

# Time for Action on Climate Change

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*Adane Belay 12-08-15*

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference is being held in Paris since last week. It is the 21st yearly session of the Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

The objective of the summit is achieving a far-reaching deal to tackle global warming. Among several sticking points is money, how much rich countries should invest to help poor countries cope with climate change, how much should be invested in renewable energy, and how much traditional oil, gas and coal producers stand to lose if countries agree to forever reduce emissions.

As usual, Ethiopia was on the front row of this global initiative. As Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalgne told the conference, climate change is a pressing issue for Ethiopia. He said:

*I have come to Paris, at this defining moment, to tell you of the struggles and hopes of my people; the stories of a hundred million people, who are working hard, to eradicate poverty and establish a fair, prosperous and sustainable economy.*

*Over the past 15 years, with hard work, and support, we have decreased, by more than half, the number of people*

living in poverty; and met many of the Millennium Development Goals, including those relating to child and maternal mortality. We are determined to work harder and achieve more in the Sustainable Development Goals we have set for ourselves.

Yet climate change, weather variability, and related disasters threaten our lives, livelihoods, and hard-fought development gains.

We have seen average temperature rise, within half a century, by one degree centigrade. The rains have become unpredictable, unreliable. Extreme droughts and floods have become more frequent and severe. At the moment, el Niño triggered drought is affecting millions of my people.

Indeed, the El Niño phenomenon is not something that Ethiopia as a country is able to control. As the Premier explained in an interview a few weeks ago, the problem has its roots from the irresponsible emission of the so-called greenhouse gas by the world's most advanced economies for many years and its impact is felt in the form of disruption of the climatic conditions around the globe. This disruption in the climatic condition in turn causes temperature levels to rise in oceans resulting in the disruption of the usual rainfall cycles that originate from these water bodies.

To address the problem, the government has imported 250,000 metric tons of food and ordered additional 650,000 tons. In fact, the government promised that it might go as far as folding some projects if necessary. Because, even it would be a better option that letting the people go hungry.

The sad thing is that despite all these hardships, Ethiopia has not caused climate change. As the Prime Minister described it:

*We have not caused climate change. We cannot solve it on our own. We find ourselves in a situation which justifies surrender, hopelessness and bitterness. But we choose to be hopeful and proactive.*

*We work hard and sacrifice to produce clean electric power from renewable sources. We invest in increasing our resilience to climate change. We invest in modernizing our livestock and conduct climate smart agriculture. We invest in clean, modern, and efficient technologies.*

*No doubt, these are endeavors from which we derive benefits. But it is also true that these help reduce the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases.*

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Indeed, Ethiopia took a proactive step to contribute towards addressing climate change four years ago. The government prepared and launched the most progressive and forward-looking development plan, the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE). Ethiopia was one of the first countries to formally merge policy agendas around climate resilience and the green economy at a national planning level by adopting a Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Vision and Strategy in 2011.

The green economy strategy, Climate Resilient Green Economy, was launched in 2011, addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, while pursuing the goals of economic growth, zero net

emissions and building resilience. The Climate Resilient Green Economy Facility was launched in September 2012, to support the government's vision of becoming a middle-income economy with low carbon growth by 2025.

The main policy driver for green growth in Ethiopia is the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy (CRGE). Developed under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office, the CRGE has made tremendous strides in providing vision, high-level commitment, credible analysis, and planning an extensive portfolio of investments in a very short time.

*The CRGE's goal is to increase economic growth so as to leap from least-developed to middle-income country status, whilst at the same time reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increasing climate resilience. The CRGE has two components: a Green Economy Strategy (GES), which mainly addresses mitigation and was launched in 2011; and a Climate Resilience Strategy (CRS), which focuses on adaptation and is currently being developed with a focus on agriculture, forestry and land use.*

*The strategy indicates by 2030, there is potential for per-person GDP to increase by 475%, from USD 380 to more than USD 1,800 GDP per capita, while at the same time decreasing GHG emissions on a per capita basis from 1.8 t to 1.1t CO<sub>2</sub>e – over a third.*

*The strategy recognizes that achieving this through the conventional development path would result in dramatically increased carbon emissions and unsustainable use of natural resources.*

*The climate-resilient green economic strategy for Ethiopia*

*demonstrates the commitment of Ethiopia to bypass the conventional approach to economic development and create a green economy where economic development goals are met in a sustainable way.*

The strategy identified the following four pillars of development in the green economic action plan:

- Improve crop and livestock production practices for higher food security and farmer income while reducing emissions;
  - Protect and re-establish forests for their economic and ecosystem services, including as carbon stocks;
  - Expand electricity generation from renewable sources of energy for domestic and regional markets; and
  - Leapfrog to modern and energy-efficient technologies in transport, industrial sectors, and buildings.
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That was not all. Ethiopia demonstrated its commitment to fighting  
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global warming by becoming among the first least developed country to submit its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC this year.

