

AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES OF THE FIRST GST OUTCOME: A FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ International cooperation on climate is happening through a diversity of actors, scale, focus, mode of action. These processes have flourished over time but remained largely scattered and uncoordinated with often no real accountability. An opportunity exists for enhancing international cooperation through a collective framework that guides, articulates and integrates these voluntary activities for more effective outcomes.
- ▶ International cooperation has not achieved its full potential in driving climate ambition and addressing the implementation gap. The current efforts in the Global Stocktake (GST) focus primarily on enhanced ambition in action and support, which is not sufficient to address climate change at a transformative scale.
- ▶ A new vision that brings creativity and innovation in policy making and international cooperation towards enhanced action and support, with a needs-based, context specific approach and systems transformations at its center, is necessary towards more ambitious future climate action. This vision could inform the next round of commitments to action and support in 2025, and, in the longer-term, help structure how international cooperation is considered in subsequent GST processes.
- ▶ For African countries, the achievement of the Paris Agreement (PA) outcomes in the transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies is characterised by addressing the triple challenge of advancing poverty reduction and reducing/avoiding high emitting pathways, whilst addressing inequality. Some global structural challenges on trade and finance prejudice the ability of African countries to build mitigative and adaptive capacity.
- ▶ The pillars of enhanced international cooperation should build on providing guidance on the broad typologies of cooperative initiatives through embedding the criteria of; environmental outcomes, transformative potential, distributive outcomes, economic performance, and institutional strength as part of a guidance to all international cooperation; the scope of such criteria applying to mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation.
- ▶ There is an opportunity for CoP 28 to decide on a Dialogue towards a framework for enhanced international cooperation as a means of driving ambition and implementation. The reach of such Dialogue would extend to institutions whose activity has a bearing on climate action beyond the UNFCCC, as such providing guidance to donor countries, donor institutions, international financial institutions, and other relevant stakeholders.

Background

This report follows the status quo analysis report¹ of the IDDRI - KAS, Africa GST Project, which identified that, despite the potential of international cooperative initiatives in enhancing climate action, African countries' participation remains limited. The report further postulated that the level of participation could be driven by international cooperative initiatives not addressing the priorities and needs of African countries.

Furthermore, this report draws from the reflections on international cooperation by Latin American Countries (LAC)² as part of the IDDRI Deep Decarbonisation Pathways Project. This is because there are commonalities in challenges and opportunities the two regions face in the transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient development that could be identified.

This report identifies some challenges and opportunities for enhanced international cooperation in the GST as a means of addressing the ambition

and implementation gap identified in the Technical Dialogue Synthesis Report (TD-SYR). It also includes recommendations on how these could be captured in the CoP 28 outcomes.

The report therefore shares African perspectives, and follows a structure that covers the following topics,

- what is international cooperation, and what typologies exist;
- the potential of international cooperation as an enabler of climate ambition;
- challenges and opportunities of the shift to low-carbon and climate-resilient development;
- needed changes in international co-operation; and
- recommendations on the outcomes of the GST.

The process followed in the production of the report included review of literature and consultations with some key African negotiators, as such not derived from an in-depth study of international cooperation in Africa.

1 https://ddpinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/africa_gst_paper.pdf

2 <https://ddpinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/gst-lac-iddri-tempus-submission-vf-1.pdf>

What is international cooperation?

International cooperation generally refers to processes of policy coordination by which states and other entities, such as multinational corporations, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations adjust their actions towards a desired outcome. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the central platform for international cooperation through its provisions, such as for cooperative approaches on carbon markets, and finance for developing countries, amongst others.

Beyond its institutions and provisions, the UNFCCC has stimulated the action of various stakeholders towards climate action. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Patt, A., *et al* 2022) [1] cooperation is occurring at multiple governance levels including cities, transnational partnerships and alliances involving non-state and sub-national actors,

which are increasingly playing a significant role in stimulating in low-carbon technology diffusion and emissions reductions. Beyond the low carbon action, the same can be said for other thematic areas such as adaptation and means of implementation.

Typologies of international cooperation can be classified by the type of actors, i.e. government, business, non-governmental; or the level at which they operate, i.e. subnational, national, transnational; whereas some can be classified on the basis of scale, e.g. global, sub-global, regional. Furthermore, some can be characterised by their focus, e.g. sectoral or economy-wide; whereas some are characterised by the mode of action e.g. technical support, setting of standards or targets, enabling implementation, etc.

