

Good Practices in NDC Updates and Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa

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Workshop Report

Organized by:



IGES

Regional Collaboration Centre – Bangkok
Promoting Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific



Regional Collaboration Centre – Dubai
Promoting Climate Action in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia

In collaboration with



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 16-18 March 2021, the UNFCCC-IGES Regional Collaboration Centre for Asia and the Pacific based in Bangkok (RCC Bangkok); the UNFCCC-WGEO Regional Collaboration Centre for the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia based in Dubai (RCC Dubai); and the NDC Partnership organized a virtual workshop titled “Good Practices in NDC Updates and Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa”.

More than 125 participants from 32 countries in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, in addition to 12 development partners and finance institutions, attended the workshop.

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Drawing from the UN Climate Change Secretariat’s Initial NDC Synthesis Report, several important points were raised, including:

- 48 new or updated NDCs collectively fall short of what science requires to achieve the 1.5°C goal;
- Parties paid more attention to the planning and implementation process around adaptation in these NDCs; and
- NDCs and long-term low emission development strategies (LT-LEDS) are important to putting the world on track to net-zero by 2050.

The virtual workshop was a platform for countries to exchange their experiences in the NDC Update process and challenges in NDC implementation. Several key messages emerged from the interactive discussions at the plenary or the break-out sessions over three days, as summarized below.

A. Lessons Learned from the NDC Update Process

Effective governance is critical. Countries reiterated the importance of strong political commitments and clear plans for integrating the entire ecosystem of services (line ministries and different agencies) into climate action. Ministries charged with formulating NDCs work closely with the Ministry of Finance and other line ministries in the NDC updating and implementation process.

Whole-of-society approaches must be at the center of the update process. Effective and inclusive engagement with stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil societies, and academia, as well as youths, women, and marginalized and vulnerable groups, is important to ensuring all facets of society accept NDCs.

Build back better with green economic recovery efforts. Aligning NDC targets with green economic recovery efforts addresses economic challenges brought by COVID-19 and allows countries to build back better in a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient way.

B. Challenges and Good Practices in NDC Implementation Planning

Many countries highlighted the challenge of climate action taking a backseat to short-term economic considerations. Countries may also lack availability of and access to good data to form baselines, inform policies, and facilitate reporting; capacity to efficiently engage all stakeholders and line ministries; clear regulatory frameworks and long-term strategies to implement NDCs; and capacity to access available funding mechanisms. Countries continue to face challenges, especially during the pandemic, in aligning agendas on sustainable development, green recovery, and green economy with climate action for effective governance and implementation.

Despite these challenges, countries shared a number of practices that benefited their planning process, including:

- *Investment plans*: Developing NDC investment/action/implementation plans, including mapping investment opportunities, can drive policy frameworks to unlock available private and public finance and make it easier for international donors to mobilize resources.
- *Coordination mechanisms*: Supporting a coordination mechanism ensures effectiveness and efficiency while avoiding overlaps in the NDC enhancement or implementation processes.

C. Areas of Collaboration between Countries, Development Partners, and Finance Institutions

Raising countries' awareness of available funding mechanisms and capacity to develop proposals to access funds that need enhancement. Development partners and international donors, through their own programs or in collaboration with other partners, are committed to providing sectoral, technical, or financial support for NDC implementation in countries across the regions. This can be done by supporting countries in developing an NDC investment plan that elaborates climate-related pipeline projects and budgeting processes and makes it easier for international donors and development partners to render support.

Creating favorable enabling environments for project developers. Development partners can do more to support countries in improving local capacity to develop bankable proposals. Partners can further provide matchmaking platforms to raise awareness of funding availability to scale up climate finance.

Learning from countries' experiences and benefiting from peer-to-peer support is crucial for planning and implementing NDCs. The dialogue spaces created by the Regional Collaboration Centres, the NDC Partnership, and other development partners allow countries to draw experience and gain insights into successes, challenges, and common NDC planning and implementation themes while providing an opportunity for countries to bridge capacity gaps in the region.

II. OPENING REMARKS: URGENT NEED FOR ENHANCED CLIMATE ACTIONS

The opening segment urged all parties and actors to take enhanced climate actions as climate change remains the greatest risk to human development for the rest of the century.

