

New Climate Diplomacy under the Paris Climate Agreement

Ana TSKIPURISHVILI

Executive Summary

- The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. The nature of the problem compels a long-term approach by the international community. There is a general recognition of the urgency of the problem and the need for immediate action. It is of a crucial importance of a shared rules based global order, with multilateralism as its key principle and the UN at its core so as to fully implement the Paris Agreement and to achieve Agenda 2030. This is where climate diplomacy comes in. The Paris Agreement succeeded by changing the paradigm of climate diplomacy. It established the nationally determined contributions, balanced by reporting and review. The Paris Agreement shifted the pattern of differentiation, putting in place more supple means of differentiating to begin building a carbon-free future. The Paris Agreement has contributed to a change of attitude towards climate change. The real work lies ahead, but Paris created a strong foundation. Following on from the successful agreement in Paris, the provisions should be integrated into the diplomatic practices worldwide.

Introduction

The challenges posed by the climate crisis are enormous. It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Each of the last four decades has been successively warmer than any decade that preceded it since 1850. Greenhouse gas emissions have already increased temperatures and threatening lives and livelihoods around the world. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. The repercussions also raise important geopolitical questions that touch upon the heart of international politics.

Climate change is a global problem that necessarily requires a global response. This is where climate diplomacy comes in. International cooperation is essential to ensure that all countries may adequately adapt to the effects of climate change. The international response to climate change is complex, intense, and delicate.

The Paris Agreement is a landmark international accord that was adopted by nearly every nation in 2015 to address climate change and its negative impacts. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. Rarely is there consensus among nearly all nations on a single topic. But with the Paris Agreement, leaders from around the world collectively agreed that climate change is driven by human behavior, that it's a threat to the environment and all of humanity, and that global action is needed to stop it.

This paper offers a better understanding and explanation of the new climate diplomacy under the Paris Climate Accord. It furthers the analysis of the new era of multilateral diplomacy on the climate change. The climate crisis is a global issue touching upon diverse areas of international and foreign policy and climate diplomacy encompasses all diplomatic engagement relating to climate change. Sustaining such an enabling environment represents a



fundamental prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement.

1. What is the Paris Agreement?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, is a treaty among governments that provides a foundation for the global climate effort. The agreement in Paris was built on the foundations of the UNFCCC and the Copenhagen and Cancun Agreements. The Paris Agreement defines how countries will implement their UNFCCC commitments after 2020. The Paris Agreement is the culmination of decades of international efforts to combat climate change. The Paris Agreement was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century.

Some of the key aspects of the Agreement are set out below: *Long-term temperature goal* (Art. 2), *Global peaking and “climate neutrality”* (Art. 4), *Mitigation* (Art. 4), *Sinks and reservoirs* (Art. 5), *Voluntary cooperation/Market- and non-market-based approaches* (Art. 6), *Adaptation* (Art. 7), *Loss and damage* (Art. 8), *Finance, technology and capacity-building support* (Art. 9, 10 and 11), *Climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information* (Art 12), *Transparency* (Art. 13), *implementation and compliance* (Art. 15), *Global stocktake* (Art. 14) and *Decision 1/CP.2*.

The Paris Agreement is a landmark in the multilateral climate change process because, for the first time, a binding agreement brings all nations into a common cause to undertake efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. The Paris Agreement provides a framework for technical, financial and capacity building support to the countries.

2. How does it work?

The Paris Agreement establishes a set of binding procedural commitments. Parties commit to “*prepare, communicate and maintain*” successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs); to “*pursue domestic mitigation measures*” aimed at achieving their NDCs; and to regularly report on their emissions

and on progress in implementing their NDCs. Each party’s successive NDC will “*represent a progression*” beyond its previous one and “*reflect its highest possible ambition.*”

The achievement by a party of its NDCs is not a legally binding obligation. The 2018 facilitative dialogue, renamed the “*Talanoa Dialogue*,” concluded a year-long assessment of progress toward the Paris Agreement’s long-term goals. UN Climate Change has published a full version of the NDC Synthesis report in 2021.

