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Discussion Paper

How can the Global Stocktake be leveraged for enhanced climate action?

Updated Second Edition

by:

Lukas Hermwille, Carsten Elsner & Wolfgang Obergassel
Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, Wuppertal

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On behalf of the German Environment Agency

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Abstract: How can the Global Stocktake be leveraged for enhanced climate action?

This paper discusses strategies to enhance the impact of the Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement on climate change. Analyzing previous international and national policy processes, the study offers key recommendations for leveraging the GST's outcomes for future climate policies, especially in the context of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The paper emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts to ensure that the results of the GST influence national political discourse. It proposes differentiated communication strategies tailored to various stages of the NDC policy process and diverse target audiences. These recommendations include forming messaging coalitions, simplifying messages for the agenda-setting stage, and employing more comprehensive approaches to the policy formulation and decision-making stages. The study draws from a wide range of examples like the UNFCCC First Periodic Review and national efforts like the French Citizens Climate Assemblies and the South African Presidential Climate Commission. These examples offer insights into successful and unsuccessful approaches of transferring scientific results into political action. The paper advocates for a nuanced and strategic approach to communication and emphasizes the importance of legitimacy and complexity in engaging stakeholders at different levels of decision-making.

Kurzbeschreibung: Wie kann das Echo des Global Stocktake für mehr Klimaschutz genutzt werden?

In diesem Papier werden Strategien erörtert, um die Wirkung der Globalen Bestandsaufnahme (Global Stocktake – GST) im Rahmen des Pariser Abkommens zum Klimawandel zu erhöhen. Zu diesem Zweck werden vorherige internationale und nationale Politikprozesse analysiert und Empfehlungen abgeleitet, wie die Ergebnisse des GST für künftige Klimapolitik genutzt werden können, insbesondere im Kontext der Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Eine zentrale Empfehlung ist die Notwendigkeit koordinierter Anstrengungen, um sicherzustellen, dass die Ergebnisse des GST den nationalen politischen Diskurs beeinflussen. Außerdem sollte die Kommunikation rund um den GST auf die verschiedenen Phasen des NDC-Politikprozesses sowie die unterschiedlichen Zielgruppen eingehen. Die Bildung von Kommunikationskoalitionen, die Vereinfachung von Botschaften für die Agenda-Setting-Phase und die Verwendung umfassender Ansätze für die Phasen der Politikformulierung und Entscheidungsfindung sind hierbei die zentralen Elemente einer gelungenen Kommunikationsstrategie. In der Analyse stützt sich das Papier auf Beispiele wie den First Periodic Review des UNFCCC und nationale Bemühungen wie den französischen Klima-Bürgerrat und die südafrikanische präsidiale Klimakommission. Diese Beispiele geben Einblicke in erfolgreiche und erfolglose Ansätze bei der Umsetzung wissenschaftlicher Ergebnisse in politisches Handeln und flossen in die Empfehlungen mit ein. Insgesamt wird für einen nuancierten und strategischen Kommunikationsansatz plädiert und die Bedeutung von Legitimität und Komplexität bei der Einbindung von Interessengruppen auf verschiedenen Entscheidungsebenen herausgestellt.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
Art.	Article
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GST	Global Stocktake
HRC	Human Rights Council
LTGG	Long-term global goal
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions (in Paris Agreement)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PA	Paris Agreement
PR	Periodic review
SED	Structured expert dialogue
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Summary

The Global Stocktake is a key pillar of the Paris Agreement and assesses the collective progress in terms of combatting global warming since 2015. At COP28, the first Global Stocktake came to an end and a window of opportunity to leverage its results for more ambitious climate action opened. This paper was first published prior to COP28 and now received an update considering the result of COP28, feedback received in an online seminar and further examples. It provides an overview of possible actions to maximize the outreach of the first GST for future climate policy and especially for the next round of NDCs starting in early 2025. While the GST addresses all pillars of the Paris Agreement, this paper focuses on mitigation.

Among many other aspects, the GST decision at COP28 calls on parties to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, to triple the renewable energy capacity by 2030 and to phase down inefficient fossil fuel subsidies (UNFCCC 2023a, § 28). While some have hailed this as the end of the fossil fuel era, there is no automatism that the global signal provided will actually resonate with national-level political discourses nor will they be automatically reflected in the next round of NDCs. Instead, the results have to be communicated and actively introduced into national policy processes to ensure ambitious climate policy.

The NDC cycle can be understood as a policy process with different stages. This paper provides specific recommendations for those stages, specifically agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision-making. Since the GST is a unique international process, which has not been conducted before, the recommendations rely on the examination of other processes, in which an attempt was made to transfer scientific knowledge into political action. To this end, an analysis of the relevant literature on previous processes, a focus group discussion and expert interviews were conducted.

Furthermore, since aspects such as the complexity of the information that is required might vary with the specific audience targeted for communication of the GST and the stages of the NDC cycle in which communication should take place, a communication model is used which distinguishes between the role of the sender and recipient as well as the tone, channel and content of the message.

Based on the experiences gathered in previous and ongoing policy processes such as the French Citizens Climate Assemblies and the South African Presidential Climate Commission, the following three key recommendations for leveraging the response to the Global Stocktake for enhanced climate action are suggested:

- ▶ Do not take for granted that the outcomes of the Global Stocktake will trickle down into national level political discourse by themselves. Actual uptake in national discussions will require considerable coordination and communicative effort from a number of stakeholders to achieve.
- ▶ Design differentiated strategies to affect and influence different stages of the NDC policy process, taking into account the different audiences, channels, messages and tone to achieve effective communication for each phase.
- ▶ Coordinate your messaging coalition of like-minded parties in policy-making, NGOs, private sector entities and research and focus on positive messages, highlighting the opportunities arising from ambitious climate action and taking inspiration from other countries.

In conclusion, a successful leverage of the Global Stocktake would include forming a large messaging coalition including national partners to carry the messages into the respective countries. Furthermore, the communication should be specifically tailored for each stage of the NDC cycle:

- ▶ **Agenda-setting:** With a view to tapping the initial public attention, it should be noted that the media and the public in general are the key recipients of communication. At this stage messages should be kept simple in order to reduce complexity. To contextualize the exclusively collective information generated by the Global Stocktake, additional sources for country-specific information should be used.
- ▶ **Policy formulation:** In this stage, the communication should address the competent authority – depending on the country line ministries or legislative bodies – and key individuals within these authorities. More comprehensive and complex messages are needed at this stage and good practice examples collated during the technical phase of the Global Stocktake could prove particularly useful.
- ▶ **Decision-making:** To ensure that ambitious policies are adopted, the decision-makers should be targeted. The degree of complexity of the message varies with the decision-maker, i.e. whether they are part of ministerial bureaucracy or whether citizens vote on a plebiscite. At this stage, it is also vital that the communication comes from stakeholders within the country to maximize the legitimacy of the message.