Ambassador Ken O’Flaherty, UK COP 26 Regional Ambassador to Asia-Pacific and South Asia, highlighted that while countries in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) demonstrated climate leadership as reflected by progress in mitigation actions, they still have much work to achieve global net-zero. Countries emitting 65 percent of CO₂ greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and accounting for 70 percent of the world’s economy have now committed to reaching net zero emissions, or carbon neutrality, by the middle of this century. Countries in the region are striving to enhance their NDCs by setting ambitious targets and utilizing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The United Kingdom is leading by example in setting net zero emission and renewable energy targets and in submitting its adaptation communication despite challenges brought by COVID-19. He emphasized that the U.K. is committed to supporting all Parties as they step up climate actions and securing a balanced outcome from COP26 to reflect and respect the interests of everyone concerned.

Romeo Bertolini, NDC Partnership Deputy Director and Head of the Bonn Office, shared that while profound progress has been made in the NDC update process, much work still remains to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Through the Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP), the Partnership and 46 of its members are supporting 67 countries in NDC updating and implementation planning. He mentioned that “tougher challenges lie ahead including recovering from the pandemic while working to achieve global climate goals.” The NDC Partnership’s Economic Advisory Initiative deployed 50 economic advisors to 33 countries, supporting countries in putting climate at the heart of recovery plans by integrating climate priorities with economic recovery plans. The Partnership is also working with several countries in preparing NDC Action Plans.

James Grabert, Mitigation Division Director and Acting Communication and Engagement Division Director at the UN Climate Change Secretariat, emphasized that, “while it is encouraging to hear growing commitments to net-zero emissions by 2050 around the world, such long-term goals must be translated into immediate actions and NDCs.” The world has an opportunity to shape a new economy in the 21st century to become cleaner, greener, healthier, and more resilient. The initial NDC Synthesis Report, published by the UN Climate Change Secretariat in Q1 2021, analyzes NDC submissions from 75 Parties communicating a new or updated NDC before the end of last year. Asia and MENA, as important regions with growing emissions, need to create an acute awareness in every country to urgently work together on climate change. Grabert congratulated those honoring their commitment to submit updated or new NDCs before the December 2020 deadline and urged those who have not communicated updated or new NDCs to do so by 30 July 2021, which will enable a comprehensive assessment of future global emissions levels in the final NDC Synthesis Report, before COP 26.

III. SETTING THE SCENE

To set the scene for the workshop, key messages from the NDC Survey carried out by RCC Bangkok and RCC Dubai in 2020 and the initial NDC Synthesis Report published by the UN Climate Change Secretariat were presented. The NDC Survey revealed that most countries in these regions aim to enhance ambition by adopting new adaptation and mitigation targets, aligning NDCs with national policies, and mainstreaming climate change into local and sectoral development planning. Survey respondents also highlighted the need for support to build local capacities and ensure a country-driven process.

The initial NDC Synthesis Report showed that total GHG emissions in 2030 will be 0.5 percent lower than in 2010, which is almost negligible compared to the required level informed by the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius. The IPCC Special Report concluded that global emissions must be cut by 45 percent by 2030 from 2010 levels and must reach net-zero by 2050 to achieve the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal. The initial NDC Synthesis Report warned of an urgent need to increase ambition in climate action, meaning NDCs yet to be submitted in 2021 need to show increased ambition and those already submitted may consider resubmitting according to the Paris Agreement's Article 4.11. The initial NDC Synthesis Report also called for more support for enhanced action and encouraged parties to see COVID-19 as an opportunity to align and integrate NDC-related measures, finance, and stakeholder engagement with national recovery programs.

One noteworthy development was that the new and updated NDCs paid more attention to the planning and implementation process around adaptation. Out of 48 parties submitting updated NDCs, 39 included an adaptation component. Although food security and productivity are the most concerned adaptation area, biodiversity and ecosystems appear stronger compared to the previous NDCs. NDCs submitted in 2020 contained more integrated adaptation frameworks, more description of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), more quantitative targets and indicator frameworks, and more information about different types of co-benefits and synergies between mitigation and adaptation. In terms of NAPs, 125 out of 154 developing countries are undertaking the process to formulate and implement NAPs, and 85 developing countries submitted GCF proposals for NAP formulation with 55 of them supported by GCF.

Collectively, the NDCs elements, domestic mitigation measures, and LT-LEDS are needed to put the world on track to achieve a global balance of emissions and removals by 2050. Consistency with the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius requires transformational changes in emissions and needs fundamental changes in infrastructure. Although NDCs submitted in 2020 recognize drivers for emissions, they are missing transformational drivers for changes within the NDCs on key areas like energy supply; buildings; transport; materials production; industrial processes; agriculture; and land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). National mitigation strategies must send tangible long-term signals to investors and economic actors and enable them to raise awareness and build capacity of all stakeholders.

