CLIMATE ACTION TRACKER

India

Page last updated: 2nd November 2016

History: 2017 2016 2015 2014 2013 2012 2011

Rating

Inadequate | Sufficient | Role Model

Medium

Note: Hover over the coloured bars for a pop-up with the fair emissions range per effort sharing category. More information here.

Assessment

The rapid growth in renewable energy in India, combined with sustained reductions in coal imports and increasing challenges to the viability of new coal-fired power plant construction—with ultra-mega coal projects cancelled—gives an indication of the transformation that is beginning in India's energy supply sector. With every single fossil fuel source beginning to reduce its coal and carbon dioxide emissions, developments in India are amongst the most important underway globally. Given its state of development, India could have been expected to increase its coal-fired power use for decades. However, there is a transition underway with an extremely rapid growth in renewable energy installations, which has begun to displace planned coal at a scale that has surprised many analysts. The Ministry of Power has announced that India will not build any new coal-fired power plants in the 13th Five Year Plan (2017-2022), currently at target 175 GW of renewable power capacity to be reached by 2022, which already set to more than double its emissions intensity target. The likely continued expansion of renewables after 2022, for which no targets have yet been set, will make India also overachieving its 2030 non-fossil capacity target. Thus India's Paris Agreement NDC commitment is weaker than actions resulting from current policies. Neither the NDC nor current policies are ambitious enough to limit warming to below 2°C, let alone the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit, while other countries have similar emissions reduction costs and comparably greater efforts.

On 2 October 2016, India ratified the Paris Agreement. India's 'Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets to lower the emissions intensity of GDP by 33% to 35% by 2030 below 2005 levels, to increase the share of non-fossil power generation capacity to 40% of installed electric power capacity by 2030 (equivalent to 26–30% of generation in 2030), and to create an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5–3 GtCO2e by additional forestation by the implementation of the 2030. For 2020, India has pledged to reduce the emissions intensity of GDP by 20% to 25% by 2020 below 2005 levels. Both the NDC and Copenhagen pledge are in line with current policies and we rate them as "medium".

The "medium" rating indicates that India's climate plans are at the least ambitious end of what would be a fair contribution. This means they are not consistent with limiting warming to below 2°C, let alone with the Paris Agreement's stronger 1.5°C limit, unless other countries make much deeper reductions and comparably greater efforts.

Existing policies and measures are described in detail in India's NDC. However, the description of the targets is very brief. India could increase the transparency of its NDC by describing the greenhouse gas coverage and the accounting metric for the intensity target (e.g. constant or normal GDP) as well as the way it envisages it will achieve the non-fossil power capacity target.

Given that the coverage is not specified, we have assumed that the 2030 intensity target excludes the agriculture sector, consistent with India's Copenhagen pledge, and reduce the emissions intensity of GDP by 25% to 35% below 2005 levels.

Under the assumption of a 7.2% annual GDP growth, the emission reduction levels resulting from both the 2020 and 2030 intensity targets[1] implies:[2] The non-fossil power generation target would result in emissions 4.7 GtCO2e lower than projected in 2030 under current policies. However, the absolute growth in coal-powered electric generating capacity would be significantly larger than the absolute increase in renewables-based capacity, because the 40% target is only for the share of non-fossil capacity in total capacity, and not for the absolute capacity. This is also the permitting pipeline. However, it is expected that the actual result in renewable energy capacity will be greater than the pipeline, because this would lead to a greater kick-in of carbon-intensive power-infrastructure in India than appears necessary. Uncertainty around the likely future build of coal power capacity is illustrated by the cancellation of the Tilaiya ultra mega coal power project in 2016 by the Ministry of Power, New and Renewable Energy Plants (UMPPs). Leading coal power producers such as Adani appear to have suspended investments and further development in this area and instead have scaled up investments in solar and renewable energy in both India and Australia.

Pledges and targets

Paris Agreement targets

India ratified the Paris agreement exactly one year after the submission of its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), on 2 October 2016, the 147th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Since India did not submit an NDC prior to ratification, the INDC became its first NDC. It includes the following main elements (Government of India, 2015a):

- To reduce the emissions intensity of GDP by 33% to 35% by 2030 below 2005 levels.
- To increase the share of non-fossil based energy resources to 40% of installed electric power capacity by 2030 (with the help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance including Green Climate Fund (GCF))
- To create an additional (incremental) carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 GtCO2e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030

The coverage and metrics of the emissions intensity target are not specified in the NDC. In our analysis we have assumed that the target excludes the agriculture sector, consistent with India's 2020 pledge. Under the assumption of a 7.2% annual GDP growth (IEA, 2015d), the emissions level resulting from this target would be 5.9–6.0 GtCO2e (excluding LULUCF) in 2030, for a total of 5.4–5.6 above the 1990 level.

