

# Preparing for COP 21, Paris and the New Climate Agreement: *Evaluating INDCs for Sustainable Development*



**By** *Dr Ted Christie, Environmental Lawyer & Mediator – 28 August 2015*

## **Disclosure Statement:**

*Ted Christie does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.*

In preparing for COP21, UNFCCC Parties have committed to publicly outline what post-2020 climate actions – *mitigation measures or [mitigation + adaptation measures]* – which they intend to take as their *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* (“INDCs”).

INDCs are crucial for the new climate agreement and moving to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future **(1)**.

An *Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (“INDC”) should represent the best of the available sustainable development options for each UNFCCC Party.

A problem for moving to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future is how to evaluate whether an INDC is not only consistent with sustainable development – but also, whether it is the optimal INDC for achieving sustainable development?

Finding sustainable solutions requires the multiple and competing objectives of sustainable development – *ecological, economic, social (including cultural)* - to be assessed and balanced.

That is, to ensure that future risks to people, economies, and ecosystems, from climate change, have been equitably addressed in the new climate agreement.

The application of a contemporary methodology for evaluating sustainable development has its basis in principles and concepts from both policy (“*Multi-Objective Analysis*”) and conflict resolution (“*Principled Negotiation*”).

Multi-objective analysis is widely used as a decision-making aid for resolving public sector problems involving multiple and competing objectives e.g. Environmental policy, energy, water resources **(2)**.

The potential for multi-objective analysis to evaluate the compatibility of INDCs with sustainable development and climate change is clearly evident

A pathway to apply multi-objective analysis to climate change is to link two key elements of “principled negotiation” to a conflict resolution framework:-

- i. The INDC developed by each UNFCCC Party must be seen by all other Parties as a “*creative option for mutual gain*.”

For an INDC to be seen as a “*creative option for mutual gain*”, it should be climate change-effective, enhance and promote the cost-effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures and be equitable relative to other INDCs; and

- ii. “*To insist on the use of objective criteria*” as a pre-condition to evaluate each INDC.

The need for the evaluation to be based on “*objective criteria*” requires the multiple objectives for sustainable development to be framed, agreed to and endorsed before negotiations commence. The same objectives are used to evaluate every INDC.

These objectives provide a foundation for evaluating each INDC for its compatibility with sustainable development. Compatibility could be assessed as “*compatible*”, “*non-compatible*” or “*uncertain*”; reasons should be given for these conclusions.

The following examples of multiple objectives for achieving sustainable development, which could be framed for COP21, are based on decisions and recommendations arising from past UNFCCC Conferences and publications.

***I Ecological Objectives:***

- (a) *To ensure that the combined total of contributions in all INDCs are effective in stabilizing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at a level that will limit global temperature rise below 2°C by 2100.*

- (b) *“Green growth that is efficient in its use of natural resources, clean in that it minimizes pollution and environmental impacts, and resilient in that it accounts for natural hazards and the role of environmental management and natural capital in preventing physical disasters **3**.”*

## **II Economic Objectives:**

- (a) *To enhance and promote the cost-effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions whilst ensuring that these measures do not aggravate existing inequities within and across UNFCCC Parties to the new Climate Agreement; and*
- (b) *To develop a strong, growing and diversified economy together with maintaining and enhancing international competitiveness that enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.*

## **III Social Objectives:**

- (a) *To minimize the extent environmental costs and economic benefits are shared disproportionately between all UNFCCC Parties to the new climate agreement; and*
- (b) *To protect the most vulnerable, alleviate poverty and create a future with prosperity for all.*

## **IV Cultural Objectives:**

- (a) *To provide financial and technology capacity-building support for developing countries for preparing their INDCs to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for moving to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future and for achieving sustainable development; and*
- (b) *To provide funds for vulnerable developing countries through an “Environmental Performance Bond” to cope or to adapt with any projected risks of climate change. If environmental damages occur, the bond would be used to rehabilitate or repair their environment.*

## Dr Ted Christie and Environmental Dispute Resolution:

Author of the cross-disciplinary (*law/science/negotiation*) book, “*Finding Solutions for Environmental Conflicts: Power and Negotiation*” (2008)  
Edward Elgar Publ., Cheltenham, UK.

**Read more** [About Dr Ted Christie](#)

## Hyperlinks

1. CAIT Climate Data Explorer, World Resources Institute, August 2015.  
<http://cait.wri.org/indc/>
2. To read more on “Sustainable development and multi-objective analysis” (**at pages 118-126**), download the following Google eBook by clicking on the following link:  
[https://books.google.com.au/books/about/Finding\\_Solutions\\_for\\_Environmental\\_Conf.html?id=RTQNCPP6EeQC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.com.au/books/about/Finding_Solutions_for_Environmental_Conf.html?id=RTQNCPP6EeQC&redir_esc=y)
3. ‘A Guidebook to the Green Economy’, Division of Sustainable Development, UNDESA, August 2012.  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/GE%20Guidebook.pdf>