IV. PANEL DISCUSSIONS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NDC UPDATE PROCESS

Panelists from Armenia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Nepal, Mongolia, Cambodia, and Lebanon highlighted salient points of their updated or new NDCs and shared the challenges they faced in the NDC update process. These include issues pertaining to data (i.e. establishing a baseline, modeling and projections, limited access and availability), stakeholder engagement and coordination, policy formulation (i.e. lack of clear or strong legislative and governance framework), and access to funding.

Experiences and lessons learned shared by the countries include:

- Updated NDCs should provide more information for clarity, transparency, and understanding compared to the 2015 INDC process. Panelists highlighted the importance of political commitments in enhancing ambition, the usefulness of NDC guidelines established at COP 24 in Katowice, and the pertinence of availability and accessibility of baseline data as success factors in NDC updating.
- Increased ambition is key to strengthening countries' commitments to the Paris Agreement. Several countries significantly increased their new or updated NDC targets compared to their INDC and broadened the scope of mitigation and adaptation sectors in NDCs. The NDC update process allowed countries to undertake a country-driven and socially inclusive approach, following the IPCC guidelines. They also benefitted from engaging with national and international experts, despite restrictions on in-person consultations due to COVID-19.
- National climate change implementation plans, strategic plans, or other medium-term plans are important to securing political commitments and affirming countries' commitments to global efforts on mitigating GHG emissions under the Convention. As a crucial step toward NDC implementation, countries should identify priority mitigation and adaptation actions along with the calculation of projected finances. Countries continue working closely with development partners for support in accessing finance, capacity development, and technology transfer to implement NDCs.
- Aligning NDC targets with green economic recovery efforts addresses economic challenges brought by COVID-19 and allows countries to build back better in a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient way. However, countries still face challenges in aligning agendas on sustainable development, green recovery, and green economy with climate action for effective governance and implementation.

- Building proper institutional arrangements for the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures in the NDC and LT-LEDS is critical for a paradigm shift towards climate resilient and low-carbon development.
- Countries found that utilizing whole-of-society approaches in engaging with stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil societies, and the academia ensures an inclusive and comprehensive NDC.
- Countries will benefit from a more robust and comprehensive monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) system and an enabling legal framework.

V. BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES, POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NDC IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER UPDATES

The country panel discussions were followed by breakout sessions revolving around the common and individual technical, financial, legal, political, and cultural barriers that countries may face in the NDC implementation process. The breakout sessions provided an avenue for all country participants to share the anticipated barriers, formulate solutions, and map opportunities to overcome them as summarized below.

A. Breakout Session Day 1: NDC Implementation Planning and Tracking of Progress

The way countries' NDCs are implemented and improved upon over time will determine whether the Paris Agreement's long-term goals are achieved. In the Day 1 breakout session, participants shared their views and experiences on identifying sectoral priority activities, progress tracking, and establishing governance mechanisms.

Station 1: Identifying sectoral priority activities and enabling actions

The Station 1 discussions revolved around three subtopics: planning and prioritization, enabling mechanisms, and horizontal and vertical integration. Some key points are as follows:

- Countries need to build national and sub-national capacities in all sectors. To do this, countries must have a conducive regulatory and coordination framework and consider focusing on bottom-up approaches.
- Countries can tap into international support for access to finance, NDC implementation planning, and capacity building.

Station 2: Tracking progress and reporting

The Station 2 discussions revolved around three subtopics: transparency and accountability, technical capacity, and data availability and access. Some key points are as follows:

- Data is critical to ensure effective NDC implementation planning and to monitor progress.
- Countries want to build capacity through international technical exchange, peer-to-peer learning support, sharing relevant examples of good methodology practices, and gender-responsive solutions.
- Collaboration between countries with similar socio-economic conditions in enhancing capacity is important. This can be facilitated by the NDC Partnership, UNFCCC/RCCs, or other international development partners.

Station 3: Establishing governance mechanism

The Station 3 discussions revolved around three subtopics: implementation and coordination, institutional mandates and capacities, and political will. Some key points are as follows:

- Successful implementation entails whole-of-government approaches.
- There may be uneven awareness and understanding of NDCs across sectors and line ministries, which is exacerbated by the weak institutional mandates. This issue can be alleviated by formulating legislative solutions and creating formal working groups.
- Exchange platforms and technical assistance on finance, capacity building, target setting, regulations, and others can help countries effectively implement their NDCs.