The diverse typologies suggest a very complex arena of international cooperation on climate action, and raise

the question of how the UNFCCC, through the GST, can enhance international cooperation as envisaged in Article 14.3 [2] of the PA.

The underlying common characteristic of international cooperation is the voluntary nature, hence any consideration of enhancement should maintain the sanctity of this characteristic. Examples of these are 'coalitions' of the willing or climate clubs³. This voluntary nature translates into such clubs not having demanding obligations on their members, whilst providing member-only benefits to encourage participation. Some form of standard-setting cooperation such as carbon border tax adjustment schemes, and environmental standards can however be unilateral and pose challenges for affected participants, who may not be willing participants.

The IPCC 2022 (Figure 14.3 on p1483, Ch 14 , WGIII, AR6) presents climate governance for international cooperation on mitigation as including:

- Global treaties, such as Montreal Protocol, Convention on Biodiversity, among others;

- United Nations programmes and agencies such as UNEP, UNDP, UN REDD+ programme, among others;
- Global Organisations such as IRENA, IEA, MDBs, among others;
- Regional, multi, and bilateral agreements such as on trade, development, South-South cooperation; and Non-state transnational actors, NGOs, business partnerships, city networks, among others.

These characteristics are also important in understanding how the UNFCCC can contribute to enhanced international cooperation and the challenges thereof. Moreover, the characteristics of cooperation, raises questions about their effectiveness in delivering the desired outcomes considering the light obligation under these clubs, and how such clubs can reinforce the multilaterally agreed principles of the UNFCCC.

³ (Patt, A., et al 2022) defines as international actor groups that start with members fewer than the UNFCCC, with aims of cooperating on one or more climate change related activities.

International Cooperation as an enabler of climate ambition

Article 14.3 of the PA provides for “The outcome of the global stocktake shall inform Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Agreement, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action.

However the main focus in the GST discussion have been on the first part, which is ‘... updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support ...’. The focus on updating and enhancing commitments is therefore not a full utilisation of tools available under the PA, as that may address the ‘ambition gap’, whereas international cooperation can play the a significant role in addressing the ‘implementation gap’. The importance of international cooperation also lies in the fact that, not all climate action countries undertake take the form of formal commitments under the UNFCCC.

The synthesis report of the GST Technical Dialogue (UNFCCC, 2023) in Key Finding #6 identifies systems transformations as central to achieving mitigation objectives under the PA, whilst noting that “More effective international cooperation and credible initiatives can contribute to bridging emissions and implementation gap”. As much as this statement is directed at mitigation, it can safely apply to all thematic areas of the PA including adaptation and means of implementation. The challenge in this regard is not only how such cooperation delivers enhanced action, but also how to make such ‘credible’.

Pursuing a “more effective” cooperation suggests a need for a new vision for international cooperation, further building on Key Finding #5 which suggests that creativity and innovation and international cooperation are needed if the goals of the PA are to be

Box 1: A Case of African JET-Ps

JET-Ps are an emerging form of international cooperation, characterised and upfront joint political declaration towards system transformation and mobilisation of finance. The model provides a significant opportunity with cases of South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam, for activities in the order of \$8.5bn, \$20bn, \$15.5bn respectively. The political declaration is followed by an investment plan, as such following a different path from traditional climate action finance, with a potentially for streamlined funding and addressing a broader set of context-based needs than just finance. For Africa, Senegal signed its partnership with the IPG in June 2023, with the partnership focussing on increasing the share of renewable energy in lieu of a short term €2.5bn in mobilised finance; whereas Nigeria is working on a JET-P proposal announced at the Africa Climate Week in 2023.

achieved, particularly towards advancing domestic measures of action and support. This innovation and creativity in policies should therefore have systems transformation at the center.

Some emerging forms of cooperation offer alternative opportunities for supporting the transitions, however these are not yet tested for effectiveness in outcomes and credibility, such as JET-Ps in **Box 1**. As much as the effectiveness of such partnerships has not been tested, Torres-Gunfaus, *et al* 2022 [3] suggest that amongst other considerations of JET-Ps, they should:

- make a difference on amounts of mobilised amounts of money, noting the actual costs and needs may be significantly larger than the finance provided;
- further provide a move from project level focus to whole-system approaches with development at the center; and
- transition from the traditional donor system of developed countries setting the terms of financial support, rather to give way to true partnerships.

