide an **institutionalized and ongoing process** through which the adaptation-related component(s) of **successive NDCs can be identified and implemented**.
- For countries that have not included an adaptation component in their NDC or that are planning to develop their adaptation contributions further in future years, the **NAP process and its results could be used to inform the development of future NDCs**.
- If well integrated with national sustainable development planning, the **NAP process can help align the NDC to broader sustainable development objectives**.
- The NDC could help to raise the **profile of the NAP and leverage international support** for finance, technology and capacity building for adaptation.
- The use of **common objectives**, data sets, socioeconomic analyses, climate models, risk assessment and vulnerability frameworks, and indicators by the **NDC and the NAP could create efficiencies and coherence** along with effectiveness for design and implementation.

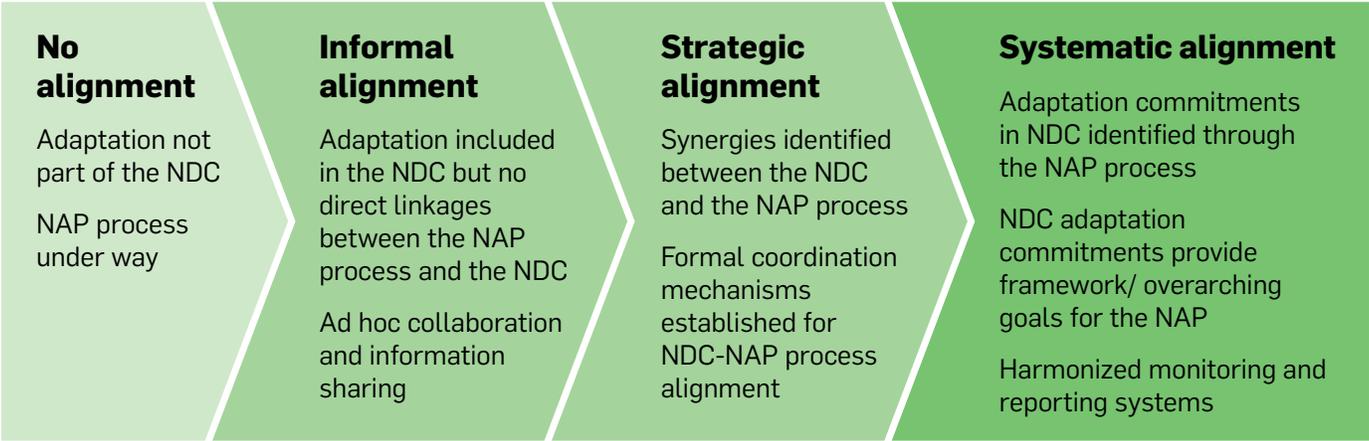
### 3. The Range of Alignment Between the NDC and NAP Process

The opportunities and challenges associated with alignment of the NDC and NAP process in a particular context depend on a number of factors. These include the institutional mechanisms that are in place, the timing of when different policy processes are initiated, resources and capacities available to enable coordination, as well as power dynamics within the government.

Both the NAP and NDC processes generally fall under the responsibility of the environment ministry, but may be led by different teams and have differing levels of political buy-in and engagement across government ministries. Further, the NDC is often owned by the bodies responsible for climate change mitigation, who may lack understanding of how the adaptation commitments may be operationalized. Similarly, those leading the NAP process may not be considering it in the context of adaptation information in the NDC.

Hence, it is recommended that countries consider the objectives of alignment in their specific context and determine where the most feasible entry points exist for pursuing alignment. Figure 1 applies the continuum introduced in the [first brief](#) in this series (Dazé, Terton, & Maass, 2018) to the specific case of the alignment of the NDC and NAP process and the varying degrees of it. It recognizes that some countries may have initiated the NAP process but have not included an adaptation component in their NDC. It further acknowledges that, in addition to synergies, alignment may reveal conflicting priorities among the different policy processes, requiring negotiation and adjustment toward the best results. The feasibility and potential benefits of pursuing strategic or systematic alignment will differ depending on the particular country context and the specific opportunities and challenges within the policy processes at a particular time.

**Figure 1. Applying the alignment continuum to NDC and NAP processes**



During the Peer Learning Summit, countries mapped where they currently are along this range of approaches, as well as how they would like to see alignment of the two processes advance in the future. Currently, most countries indicated that alignment of their NDC and NAP process is informal. For example, Nepal’s NDC indicates that the country places climate change adaptation at the centre of development planning and policy (Government of Nepal, 2016); however, the NAP process is still in the early stages. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has completed a NAP document, and while there are overlaps with the NDC in terms of the vulnerable sectors identified and potential adaptation actions, explicit linkages have not yet been made between the two processes. A few countries are at the strategic point in the continuum where, for example, the NAP has been used to elaborate the adaptation actions identified in the NDC, as in the case of Togo. All of the countries participating in the exercise indicated that they would like to pursue strategic or systematic alignment over time.



**4. Challenges and Opportunities for Alignment of the NAP and NDC**

In the [first brief](#) in this series, we outlined the benefits that countries can accrue by aligning national-level policy processes aimed at contributing to climate-resilient development (Dazé, Terton, & Maass, 2018). During the Peer Learning Summit and national workshops, countries discussed the challenges and opportunities they face in pursuing alignment of their NAP process with their NDC. The following are some of the common opportunities and challenges identified.

