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What is South Africa's Updated Mitigation Target in the Nationally Determined Contribution and Why is this Important?

South Africa's revised **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** was released in September 2021. Ahead of COP26, it is more critical than ever that countries acknowledge the urgency in the IPCC's recently released Sixth Assessment Report and the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees.

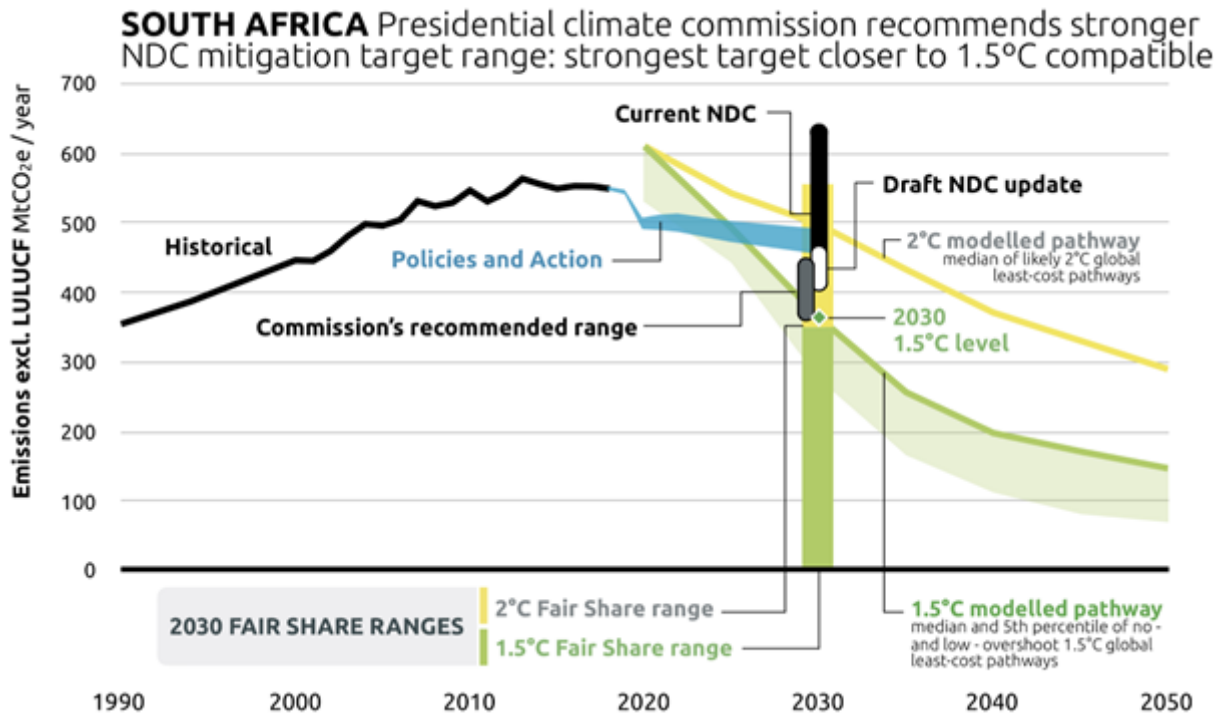
For South Africa to do this, we require significant improvements on our annual emission targets and a greater focus on investment into zero-carbon energy, transport and industry. It also requires an understanding of, and a response to, our vulnerability to physical climate risk.

South Africa's updated NDC is important in the build-up to COP26, as it gives a strong indication to the rest of the world of South Africa's commitments to combatting climate change. This updated NDC is important in setting out South Africa's enhanced ambition in fighting climate change, especially by surpassing the original target of 398 to 614 MtCO₂e by 2030, as set out in 2015. The enhanced ambition will likely open new avenues to trade and finance opportunities, which are fundamental in the transition to a zero-carbon economy.

What is the Updated Mitigation Target in the Revised NDC?

