# Discussion Paper: Post 2015 and climate change – arguments for a stand-alone climate goal

### 1. Background

This paper has been prepared to inform the discussions of a workshop organised by CAFOD, WWF with the support of CAN-International and Beyond2015 on the options for including climate change in the post-2015 framework.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the option of a stand-alone climate change goal. It takes as a given that mainstreaming of climate change across the framework is desirable, but makes the case for a stand alone climate goal in additional to mainstreaming climate change on the basis that climate change is a major threat to sustainable development and ending poverty, and so demands the profile and added action that goal status would bring with it.

### 2. Climate change in the post-2015 framework

As countries begin to develop their positions on what the post-2015 framework should include, there seems to be growing support for including climate change in a more substantive way than in the MDGs[1].  For example, the group of fragile states, Pacific Island and Portuguese speaking African nations have argued that climate change should be on the development agenda[2], and the newly elected President of the UN General Assembly has identified combating climate change as one of his priorities[3]. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)[4], High Level Panel (HLP)[5], and Global Compact[6] reports to the UN Secretary General each recommended climate be included within one or more of their proposed goals.  However, which elements of the climate issue should be included, and how far the framework should go in recommending action, is still an open question.

Given how important climate change is for development, the mainstreaming of climate change across the framework and embedding concrete actions to address the impacts of climate change on poor and vulnerable communities should be a non-negotiable. Suggestions for targets that can be embedded in other goal areas of the post-2015 framework are outlined in a separate paper.[7]

However, while there are clear benefits to mainstreaming, there are also some issues. Confining climate action to only those goal areas defined in the framework risks that those targets and actions will not add up to a package of measures that together achieve climate policy objectives, ie. they might not be enough to avoid dangerous climate change. Perhaps even more importantly, mainstreaming reduces the political profile of

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[1] Climate change was included only as an indicator in greenhouse gas emissions in one goal, MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability).
[2] The Dili Consensus 2013
[3] http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/30/un-general-assemblypresidentputsclimatechangeattopofagenda.html
[4] Sustainable development solutions network. 2013. An action agenda for sustainable development: report for the UN Secretary General.
[5] High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post 2015 development agenda 2013 A new global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development
http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf
[6] United Nations Global Compact 2013 Corpoate sustainability the UN post-2015 development agenda.
[7] CAFOD, WWF, Jo Philips, 2013. Cross-cutting Climate Change: how to integrate climate change in the post-2015 framework.

[workshop draft, 5 Oct 2013, Rachel Garthwaite, Save the Children, Bernadette Fischler, CAFOD].

climate change by not acknowledging it as a major sustainable development issue in its own right.  There is then an argument to be made for a stand-alone climate goal.

## 2.1 Strengthening global climate action through a climate change goal

The overall aim of a climate change goal would be to strengthen climate change action at the intergovernmental and national levels so as to reduce the risks posed by climate change to development and poverty eradication. It would not be to replace or duplicate the negotiations that take place under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To deliver this aim a climate goal would need to have the following objectives:

1. To reframe climate change as an issue for poverty eradication and sustainable development and to communicate the urgency of action;
2. To drive action on climate change;
3. To build political momentum for an ambitious UNFCCC agreement in 2015.

### Reframing climate as an issue for poverty and sustainable development and communicating the urgent need for action

One of the key reasons for the slow progress on climate change is that it has been perceived to be, and treated as an environmental issue[8]. One of the objectives of a climate goal would then be to reframe the climate issue in terms of sustainable development and poverty.  As was the case with the MDGs, it can be expected that each of the goal areas defined in the post-2015 framework will be a headline that affirms the global importance of that issue and reinforces the need for urgent global action. Goal status is therefore an important tool for communicating to those who don't see climate change relevant to development, as well as climate negotiators, the urgency of the climate challenge, its relevance to poverty eradication and sustainable development, and what is at stake if the UNFCCC climate negotiations deliver weak commitments.

### Driving action on climate change

Expectations are high that the next set of goals will set the direction of sustainable development policy globally for at least the next 15 years and it is hoped that they will focus political energy and development resources, promote cooperation between actors, and help civil society to hold governments to account in the same way that the MDG's did[9][10][11].