Indeed, pledging to cut emissions below 2010 levels from 150 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2010 to 145 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030 was a big step. Ethiopia's INDC makes an ambitious commitment to curb its greenhouse gas emissions between now and 2030.

According to the plan, Ethiopia intends to limit its net GHG emissions in 2030 to 145 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e or lower. This would constitute a 255 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e reduction from the 'Business As Usual' emissions in 2030 or 64% by 2030 from the 'Business As Usual' scenario. This emission reduction target encompasses actions in all major emitting sectors including agriculture, forestry, energy, and transport, among others.

Indeed, as the Prime Minister said in Paris:

We are ready to be true partners, to chip in. We already announced we would create a carbon neutral economy, reducing emissions by 64 percent by 2030. Many agree that this is more than our fair share. We need to see matching actions and support from our partners.

Indeed, Ethiopia plans to undertake adaptation initiatives to reduce the vulnerability of its population, environment, and economy to the adverse effects of climate change, based on its Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy (CRGE).

The CRGE is Ethiopia's strategy for addressing both climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives. The implementation of the CRGE would ensure a resilient economic development pathway while

decreasing per capita emissions by 64% or more. The CRGE is also integrated into the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (the national development plan). In the long term, Ethiopia intends to achieve its vision of becoming carbon-neutral, with the mid-term goal of attaining middle-income status.

Moreover, Ethiopia's INDC includes a section on adaptation in its climate commitment. The INDC notes the extensive adaptation planning process in Ethiopia. Ethiopia goes on to outline medium- and long-term actions to reduce vulnerability in key priority areas relating to drought, floods, and other crosscutting interventions.

These include measures such as capacity building to cope with the spread of diseases, strengthening water resource management, and developing insurance that can support farmers and herders in times of disaster.

The adaptation component also notes that to achieve its long-term goal, action will be needed to identify capacity gaps and build capacity to mainstream adaptation into all public and private development initiatives. It also notes that the response to climate change requires participation of the entire population, and notes the importance of measures to increase the status of women, the welfare of children, and the well-being of the elderly, disabled, and environmental refugees.

These are bold and exemplary pledges. If Ethiopia's planned activities are fully implemented, it will reduce per capita emissions to 1.1 TCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030. This will exceed any expectations based on either fairness or ambition while contributing largely towards the achievement of the objective of the Convention. This fairness is underlined by the fact that for more than 80% of the abatement potential, the costs will be less

than US\$1 per ton CO<sub>2</sub>e.

Indeed, Ethiopia's exemplar effort has been noted. On the sidelines of the summit, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia was among the six leaders invited to the high-level Carbon Pricing Panel. Along with Canada, Chile, France, Germany, and Mexico, they discussed and urged others to follow their lead and put a price on carbon.

These global leaders formed the high-level Carbon Pricing Panel, as they have taken steps to price carbon, through emissions trading programs, carbon taxes and fees, and other pricing mechanisms, that provide incentives to invest in a greener economy.

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister was cautious. He reminded the conference that "every nation has to contribute. Of course, national contributions need to be differentiated, reflecting responsibility, need, and capacity. It is welcome that the national contributions submitted this year have reduced the extent of projected global warming over the century ahead . But let us not pretend that a future of around 3 degrees of warming is something to celebrate".

"If poor people like us can resolve to create a carbon neutral economy, surely better placed nations can and should do much more. "...the global partnership and cooperation should provide for adequate support for low-carbon development and the creation of resilient societies and ecosystems."

Indeed, this is the moment of real and concrete actions action. As PM Hailemariam Desalegn underlined in Paris:

[This is .no time for shirking responsibility. This is no time for false promises. We should speak in good faith. We are](#)

not adversaries. We owe this to our citizens, businesses, local governments, and non-governmental organizations.

Let us leave Paris with a legally binding, ambitious, durable, fair and effective agreement which shows partnership and cooperation that protects our common security and advances our common humanity.

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