Zusammenfassung

Der Global Stocktake (globale Bestandsaufnahme) ist eine wichtige Säule des Übereinkommens von Paris und bewertet den kollektiven globalen Fortschritt bei der Bekämpfung des Klimawandels. Auf der 28. Vertragsstaatenkonferenz der VN-Klimarahmenkonvention (COP28) wurde der erste Global Stocktake abgeschlossen. Dies eröffnet die Möglichkeit, die Ergebnisse für ambitioniertere Klimaschutzmaßnahmen zu nutzen. Dieses Diskussionspapier wurde erstmals vor der COP28 veröffentlicht und wurde nun unter Berücksichtigung der Ergebnisse der COP28, des in einem Online-Seminar erhaltenen Feedbacks und weiterer Beispiele aktualisiert. In diesem Zusammenhang wird ein Überblick über mögliche Maßnahmen zur Maximierung der Reichweite des ersten GST für die künftige Klimapolitik und insbesondere für die nächste Runde der Nationalen Klimaschutzziele (Nationally Determined Contributions – NDCs) bereitgestellt. Der GST deckt alle Säulen des Übereinkommens von Paris ab, dieses Papier konzentriert sich jedoch auf die Säule Emissionsminderung.

Neben vielen anderen Aspekten fordert der GST-Beschluss auf der COP28 die Vertragsparteien auf, einen Wandel weg von fossilen Brennstoffen in den Energiesystemen zu vollziehen („transition away from fossil fuel“), die Kapazität der erneuerbaren Energien bis 2030 zu verdreifachen und ineffiziente Subventionen für fossile Brennstoffe auslaufen zu lassen (UNFCCC 2023a, Absatz 28). Während einige Beobachter dies als das Ende der Ära der fossilen Brennstoffe feierten, gibt es keinen Automatismus, dass das globale Signal, das von der Konferenz ausgeht, tatsächlich in den politischen Diskursen auf nationaler Ebene Widerhall findet oder sich automatisch in der nächsten Runde der NDCs niederschlägt. Vielmehr müssen die Ergebnisse kommuniziert und aktiv in die nationalen Politikprozesse eingebracht werden, um eine ambitionierte Klimapolitik zu gewährleisten.

Der NDC-Zyklus kann als ein politischer Prozess mit verschiedenen Phasen verstanden werden. In diesem Papier werden spezifische Empfehlungen für die Phasen des Agenda-Settings, der Politikformulierung sowie der Entscheidungsfindung gegeben. Da es sich bei dem GST um einen einzigartigen und neuen internationalen Prozess handelt, stützen sich die Empfehlungen auf die Untersuchung anderer Prozesse, bei denen versucht wurde, wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse in politisches Handeln umzusetzen. Daher wurde eine Analyse der einschlägigen Literatur zu früheren Prozessen, eine Fokusgruppendiskussion sowie Interviews mit Expert*innen durchgeführt.

Aspekte wie die Komplexität der erforderlichen Informationen variieren je nach Zielgruppe und Phase des NDC-Zyklus, in denen die Kommunikation stattfinden sollte. Um dem Rechnung zu tragen, verwenden wir ein Kommunikationsmodell, das zwischen der Rolle des Senders und des Empfängers sowie dem Ton, dem Kanal und dem Inhalt der Botschaft unterscheidet.

Auf der Grundlage der Erfahrungen aus früheren und aktuellen politischen Prozessen wie dem französischen Klima-Bürgerrat und der südafrikanischen präsidialen Klimakommission werden die folgenden drei Schlüsselempfehlungen ausgesprochen, um das Resultat des GST bestmöglich für verstärkte Klimaschutzmaßnahmen nutzen zu können:

- ▶ Es ist nicht davon auszugehen, dass die Ergebnisse der Globalen Bestandsaufnahme von allein in den politischen Diskurs auf nationaler Ebene einfließen werden. Um dies zu erreichen, bedarf es eines hohen Maßes an Koordination, Kommunikation und Anstrengungen seitens einer Vielzahl von Akteuren.
- ▶ Differenzierte Kommunikationsstrategien können dabei helfen, die verschiedenen Phasen des NDC-Politikprozesses zu beeinflussen. Dabei sollten unterschiedlichen Zielgruppen,

Kanäle und die Art der Botschaften berücksichtigt werden, um eine effektive Kommunikation für jede Phase zu erreichen.

- ▶ Verschiedene gleichgesinnte Akteure sollten ihre Kommunikation bezüglich des GST abstimmen und als Allianz auftreten. Dazu gehören insbesondere politische Entscheidungsträger*innen, Nichtregierungsorganisationen, Unternehmen des Privatsektors und Wissenschaftler*innen. Außerdem sollten vornehmlich positive Botschaften kommuniziert werden, da diese Chancen hervorheben können, die sich aus ehrgeizigen Klimaschutzmaßnahmen ergeben, und inspirierende Beispiele aus anderen Ländern in den Vordergrund stellen.

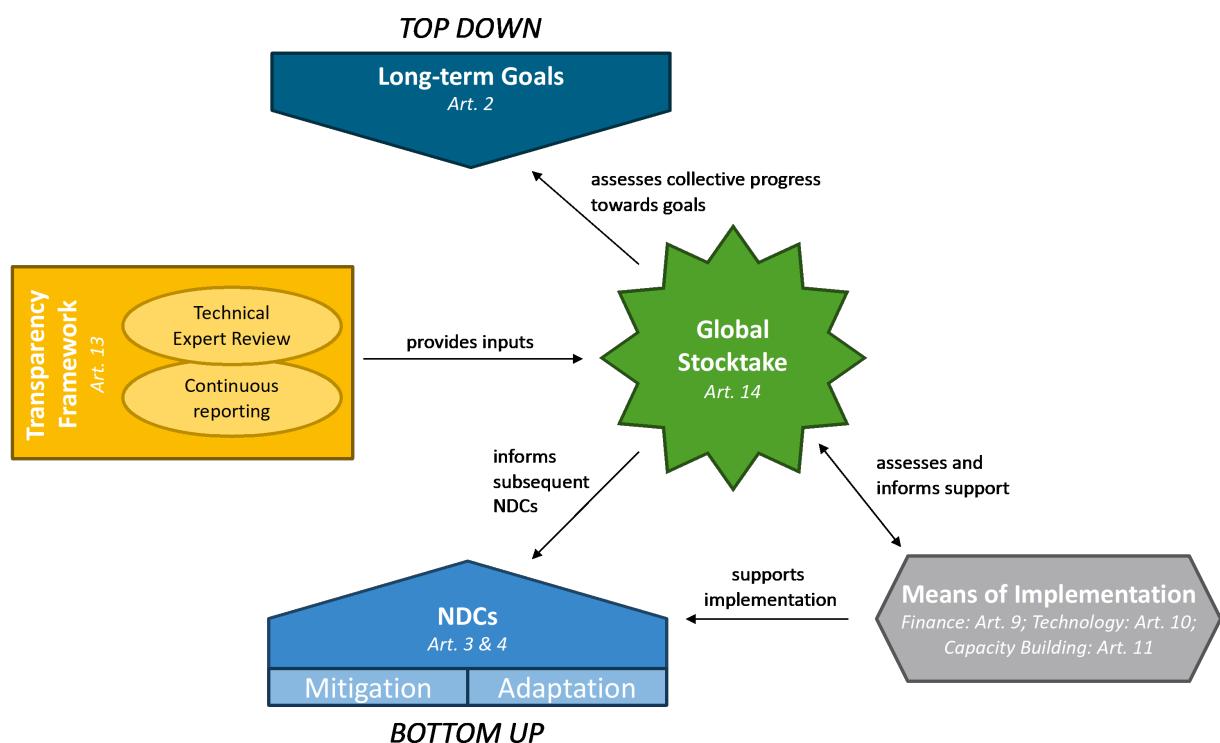
Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass eine erfolgreiche Nutzung des GST die Bildung einer Koalition nationaler Akteure voraussetzt, die die Botschaften in die jeweiligen Länder tragen. Darüber hinaus geben die Phasen des NDC-Zyklus den Rahmen für die Art der Kommunikation vor:

- ▶ **Agenda-Setting:** Um die anfängliche Aufmerksamkeit zu nutzen, sind die Medien und die Öffentlichkeit im Allgemeinen die Hauptempfänger der Kommunikation in dieser ersten Phase. Die Botschaften sollten dabei einfach gehalten werden, um die Nachricht verständlich und eingängig zu kommunizieren. Da der GST ausschließlich Informationen über den kollektiven Fortschritt generiert, müssen diese auf Länderebene kontextualisiert werden. Dafür sollten zusätzliche Quellen für länderspezifische Informationen genutzt werden.
- ▶ **Politikformulierung:** In dieser Phase sollte die Kommunikation die politischen Entscheidungsträger*innen, vor allem in den nationalen Fachministerien oder gesetzgebenden Körperschaften, als Hauptzielgruppe adressieren. Es werden deshalb umfassendere und komplexere Botschaften benötigt. Darüber hinaus könnten sich Beispiele aus anderen Ländern für bewährte Verfahren, die in der technischen Phase des GST gesammelt wurden, als besonders nützlich erweisen.
- ▶ **Entscheidungsfindung:** Um sicherzustellen, dass ambitionierte Maßnahmen beschlossen werden, sollten die verschiedenen Entscheidungsträger*innen angesprochen werden. Der Grad der Komplexität der Botschaft hängt davon ab, ob sie zum Beispiel Teil der Ministerialbürokratie sind oder ob die Bürger*innen in einer Volksabstimmung abstimmen. In dieser Phase ist es auch von entscheidender Bedeutung, dass die Kommunikation von Akteuren innerhalb des Landes kommt, um die Legitimität der Botschaft zu erhöhen.

1 Introduction

The Global Stocktake is the central cog in the ambition cycle of the Paris Agreement (see figure). It provides feedback and connects the national-level implementation of NDCs with the overarching objectives of the Paris Agreement with a view to influencing and inspiring national agendas towards more ambitious subsequent NDCs. It builds on the inputs from the Paris Agreement's enhanced transparency framework and also takes into account the means of implementation provided by developed to developing countries to support and facilitate the implementation of NDCs. This paper focuses specifically on leveraging the results of the GST for more ambitious climate change mitigation in the next round of NDCs. It should be noted that the GST and its mandate in Article 14 of the Paris Agreement are much broader in scope and lessons from previous policy processes regarding successful communication might be similarly useful for other thematic discussions such as adaptation or finance. Due to limited resources and in the interest of focus, our analysis predominantly concerns aspects related to mitigation. It is, however, important to note that the GST has a much broader mandate covering all aspects of climate action and support including adaptation, loss and damage and finance. Likewise, the NDCs are not limited to encompassing mitigation actions. Parties are encouraged to also include commitments related to adaptation and specify their needs in terms of means of implementation for their proposed climate actions.

Figure 1 The Global Stocktake in relation to key elements of the Paris Agreement



Source: Authors' own illustration, Wuppertal Institute

The first full assessment cycle of the Global Stocktake concluded at COP28 in Dubai. The information collection and technical assessment phases had already started 1.5 years prior. Through a series of workshops and roundtables, part of the Global Stocktake's technical dialogues, a wealth of information was collected on all aspects related to the GST (see Climate Policy Radar, 2023). The Co-facilitators of the GST technical dialogue synthesized this information in a report

published ahead of COP28 (UNFCCC, 2023c). In the area of climate change mitigation its main conclusions were:

- ▶ Even though there has been progress, the global emissions trajectory is not aligned with the goal of the Paris Agreement and there is very little time to correct course.
- ▶ Much more ambition is needed: compared with 2019 levels global GHG emissions need to decrease by 43% by 2030, by 60% by 2035 and reach net zero CO2 emissions by 2050.
- ▶ Achieving the Paris goals requires a “systems transformation across all sectors” including a phase-out of “all unabated fossil fuels”, scaling up renewable energy and halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation.
- ▶ Mitigation actions need to be flanked by measures ensuring a just transition and enabling economic diversification.

During the negotiations in Dubai, the most prominent question was whether and which of the findings from the GST technical dialogue synthesis would make it through the political filter of multilateral negotiations and be featured prominently in the final political consideration of outputs. This final phase of the GST mandated Parties to “summarize opportunities and challenges for enhancing action and support in the light of equity and the best available science, as well as lessons learned and good practices” (UNFCCC 2018b, para. 13) to provide information to Parties on updating and enhancing their NDCs and on enhancing international cooperation for climate action (UNFCCC, 2016, Art. 14.3).

Given that COP28 was hosted in a state with a fossil dependent economy and Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, as the COP President, is not only the host country’s Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology but also the CEO of the state-owned Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, the most salient political question was whether and in what form any reference to phasing out fossil fuels was going to be reflected in the final GST decision. Only two years earlier, Parties had adopted explicit language on fossil fuels for the first time. The Glasgow Climate Pact called for a “phase down of coal” (Obergassel et al., 2021). One year later, India had proposed language to “phase down all fossil fuels”, but while this was hotly debated in the corridors of COP27, it never made it into any version of the negotiation texts (Obergassel et al., 2022). Now in Dubai, a coalition of at least 127 countries supported a call for a “phase-out of unabated fossil fuels” but this language was firmly opposed notably by OPEC countries (van Asselt, 2023). Ultimately, Parties agreed on a compromise formulation: Parties now recognize the need for “transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science” (UNFCCC, 2023a, para. 28d). Besides this, the decision calls for tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030 (UNFCCC, 2023a, para. 28a). The decision also marked another first that was not so much in the public spotlight by calling for “halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030” (UNFCCC, 2023a, para. 33). Moreover, the decision calls for a transition to sustainable lifestyles, sustainable patterns of consumption and production and circular economy approaches (UNFCCC, 2023a, para. 36). In terms of the overall scope and ambition, the decision encourages Parties to submit NDCs that cover all GHGs, sectors and categories and are aligned with achieving the 1.5 °C temperature limit (UNFCCC, 2023a, para. 39).

Some Parties and observers have hailed the decision as “Beginning of the End” of the fossil fuel era (UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell quoted in UNFCCC 2023d). However, the final

language is admittedly much more malleable compared to versions earlier proposed that had called for an unambiguous phase-out of fossil fuels with a fixed date. Nonetheless, COP28 further eroded the legitimacy of continued fossil fuel extraction. But only the subsequent national level discussions, implementation and particularly the updated and new NDCs will prove whether indeed the Global Stocktake marked the end of the fossil fuel era and accelerated implementation before 2030.

While the intent of the political messaging from the Global Stocktake to inform NDC development has been expressed quite clearly, it is far less clear how this messaging is supposed to be received and translated into tangible outcomes at the national level. The purpose of this discussion paper is to develop a theory of change for how the message of the Global Stocktake could resonate with the upcoming development of the updated or new NDCs, which Parties are to communicate in early 2025. Our starting assumption is that **an effective uptake of GST outcomes at the national level cannot be taken for granted**. Dubash (2023) proposes therefore to solve the global collective action problem by linking national climate policy to potential co-benefits such as involving and strengthening a powerful domestic interest group, creating jobs or reducing air pollution (Dubash, 2023). This requires a major effort to feed the GST results into the national level public discourse and connect them to the political and socio-economic context. In this regard, Moosmann and Pischke (2024) provide specific indicators on how parties could reflect on the GST outcome in their NDCs in the field of mitigation (Moosmann and Pischke, 2024).