Figure 1: The only mention of international cooperation on TD artwork



The TD-SYR assertion is consistent with the IPCC finding that international cooperation can address barriers to climate action, whilst noting that the extent to which countries increase the ambition of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and ensure they are effectively implemented, will depend in part on the successful implementation of the support mechanisms in the PA.

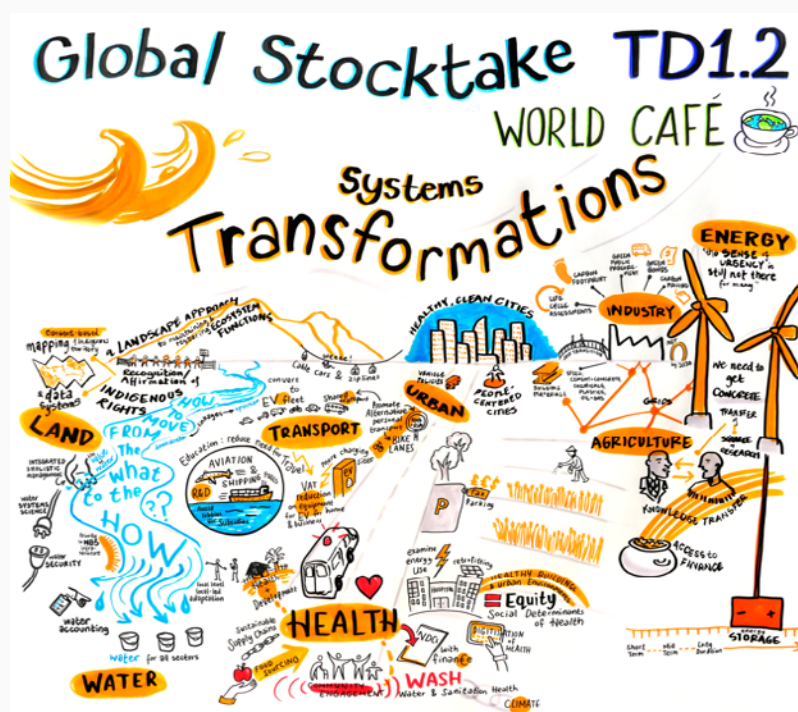
In that regard, the IPCC also indicates that many developing countries' NDCs have components or additional actions that are conditional on receiving assistance with respect to finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building. The question therefore is, whether the needs of African countries - financial and non-financial – are understood in order to unlock action and ambition. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2023) [4], INDCs submitted by African countries by and large were not informed by national development goals, hence may not be a true reflection of national needs and potential. Hence it can be further

argued that, African countries may not even fully appreciate their needs.

For African countries, of specific interest and concern would be the implementation gap, understood to be of the difference between commitments made to date compared to policy and measures to achieve those commitments. Noting that 45 of the 55 African countries have submitted new or updated NDCs, with only 1 country that has not submitted. Thus, the challenge facing African countries may not always be ascribed to a lack of commitment to act, but rather the ability to implement. In addressing the implementation gap, it can be argued that international cooperation and means of implementation constitute the biggest opportunity for Africa.

The required systems transformation towards climate resilience and low-carbon development necessitates a consideration of the context of African countries, priorities and needs of those countries as that is at the core of not only enabling the transition, but also in a 'just' manner.

Figure 2: Systems transformation at the center



Challenges and opportunities for enhanced cooperation on climate action

Context of African countries

The role of understanding the context of developing countries in the largely unexplored opportunity in international cooperation on climate action is aptly presented by Athanasiou, T., *et al.* (2023) [5] by suggesting that '...the GST [should] take a concrete, bottom-up, needs-based approach to collective assessment, one that holds the notions of adaptive and mitigative capacities at its core.' The report further elaborates that needs are not just financial, an understanding of the context and non-financial needs is critical to unlocking effective international cooperation and enhanced climate action.

Africa is the most under-developed region in the world. As of 2021, only Seychelles and Mauritius with HDI Index of 0.785 and 0.802 were above the world average of 0.732 (UNDP, 2023) [6]. In pursuing the SDGs, African governments are off-track to meet the targets by 2030, with no country scoring green for 13 of the 17 goals, where all African countries are currently struggling to tackle all kinds of inequalities (Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2020) [7].