With currently implemented policies, including the target for 175 GW renewable energy capacity by 2022, we project the share of non-fossil power generation capacity to reach 39% in 2030, corresponding to a 24% share of generation in 2030. For 2030, India has pledged to increase the share of non-fossil power generation capacity to 40% (by capacity of renewable energy sources, nuclear power or a combination), we estimate reaching this target would result in emissions around 4.7 GtCO2e lower than current policy projections, resulting in an emissions level of 5.3–5.5 GtCO2e (a 5.3–above the 1990 level) by 2030. This is far below the emissions level required for India to meet its intensity target. Next to these mitigation targets, India's INDC also strongly emphasises adaptation measures.

Although the INDC does not state this, we assume the target to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 GtCO2e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030 to be cumulative, representing an average annual increase of 83–100 MtCO2e/yr, over the period 2016–2030. Over half of this target could be achieved by the Green India Mission, which is expected to enhance the annual carbon sequestration by about 100 MtCO2e.[3]

2020 pledge

India has pledged to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20–25% in 2020 compared to 2005 levels. This target does not cover emissions from the agricultural sector. India proposed the target during the Copenhagen negotiations and submitted it to the Copenhagen Accord on 30 January 2010. The quantification of this pledge covers a range of between 3.6 and 3.8 GtCO2e in 2020 (excluding LULUCF). This is a factor 3.3–3.5 above the 1990 level.

Long-term goal

In 2007, at the G8+5 Summit in Germany, then Indian Prime Minister Singh pledged that India's per capita emissions would never exceed those of the developed world. Given India's low per capita emissions, meeting the pledge does not require any emissions reductions and would allow for significant increases in per capita emissions up to 2030, and this pledge is not shown in the figure. However, we take this pledge into account in the global pathway to 2100, when calculating the associated rise in global temperature. Over the period 2010–2030 we project India's per capita emissions to increase by around 84–88% from 1.9 to around 3.6 tCO2e per capita (excluding LULUCF) by 2030. Although this represents a strong increase, India's 2030 per capita emissions will still be far below the 2010 world average of 6.7 tCO2e per capita.

Copenhagen pledge	
2020 target	20% to 25% below 2005 emissions intensity of GDP by 2020 [2.31-2.51% above 1990 by 2020 excl. LULUCF]
Coverage	Excluding agriculture sector
Conditions	None
Paris Agreement target	
Ratified 2030 targets	33% to 35% below 2005 emissions intensity of GDP by 2030 [442-458% above 1990 by 2030 excl. LULUCF]
	Non-fossil share of cumulative power generation capacity 40% by 2030
Coverage	Not Specified
LULUCF	Additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5-3 GtCO2e by 2030
Long term goal(s)	
Long term goal(s)	Per capita emissions never to exceed those of the developed world

Fair share

We rate India's 2030 INDC and 2020 pledge "medium".

The pledges are in line with effort sharing approaches that focus on equal cumulative per capita emissions. Approaches that focus on historical responsibility and capability would require more stringent emissions reductions. Current policy projections for 2030 are in line with fair shares based on common per capita emissions for all countries by the year 2050, assuming a linear convergence.

The "medium" rating indicates that India's climate commitments are at the least ambitious end of what would be a fair contribution. This means they are not consistent with limiting warming to below 2°C, let alone with the Paris Agreement's stronger 1.5°C limit, unless other countries make much deeper reductions and comparably greater efforts.

Unlike other developing countries such as China, India has not announced a peaking year for GHG emissions. Based on our effort-sharing analysis, India's emissions indeed would not need to peak before 2050 to contribute a fair share of global emission reductions. However, to be rated "sufficient," India's emissions growth would have to slow down compared to current policy projections.

Current policy projections

Our analysis shows that the India can achieve its NDC target with currently implemented policies, i.e. it would not have to put any other policies in place. Under current policy projections, greenhouse gas emissions (excluding LULUCF) are projected to reach a level of 3.6 GtCO2e in 2020 and 5.4–5.5 GtCO2e in 2030. This is a 95%–105% increase as compared to 2005 levels in 2020 and a more than doubling of 2005 levels by 2030. This growth is in line with the 2020 intensity pledge, and exceeds the 2030 intensity target, but whether India will achieve its targets depends on actual economic growth. We assume a 7.2% GDP growth per year for both our projections and the intensity target projections (IEA, 2015d). The Indian Government targets higher GDP growth of around 8% per year in its 12th Five Year Plan (Government of India, 2013) and NDC (Government of India, 2015a), but has not set any policies to achieve this growth. The Economic Survey 2015-16, Congress Prime Minister Modi said that its annual growth goal must "be achieved with a light carbon footprint, with greater emphasis on renewables" (EEFA, 2016).

India's total emissions have been growing steadily since 1990. The overall growth slowed down around the year 2000 as land use changed from being a small source of emissions in the first inventory year—14 MtCO2e in 1994—to a large sink, with removals of 223 MtCO2e in 2000 and 175 MtCO2e in 2007. Based on projections from the Planning Commission Government of India (2014), this carbon sink is expected to increase to 206 MtCO2e in 2020 and 245 MtCO2e in 2030 under current policies. The renewable energy target announcement was officially adopted in August 2015 (MNRE, 2015b). By the end of 2014 the Government of India had approved plans for 25 Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects, with a combined capacity of over 20 GW, out of the pending 33 projects (MNRE, 2015a).