B. Breakout Session Day 2: Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is crucial to ensuring alignment between NDCs and development priorities that conveys maximum benefits to the greatest possible number of people. It also allows for the buy-ins and ownership of climate plans by all actors. In the Day 2 Breakout Sessions, participants shared their views and experiences on creating effective coordination and engagement mechanisms, engaging the private sector, and issues pertaining to vulnerable groups, gender, and youths.

Station 1: Vulnerable groups, gender mainstreaming, and youth-related issues

The Station 1 discussions revolved around three subtopics: stakeholder inclusiveness, gender mainstreaming, and vulnerable and marginalized groups. Some key points are as follows:

- Women, youth, and vulnerable groups are often left in the fringes of climate-related policies.
- Improving access to information and creating safe spaces for these groups can facilitate greater inclusion.
- It is necessary to create gender responsiveness mechanisms in all sectors pertaining to NDC implementation.

Station 2: Engaging the private sector

The Station 2 discussions revolved around three subtopics: policies and regulations, market and supply chain viability, and engaging small businesses. Some key points are as follows:

- It is important for governments to create demand and opportunity in the market to enable the private sector to invest in climate-friendly products and services.
- Enabling policies and incentives from the government will help private sectors switch from conventional methods to climate-friendly practices.

Station 3: Effective coordination and engagement mechanisms

The Station 3 discussions revolved around three subtopics: engaging non-state actors, cultivating active civil societies, and coordinating development partner support. Some key points are as follows:

- There remains a lack of coordination frameworks in which development partners, civil societies, and other non-governmental stakeholders can work with the government to implement NDCs.
- A coordination mechanism is needed to ensure effectiveness and avoid duplication of development partners' work.
- Governments should take a leading role in formulating platforms for collaboration.

C. Breakout Session Day 3: Financing for NDC Implementation

Achieving the Paris Agreement's goals requires countries to apply some combination of domestic budgetary allocation, private sector finance (national and international), bilateral and multilateral finance mechanisms, and development assistance to meet NDC commitments. Understanding how to access funding from a diverse menu of multilateral, bilateral, public, and private sources is a complex and dynamic challenge. In the Day 3 Breakout Sessions, participants shared their views and experiences on public financing, private/blended financing, and pipeline development.

Station 1: Public finance

The Station 1 discussions revolved around three subtopics: obstacles in mobilizing climate finance, possible areas of collaborations to explore with public finance providers, and the technical assistance needed to facilitate access to international and domestic public finance. Some key points are as follows:

- Countries found it challenging that international climate finance is still driven by donor priorities and objectives, i.e., it is time consuming to fulfill donor requirements on funding proposals.

- Some countries lack awareness of and information about funding availability. Countries highlighted that support for proposal development, data collection, and technology transfer are areas of technical assistance needed for improving access to international public finance.
- Key obstacles to domestic public finance include: (i) lack of finance ministry or budgeting bureau involvement in planning; (ii) lack of legislative frameworks to mainstream climate change into national development; and (iii) lack of long-term vision.
- Governments also need to enhance collaboration with the energy and industrial sectors and provide clearer guidance for these sectors to ensure investments are green and sustainable in the long term.
- Countries called for capacity building of national, subnational, and local agencies on stakeholder engagement and involvement in climate finance.

Station 2: Private/blended finance

The Station 2 discussions revolved around three subtopics: the private sector's role and corresponding enabling policies, effective spending, and the technical assistance needed to mobilize private finance. Some key points are as follows:

- Key challenges in tapping into private/blended finance include the focus on short-term returns among private financiers and the lack of communication between public and private sources.
- Private finance can play an important role in accelerating innovations and making new green technologies affordable.
- Governments play an important role in facilitating private/blended finance, including creating a conducive regulatory framework, providing tax incentives, reducing bureaucratic hurdles for new technologies, and removing subsidies for high-emission sectors.

Station 3: Pipeline development

The Station 3 discussions revolved around three subtopics: requirements to develop a climate friendly project, the private sector's role in project development, and climate finance's role in addressing adaptation loss and damage needs. Some key points are as follows:

- The private sector faces climate risks and should contribute to green development.
- Governments should spur the private sector's contribution by implementing policies that encourage its involvement in green technologies and products.
- Climate risk-informed financing can be facilitated by establishing risk analytics.
- Sharing of success experiences between countries is very beneficial.
- Governments should encourage private sector participation in stakeholder capacity building and engaging local projects.