To this end, we make recommendations for policy-makers and stakeholders to fully leverage the GST for a constructive NDC development process.

Specifically, we address the following questions in relation to the upcoming NDC policy process (see next section):

1. What interventions and activities can maximize the immediate political perception of the results of the GST in the national political discourse and media as a means for political **agenda setting**?
2. What interventions and activities can be utilized to inform the political agenda for the development of the NDC, here termed "**policy formulation**"?
3. How can the results of the GST be employed to appraise the first drafts of the updated or new NDCs with a view to ensuring consistency with global ambition requirements during the **decision-making** phase of the next NDC?

2 A theory of change

Our theory of change for the Global Stocktake requires two key components. Firstly, we need to develop a conception of the NDC development process and identify entry points in which information from the GST can make a difference. Secondly, we need a theoretical foundation of how that information is communicated into the political discourse. We will develop both of these elements in the remainder of this chapter.

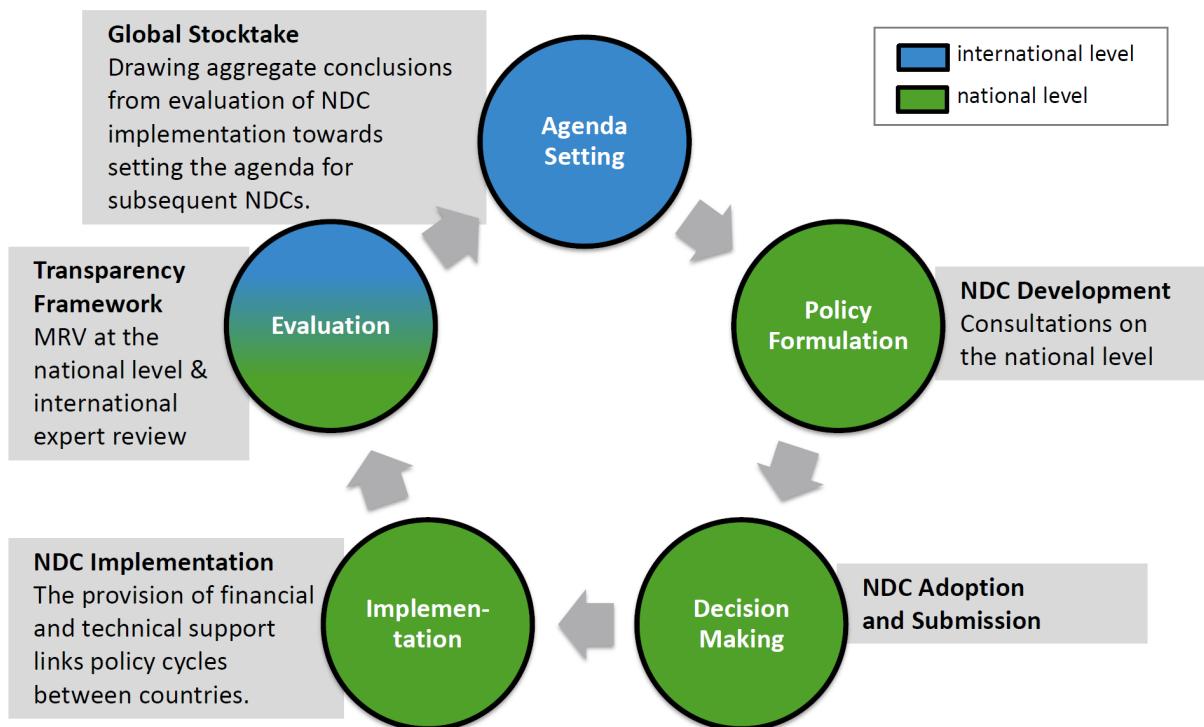
2.1 The NDC cycle as a policy process.

The Paris Agreement has established a 5-year cycle of NDCs that stimulates and synchronizes policy processes at the national level. NDCs are mandatory policy documents in which countries specify their climate action targets and the policies and measures to achieve them. Once adopted, Parties are legally required to implement "domestic mitigation measures, with the aim

of achieving the objectives of such contributions" (UNFCCC 2016, Art. 4.2). Parties monitor and report on the implementation of their NDCs and the resulting emission reductions by way of the enhanced transparency framework (Art. 13). The Global Stocktake aggregates the individual country-level evaluations in order to formulate conclusions in relation to collective progress at the global level. As stated above, these conclusions in turn will inform national climate policy agendas for the next round of NDCs, thus completing a prototypical policy cycle (see Figure 2).

Of course, this prototypical policy cycle is a strong simplification. Many countries have long-established climate and energy policy processes, which are independent from the international process. For example, the European Union undertook several initiatives to adopt energy and/or carbon taxation already in the 1990s, which ultimately led to the introduction of the EU emission trading system. Another example is China which has historically adopted all major development targets as part of its regular 5-year-plans. For those countries, the NDC is rather a tool for synthesis of different areas and for foreign policy. In those instances, the relevant policy processes probably won't carry the NDC label. In that case, the first step to influence NDC ambition would be to identify the relevant policy processes that will co-determine the NDC in the national context.

Figure 2 The NDC cycle as a policy process



Source: Hermwillie et al. (2019).

In our view, the Global Stocktake can potentially affect and influence three stages of the NDC cycle, each of them requiring differentiated communication in relation to the audience, contents, and means of communication.

The first and perhaps most obvious stage is the **agenda-setting stage**. As a major political event, COP28 and the conclusion of the Global Stocktake have attracted major public attention and media coverage. Whether or not this will suffice to set national-level political agendas towards the development of the subsequent NDC will be a matter of how effective and persistent the media coverage is, which in turn is a function of effective communication on the part of stakeholders and policy makers. But it is also a matter of timing. While the immediate echo of the GST may have faded in some ways already, depending on country-specific contexts, other policy processes will start anew and provide opportunities to highlight the results of the GST.

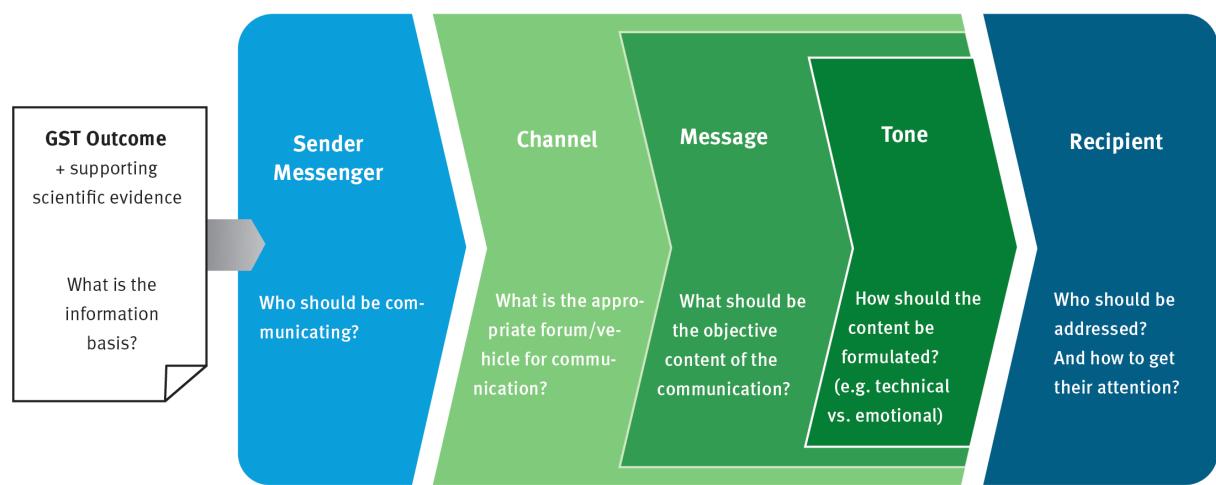
The second stage requires a more quiet and targeted form of communication. Ideally, in the **policy formulation stage**, the new global objectives should be translated into national trajectories and respective policies and measures to transition away from fossil fuels and to scale up renewable energy and energy efficiency. In this context, national-level policy-makers may draw on the lessons learned and good practice examples identified during the technical phase of the GST to further develop their portfolio of climate policies and include technical improvements in their NDCs leading to higher ambition and more credible prospects for implementation.

