



# NDC INSIGHTS

## n°6

### Laying the foundations for long-term emissions reductions

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As the deadline for updated NDCs approaches this September, attention is rightly focused on short-term emissions cuts. But national pathways developed by DDP country teams show that meeting the objectives of the Paris Agreement—including carbon neutrality—will depend on choices made today that shape emissions well beyond 2030. Short-term measures may not always deliver immediate emissions reductions, but they are often essential enablers of long-term transformation. The latest DDP analysis reminds us: what countries build, legislate, and normalize today will shape emissions far beyond 2030.

#### What national pathways tell us

Long-term emissions reductions depend on a foundation built early. Whether it is public investment in infrastructure, legal reforms, or shifts in individual behaviour, decisions made now and in the coming years will either lock countries into high-carbon pathways—or unlock sustainable futures.

Crucially, DDP country teams show that achieving deep reductions by mid-century depends on aligning short-term policies with long-term needs.

#### Key enablers of long-term decarbonization

##### Infrastructure and technology

In **China**, halting coal plant expansion by 2025 helps avoid stranded assets and accelerates the energy transition. In **Senegal**, a combined investment in renewables and limited gas use secures energy access while maintaining alignment with net-zero goals.

##### Institutions and governance

In **Nigeria**, transforming the freight sector requires more than technical options—it needs institutional reforms, planning frameworks, and implementation capacities. Without this, structural barriers may delay or derail low-carbon investments.

##### Lifestyles and behaviour

**India's** Mission LiFE is laying the groundwork for long-term change by encouraging energy-saving behaviours and sustainable consumption. While impacts may be modest now, they scale over time—reducing energy demand and unlocking further reductions in hard-to-abate sectors.

#### What this means for NDCs

As countries prepare to submit new or updated NDCs, the stakes go beyond near-term emissions. The structural foundation for deep decarbonization must be embedded now, within this round of national commitments—not postponed to future policy cycles. This means using NDCs not only as tools for tracking short-term progress but as levers to drive systemic transformation across critical sectors.

First, NDCs should prioritize early action in sectors with long lead times, such as power infrastructure, freight transport, and urban planning. Decisions in these areas often involve multidecade assets and require years to implement. Delaying action here risks locking in high-carbon pathways that will be costly—or impossible—to unwind later.

Second, governments should consider including targets that reflect structural shifts, rather than focusing solely on near-term emissions reductions. These could include quantified goals for deploying key infrastructure (e.g. kilometres of new rail lines), timelines for ending the approval of new fossil-based assets (e.g. coal or gas plants), or mandates for clean technologies (e.g. all new buildings zero-carbon-ready by a certain year). Unlike traditional emissions targets, these structural targets are not about the tonnes reduced in the next five years—but about ensuring the right systems are in place to enable sustained reductions over time.

Third, short-term measures should be designed to unlock longer-term shifts. The institutional reforms, financing frameworks, and social policies adopted now must lay the groundwork for sustained transformation—especially where behaviour change or new infrastructure is needed. Similarly, investments in institutional capacity and governance—though less visible—are essential enablers of long-term transformation.

Finally, countries should frame their NDCs as part of a long-term vision, grounded in a sectoral understanding of how emissions reductions will unfold over time. By decomposing long-term targets into near-term milestones by sector—such as power, transport, and demand—countries can improve credibility, signal ambition, and align public investment with their future mitigation needs.

#### Next in NDC Insights

In our next edition, we'll explore how ambitious climate action can be made socially acceptable and economically inclusive. Drawing on new insights from **Brazil**, the **US**, and **Argentina**, we'll examine how fiscal tools, mobility policies, and international cooperation can protect vulnerable groups during the shift to net zero.

#### Missed the last newsletters? Download:

- ["Beyond pledges: Are NDCs addressing the transformations we need?"](#)
- ["What role for Carbon Capture and Storage?A measured look at its place in the transition"](#)
- ["Can land use deliver on climate and development goals?"](#)
- ["Can we tackle non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions without compromising food security?"](#)
- ["From ambition to action: Where can countries reduce emissions in the next five years?"](#)

#### About the DDP and why this newsletter matters

The [Deep Decarbonization Pathways \(DDP\)](#) initiative supports countries in designing strategies for deep emissions cuts aligned with development goals.

Since 2013, DDP has worked with local experts to build bottom-up, country-driven pathways that turn climate ambition into real, grounded action.



### Stay updated with the country news, publications and events!

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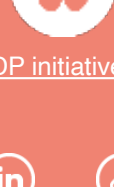
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