The region's level of development presents both opportunities and challenges in that, the immediate need is achieving development outcomes with the opportunity of 'tunnelling' through the environmental Kuznet's curve, leveraging advances in green technologies and resource protection. The necessary balance for African countries should therefore be informed by conditions that enable the achievement of both the development outcomes and imperatives for the transitions.

The poor performance on development indicators in Africa has context, where Africa's underdevelopment is historical and structural in nature. According to Sokona, Y *et al* (2023) [8], African economies suffer at least three structural deficiencies that constrain development potential, viz., a lack of food sovereignty; a lack of energy sovereignty; and low-value-added content of exports relative to imports.

These deficiencies in turn contribute to structural trade deficits, weakened African currencies and

pressure to issue debt denominated in foreign currencies, resulting in a vicious debt cycle. African debt has increased by 183% between 2010 (\$648bn) and 2022 (\$1,833trn); with 27 countries above the 60% debt-GDP ratio, whereas 23 governments were spending more than 10% of their revenues on interest repayments (UNCTAD, 2023) [9].

It can be further argued that these structural deficiencies lead to undiversified primary resource dependent economies that are vulnerable and not globally competitive, resulting limited capacity to advance their mitigative and adaptive capacities. These structural deficiencies can be postulated to deepen in light of emerging trade-based international cooperation include the use of instruments such as product standards, carbon border adjustment tools, amongst others.

This form of international cooperation, such as the European Union's (EU) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) being implemented starting the 1st October 2023. Such cooperation holds the promise of providing an impetus for transformation towards greener industrial production, and stimulating green

Box 2: Carbon Border Adjustments Mechanism (CBAM)

To fight carbon leakage and equalise the price of carbon between domestic products and imports, the EU has started with the implementation of CBAM, as such stimulating cooperation on green transition. In its initial phase, the mechanism covers the cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen sectors.

The impact of this instrument on African economies is moderate even at €87/ton where from different modelling schemes project the reduction in GDP between 0.18% and 0.91% for any one African country. In a hypothetical example where CBAM applies to all imports, the GDP reductions are projected to be in the order of 5.72%.

Source: African Climate Foundation & London School of Economics and Political Science. 2023. [20]

industry beyond the EU borders. However, the impact of such mechanisms is not yet fully understood, especially on African economies.

This form of cooperation presents opportunities if implemented in a manner that takes into account unique challenges of developing countries, as well as the required technical cooperation, and in accordance principles that are consistent with the UNFCCC. However, the unilateral nature of trade-based forms of international cooperation risk such initiatives having a negative impact due to them not voluntary, potentially unresponsive to needs of participating/affected countries.

Faced with depreciating currencies and rising import prices, African governments typically resort to subsidising necessities thereby artificially maintaining exchange rates by accumulating more debt and diminished mitigative and adaptive capacity. These structural challenges extend to the global financial architecture that translates to excessively high costs of accessing climate and development finance compared with developed countries, trade barriers for their products, commodity dependence at the lowest end of global value chains, and volatile financial flows (UNCTAD, 2023) [10]. The global financial architecture reinforces the drivers of debt accumulation in developing countries.

For African countries, sovereign entities issue bonds at high discount and borrow at high-interest rates as they are considered riskier. This is regardless of the fact that African countries with less than a 60% IMF benchmark debt-to-GDP ratios are classified as sub-investment grade; bonds from African countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zambia trade at 6.6%, 9.1%, and 38% respectively compared to the global average of 0.74%. Whereas Italy with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 134.8% was paying 0.91% on its 10-year sovereign bond at the height of the pandemic downturn. The risk perception is also not informed by the historical record of default. For instance, Namibia's 10-year dollar-denominated bond had a 481.6 basis point spread compared to Greece at 222.6 basis points, even though the countries have a similar credit rating of Ba3, but with Greece having a history of defaulting. [11] Noting this context, the preamble of the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) [12] and Article 3.4 affirms the development imperative of climate action, and that it should take full account

of the legitimate priority of developing countries to sustain economic growth and eradicate poverty and that economic development is central to a climate change response. The question then becomes what African countries need to do to be within sustainable development pathways, and the collective responsibility of the global community.

What is needed?