Finally, stakeholders particularly from civil society and academia but also (opposition) legislators may utilize the results of the GST as a yardstick to assess whether the emerging drafts of the updated or new NDCs of their respective countries are in line with the global efforts required to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement. In that way, **the results of the GST may play a role as tools for informed decision-making**.

2.2 A simple communication model

With some exceptions such as the European Climate Law (discussed further below), in most countries there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the results of the GST will automatically be considered in the subsequent NDC policy process. It will inevitably require a dedicated form of political communication. In order to support stakeholders and policy-makers in developing strategic communication strategies, we present a simple communication model that will guide the subsequent analysis.

Communication is usually defined as the exchange of information between a sender/messenger and a recipient. For our specific case, this relates to the information collected during the first GST. The purpose of the communication is clearly defined in our case: to inform the development of enhanced NDCs representing a Party's "highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances" (UNFCCC 2016, Art. 4.3). In other words, the recipients of the information communicated ought to act in a way that can affect the desired result. However, more is required for effective communication than just an information basis and a recipient. It also needs a sender or messenger and it needs a communication channel or means of communication, and this channel will transmit information via a tailored message, which is embedded in the context of evoking a certain tone. Figure 3 provides an overview of this simple model of communication.

Figure 3 Schematic illustration of the communication model

Source: Authors' own illustration, Wuppertal Institute adapted and simplified from Shannon & Weaver (1998).

In order to design communication strategically, policy-makers and stakeholders should consider each of these elements carefully and be mindful of the specific purpose of the communication. This will differ for different stakeholders and in relation to the purpose of the communication. Specifically, and in relation to the next round of NDCs, there will be differences as to whether they intend to set the political agenda, to inspire policy formulation or to influence decision-making. It should be noted that the figure above provides a simplified version of communication. In reality, there is dialogue between the sender, the recipient and most likely certain intermediaries. In a successful case, the dialogues originating from the initial communication self-enforce themselves by including an ever-widening array of actors in conveying the message.

Firstly, they need to decide who the target audience is. For instance, it can be the general public when a specific policy is subjected to a plebiscite. Or it may be a small group of bureaucrats who are drafting specific sections of policy documents. In relation to the choice of the target audience, the question is how to gain their attention. The choice of the right channel is important here. What is the right forum for approaching them? What means of communication do they use? The choice of the channel will have an effect on the choice of the message. What should the objective content of the communication be? Is the chosen channel appropriate for that message? Short advertisement videos are usually not a very practical way of communicating highly detailed information on good practice examples, but targeted policy dialogues may very well be. The tone of the communication is also critical: Is it intended to evoke certain emotions – hope, fear, anxiety – or is it necessary to choose a technical tone in order to be taken seriously by the targeted recipients? Finally, the sender or messenger also needs to be considered. In the case of international climate processes, the number of senders often exceeds the number of recipients. Thus, coordinating and aligning the messaging is often key for successful communication in order to achieve the desired effect on policy-making. Sometimes it is also necessary that information is communicated by individuals with a certain legitimacy (e.g. researchers) or through high-profile celebrities who act as advertisement media.

To summarize our theory of change: The GST can achieve its objective of facilitating effective policy processes towards subsequent NDCs that represent the “highest possible ambition” if and when the results of the GST are communicated effectively to recipients that are able to set a political agenda towards the development of the NDC, inspire policy formulation and use the GST outcome as a benchmark for ambition when the updated or new NDC is about to be adopted. Effective communication can only be realized if the entire chain of communication is carefully

crafted taking into account not only the information base but also the messenger, the channel, the actual message and its tone, as well as the recipient and its ability to act in the desired way.

3 Elements of a post-GST engagement strategy

In terms of the communication model introduced above, there are many ways in which the GST outcome could be leveraged for constructive political debate at the national level. Stakeholders and policy-makers have a wide range of options for designing their communication strategies. Who should the main recipients of the communication be? By what channels can they be reached? And what is the appropriate message and tone to get them to act? There is not a single formula, however, for effective communication at the interface between science and policy. Strategies need to take into account national and sub-national circumstances and, most importantly, they will vary for communications targeting the various steps in the NDC policy process.

In this section, we will provide a first overview of the options and considerations policy-makers and stakeholders will have to face when leveraging the results of the GST for the three relevant stages of the NDC policy process: agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision-making (see Figure 2). For this, we draw on the results of a focus group, a series of interviews held with scientists and civil society activists with ample experience at the science-policy interface, and the discussions that took place at an online seminar on 29 January 2024.

3.1 Agenda-setting

After the conclusion of the first GST at COP28 and the final decision regarding the consideration of outputs, the GST outcomes should fulfil the important function of influencing national-level political agendas and the next round of NDCs, which should be finalized in early 2025. Theoretically, governments (or formally mandated advisory bodies to governments) have a responsibility to convey the message of the GST to national level policy making. As reiterated in “Guidance and way forward” section of the GST decision (UNFCCC, 2023a), Parties are mandated to report in their NDCs how the results of the GST have been taken into account. This, in turn, implies a responsibility to digest and reflect on the GST and connect its outcomes to the national context. However, in practice not all governments might be aware of or willing to proactively assume this responsibility. Hence, political communication towards agenda setting might actually require two phases of communication. In the first phase the recipients of the communication are national governments while civil society and the private sector function as sender. In that phase the message needs to be holding the national governments accountable to heed their responsibility to organize a proper reflective process digesting the GST results. A logical candidate are the national climate advisory bodies that have been established in some countries, such as the UK Climate Change Council or the South African Presidential Climate Commission (see Box 5 below). They could take the initiative to integrate the GST results in the advice they give to their governments.

Box 1: The GST in the European Climate Law

The EU provides an example of how integration of the GST in domestic political processes can even be enshrined in legislation. The European Climate Law establishes a five-year cycle of assessment of the EU's collective progress towards its climate neutrality objective and progress towards adaptation, as well as assessments of member states' national measures. This cycle is explicitly linked with the GST cycle, as the outcomes need to be published every five years, starting in September 2023. In case progress is found to be insufficient, the Commission is called on to propose additional measures (European Climate Law, 2021, p. Art. 6 and 7). Moreover, the European Commission needs to propose an EU emission target for 2040 at the latest within six months of the first GST, taking into account the results of the assessments according to Articles 6 and 7, and the outcomes of the GST (European Climate Law, 2021, p. Art. 4.3). Moreover, the Commission may propose to revise the EU 2040 target within six months of the second GST (European Climate Law, 2021, p. Art. 4.6). Finally, the Commission needs to submit a report on the operation of the EU Climate Law to the European Parliament and to the Council of Ministers within six months of each GST. Where appropriate, this report may be accompanied by legislative proposals to amend the EU Climate Law (European Climate Law, 2021, p. Art. 11).