One of the objectives of a stand-alone goal would be then to accelerate action on tackling climate change. As a minimum the goal targets would need to reflect what has already been agreed under the UNFCCC Convention. However, it is widely accepted that this is not sufficient for avoiding dangerous climate change, so a different, though politically more difficult option, would be to define targets in terms of what is actually necessary.

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[8] http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/kofi-annan-climate-change-is-not-just-an-environmental-issue-423511.html
[9] http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/02/21-millennium-dev-goals-mcarthur
[10] 2012Save the Children After the Millennium development Goals.
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/After-the-Millennium-Development-Goals.pdf
[11] 100 voices, Research paper by CAFOD and IDS


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Which ever option is chosen, the value of a stand-along goal is that it would focus political attention and resources on the interventions needed to address climate change within the broader context of ending poverty and sustainable development.

**Building political momentum for an ambitious UNFCCC agreement in 2015**

By reframing climate change as a critical issue for ending poverty and delivering sustainable development, a climate goal would help with communicating why climate change matters, and the importance therefore of an ambitious, legally binding climate deal under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

The process of discussion and negotiation could contribute to improving collaboration between the climate and development communities, and unifying their political messaging, reducing competition for political space and strengthening the potential for influencing the process.

Furthermore, having a discussion about climate change in the post-2015 process could help to increase the potential for an ambitious deal by unlocking certain challenges in the UNFCCC process. Bridging the differences between the two processes in terms of context, dynamics, individuals and in the nature of the final outcomes could create the space for agreement on issues where there might not otherwise be any under the UNFCCC.

If having a climate goal could potentially improve the prospects of an ambitious global climate deal, the converse is also possible. Omitting a climate goal from the framework would indicate climate change to be a low priority for the poverty eradication and sustainable development policy agendas. This message would undermine the UNFCCC agenda and set the sustainable development discourse back decades.

### 2.2  What are the risks associated with a climate goal?

**Political spillover**
Concerns have been raised that a stand-alone goal would risk usurping the UNFCCC, and contaminating the post-2015 negotiations with the difficult aspects of climate politics putting the success of the entire process at risk.

The risk of usurping the mandate of the UNFCCC is however manageable. As outlined above, a climate goal could be defined so that it supports the implementation of actions *already agreed* under the Convention (for example in Cancun, Durban and Doha).  The HLP, for example, took this approach by suggesting the UNFCCC two degree goal as a target. This would be the politically safe though low ambition route.

It is true that the UNFCCC politics are complex and difficult. However, it is more than likely that those issues that are perceived to be specific to the UNFCCC will play out in the post-2015 discussions whether climate change is included as a stand alone-goal, in any other form, or indeed at all.  The issues at the heart of the difficult UNFCCC politics relate to equity and the fair distribution of resources, in other words, the interpretation and application by countries of the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities principle (or CBDR).  While CBDR is a foundational element of the UNFCCC, it is not unique to climate policy. It is a fundamental principle of sustainable

development[12], being one of the Rio Principles and was in fact a key element in the Millennium Declaration[13]. With the SDG process being a post-Rio process and the means of implementation being a key part of the post-2015 discussions, the much feared negotiations about CBDR are likely to be invoked in the setting of goals, targets and indicators, and in agreeing the financial commitments associated with the next framework, regardless of whether climate change is part of the discussions.

**Putting climate ahead of other high priority issues related to environment**
Concerns that a climate goal would replace other priorities are of course well-founded. To be effective the number of goals needs to be kept short so a climate goal would inevitably mean other issues fall off the table. From the Beyond 2015 and CAN-I perspective these concerns relate to it taking the place of an environmental sustainability goal. However, this seems unlikely given a climate goal would not capture all of the accepted environmental issues relevant to the psot-2015 agenda such as biodiversity, fisheries etc. A more likely outcome is that climate will be conflated with environment as it was in the last framework, which is not at all desirable.

**A stand-alone goal is ignored**
Not all of the goal areas defined under the MDGs have received the same level of attention, with progress on some issues lagging far behind others[14]. The environmental sustainability (MDG7) is good examples of this. Clearly just having goal status is not sufficient on its own for ensuring an issue is given high political priority – much also depends on the narrative of the goal, how well the links are made with the objectives of the framework, the quality of targets and indicators, and data availability etc.