The outcomes from these sessions were further addressed in panel discussions with the development partners and finance institutions and contributed toward the key messages on collaborative opportunities for NDC implementation.

VI. PANEL DISCUSSION: SUPPORT OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR NDC IMPLEMENTATION

Twelve development partners and finance institutions working on the regions elaborated support programs for NDC implementation related to addressing challenges in NDC implementation planning and tracking of progress, stakeholder engagement and coordination, and other challenges identified from the Breakout Sessions by the participating countries.

Development partners brought up the following key points during the panel discussions:

- Development Partners, through their own programs or in collaboration with other partners, committed to providing sectoral, technical, or financial support for NDC implementation across the regions.
- Support for countries in providing a coordinating mechanism is important to ensuring effectiveness and efficiency, while avoiding overlaps in the NDC enhancement or implementation process.
- Developing NDC investment plans, including investment opportunity mapping, can drive policy frameworks to unlock available private and public finance.
- Innovative financing such as blended finance, insurance, guarantees, and credit enhancement measures can be catalytic in removing barriers and stimulating investments.
- Countries should adopt a national monitoring framework to incorporate NDC-related tools to inform policy decisions and boost transparency and accountability.
- International private investors are interested in providing green financing and are waiting for governments to provide a conducive regulatory framework and market conditions.

These discussions addressing the challenges and barriers countries face in updating and implementing NDCs contributed to the key messages from the workshop as detailed below.

VII. COUNTRY-IDENTIFIED AREAS OF SUPPORT FOR NDC ENHANCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Countries face myriad challenges in their NDC update processes depending on geography, politics, and socio-economic situations. Based on the enriching discussions over the three-day virtual

workshop, countries identified the following key areas that need support to advance NDC enhancement and implementation efforts:

A. Climate Actions: Adaptation and Mitigation

- Conflicting priorities in the context of economic development vs. ambitious climate actions is often the bottleneck for countries where energy-intensive industries are part of the established development architecture. Strong political will and commitment and support from the international community will be needed to address this issue. Evidence-based data on co-benefits arising from integrated approaches can provide the required momentum to the decision-makers for formulating such policies.
- NDCs, domestic mitigation measures, and LT-LEDS, are needed to put the world on track to achieve the targets by 2050. Nature-based solutions, as against economic growth-aligned national development plans, is critical to dealing with climate urgency. Countries need support to chart and implement climate action plans that integrate socio-economic and environmental dimensions.
- Parties felt the critical need to include adaptation components in NDCs as certain national circumstances prioritize adaptation needs over mitigation needs. Adaptation is the region's story as countries have limited natural resources and suffer from slow onset natural disasters. Resilience building is a high priority and integrated approaches are crucial to managing climate risks. In consideration of climate risks, national governments should be made aware of the co-benefits of formulating short-to-medium term cross-cutting and climate-resilient strategies, plans, and long-term socio-economic development.

B. Evidence-Based Solutions

- Evidence-based policymaking, based on sound scientific data, is key to addressing risks associated with the vulnerable population. For example, when formulating ambitious climate action plans in the agriculture sector in which most of the vulnerable population is associated, socio-economic benefit and a whole-of-society approach should be major considerations. International support to provide such evidence through experience sharing and data analysis will be needed.

C. Whole-of-Society Approach

- The urgency of delivering climate commitments requires inclusive stakeholder engagement that leaves no one behind, mainstreaming gender differentiated issues in NDC planning and implementation, incentivizing the private sector, and empowering vulnerable people, marginalized groups, the young, the elderly, and all stakeholders.

- Economy-wide approaches that break silos to find collaborative opportunities for nature conservation, food security, job creation, health, and other societal priorities should be harnessed to scale ongoing efforts and accelerate climate action.
- Different stakeholders have different mandates. It will be beneficial to explore the overlapping areas of these mandates with ambitious climate goals and strategize plans in a way to align them with NDC Implementation tracking mechanisms.
- Fragmented and sectoral policies should be replaced by development plans that integrate climate actions with long-term sustainable goals and benefit all parts of society.

D. Resource Mobilization

- Countries agreed that climate finance is still a key limiting factor to implementing climate plans and policies in all regions. While financial resources are available, countries are not aware of available funding sources. Countries must build capacity to develop proposals to access these funding mechanisms and develop bankable projects to deliver on ambitious climate actions.
- Finance institutions reiterated that the financing gaps are less associated with the availability of funding but more related to financial resource access. Especially in developing countries, these funds must be channeled to build carbon neutral and resilient societies, and there are existing gaps in countries' capacity to formulate such proposals.
- Creating favorable enabling environments for project developers, improving local capacity to develop bankable proposals, and providing matchmaking platforms to raise awareness of funding availability are urgently needed to massively scale up climate finance.