Once this is achieved, the government may become itself a sender (among many others) and communication of the actual contents to be considered in the subsequent policy processes may commence. In that phase, the media and the public in general should be identified as key audience/recipients. Furthermore, it is important to identify what type of information from the GST is particularly useful for the message. Since the GST only provides aggregate information on collective progress, countries may find it hard to compare their own progress with others. As such, the message could also incorporate additional sources and independent information from the scientific community (see Box 2, below), which allows for a comparison with peers, or build on additional scientific analyses that provide a national perspective on the GST results highlighting strength and weaknesses of a given country in the light of global collective action (see Box 3).

Box 2: Additional sources which allow for country-based comparison

Since the GST does not provide individual country level information, policy-makers and stakeholders need to draw on other sources to contextualize their countries' performance. These sources might be helpful to this end:

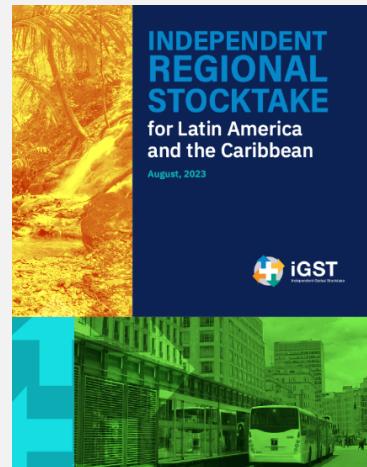
- ▶ The GST Performance Distribution Tool presents global performance of key indicators in a distribution chart. It allows an individual country within that distribution to be highlighted: <https://globalstocktakedata.org/>
- ▶ The Climate Action Tracker is an independent scientific project that tracks government climate action and measures it against the globally agreed Paris Agreement objectives: <https://climateactiontracker.org/>
- ▶ The Systems Change Lab is an initiative that tracks global progress for more than 70 transformational shifts across nearly every system, enabling users to compare current action against targets: <https://systemschangelab.org/>

Box 3: Regional Stocktake and country fact sheets for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Hub of the independent Global Stocktake (iGST) initiative has prepared an in-depth Regional Stocktake. This study synthesizes recent trends in climate action in the region including climate change mitigation, climate impacts and vulnerability and finance. The country fact sheets break key insights down even further. These materials are a prime example how domestic research and civil society organisations can support the contextualization of country performance in light of collective international progress assessed by the GST.

The analysis is available here:

<https://www.iniciativaclimatica.org/balance-regional-independiente-de-cambio-climatico-para-america-latina-y-el-caribe/>



A participant from the focus group discussion emphasized that the simple messages should also be adapted to the specific country contexts in order to maximize public attention on the ground. Weaving the narrative in a way that connects to the current context is critical to achieve the intended goals. For instance, this could be connected to extreme weather events and economic losses in the country but also to consequences regarding the strong economic sectors or matters related to social or development policy in the respective country.

Timing is also crucial. As outlined above, not all countries will have dedicated NDC policy processes. In many countries key features or the upcoming NDC will be negotiated under the label of other long-established policy processes. Effective communication therefore first of all requires to identify the relevant processes and to adjust the timing to the pace that these processes provide.

The main focus of communication in this stage should be to raise public attention in the form of simple messages and catch phrases. The messages should be easily digestible and memorable in order to reduce the complex details of the GST and to maximize public attention as well as media coverage. As the example of the formulation of the 1.5°C temperature limit below shows, it is vital to involve as many stakeholders in the communication in the role of sender as possible. If parties, UN bodies, NGOs and private stakeholders convey similar messages, the public attention will be much higher. In essence, it is vital to create a self-enforcing cycle whereby the few experts involved in the GST process convey the key results to other stakeholders. Those include less informed but interested NGOs and other organizations.

Finally, the tone matters greatly when conveying the message. A suggestion from the focus group discussion emphasized the importance of good practice examples and small success stories when articulating a message which in essence says that much more needs to be done but shows that this is possible. Instead of arguing whether the 1.5°C temperature limit is already out of reach or still achievable, it should be emphasized that every fraction of a degree counts and that it is vital to keep up with the highest possible ambition. There should also be a distinction between mitigation and adaptation, while also considering co-benefits, and ambitious measures taken that consider the country's context.

In terms of the actual results of the Global Stocktake, two sections of the GST decision are particularly salient as the basis for the message. First, the section on “Guidance and way forward” is particularly useful to prompt national governments into action. Second, the mitigation section and in particular §28, §33, §35 and §36 contain the new global goals adopted by COP28 including the goal to triple renewable energy capacity, to double the rate of energy efficiency

improvements, to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, to halt and reverse deforestation, to preserve and restore oceans and to transition sustainable lifestyles, sustainable patterns of consumption and production and circular economy approaches. These headline targets need to be translated to the national context and offer a fulcrum to leverage political discussions at the national level.

Box 4: The structured expert dialogues and the 1.5°C temperature limit

The communication of the 1.5°C temperature limit provides a good example of what successful communication in the agenda-setting phase could look like. A key element was its emergence in the structured expert dialogue under the periodic review, which brought together policy-makers and scientists. The knowledge about climate change provided by the IPCC could find a way into the UNFCCC process through this structured expert dialogue and promoted evidence-based climate policy formulation. This was ensured through party consultations on IPCC reports, which led to the understanding among parties that the 1.5°C temperature limit is needed in order to limit the effects of climate change.

The intensive exchange between scientists and Parties resulted in a situation whereby Parties took ownership of the scientific results under the key message of the 1.5°C temperature limit. Thus, a widespread communication coalition could form that involves parties, NGOs, scientists and media and conveys the same message in “simple” terms. Although, the case is still a special one and is not necessarily applicable to the GST and the adoption to the national case, it still provides some valuable insights as to how scientific findings can be successfully introduced into political discourses, shape discourses and ultimately institutionalized.

3.2 Policy formulation

In the policy formulation phase, the main target audience/recipients of communication should be policy-makers in the whole government in order to have an integrated response. This includes staff members and external advisors in national line ministries or legislative bodies in charge of developing the policy proposals. Communication and coordination in all parts of the government ensures support for the policy proposal and enhances the understanding for the GST. In many countries, structured stakeholder consultation processes might be a formal avenue for influencing NDC formulation. In this phase it is particularly important to involve a diverse group of senders such as civil society, the private sector or women interest groups to account for all parts of the GST decision as reflected in (UNFCCC 2023a, §§ 9, 158, 161, 176, 178, 179). Recent research has shown that strong participatory governance processes and democratic structures do not only increase the legitimacy and ownership of NDCs but are actually also a key determinant of the level of ambition (Peterson et al., 2023; Tørstad et al., 2020).