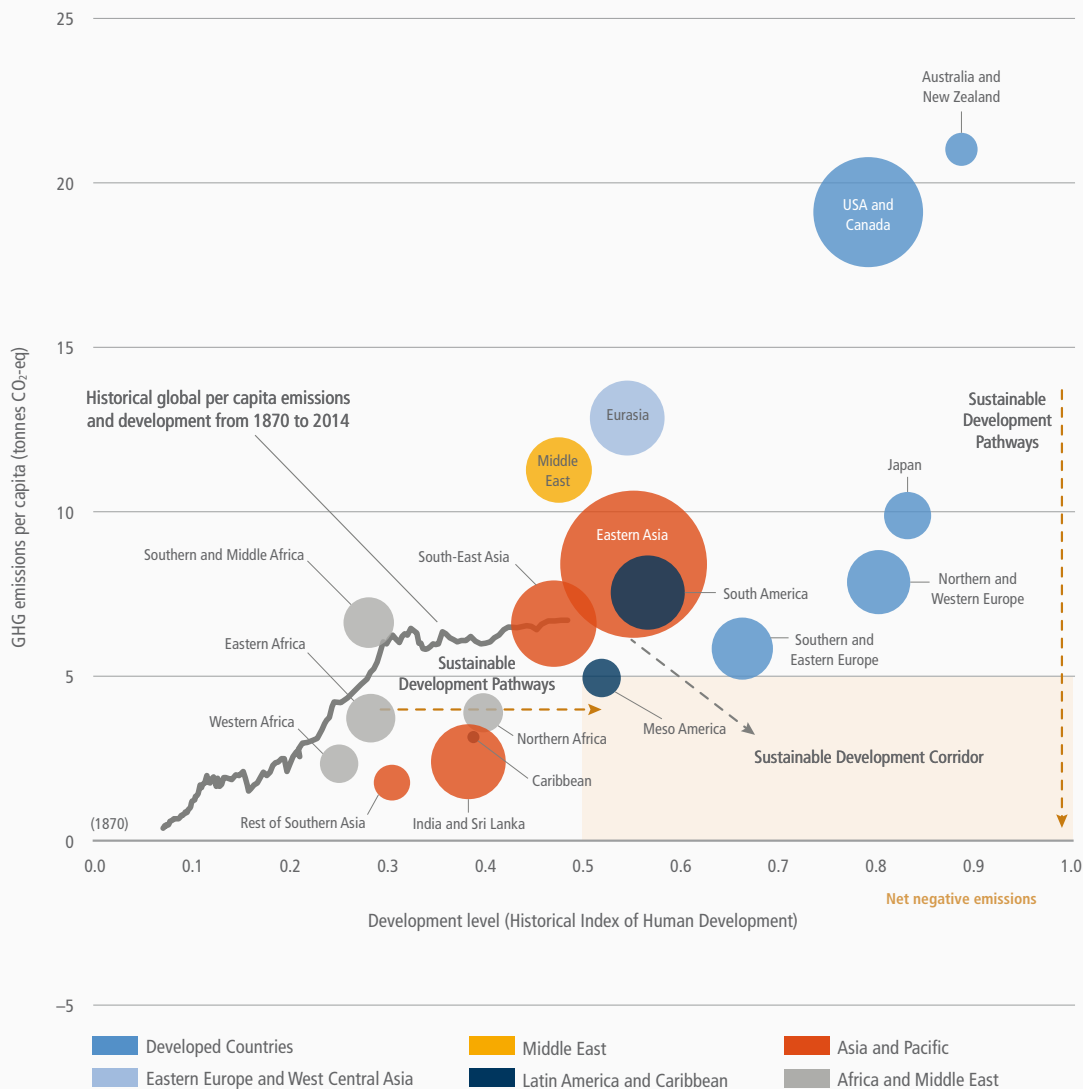
The context of the pursuit of sustainable development and climate resilience in a carbon constrained world is aptly expressed in **Figure 3**, which is an excerpt from the IPCC, Pathak, *et al* (2022) [13].

With the exception of Southern and Middle (Central) Africa, African countries have always been within range of sustainable emissions per capita, with the common challenge across all African countries being how to close the development gap. It is therefore unsurprising that the majority of African countries prioritise increasing the availability of modern energy, where 600 million people, or 43% of the total population lack access to electricity, and 970 million Africans lack access to clean cooking [14]. On the other hand, Southern and Middle (Central) Africa have the dual challenge of both reducing emissions per capita whilst pursuing sustainable development goals.

