

Ethiopia leads the way on climate change

(Haftu Gebreamlak)

Ethiopia's commitment on the environment has been demonstrated and praised again and again at several occasions.

The latest testimony was from Tim Gore, Oxfam's international climate adviser, when Ethiopia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) was submitted to the UNFCCC.

Mr. Gore lauded:

"Ethiopia's strategy to build a climate resilient green economy is showing the way to rich countries - from Australia to Japan - who have yet to announce their final countries commitments ahead of the critical climate summit in Paris in December."

Indeed, Ethiopia has a strong track record in the fight against global warming.

Back in 2009, when few appreciated the threat and urgency of the matter, Ethiopia through her late Prime Minister was leading efforts to build an international consensus. Writing an article on Project Syndicate, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi wrote:

"Climate change will hit Africa – a continent that has contributed virtually nothing to bring it about – first and hardest.

Aside from Antarctica, Africa is the only continent that has not industrialised. Indeed, since the 1980s the industrialisation that had taken place in Africa has by and large been reversed. Africa has thus contributed nothing to the historical accumulation of greenhouse gases through carbon-based industrialisation. Moreover, its current contribution is also

negligible, practically all of it coming from deforestation and degradation of forests and farmland.

Yet climate change will hit Africa hardest, because it will cripple the continent's vulnerable agricultural sector, on which 70% of the population depends. All estimates of the possible impact of global warming suggest that a large part of the continent will become drier, and that the continent as a whole will experience greater climatic variability.

We know what the impact of periodic droughts have been on the lives of tens of millions of Africans. We can therefore imagine what the impact of a drier climate on agriculture is likely to be. Conditions in this vital economic sector will become even more precarious than they currently are.

Africa will not only be hit hardest, but it will be hit first. Indeed, the long dreaded impact of climate change is already upon us. The current drought covering much of east Africa – far more severe than past droughts – has been directly associated with climate change."

Indeed, these concerns have long been demonstrated in the national policies and plans of Ethiopia in the past two decades.

The strength of the Constitutional commitment to environment as observed in the FDRE is among the most progressive in the world.

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia recognized in Article 92 "Environmental Objectives":

1. Government shall endeavor to ensure that all Ethiopians live in a clean and healthy environment.
2. The design and implementation of programs and projects of development shall not damage or destroy the environment.

3. People have the right to full consultation and to the expression of views in the planning and implementations of environmental policies and projects that affect them directly.
4. Government and citizens shall have the duty to protect the environment.

Similarly, the government's overall policy goal set two decades ago envisaged:

"to improve and enhance the health and quality of life of all Ethiopians and to promote sustainable social and economic development through the sound management and use of natural, human-made and cultural resources and the environment as a whole so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Four years ago, the government of Ethiopia took its commitment forward with the preparation of the most progressive and forward-looking development plan.

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 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia have put forth their strategy for developing a climate-resilient green economy 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 and coordinated by EPA, 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 GES screened over 150 GHG abatement technologies against cost criteria and conditions in Ethiopia, coming up with an investment plan of over 60 initiatives that can be turned into bankable projects in order to attract international climate finance. The GES's bold proposition is that, 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 CO₂e – over a third. This month the government of Ethiopia took another big step.

The strategy recognises 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.

This month the government of Ethiopia took another big step.

Ethiopia submitted of Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC. 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 CO₂e or lower. This would constitute a 255 MtCO₂e reduction from the BAU emissions in 2030 or 64% by 2030 from the BAU scenario. This emission reduction target encompasses actions in all major emitting sectors including agriculture, forestry, energy and transport, among others.

As one of Africa's most vulnerable nations, and the first least developed country to submit its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC, Ethiopia communicated its plans to cut emissions below 2010 levels from 150 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂e) in 2010 to 145 MtCO₂e in 2030.