The newly released NDC focusses on mitigation, adaptation and finance. However, our focus here is mainly on mitigation. The NDC has adopted an annual emission target range of 350 to 420 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂-e) by 2030, which was a significant improvement from the 2015 target of 398 to 614 MtCO₂e by 2030. This adjustment is in line with the recommendations set out by the Presidential Climate Commissions (PCC) in June 2021, that the country's NDC be strengthened to 350-420 MtCO₂e.

Climate Action Tracker (CAT) have derived “1.5°C consistent modelled pathways” for each country it assesses, by downscaling global and regional 1.5°C compatible scenarios from the IPCC special report on 1.5°C.^[1] For South Africa to obtain a 1.5°C consistent target for domestic emissions reductions, the absolute emissions target would need to be 364 MtCO₂e or lower, excluding LULUCF by 2030.^[2] If South Africa wants to make a fair contribution to the Paris Agreement, it will then need to limit its emissions in 2030 to 350 MtCO₂e, excluding LULUCF.^[3] By adhering to the lower bound of the PCC’s recommendation as its updated NDC target, this makes South Africa one of the few countries with a close to 1.5°C compatible target, as shown in the below diagram:



Source: Climate Action Tracker (July 2021)

The draft NDC, released for public consultation and feedback on 30th March 2021, was initially criticised for not demonstrating the appropriate level of ambition at 398 to 440 megatons by 2030, even though the top end of the range had been revised down to 440 megatons from 618 megatons. Leadership from all stakeholders participating in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) run consultative approach, and in particular the PCC, were critical in driving enhanced ambition. This has resulted in a further reduction in the upper bound of the target range, as well as a lowering of the lower bound of the range. This newly updated NDC has been submitted to the UNFCCC prior to COP26, which is being held in Glasgow in November 2021.

South Africa’s NDC and Adaptation

The adaptation component of the NDC will need to be improved over time but sets a base of activities and the governance framework for enhance adaptation ambition in South Africa. South Africa adopted a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) in 2020, which serves as the country’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and provides a common vision of climate change adaptation and resilience for the country. This newly added policy instrument will be used to provide overarching guidance to all sectors of the economy in implementing the adaptation goals set out in the NDC. The NCCAS ensures that for the period of 2021-2030, government will achieve

^[1] Climate Action Tracker (2021): *South Africa’s Presidential Climate Commission recommends stronger mitigation target range for updated NDC: close to 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible* [Online]. Available: <https://climateactiontracker.org/blog/south-africas-presidential-climate-commission-recommends-stronger-mitigation-target-range-for-updated-ndc-close-to-15c-compatible/>

^[2] Ibid

^[3] Ibid

their NDC adaptation goals by prioritising vulnerable systems and building resilience in key areas such as biodiversity, water systems and other vulnerable ecosystems.

The newly updated NDC also states that The National Treasury, South African Reserve Bank, financial sector regulators as well as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) will work collaboratively on sustainable finance initiatives. Consistent investment requirements will be put in place to enable financial market participation to ensure fiscal support for overall green objectives.

What is the NDC and how does it work in South Africa?

Country NDCs are non-binding national plans set out by countries who are signatories to the Paris Agreement. NDCs provide a set of climate related actions and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets which each country aims to achieve through policy, plans and measures in line with the global targets set out in the Paris Agreement.

The NDC process begins with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) releasing their proposed NDC for public comment. This year, Government and the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) held various meetings and consultations with research institutions and key stakeholders to obtain feedback on the targets and suggested level of ambition. Based on the feedback received, the NDC is then revised, and an updated version released.

For more information on the National Business Initiative's climate change work, please contact Geeta Morar (Project Manager: Environmental Sustainability): GeetaM@nbi.org.za

^[1] Climate Action Tracker (2021): *South Africa's Presidential Climate Commission recommends stronger mitigation target range for updated NDC: close to 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible* [Online]. Available: <https://climateactiontracker.org/blog/south-africas-presidential-climate-commission-recommends-stronger-mitigation-target-range-for-updated-ndc-close-to-15c-compatible/>

^[2] Ibid

^[3] Ibid



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