Typical of most developing countries, African countries have a wider development gap than developed countries, with the latter's challenge being a reduction in consumption, rather than development. A further global problem faced by all countries is inequality, as data shows a number of Southern African countries whose Gini coefficient is in the high 50s, with South Africa breaking the 60 barrier [15]. This context suggests that, African countries must achieve the reduction of poverty and extreme poverty in some sectors of the population, while simultaneously exiting fossil-fuel-intensive activities.

In Africa, agriculture and land-use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) emissions account for about 55% of Africa's annual emissions. The African Group has therefore taken a position that international co-operation in the for JET-PS does not reflect an understanding of needs of African countries as it underplays the importance of non-energy emission sources in Africa's just transition [16], rather for JET-Ps for the cooperation to cover a larger sector for African emissions.

Figure 3: Sustainable development pathways towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals.



Adaptation has been cited as a priority by African countries due to the high reliance on natural resources for livelihoods and economic development. The changing climate system however presents risks from climate impacts that risk eroding any development gains being made, particularly through:

- flooding from sea level rise, and heavy precipitation events;
- reduction in agricultural productivity from flood-drought cycles; and
- loss of biodiversity, and land degradation.

For African countries, more than 110 million people on the continent were directly affected by weather,

climate and water-related hazards. In 2022, causing more than US\$ 8.5 billion in economic damages. There were a reported 5,000 fatalities, of which 48% were associated with drought and 43% were associated with flooding, but the true toll is likely to be much higher because of under-reporting [17]. This can be seen as the rationale for adaptation being a priority for African countries as insignificant contributors to global emissions, including the pursuit of global targets to drive international co-operation under the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) Framework.

The structure of African economies has a significant contribution to the mitigative and adaptive capacity

and the ability to finance its transition. The transition from fossil fuels, noting that, the share of fossil fuel products in overall export basket exceeds 40% for countries in Central, Western and Northern Africa, whereas they are not a significant share in the export basket of countries in Eastern and Southern Africa [18]. With the foreign demand for fossil fuel products likely to decline on account of the transition, this is likely to result in eroding the foreign exchange reserves of many countries in Africa. For example, for about 15 African countries, the contribution of earnings from

exports of fossil fuels to the total foreign exchange reserves exceeded 25% for at least one year during the period 2017-2022⁴. This raises the risk raised in Key Finding 3 of the SYR which suggests that "...systems transformations open up many opportunities, but rapid change can be disruptive. A focus on inclusion and equity can increase ambition in climate action and support".

4 Ibid

Needed changes in international co-operation

The IPCC suggests some criteria for assessing the effectiveness of international cooperation (Patt, et al, 2022 in **Table 14.2** on p1460, Chapter 14 of WGIII, AR6) which include:

- Environmental outcomes - to what extent does international cooperation lead to identifiable environmental benefits, namely the reduction of economy-wide and sectoral emissions of greenhouse gases from pre-existing levels or 'business as usual' scenarios?;
- Transformative potential - to what extent does international cooperation contribute to the enabling conditions for transitioning to a zero-carbon economy and sustainable development pathways at the global, national, or sectoral levels?;
- Distributive outcomes - to what extent does international cooperation lead to greater equity with respect to the costs, benefits, and burdens of mitigation actions, taking into account current and historical contributions and circumstances?;
- Economic outcomes - to what extent does international cooperation promote the achievement of economically efficient and cost-effective mitigation activities?; and

Table 14.2 | Criteria for assessing effectiveness of international cooperation.

Criterion	Description
Environmental outcomes	To what extent does international cooperation lead to identifiable environmental benefits, namely the reduction of economy-wide and sectoral emissions of greenhouse gases from pre-existing levels or 'business as usual' scenarios?
Transformative potential	To what extent does international cooperation contribute to the enabling conditions for transitioning to a zero-carbon economy and sustainable development pathways at the global, national, or sectoral levels?
Distributive outcomes	To what extent does international cooperation lead to greater equity with respect to the costs, benefits, and burdens of mitigation actions, taking into account current and historical contributions and circumstances?
Economic performance	To what extent does international cooperation promote the achievement of economically efficient and cost-effective mitigation activities?
Institutional strength	To what extent does international cooperation create the institutional framework needed for the achievement of internationally agreed-upon goals, and contribute to national, sub-national, and sectoral institutions needed for decentralised and bottom-up mitigation governance?