Box 5: The Presidential Climate Commission in South Africa

The Presidential Climate Commission in South Africa addresses climate change with the attempt to include major stakeholder groups. Formed through collaboration between government, industry and business leaders, labour organizations, research and academic institutions, environmental activists, as well as community and youth representatives, the commission embodies a holistic approach to tackling climate challenges. By integrating diverse perspectives, it has successfully advocated policies and strategies that prioritize both environmental sustainability and socio-economic equity. In its work, the commission contributed to a variety of transition topics such as the just transition framework, the just energy transition and climate finance.

Through transparent communication and inclusive decision-making processes, the commission has fostered trust among stakeholders, paving the way for effective implementation of initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy sources. Additionally, its emphasis on a just transition acknowledges the need to safeguard the livelihoods of workers in traditional industries while facilitating their transition to new, sustainable opportunities. Overall, the Presidential Climate Commission can serve as a model for effective governance advice and collaboration for ambitious climate policy at the country level (Presidential Climate Commission, 2024).

When trying to influence policy developments, more comprehensive and complex messages are needed compared to the other two stages of the policy process. Two aspects of the GST decision are particularly relevant: to define national-level trajectories for the new global goals adopted in Dubai and to underpin those with policies and measures. For the latter, the large number of good practice examples collated under the GST could be particularly useful. For instance, the synthesis report of the co-facilitators of the GST Technical Dialogue (UNFCCC, 2023c) highlights the following good practices:

- ▶ Institutionalizing climate policy development within joint planning frameworks
- ▶ strengthening stakeholder capacity to participate more substantively in NDC preparation and implementation
- ▶ designing planning and reporting systems for transparency and public scrutiny
- ▶ partnering with regional and international organizations to develop a robust NDC; and establishing a scientific and quantitative system for analysing and assessing progress of implementation
- ▶ climate policy should address equity, just transition principles and gender equality to tackle distributional consequences of low-emission development based on best available science

More detailed good practice examples are available on the online searchable Global Stocktake Explorer GST1.org (Climate Policy Radar, 2023).

Selecting good practice examples in areas, in which the country in question has underperformed in previous years and NDC periods, could help to spur a constructive political debate. Obviously, it is very difficult to transplant policies and instruments from one country to another, but they could still be helpful in initiating a discussion. A key contribution of national stakeholders such as local communities and governments, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, civil society, business and financial institutions would be to think about what it would require for the selected good practice examples to be viable within their own national context (UNFCCC 2023a, §158). Engaging with policy-makers and trying to develop the answers to this question collectively could be particularly effective, according to one of our interviewees. This interviewee highlighted that engaging early on with policy-makers and establishing a genuine dialogue between researchers, civil society representatives and policy-makers are more effective than presenting solutions that are not a good match to the political challenges the policy-makers are responding to.

To achieve this, stakeholders should participate early in the process when there is still a greater openness to discussing a wider range of options and ideas. In terms of the communication channel, it is best to draw on established communication platforms. These could be formal stakeholder consultation processes where they have been established. In other cases, stakeholders

might be able to draw on regular informal meetings between policy-makers and key stakeholders. If none of these options are available, it might be necessary to create them. The key here is not to rely on one-off outreach events alone but to establish a genuine and consecutive dialogue at the working level avoiding the highly politicized discussions that will come into play later in the policy process.

As a result of the GST process many good practices have been identified, which function as recommendations for more ambitious climate policy within countries. The good practices proposed in the technical dialogues essentially tackle different areas, namely mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, climate finance, technologies and capacity building as well as overall process-oriented recommendations. Regarding the latter, key recommendations included the institutionalization of climate policy development within countries, capacity building for NDC preparation and implementation as well as partnering with regional and international organizations for NDC development among others (UNFCCC, 2023b).

Meanwhile, scaling up renewables, phasing out unabated fossil fuels as well as inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and promoting just transitions were examples of mitigation measures. On adaptation and loss and damage, it was recommended to mainstream adaptation and bring it to the centre of decision-making, set up disaster risk insurance facilities and early warning systems but also to make use of adaptation action that offer mitigation co-benefits. Finally, it was proposed to improve access to climate finance and especially adaptation finance as well as debt cancellation for developing countries (UNFCCC, 2023b).

The final GST decision (UNFCCC, 2023a) built on those recommended good practices. Apart from what was mentioned earlier on mitigation, the GST decision included a phase down of unabated coal power, a reduction of non-carbon dioxide emission (specifically methane) and an acceleration of low-emission technologies such as renewables, nuclear and abatement and removal technologies (UNFCCC, 2023a, §28). Although some good practices on adaptation were taken up by the GST such as adaptive capacity building and early warning systems the GST stayed rather vague regarding timelines and measurable targets (UNFCCC, 2023a). While, the loss and damage fund was put into operation, the GST also lacked a strong message on climate finance, leaving this highly debated topic for COP29. As a way forward, parties were reminded to hand in the next round of NDCs. Finally, several measures for raising ambitions were mentioned, such as a “Roadmap to Mission 1.5”, a GST dialogue on knowledge sharing by the chairs of the subsidiary bodies as well as initiatives by the high-level champions and other stakeholders (UNFCCC, 2023a, §§ 185, 187, 191).

Box 6: The French Citizens' Climate Assembly

Citizens' Climate Assemblies could be an interesting alternative way of supporting the policy formulation phase. Such Climate Assemblies are a form of deliberative democracy that bring together randomly selected citizens to address the issue of climate change and develop policy recommendations. These assemblies are typically composed of a diverse group of individuals who represent a cross-section of the population, ensuring that a variety of perspectives are considered. By employing such a representative climate assembly to develop policy packages, it may be possible to avoid major societal backlash and gather a wide range of views. Many environmental policy-makers are particularly wary of such backlash after the “yellow vest” movement created significant social disruption in France and even spilled over in several other European countries.

While the French citizens assembly ultimately failed in the sense that the majority of its recommendations were not adopted as policies, it was still remarkably effective in formulating progressive and innovative targets and policy proposals. Holding a citizens' climate assembly specifically to review the results of the GST in the light of the national circumstances and a mandate to develop policy recommendations for the next NDC could be a resource-intensive but potentially particularly effective form of engaging with the GST outcome.

3.3 Decision-making

After policy has been formulated, the process of finally deciding on policies and the next round of NDCs should also be accompanied with appropriate communication. The procedures and actual decision-makers will vary across jurisdictions. In some countries, legislators at national level or for some aspects at state/provincial level may be in charge of adopting key laws underpinning the NDC. In other countries executive decisions will be taken at the head of state or ministerial level. And in some countries, decisions might even be taken by way of a plebiscite (see Box 4, below).

Depending on the assessment of who the relevant decision-makers are, the message, the channel and the tone will vary. In cases, in which ministerial bureaucracies propose decisions, the degree of complexity included in the message can be highest. This includes a high level of specificity and the attempt to meet and incorporate the concrete needs of the ministerial staff. Addressing legislators, it might be necessary to reduce the degree of complexity somewhat, although more complex messaging may be possible when communicating with specialized staff who support the elected representatives. When decisions are taken by citizens in a plebiscite, it is probably advisable to minimize the complexity.

Art. 4.3 of the Paris Agreement stipulates that each NDC will represent the highest possible level of ambition reflecting Parties' common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances. The GST decision further specifies that NDCs should be in line with achieving the 1.5°C temperature limit. In addition, the updated or new NDCs should include a trajectory for transitioning away from fossil fuels and indicate how the party will contribute to the objectives of tripling renewables, doubling energy efficiency, and halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030. This is the yardstick that stakeholders and decision-makers should apply when assessing the suitability of the proposed updated or new NDC and the policies and measures underpinning it. Clearly, there is substantial room for interpretation in terms of what constitutes the “highest possible ambition” and what an individual country should contribute to global objectives. But the political outputs of the GST and the technical information collected contain information that supports stakeholders and policy-makers in shaping a shared interpretation for their respective countries.