The Paris Agreement provides a framework guiding the global effort for decades to come. The aim is to create a continuous cycle that keeps the pressure on countries to raise their ambition over time. To promote rising ambition, the agreement establishes two linked processes, each on a five-year cycle. The first process is a “*global stocktake*” to assess collective progress toward meeting the agreement’s long-term goals. Parties will then submit new NDCs, “*informed by the outcomes of the global stocktake.*” Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement requires that all countries do their part and slash greenhouse gas emissions. To that end, greater flexibility is built into the Paris Agreement.

While the Paris Agreement doesn’t have harsh penalties for countries not meeting their targets, it does have a *robust system of monitoring, reporting, and reassessing individual and collective country targets* over time in order to move the world closer to the broader objectives of the deal. And the agreement sets forth a requirement to announce their next round of targets every five years, unlike the Kyoto Protocol.

The Paris Agreement includes a series of mandatory measures for the monitoring, verification, and public reporting of progress toward a country’s emissions-reduction targets. The enhanced transparency rules apply common frameworks for all countries, with accommodations and support provided for nations that currently lack the capacity to strengthen their systems.

The COVID-19 did impact the engagement in climate diplomacy, changing the plans and reducing the frequency of their interactions. While COP 26 was postponed due to COVID-19, the delay gave countries time to develop more ambitious targets and accelerate low-carbon actions to ensure a green and resilient recovery from COVID-19.

The UK hosted the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 13 November 2021. The COP26 summit brought parties together to accelerate action towards



the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. On 13 November 2021, COP26 concluded in Glasgow with all countries agreeing the Glasgow Climate Pact to keep 1.5C alive and finalize the outstanding elements of the Paris Agreement.

Climate negotiators were focused on mitigation (secured near-global net zero, NDCs from 153 countries and future strengthening of mitigation measures), adaptation and loss and damage (boosted efforts to deal with climate impacts), finance (mobilized billions and trillions), collaboration (worked together to deliver). It ended two weeks of intense talks with consensus on urgently accelerating climate action. The Glasgow Climate Pact combined with increased ambition and action from countries, means that 1.5 degrees Celsius remains in sight and scales up action on dealing with climate impacts, but it will only be delivered with concerted and immediate global efforts.

3. The new era of multilateral diplomacy on the climate change

Climate change is a global emergency that goes beyond national borders. It is an issue that requires international cooperation and coordinated solutions at all levels. In the era we are leaving now, no country can deny diplomacy. Since the 1990s, the UN has held climate change' conference of the parties' every year without agreement as it was between a certain number of countries. Unlike other conferences before, Paris COP21 had almost everyone on the table 195 countries worldwide.

For the first time, each state set its own goals for limiting or slowing the carbon emissions, fighting deforestation, maintaining transparency on climate issues and identifying the adverse effects of climate change. Either way, the fact that this agreement was adopted at all is a triumph for the notion that international diplomacy can produce global solutions to big global challenges. It's an affirmation that even the most seemingly intractable and complex global problem, as climate change surely is, can be mitigated and addressed through smart diplomacy.

A more flexible strategy, a willingness to accept nonbinding commitments helped to secure a climate deal in Paris. That made it easier for national governments to tailor their commitments to what they know they can deliver at home. While the Paris Agreement does not "solve" climate change, it is a critical inflection point. It brings us much closer to a safer climate trajectory and creates an ambitious path

forward for decades to come. The challenge now is to make good on the promise of Paris, by turning the action pledged into the progress. Success now largely depends on what happens at subnational, national and regional levels. The main issue involves bridging the gap between developed and developing countries.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that climate change will be limited only by "**substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.**" It will be very hard for diplomats to build the machinery that will make deeper agreements possible in the future. Commitments must be backed by bold and credible actions by every country in the world.

Climate change is a destabilising factor that needs to be considered in efforts to build resilience, while promoting conflict-sensitive climate action contributes to stability. The climate crisis is a global issue touching upon diverse areas of international and foreign policy and climate diplomacy encompasses all diplomatic engagement relating to climate change. Sustaining such an enabling environment thus represents a fundamental prerequisite for the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The European Union's climate diplomacy had indeed transformed. Key features of the European Union's novel strategy are greater pragmatism relying on attention to other players' positions, interests and values, and a greater flexibility in its approach, including a willingness to accept a universal climate regime based on nationally determined contributions. The multiple bilateral approaches the European Union pursued in the run-up to and at the Paris summit enabled it to co-create – together with the other major emitters and in cooperation with its partners from the High Ambition Coalition, a negotiation environment that made the Paris Agreement possible.

