South Africa

Page last updated: 30th November 2012

Rating



Assessment

South Africa's pledge is rated Medium. The country provided a quantitative target based on a detailed scenario analysis, but has made the target conditional to a strong Copenhagen agreement and financing from developed countries. It is unclear which share of the target is unconditional. If the conditional target becomes unilateral it will be in the Sufficient range.

South Africa is unlikely to reach its pledge. Current emissions are already above earlier business as usual projections.

Description

South Africa will undertake mitigation actions which will result in a deviation below the current emissions baseline of around 34% by 2020 and by around 42% by 2025. The target was proposed during the Copenhagen negotiations and submitted to the Copenhagen Accord on 29 January 2010. This level of effort enables South Africa's emissions to peak between 2020 and 2025, plateau for approximately a decade and decline in absolute terms thereafter. This characterizes a peak-plateau-decline (PPD) trajectory. This undertaking is conditional on a fair, ambitious and effective agreement in the international climate change negotiations under the Climate Change convention and the Kyoto Protocol and the provision of support from the international community.
In October 2011, South Africa has provided an explanatory note with further details on their "business-as-usual" trajectory, and on the lower and upper limits of their PPD trajectories. The pathways start in 1994 and -in that year- are consistent with data submitted in the 2nd National Communication. In the year 2000, which is the most recent data point, historic data given in the National Communication is higher than the reference scenario. In the National Communication, the scenario data is included as well, but only starting in 2003.

Status

Announcement of the president, submitted under the Copenhagen Accord and acknowledged under the Cancun Agreements

Date of pledge: 6 December 2009

Source

South Africa's pledge to the Copenhagen Accord

Announcement of the president

Department of Environmental Affairs, (2011), Explanatory note: Defining South Africa's Peak, Plateau and Decline Greenhouse Gas Emission Trajectory

South Africa's Second National Communication under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

DEAT (2007) Long Term Mitigation Scenarios. Strategic Options for South Africa. Pretoria, South Africa: Development of Environment Affaires and Tourism (DEAT)

Assumptions

For historic emissions, we use the 2nd National Communication. For baseline projections and the pledge, we use the emission estimates from the government's Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios. We interpreted the scenario "unconstrained growth" in the scenario analysis as the reference level. We deducted from that 34% in 2020. For the global pathway we used the scenario "start now" as if it were a unilateral pledge.

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