3. **The elements of a stand-alone climate goal**
The elements of a stand-alone goal need to support its objectives, namely to communicate the urgency of climate change and its relevance to poverty eradication and sustainable development, and to articulate and drive the climate activities that will support the delivery of international climate policy and sustainable development objectives.

The goal wording and accompanying narrative will be important for framing purposes. The narrative should for example highlight the closing window of opportunity for staying within the two degree target and the resulting urgency for action, and frame climate change in terms of equity and equality as both are important themes for the post-2015 framework (as well as the UNFCCC). As well as laying out the barrier that climate change presents to ending poverty, the narrative needs to make the links between economic development and climate change and to emphasise that climate smart development pathways can be good for equitable and inclusive economic progress, for society as well as for the environment. The links should be made between the actions to be taken under this goal and climate change targets cutting across and supporting other goal objectives.

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[12] The principles of common responsibility and differentiated responsibility are referred to in the 1972 Stockholm Principles and again in the 1992 Rio Principles.
[13] The declaration defined the fundamental values of solidarity and shared responsibility: Solidarity: Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most. Shared Responsibility: responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally...
[14] See MDG report 2013.

[workshop draft, 5 Oct 2013, Rachel Garthwaite, Save the Children, Bernadette Fischler, CAFOD].

Targets could be either process or outcome based, or a combination of both but should address the four pillars of the UNFCCC: mitigation, adaptation, technology development and transfer, and finance. The suggestions made below are based on the decisions taken at the Cancun, Durban and Doha UNFCCC Conference of the Parties(COPs). These are intended to include economic, social and environmental elements of the climate issue, but are illustrative only and a starting point for discussion.

- *Meeting the UNFCCC global goal of avoiding dangerous climate change*. This could be framed in terms of the two degree target itself (as in the HLP report) or in terms of the need to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases by x% by 2030 so as to stay within 1.5/2 degrees of preindustrial temperatures[15];
- *Reducing vulnerability to climate change*. A target aimed at reducing the impacts of climate change could be framed either in terms of reducing the number of people, or proportion of the population who are vulnerable[16] to climate change, or, in terms of the number of countries that have developed and implemented adaptation and/or DRR strategies.[17] Discussions regarding an Adaptation Goal are progressing under the UNFCCC, this could provide an alternative target for addressing vulnerability.
- *Moving to a low-carbon society*; The Cancun agreements recognised that a paradigm shift is needed towards building a low-carbon society and agreed that developed countries should develop low carbon development strategies or plans, and encouraged developing countries to do the same (in the context of sustainable development). Possible targets could include all countries having low carbon economies by 2030 (although this is obviously very ambitious).
- *Reducing the inequalities of climate change;* a target framed in this way would likely overlap with the other targets. It would however aim to drive progress in reducing the disproportionate impacts of climate change, or climate change policies, on vulnerable groups. It is possible that this objective could be captured through the use of indicators rather than a specific target?
- *Building capacity to deal with climate change*. A target on capacity would also likely overlap with the other target areas or other agreements on means of implementation. However, a target could be defined aimed at driving acceleration of financial flows, technology transfer, and/or climate awareness.

| **Possible targets** |
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| • World stays within two degree target<br>• Global GHG emissions reduced by x of 1990 by 2030<br>• All countries have reduced carbon intensity of their economies by x relative to 1990 by 2030<br>• Number of people vulnerable to climate change impacts reduced by x by 2030<br>• Losses of life and livelihoods from climate events reduced by x by 2030<br>• All countries have financial and technical capacity to respond to climate change by 2030 |

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[15] A global greenhouse gas reduction target hasn't yet been agreed under the UNFCCC, however, it was agreed in Cancun that UNFCCC Parties would work towards identifying a global goal for substantially reducing global emissions by 2050.
[16] Drawing on methodologies eg: GAIN index see: http://index.gain.org, or Wheeler, 2011. Quantifying vulnerability to climate change: implications for adaptation assistance. CGD working paper, January 2011.
[17] The Cancun agreements established a process to enable LDC parties to formulate and implement national adaptation plans, and in Durban, developing country parties were invited to use the LDC guidelines in the development of their national adaptation plans.

[workshop draft, 5 Oct 2013, Rachel Garthwaite, Save the Children, Bernadette Fischler, CAFOD].