4. How Will the Paris Agreement Track Countries Progress?

Established in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement, countries must evaluate progress toward climate adaptation, mitigation, and financial goals via the 2023 global stocktake. It includes a stronger transparency and accountability system that holds governments accountable to their commitments. The new transparency regime is legally binding, and applies to all countries. Countries must report their greenhouse gas inventories and progress towards their emissions reduction targets every two years. The reports will also require reporting on adaptation and will provide assistance to developing countries that need help to improve their reporting. These



national level reports will be subject to an independent “*technical expert review*.” Countries will then be subject to a “*multilateral examination*” to consider progress toward their targets. These transparency and accountability tools will be aided by the powerful domestic motivation to follow through on their new commitments since countries have realized that acting on climate change is in their own national interest.

The Copenhagen/Cancun agreements built essentially a three-part system for transparency and accountability by: (1) requiring that countries regularly report their emissions, climate actions, and trajectory towards their targets; (2) conducting an independent expert review of those country reports; and (3) evaluating country progress through an international public review. There were some differences in this system between developed and developing countries. Paris Agreement strengthens this system in several ways by creating an “*enhanced transparency framework*” and a “*mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance*” using a common set of rules for both developed and developing countries.

Pursuant to the Paris Agreement, progress towards achieving the national targets are to be assessed using an “accountability” system that includes a: (a) “technical expert review”; (b) “facilitative, multilateral examination;” and (c) “mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance.” These systems create a clear mechanism to know if countries are off-track to meet their target and hold them accountable to make a course correction. The COP24 decisions furthered the rules around each of these: The Technical Expert Review, A Multilateral Assessment and Facilitating implementation and compliance.

The Paris Agreement includes key strengthened measures to ensure that countries meet their commitments. It adds an international layer of accountability to the domestic drivers that will also help hold politicians in countries accountable. The combination of these factors will help create the conditions for countries to meet their targets over time. The detailed Katowice Rulebook takes those strengthened measures and gives them life. The 191 parties aren't without some guidance, however. At the COP24 meeting in Katowice in 2019, they agreed on a

three-phase process for the stocktake: Information collection and preparation, technical assessment, communicating and acting on findings.

The Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee held its first meeting in 2020. The committee that operates the mechanism to facilitate implementation of and promote compliance with the provisions of the Paris Agreement, established under its article 15, has laid the groundwork to deliver its mandate. The committee is expert-based and functions in a manner that is transparent, non-adversarial and non-punitive.

Conclusion

Why did Paris work? The analysis revealed that the central answer lies in a new style of international cooperation, one that has enabled 195 countries to formally adopt an agreement. Paris Agreement represented the new era of climate diplomacy. Climate risks are integrated into foreign policy agendas. However, it's important to remember the Paris Agreement isn't static. The real work lies ahead. Obviously, the Paris Accord provides the tools and pressures to make that happen.

The Paris Agreement included key strengthened measures to ensure that countries meet their commitments. Countries cannot solve this alone. The risks should be addressed at the highest diplomatic level. Following on from the successful agreement in Paris, the provisions should be integrated into the diplomatic practices worldwide. Reaching out to the public and to governments is as important as to engage in conflict prevention and peace building. The Paris Agreement created a strong foundation on which to begin building a carbon-free future.

This agreement has a solid foundation to build upon as countries have realized that it is in their own interest to cut their carbon pollution. They have concluded that, far from destroying the economy, domestic climate action produces real benefits for their citizens. As natural disasters increase in frequency and intensity, they have seen that not addressing climate change has real consequences.



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About the author

Ana TSKIPURISHVILI holds a Master of Advanced Studies degree in European and International Governance from the University of Geneva, a Master degree in International Law and a Bachelor degree in Law with a major in International Law from the Tbilisi State University.

She has extensive experience in international relations, human rights, international treaty law, international humanitarian law, solidified by the background of working in the Ministries and international organization. She is interested in EU Digital Single Market, digital governance, e-diplomacy, climate change and autonomous weapon systems.



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