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>lack of awareness among stakeholders</b> of the benefits of aligning the NDC and NAP process.</li> <li>• In some cases, resistance to <b>potential shifts in power</b> and resources that may result from alignment.</li> <li>• The <b>time and resources required, which may create additional burden</b> for the coordinating ministry and stakeholders in the two processes.</li> <li>• The <b>different timelines for the processes</b> (countries were required to submit their first NDC in 2015, with updates every five years; the NAP process is ongoing and iterative, with no set time frame).</li> <li>• The <b>NDC is often viewed as a mitigation-focused instrument</b>, which may influence the stakeholders that are engaged and create misunderstandings about the objectives and importance of the adaptation component.</li> <li>• The <b>political nature</b> of the NDC <b>versus the technical and practical nature</b> of the NAP.</li> <li>• The difficulty in communicating the <b>NDC commitments, which are broad and high-level</b>, in a way that makes them relevant and engaging for sectoral ministries, subnational authorities and other stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Financing mechanisms tend to focus on only one of the processes</b> and do not provide incentives or allocate resources for alignment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The iterative nature of the two processes creates an opening to increase alignment over time: the <b>adaptation component of the NDC may be updated based on priorities identified through the NAP process</b>, or the NDC can provide the overarching objectives for the NAP process.</li> <li>• The NDC and NAP <b>process are often coordinated by the same ministry</b>; this can facilitate enhanced coordination and knowledge sharing.</li> <li>• Linking the NDC with the NAP process can <b>facilitate communication of high-level goals to a broad range of actors and provide accountability for implementing the NAP process</b>.</li> <li>• Alignment of the processes can <b>reduce duplication of efforts</b>, for example in relation to monitoring and evaluation of adaptation.</li> <li>• Aligned NDC and NAP processes may result in <b>more efficient use of climate finance and opportunities to leverage additional resources</b> for implementation of adaptation actions.</li> <li>• <b>Sectoral and subnational actors may benefit from linkages</b> in terms of reduced duplication of efforts, streamlined coordination and allocation of resources and integrated capacity development.</li> </ul>

## 5. NDC Update: An opportunity to align the NDC and NAP process?

In 2020, countries will have the opportunity to update and enhance the current climate commitments outlined in their NDC. And there is good reason to do so: it presents an excellent opportunity to raise the ambitions of current NDCs in relation to both mitigation and adaptation.

Given that many countries included information on adaptation along with their mitigation commitments, they may also use this opportunity to update their adaptation-related commitments based on their NAP process and strengthen the explicit relationship between the NAP and NDC. There are three important ways in which countries can approach this task:

### 1. Use the NAP process to inform the development of future NDCs.

For countries that have not included an adaptation component in their NDC and are planning to develop one, the NAP process and its results could be used to inform the development of future NDC adaptation information. The detail provided in the NAP can provide the basis for the overall adaptation

vision and priorities in the NDC while enabling the NDC to remain concise and focused on principles and high-level direction. Furthermore, it can be an opportunity to demonstrate and ensure consistency between the high-level NDC and national-level NAP process.

**2. Use the NAP process to improve the quality of the adaptation-related information in the NDC and demonstrate progress.**

The NDC update could focus on improving the quality of the adaptation-related information by providing additional or new information and demonstrating progress in the implementation of the NAP process. For example, since the submission of their first NDC, many countries have progressed in their NAP process, reflecting on latest evidence and science, and generating data, information and analysis that could be summarized within an updated NDC, as appropriate. NAP teams could prepare concise analytic inputs and proposals for consideration in the NDC update, articulating the relationship of the NAP to the NDC, and highlighting institutional frameworks, improved governance structures, risks and vulnerabilities, adaptation priorities and capacity needs.

**3. Use the NAP process to add value and enhance a country's NDC adaptation goal.**

NAP teams could engage in a more dynamic way with the NDC update for submission by 2020. Efforts could focus on enhancing a country's adaptation goal and ambition through increasing the scope of a target and the explicit recognition of the NAP process, as well as its role in implementing the NDC and new commitments based on the NAP process and its results (following the first round of NDCs).

Over 90 countries have launched the process to formulate and implement their NAP (Least Developed Country Expert Group, 2018), a key process that provides a coordinated and nationally driven approach to reduce the risks they face from climate change. In 2020, countries have the option to communicate new or updated NDCs. This is a key opportunity for them to use the NAP process to (1) inform the development of future NDCs, (2) improve the quality of the adaptation-related information and (3) add value and enhance a country's adaptation goal.

## **6. Looking Beyond NDCs and NAP Processes**

Alignment of the NDC and NAP process represents an initial step toward broader alignment for climate-resilient development. In particular, because the NAP process explicitly aims to integrate adaptation in development planning across sectors and levels, it can provide a strong basis for further alignment with policy processes related to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building on NDC–NAP linkages, there are numerous opportunities for further alignment, for example:

- Overarching policy frameworks for the NAP and NDC can also incorporate relevant strategies and targets for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- With effective institutional arrangements in place to coordinate adaptation planning and implementation, it may be easier to make the links to coordination mechanisms for DRR and SDG implementation.
- Stakeholder engagement mechanisms established for the NDC and NAP process can provide a platform for dialogue on DRR and/or SDG implementation.
- Resources allocated for implementation of the NAP process can contribute to achievement of objectives related to DRR and the SDGs.

- Reviews and updates of the NDC and NAP provide opportunities for improving alignment with SDGs and DRR strategies.
- Integrated monitoring and evaluation systems for adaptation can be leveraged to track progress on relevant SDGs and DRR strategies.

## 7. Next Steps

This is the last overview brief in this series, highlighting the potential value of NDC–NAP alignment as a starting point for countries seeking to improve coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in policy processes related to climate-resilient development. In the coming months, we will be working with a select group of countries to explore the challenges and opportunities related to alignment in more detail. These experiences will be documented in a series of case studies, which will provide practical ideas for other countries on how to proceed with alignment in their particular contexts.

## References

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