E. Peer-to-Peer Support

- Learning from countries' experiences and benefiting from peer-to-peer support is crucial for planning and implementing NDCs. The dialogue spaces created by the Regional Collaboration Centres, the NDC Partnership, and other development partners allow countries to draw real-time experience and gain insights into the successes, challenges, and common themes of NDC planning and implementation and provide an opportunity for countries to bridge capacity gaps in the region.

VIII. KEY REGIONAL PLATFORMS TO FACILITATE PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING FOR COUNTRIES

Responding to countries' requests for peer-to-peer learning support, the UN Climate Change Secretariat shared the experience from the Regional Climate Weeks as a process leading up to COPs for commitments on ambitious climate action plans.

The 2021 Regional Climate Weeks kicked off in March with virtual regional roundtables designed to build regional momentum for COP 26 in November and drive regional Paris Agreement implementation.

Virtual Thematic Sessions will take place on 6-9 July and Ministerial Sessions will take place on 6-7 September in Asia and the Pacific. The first-ever Middle East and North Africa Climate Week will be held on 2-3 March 2022.

The final plenary session focused on getting perspectives from development partners, countries, and the private sector on NDC-related topics that can be further explored and integrated into upcoming Climate Weeks' thematic sessions in these regions.

Partners and countries identified as key areas the need to build on existing engagements with finance institutions so NDC support is integrated, a focus on the agri-food sector to raise adaptation needs, coordination of integrated climate and energy policies and strategies, active alignment of climate regulation and carbon pricing conditions within a multi-country context, and the need to increase private sector engagement and understand the business environment of green recovery after COVID-19, among others.

IX. CLOSING REMARKS: TOWARDS COP 26

The closing remarks were delivered by Ambassador Janet Rogan, Yasuo Takahashi, and Mr. Abdul Rahim Sultan. The key highlight from this session is the role of governments and organizations in providing several platforms and programs to strive towards targets for climate action. Several representatives called for ambitious actions integrated into national sectorial plans and the overall sustainable development goals in preparation for the next NDC update process.

Ambassador Janet Rogan, UK COP 26 Regional Ambassador for the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, shared the U.K.'s hope that COP 26 will unite the world on the path to a zero-carbon economy as we build back better from COVID-19 with a greener, more resilient, and inclusive global economy. Ambassador Rogan underlined the need for updated NDCs to address issues pertaining to water and food security, adaptation to climate change impacts, and building a cleaner and greener urban environment. She called on non-large emitters to adopt green growth strategies although she acknowledged they sometimes lack support, specifically within the challenging scenario of global finance targets already falling short even before COVID-19. She urged developed countries and donors to expand and expedite their support for developing countries in their bid to develop and adopt green growth strategies.

Mr. Abdul Rahim Sultan, Director General, World Green Economy Organization (WGEO), highlighted one key lesson learned: a whole-of-society approach is incredibly important to tackling climate change.

Countries need to involve stakeholders at all levels to nationally and locally implement green projects aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Sultan categorized the NDC update process leading up to COP 26 as 'critical' because NDC implementation over the next decades will determine global civilization's course. He stated that WGEO is committed to contributing to a successful COP26 and to supporting and enabling regional and global organizations and entities, in public and private sectors, to enhance climate ambitions and increase capacities to reduce carbon emission.

Mr. Yasuo Takahashi, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) Executive Director, highlighted the concept of Circulating and Ecological Sphere (CES). CES is built around managing resource issues at appropriate geographical scales and integrating the visions of a decarbonized society, resource circulating society, and society in harmony with nature. This will serve as a model for local development in Asia-Pacific and beyond. Within this concept, the way resources are used can play an important role in NDC enhancement and implementation. He shared information on the Platform for Redesign 2020—led by Japan's Ministry of the Environment, supported by the UNFCCC secretariat, and managed by IGES—which showcases policies and actions national governments took toward a sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 and features inspiring messages from governments and non-stakeholders for "building back better." He reiterated that committing to "realization of a carbon-neutral and decarbonized society by 2050," IGES is ready to provide peer-to-peer support, assist countries with long-term low emission development strategies, and prepare a paradigm shift towards low-carbon development.