According to the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

Ethiopia intends to limit its net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2030 to 145 Mt CO₂e or lower. This would constitute a 255 MtCO₂e reduction from the projected 'business-as-usual' (BAU) emissions in 2030 or a 64% reduction from the BAU scenario in 2030.

Ethiopia also intends 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.

This represents a major shift, since conventional economic growth would more than double Ethiopia's greenhouse emissions by 2030.

Following Ethiopia's submission of the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), Oxfam's international climate adviser, said:

"Oxfam welcomes the ambitious INDC from Ethiopia, as it sets far-reaching short-term and long-term goals on adaptation and reducing emissions. The emission reduction target of at least 64% by 2030 underpins the country's strategy, which counts on the active participation of all citizens in achieving the planned goals, in particular farmers and pastoralists. Ethiopia's INDC also aims to integrate actions that improve the status of women and the welfare of children.

"Ethiopia's strategy to build a climate resilient green **economy is showing the way to rich countries - from Australia to Japan** - who have yet to announce their final countries commitments ahead of the critical climate summit in Paris in December.

"To deliver this plan, international climate finance will be essential. This shows why it is imperative that rich countries deliver on their existing commitments on climate finance, including to the Green Climate Fund, and prepare to make new ones in Paris for the post-2020 period."

The Ethiopian Intended Nationally Determined Contribution has been through an inclusive process and it is also aligned with the national Growth and Development Plan as well as the Climate Resilient Green Economy vision and country strategy.

Carbon credit selling is mentioned as one means of achieving the country's Green Economy strategy. Adaptation to climate change is being fully mainstreamed into development activities and sector adaptation plans. These are the long-term and near-term goals of the INDC. Also detailed are ways to improve livelihoods and the landscape under three approaches, dealing with drought, flood and other cross cutting interventions which are detailed under the medium and long term actions laid out in the document.

The INDC document identifies major areas for future research: quantifying and assigning shares of unsupported and supported contributions; and identifying the technical support needed to introduce new and additional policies and actions.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest will be responsible for organizing the monitoring and evaluation of these adaptation plans that are also subject to consultative dialogue to review their implementation. The country has already removed fossil fuel subsidies to enable enhanced generation and use of clean and renewable energy.

If Ethiopia's planned activities are fully implemented, it will reduce per capita emissions to 1.1 TCO₂e 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 CO₂e.

Indeed, Ethiopia's continued commitment to fighting global warming has become recognized across the globe. Just after the submission of Ethiopia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), a senior official of the government praised Ethiopia.

French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development and COP21 President, said:

I welcome the publication by Ethiopia of its contribution to COP21, the third contribution from an African country and the first from a member of the group of least developed countries.

Subject to adequate funding, this contribution notably sets a target for limiting Ethiopia's net greenhouse gas emissions to 145 million tons of CO₂ equivalent or lower by 2030, a reduction of 64% compared to the expected trend with unchanged policies. This goal reflects Ethiopia's determination to become a carbon-neutral economy over the long term.

I also welcome the fact that this contribution includes adaptation measures aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the Ethiopian people and economy to the impacts of climate disruption.

Indeed, Ethiopia is firmly committed to the idea of advancing both environment and development side by side.

As clearly put in Ethiopia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), Ethiopia's long term goal is to ensure that adaptation to climate change is fully mainstreamed into development activities. This will reduce vulnerability and contribute to an economic growth path that is resilient to climate change and extreme weather events. It is pointed out in the document that:

Because climate change will affect all geographic areas of the country, its solution requires the participation of the entire population, especially farmers and pastoralists. Parallel to this, Ethiopia's response to climate change aims to integrate actions that improve the status of women and the welfare of children. Furthermore, measures to address climate change will be planned and implemented in a manner that addresses the wellbeing of the elderly, persons with disabilities and environmental refugees.

Ethiopia shall maintain her pro-environment role at home and abroad as it is an essential feature of her pro-people developmental paradigm and a reflection of her responsible foreign relations direction!!!