One of the focus group participants highlighted that in order to maximize the effect of communication with a view to the decision-making phase, it is vital that the communication at this stage comes from within the respective country and takes into account the specific circumstances. Thus, the communication should be substantially based on the context of the decision-maker which is in the focus. For example, if a Member of Parliament (MoP) is addressed, this member could be reminded of the wider policy context, in which the decision takes place. A MoP who has his or her origins in a district, which experienced extreme weather events, should be addressed differently than a MoP whose district contains a carbon-intensive factory.

Moreover, it has proved to be crucial to coordinate the messaging with a wider coalition of actors, among policy-makers, NGOs, private sector entities and scientists. Conveying aligned narratives, which highlight the positive effects of climate policy-making and point towards the opportunities for the country can be a formula of success. This is visible for example in the US with the Inflation Reduction Act where climate and economic interests were aligned (Dubash, 2023) but also in the recent plebiscite on adopting a climate law in Switzerland (see Box 7).

Box 7: Efforts for a 2050 net-zero target in Switzerland

On 18 June 2023, Swiss voters decided in favour of a law that envisages Switzerland to reach net-zero by 2050. This decision was preceded by the effort among political proponents and scientists to shape the narrative around the net-zero target in the media. Through an intensive exchange of views, a position on a common framing of climate science was established and conveyed to the public. In this regard, a scientific advisory committee was established, in which this exchange took place. The opponents of the law argued that the net-zero target would have negative economic consequences for the country. Through the intensive exchange, the proponents were able to align their positions and counter the argument by showing that the economic consequences of net-zero would indeed be positive and that many new opportunities arise from this target. Additionally, they were able to show that other countries are also doing a lot in terms of addressing climate change and thus counter the argument that “nobody is doing anything so why should we.” As a result, the success in this vote was secured by a message of hope through a combination of showing positive impacts for the country and positive contributions by other countries.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The GST is a novel and unique instrument in environmental governance in that it has an exclusive focus on reviewing collective progress but is nonetheless supposed to inform the national climate policy of Parties. The purpose of the Global Stocktake is to link international and national level policy processes. Specifically, it is supposed to inform the development of the next NDCs. However, there is no formalized process, no automatic mechanism in place to ensure that this happens effectively and the GST is in that sense breaking new ground.

The GST decision arguably marked a milestone in developing a shared understanding of what mitigating climate change actually means. While the UNFCCC process for most of its history focus on aggregate GHG targets, it has now started to break these targets down into actionable items. For the first time ever, a COP decision called for transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems. The decision also highlighted that by 2030, renewable energy capacity needs to be tripled, energy efficiency improvement needs to be doubled, methane emissions need to be reduced sharply, deforestation and forest degradation need to be halted and reversed and efforts to transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production as well as circular economy approaches increased.

While the above analysis focussed on aspects related to climate change mitigation, it should be noted that especially in developing countries but also increasingly in developed countries climate impacts, loss and damage and dire needs for climate change adaptation as well as sustainable development and poverty eradication take centre stage. Effective communication towards the upcoming NDCs should therefore seek to communicate holistic messages, weaving mitigation, adaptation and finance into one story. Taking an “all of economy approach”, highlighting economic opportunities arising from ambitious mitigation and crucially the costs of non-action has proved to be particularly effective.

It is now incumbent on national governments to digest and reflect on the Global Stocktake’s outcomes in the light of their national circumstances. After all, Parties are obligated to provide information on ‘how the Party’s preparation of its nationally determined contribution has been informed by the outcomes of the global stocktake’ (4/CMA.1 Annex I, UNFCCC, 2018a) as part of the information to enhance transparency, clarity and understanding of NDCs. But it cannot be taken for granted that the results of the GST will indeed be taken up in the national level political discourse. It will not happen all by itself. It requires thorough preparation and a lot of communicative and organizational work. This work will vary depending on the phase of the NDC policy cycle: agenda-setting, policy formulation, and decision-making.

The outcomes of the GST can, in principle, be leveraged to more effectively set the political agenda, to formulate adequate and ambitious policies and to serve as points of reference or benchmarks towards the adoption of the updated or new NDCs as well as the policies and measures underpinning it (Moosmann and Pischke, 2024). Each of these phases require a differentiated communication strategy that draws on different elements of the GST outcome.

We have proposed a simple communication model to support policy-makers and stakeholders in shaping their strategies and organizing political processes in an effective manner. The model differentiates the sender and recipient of the information as well as the message (i.e. the objective content), the tone in which the message is phrased as well as the channel by which it is communicated.

With respect to the agenda-setting phase of the NDC cycle, policy-makers and stakeholders should focus on contextualizing the global results addressing the question: “What does this mean for our country?” Each country needs to deliberate individually on how fast it can transition away from fossil fuels and how it can contribute to achieving the new global goals. To do so, they might need to draw on country-specific information which helps them to highlight policy areas in which the given country might have room for improvements compared to its peers.

During the policy formulation phase, messaging can be more complex and specific, developing a genuine dialogue between civil society and scientific experts on the one hand and policy-makers on the other hand. This phase should focus on defining robust national trajectories for transitioning away from fossil fuels and contributing to the global goals on renewables, efficiency, methane, and forests, as well as clear policies and measures to underpin these trajectories. This discussion can draw on the wealth of experiences and good practice examples provided to the Global Stocktake by parties and observers.

Finally, during the decision-making phase, the outcomes of the Global Stocktake may help to underpin the development of a collective understanding of what constitutes the highest possible level of ambition for a given country taking into account its common but differentiated responsibility, capability and national context. This understanding should then be the benchmark for assessing the adequacy of the proposed NDC and the policies and measures underpinning it.

To summarize, this paper offers three major recommendations for policy-makers and stakeholders:

- ▶ Do not take for granted that the outcomes of the Global Stocktake will automatically trickle down into national level political discourse. This will require considerable coordination and communicative efforts from a number of stakeholders to achieve.
- ▶ Design differentiated strategies to affect different stages of the NDC policy process taking into account the different audiences, channels, messages and tone to achieve effective communication for each phase.
- ▶ Coordinate your messaging coalition of like-minded actors, among policy-makers, NGOs, private sector entities and scientists and focus on positive messages highlighting the opportunities arising from ambitious climate action and taking inspiration from other countries.

While the above analysis is focused on national-level policy processes related to mitigation, the insights are perhaps also useful for stakeholders and policy-makers working on other issue areas such as adaptation and means of implementation or at other governance levels. Specifically, engagement with sub-national and non-state actors including through the Global Climate Action Agenda might draw on the same models adapting it to their purposes.

Moreover, this paper has deliberately focused on aspects related to climate change mitigation acknowledging the effect that the scope of the GST as well as the NDCs goes significantly beyond that. Consequently, our recommendations highlight mitigation related aspects. We hope that the model and the practical examples provided in this paper inspire and support policy-makers and stakeholders to ensure that the echo of the Global Stocktake actually resonates with their national (and sub-national) level policy processes and lead to the desired outcome – an effective policy process – and impacts the updated or new NDCs that genuinely represent the highest possible level of ambition.

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