



# From Paris to Marrakech and beyond: What next for climate policy in the Western Balkans?

November 2016

## Paris enters into force, Marrakech conference starts

Since the Paris Agreement was struck at the global climate Summit in Paris (COP21) last year, countries have come together at an unprecedented rate to ensure its early entry into force. Political momentum to combat climate change has grown remarkably, with international agreements recently adopted to tackle emissions from aviation<sup>1</sup> and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs – extremely powerful industrial greenhouse gases)<sup>2</sup>. In October 2016, both thresholds enabling the Paris Agreement to enter into force were reached – as it was ratified by over 55 countries covering over 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Such unprecedented political support ensured that the Paris Agreement enters into force on 4 November 2016, less than a year after it was agreed. The early entry into force means that the first Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) will take place already at this year's UN Climate conference – also known as COP22 – being held in Marrakech on 7-18 November. This is good news for the climate, as it creates space for immediate discussions on the Paris Agreement's implementation.

## What was agreed in Paris?

The UNFCCC COP21 Summit in Paris in December 2015 delivered the long sought outcomes for international climate action. For the first time in history all countries agreed to take drastic action to protect the planet from climate change, to jointly pursue efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C, and to rapidly reduce emissions towards net zero in the second half of the century. In addition, the Paris Agreement created a framework for global climate policy by providing common

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/Historic-agreement-reached-to-mitigate-international-aviation-emissions.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=27086&ArticleID=36283>



rules for transparency and accountability, and the requirements for regular 5-year revisions of countries' commitments.

## What can we expect from the Marrakech meeting?

With the Paris Agreement in place, COP22 must provide solid basis for a rapid transition away from fossil fuels in the coming years. This is why the discussions are expected to focus on technical details such as various modalities of implementation. Next to these, participants will also discuss how to scale up climate action and finance before 2020; how to establish a process for assessing and reviewing countries' pledges under the Paris Agreement; and how to scale up support for loss and damage<sup>3</sup>. For these discussions to move swiftly forward, it is important that countries bring concrete plans to the table.

### Enhancing action before 2020

Action before the year 2020 is a prerequisite for reaching the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement. In Marrakech discussions on how to scale up emission cuts in the coming three years will be a priority, and the Moroccan presidency will seek concrete contributions from countries.

Money to help poor countries tackle the impacts of climate change must also be the focus of the discussions about increasing action before 2020. Donor countries must provide greater clarity on how the \$100 billion roadmap will guarantee sufficient support for the most vulnerable communities.

### Reviewing and scaling up ambition for action after 2020 (NDCs)

The process of how to raise the level of countries' individual climate pledges under the Paris Agreement (so-called Nationally Determined Contributions, NDCs) must start in Marrakech so that these can be reviewed as soon as possible. At COP22 countries should agree on critical elements of this process so that they are ready to review their pledges in 2018.

## What does this mean for the Western Balkan countries?

### Ratification of the Paris Agreement

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed set of expectations from Marrakesh, please see CAN International Annual Policy Document: [http://www.climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/marrakech\\_english\\_summary\\_october\\_2016.pdf](http://www.climatenetwork.org/sites/default/files/marrakech_english_summary_october_2016.pdf)



Western Balkan countries are parties<sup>4</sup> to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and have signed the Paris Agreement. However, only Albania has ratified it so far.

As Western Balkan countries seek to join the EU, they usually associate themselves with the EU position. Yet, it will be hard for them to formally take part in the discussions concerning the Paris Agreement implementation, if they do not join it swiftly.

The EU applied a non-standard procedure of ratification, where a ratification by the European Council and the European Parliament bridged the usual practice of ratification by all the 28 national parliaments. It shows how important it is to join the upcoming discussions timely. Hence, this is the first step that countries should take to fulfil the commitments made in Paris.

### Revising national climate targets

In the run up to the Paris Summit, Western Balkan countries submitted their first greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the period up to 2030. With the Paris Agreement entering into force, these commitments are now also known as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, formerly Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDCs).

The table below shows key data about the emission reduction pledges. All pledges are made for the period up to 2030, but with different baselines. The most disturbing feature of the submitted pledges is their lack of ambition: most of the targets account for an actual increase of emissions between now and 2030. Declaring emission reductions with 1990 as the base year (or an ambitious BAU, for that matter) has not been a difficult task for countries that suffered a major decline in economic activity since 1990. When comparing targets to 1990 levels, countries can declare significant reductions, but at the same time, they can increase their emissions year by year and expand their coal fleet.

**Table 1:** Overview of mitigation commitments by SEE countries (Sources: CAIT by WRI, INDC submissions by countries)

Country	INDC (% reduction by 2030)	Baseline	Change compared to 1990 (%)	Change compared to 2012 (%)
Albania	-11.5	BAU	-55	-26
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-2	BAU	+18	+10
Macedonia	-30	BAU	+22	+11
Montenegro	-30	1990	-30	+9
Serbia	-9.8	1990	-9.8	+11

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of Kosovo, that is not a UN member.



As mentioned, all these countries wish to join the EU well before 2030. This means that their climate pledges need to be in line with the EU's target, which is currently to reduce emissions by at least 40% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Pledges that allow for growth of emissions are clearly not in line with the EU target, let alone the 1.5°C goal agreed in Paris. This is particularly true in countries that are largely coal dependent, because it means they will have most of their emissions covered by the EU ETS.

Climate action in the region must be ramped up by the end of 2018 at the latest, particularly since the region is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. It may, in fact, be among the first and worst hit in Europe. The countries need both political pressure and support from the EU, including financial and technical assistance to step up their climate action.

It is positive that the countries remained largely open to revising their NDCs. At the same time, they acknowledged financial and technical needs as well as the unreliability of the emissions data that they have used to plan their future emissions. Implementation of the EU Monitoring Mechanism Regulation, which is also recommended by the European Commission and the Energy Community<sup>5</sup>, is an excellent opportunity to improve national data and ensure its comparability across the region. This is a pre-requisite for informed policy-making so the Regulation must be implemented as soon as possible.

### **Turning commitments into action**

As countries move closer to the EU, their NDCs and climate and energy strategies will be subject to the increasing scrutiny of the European Commission, aimed at aligning them with the EU goals. As agreed in Paris, these commitments will need to be increased every 5 years. It is of utmost importance that they are turned into tangible action on the ground.

Coupled with targeted national policies, we need to see a shift of financial flows away from fossil fuel projects without further delay. In practice, this means cancellation of new fossil fuel projects and a gradual transition to an energy system that treats energy efficiency as the first fuel and relies on a balanced mix of renewable energy sources. This should ensure that the region is steered towards a zero-carbon economy, in a just and timely manner and that a carbon lock-in is avoided, in both the EU and the region.

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<sup>5</sup> Energy Community is an intergovernmental organisation aimed at enhancing regional cooperation in the field of energy between the EU and the Balkan and Black Sea regions. It aims to enable an integrated energy market across Europe. For more information, see



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**Climate Action Network Europe** is Europe's largest coalition working on climate and energy issues. With over 130 member organisations in more than 30 European countries - representing over 44 million citizens - CAN Europe works to prevent dangerous climate change and promote sustainable climate and energy policy in Europe.