



China: Short Way to Go

On October 28, 2021, China submitted its updated NDC.

The NDC reaffirms targets announced by President Xi Jinping at the UN General Assembly in September 2021: It commits to peak CO₂ emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060; to lower its CO₂ emissions per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) by over 65% from the 2005 level and to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 25%. It pledges to increase forest stock volume by 6 billion m³ from the 2005 levels, and brings total installed capacity of wind and solar power to over 1.2 billion kW.

In a separate statement in September 2021 China also pledged to stop financing coal abroad. In addition to its NDC, China intends to develop a comprehensive and ambitious National Action Plan on methane, aiming to achieve a significant effect on methane emissions control and reductions in the 2020s. WWF welcomes such pledges and announcements.

At COP 26, in November, China and the US issued a joint statement recalling their firm commitment to work together and with other Parties to strengthen implementation of the Paris Agreement. Both countries state they also intend to develop additional measures to enhance methane emission control, at both the national and sub-national levels.

In mid-June 2022 The Adaptation Strategy was published, establishing qualitative targets for China for 2035, albeit with some measurable targets, aiming to develop a climate resilient society. China also presented a Long Term Strategy in November 2021.

According to the Checklist for the NDCs We Want and taking into account that China is an upper-middle income economy responsible for around 26% of global greenhouse gas emissions, we consider that the 2021 NDC has a Short way to Go to become the NDC We Want.

Highlights:

Adaptation: In this assessment we consider the updated NDC alongside the Adaptation Strategy which was pledged in the NDC and delivered in mid-June 2022: It sets a roadmap to establish world leading capacity on climate change monitoring and early warning, and advanced climate risk management and prevention capacity by 2035. It also aims to forge a climate resilient China, with significantly improved adaption capacities throughout the entire society. It establishes 2035 adaptation indicators which are on the whole more qualitative than quantitative, though also establishes measurable indicators and milestones for 2025 and 2030. Alongside this, the updated NDC clearly acknowledges the importance to consider the need for mitigation and adaptation actions as equally important.

Nature-based Solutions: China aims to increase the forest stock volume by 6 billion cubic meters from the 2005 level. It informs that Chinese government attaches great importance to the role of nature-based solutions in reducing GHG emissions, improving climate resilience, and pursuing sustainable development. China also pledges step up the protection of natural ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, rivers, lakes, wetlands and oceans, to improve their climate resilience, functionality and stability. China will strengthen the adaptability of ocean and

coastal zones while improving the capacity of climate disaster prediction, warning and prevention, so as to ensure the safety of people in coastal areas.

Finance: China's efforts to strengthen South-South international cooperation on climate change are particularly welcome, including support to African countries and Pacific Island states. These efforts echo the spirit of the Paris Agreement and are beyond China's legal obligation under the global climate regime. We welcome and encourage China, as a developing country member of the G20, to continue demonstrating leadership and providing this voluntary assistance, meanwhile improving its transparency. President Xi Jinping's statement on committing to stop building new coal-fired power projects abroad is also relevant, despite not applying to existing domestic and overseas coal developments. The updated NDC reports advances related to the establishment of investment policies and market mechanisms.

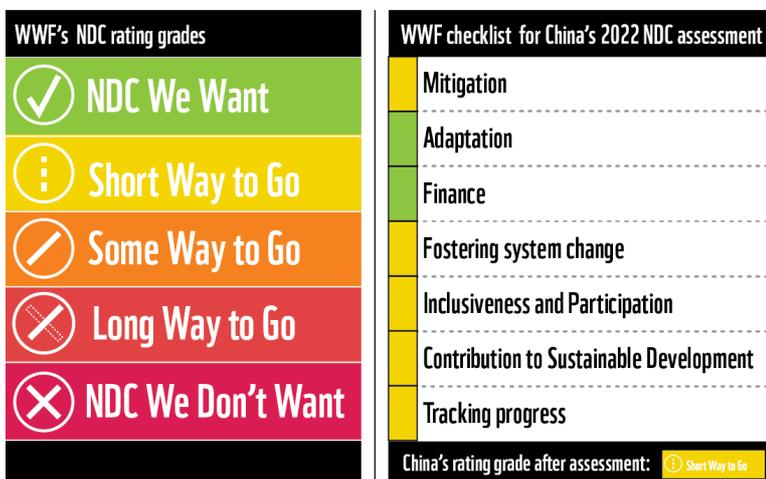
Gaps:

Mitigation and Fostering Systemic Change: China's updated NDC strengthens its previous non-fossil share and carbon intensity targets, while adding a new renewable energy capacity target. Domestic analysis suggests that these could be in line with the Paris Agreement depending on future implementation.

According to the scenario analysis of Tsinghua ICCSD, a key advisory body of China's climate policy decision-making process, China needs to peak national CO2 emissions before 2025, followed by deep decarbonization on a pathway net-zero carbon emission by 2050, along with deep reduction of other non-CO2 GHG emissions. The updated NDC pledges to develop an Action Plan including sectoral decarbonisation planning which will ensure effective implementation of China's NDCs on energy transition. This would be particularly crucial in the context of green recovery from global economic and political turbulence: China continues to face challenges in peaking coal consumption, exacerbated by pressures of energy security and the COVID Pandemic: although coal as a proportion of China's energy mix continues to fall, the National Bureau of Statistics reported a 4.6% absolute annual growth in domestic coal consumption.

China has also already demonstrated clear progress in some areas of NDC implementation – for example, already meeting forestry targets of its initial NDCs communicated in 2015 a decade ahead of schedule, hence renewed stronger target gets tabled. The Action Planning stage could provide a further opportunity for China to take stock of progress and to ensure robust implementation, contributing to the overachieving and/or further enhancement of targets ahead of the next NDC cycle.

To strengthen participation and inclusivity further, we recommend the climate action plans are incorporated into a public consultation process, similarly to as in the case for many climate regulations, before official release.



For more information

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