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Therefore, these criteria could serve as a useful guide on the outcomes of the GST towards robust contributions to the goals of the PA, whilst being responsive to the needs of African countries, noting that:

- Systems transformation requires integrated multi-sectoral change with a long-term perspective that addresses social inequalities increasing the feasibility and effectiveness of climate action in both mitigation and adaptation, particularly in the agriculture, forestry and other land-use (AFOLU) sector;
- International cooperation must promote climate resilience, and mainstream resilience criteria beyond optimising performance for economic costs, as such resilience should be considered at the system level to minimise the risk of maladaptation;
- International cooperation must unlock access to finance at a quantum and quality (particularly cost of capital), the quality of finance being critical noting that, African countries have a higher cost of capital which is largely driven by perceptions;

- For the transition to be just, international cooperation must enable the scale-up of mitigative and adaptive capacities within the continent's sustainable development pathways, such that African countries can emerge from the structural impediments;
- The transition should contribute to the reduction of poverty and generate higher-value job opportunities within the formal job market to provide more workers with social benefits. As such a whole-economy view of how different sectors make the transition will be useful to identify inequality hotspots and areas for growth;
- International cooperation can play an important role in the transformation of global market rules, such as on trade on how developing countries can capture parts of the value chain of new products (renewable generation technologies, energy storage, electromobility solutions, amongst others) noting that technologies critical for the transition are protected, with 86% owned by developed countries. Such rules should further consider environment-related-actions by countries, trade rules in the form of tariffs and standards for green technologies and minerals [19].

Recommendation on the outcomes of the GST

The recommendations with regard to a Conference of Parties (CoP), Conference of parties serving as meeting of Parties to Paris Agreement (CMA) decision should be guided by the understanding of the characteristics and diversity of international cooperation, in the form of guidance towards transformative international cooperation. Secondly, the CoP, and CMA decision should clearly indicate the touch-point of voluntary international cooperation, which can be through a platform that builds on Global Climate Action Portal (GCAP)⁵, whilst providing information according to the different typologies.

Thirdly, the effectiveness in delivering outcomes despite the light and voluntary obligations can be achieved through guidelines/criteria for effective international cooperation building on the IPCC criteria for effective international cooperation.

Fourth, noting that cooperation is across levels, actors, and sectors; it would be incumbent on the UNFCCC providing some guidance on the relevance of the principles of the Convention and its PA, to build in equity and fairness considerations, noting the importance of responsibilities and national circumstances.

Lastly, in the near term, there is an opportunity for further advancement of a vision for international cooperation in 2024 so as to further build confidence

⁵ <https://climateaction.unfccc.int>

in the system. Such activity in 2024 could be directed at the implementation of outputs of the GST in 2025 when enhanced action and support commitments are codified in the PA.

Secondly, the vision for international cooperation would serve as an exemplar of how to address international cooperation in subsequent GSTs. This could guide a synthesis report that can serve as an input to the subsequent technical dialogues, with space dedicated to a discussion on international cooperation.

The CoP decision would therefore:

- Recall the objective of Article 14.3 on international cooperation as a key outcome of the GST;
- Note the role of international cooperation can play on enhanced action and support of climate action;
- Decide on launching a Dialogue to guide international cooperation on climate change informed by the criteria for effective cooperation by the IPCC as its elements;
- Affirm the Dialogue should develop a framework for enhanced international cooperation to provide guidance to donor countries, donor institutions, international financial institutions, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Decide on a modality of holding two high-level Dialogues per annum with a view of providing outputs for consideration by the CoP-CMA;
- Invite the Secretariat to synthesise the work under the Dialogue as an input to the second and subsequent global stocktakes;
- The scope of the framework could include aspects consistent with the goals of the PA on mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation; and
- Agree that international cooperation should initiatives take into account:
 - Quantifiable targets - goals and equity considerations;
 - Additionality - in the form of the contribution of initiatives to national commitments;
 - Equitable support and financing of actions under the initiatives informed by needs; and
 - Reporting taking into account principles of the Convention and existing methodologies and processes.

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