## 4. Strengths and weaknesses of the climate goal approach

By articulating the possible content of a stand-alone goal some of the strengths and weaknesses of a stand-alone goal become more apparent. They can be summarised as follows:

Strengths
- **Climate change is put in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development.** A goal on climate change emphasises the links between poverty, development and climate change.
- **Climate is visible in the framework as a high political priority** potentially increasing action on climate change, including in the UNFCCC process**;**
- The **process of designing and negotiating a climate goal would require the development and climate movements to work together,** in unifying their political messaging, in policy and practice and supporting coordinated implementation;
- **Targets are directly related to the objectives of addressing climate change**, and are designed to add up to a package of activity for delivering climate change policy objectives.

Weaknesses
- **A Climate change goal is a hard sell in the political arena** presently due to perceptions of the risk of political spillover. Advocacy will be critical to gaining political support for this option.
- **A climate goal on its own is unlikely to lead to integration of climate actions across different sectors** (which underlines the need to have a stand-alone goal in addition to mainstreaming climate change across other development areas).

## 5. What are the alternatives to a stand alone goal?

The question remains whether the objectives of a climate goal as outlined above could be met in other less risky ways, for example through a strong narrative, by just integrating climate change into other goals and the means of implementation (mainstreaming), or by combining climate change within another goal (climate+ goal).

There is no doubt that the post-2015 framework should include a strong narrative on climate change, However, this is unlikely to drive action if it doesn't translate into climate related goals, targets or indicators.  There are also definite benefits to mainstreaming climate change across the framework including the means of implementation (financing, technology and knowledge transfer, and data collection). The key point here however is that mainstreaming does not have the same objectives as a stand-alone climate goal. It aims to make other goals climate resilient and where opportunities exist, to reduce their carbon intensity with direct benefits for the sectors and for the people who are dependent on them. This doesn't necessarily add up to a package of measures that achieve overall climate policy objectives, nor does it help with clearly articulating the measures needed to address climate change. It also doesn't help with keeping climate change high on the political and public agenda and raising the level of ambition of the UNFCCC.

The in-between option is to design a climate+ goal with the most obvious candidates being climate change and environmental sustainability, climate change and sustainable

energy, and climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR). This would capture part of the communication objective by keeping climate in the headline, but would risk conflating it with the other issue, potentially reducing the political imperative for action. Furthermore the actions needed on climate change may become too narrowly defined. For example, while a climate and energy goal lends itself to a global temperature or emissions reduction target, it implies that only energy emissions are relevant, and potentially misses adaptation and/or resilience as the other key dimensions to climate action. There are various combinations of goals and targets that could capture the major climate elements. But neither the mainstreaming nor climate+ goal options capture all of the strengths of a stand-alone goal.

## 6. Conclusion

The objective of the post-2015 process is to develop a sustainable development framework with the immediate imperative of eradicating poverty. Climate change is a clear barrier to this objective. Given how little progress has been made on climate change to date, and the seriousness of the impacts, all tools at our disposal should be put to use. Including a climate goal in the post-2015 framework could help to guide and drive global action on climate change, protecting countries' investment in other goal areas in the process.

There are other possible approaches to dealing with climate change in the post 2015 process and ultimately the approach taken should be determined by whether the objective is to build climate resilience and reduce carbon intensity in key sectors, or whether it is to focus attention on the need for urgent climate action. If the objective is the former, climate mainstreaming would be a good option. If the latter, a stand-alone climate goal is needed in addition. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive and to achieve both objectives, both would need be adopted.

Whatever the chosen approach, including climate change in a substantive way in the post-2015 framework would be a major step forward from the MDG's. Failure to do so would be a backward step for climate change and for development.

## 7. Issues for further consideration

- Should the objective of a stand-alone goal be to raise the level of action on climate change by going beyond what has been agreed under the UNFCCC, or should it be to support implementation of what has already been agreed? What are the political and practical implications of the former?

- How are the post-2015 processes and the UNFCCC processes likely to interact? What effect are decisions taken within the OWG, HLPF and expert group on financing likely to have on the UNFCCC negotiations, in particular the Ban Ki Moon leaders summit in 2014 and the UNFCCC COP in 2015? And, vice versa?

- What are the political implications of a voluntary climate goal for the UNFCCC negotiations on the legal nature of the climate agreement?