In the first half of 2015, targets for other renewable energy sources were also increased. India currently targets a cumulative installed capacity of 175 GW by 2022. This target consists of 100 GW solar, 60 GW wind, 10 GW biomass and 5 GW small-scale hydro (MNRE, 2015a). Wind power is already the largest renewable energy source, while solar power has been growing rapidly, over the period 2010–2015 solar capacity increased by around 84-88% to 3.3 tCO2e per capita (excluding LULUCF) by 2030. Although this represents a strong increase, India's 2030 per capita emissions will still be far below the 2010 world average of 6.7 tCO2e per capita.

India launched its National Action Plan on Climate Change (NACC) in 2008, which outlines eight national missions in the area of sustainable development (Government of India, 2008). India's 12th Five Year Plan for the period 2012–2017 (Government of India, 2013) proposed a re-organisation of the NACC. The Five Year Plans provide the basic direction for government activities, addressing all sectors and policy areas. Our analysis includes the 11th and 12th Five Year Plan.

Power sector policies

The power sector accounted for 32% of India's total emissions (excluding LULUCF) in 2010. Given that the Fuel mix is dominated by coal-fired generation (71% in 2012; IEA, 2014), the emissions intensity of electricity supply in India is relatively high (926 gCO2/kWh in 2012). On the other hand, per capita electricity demand in India is very low at around 700 kWh per person in 2012, a number that is around 20% lower than in 2001 (IEA, UN, 2013). In 2012, 21% of the population—265 million people—still had no access to electricity (World Bank, 2015).

In June 2014 the Government of India announced plans to overhaul the monitoring of emissions intensity by fall by 2019 Forum of Regulators, 2014). Previously, emissions were calculated at a state level, which created incentives for energy-intensive industries to avoid growth of electricity demand in India. Given the new plans, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has started to collect data on emissions (EEFA, 2015). In our projections we assume a growth of electricity demand of 6% a year (IEA, 2015e). On the federal level, India has implemented a Power Sector Development Fund (PSDF) since 2009. The Strategic Plan for New and Renewable Energy provides a broader framework (outlining the mission, objectives, goals, implementation, and evaluation plan for India's renewable energy sector) and the National Solar Mission, launched in 2010, contains capacity targets for 2022 and 2030 (Government of India, 2011). The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission was officially adopted in August 2015 (MNRE, 2015b). By the end of 2014 the Government of India had approved plans for 25 Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects, with a combined capacity of over 20 GW, out of the pending 33 projects (MNRE, 2015a).

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Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) are in place that promote renewable energy and facilitate Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO), which legally mandate a percentage of electricity to be produced from renewable energy sources. In April 2015, the RPO was revised upwards, from 3% by 2022 to 8% by 2019.

The Ministry of Power announced in April 2015 that every new coal-fired power plant would have to be accompanied by a renewable power plant of at least 10% of the generating capacity (EEFA, 2015). Given the supporting mechanisms and policies in place, it is expected to be feasible that India will meet its ambitious renewable energy targets.

However, given the rapid growth of electricity demand and the prevailing dominance of other energy sources such as coal, the total impact of the renewable energy policies and targets is expected to be relatively small. For example, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM, 2010) estimates that by 2022 it will displace around 100 MtCO2e per year. Whether India's renewable energy sector and the National Solar Mission, launched in 2010, contains capacity targets for 2022 and 2030 (Government of India, 2011). The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission was officially adopted in August 2015 (MNRE, 2015b). By the end of 2014 the Government of India had approved plans for 25 Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects, with a combined capacity of over 20 GW, out of the pending 33 projects (MNRE, 2015a).

In the absence of post-2022 renewable energy targets. The 39% share of non-fossil capacity corresponds to 24% non-fossil power generation. If India would achieve its 40% non-fossil capacity target by 2030, this would result in 26–30% non-fossil power generation. This is a share of renewables continue to grow after the 2022 target is reached, we think India is likely to overachieve its non-fossil capacity target.

Although committed to diversifying power supply and supporting renewable energy, the Indian government also supports the domestic coal industry. This is reflected in its aim of doubling India's domestic coal production to 1.5 billion tonnes by 2020, and to end the need for import of thermal coal (EEFA, 2015). Under current policies, we project the coal-fired power capacity in India to increase by a factor of 2.8 in the period 2010–2030. India's 12th Five Year Plan sets a target of 60% for new coal plants using supercritical technology, but currently most plants still have less efficient subcritical technology (IEA, 2015d). Policy measures to make sure only new efficiencies consistent with supercritical or ultra-supercritical technology will not come into effect until 2017 (IEA, 2016).

About 65 GW of coal-fired capacity is currently under construction, with another 178 GW in the permitting pipeline. However, it is expected that this would result in considerable overcapacity, should the entire pipeline be realised (Krishna & Fernandes, 2016). Uncertainty around the likely future build of coal power capacity is illustrated by the June 2016 cancellation of four coal-fired Ultra Mega Power Plants (UMPPs) by the Ministry of Power, New and Renewable Energy (EEFA, 2016). Leading coal power producers such as Adani appeared to have suspended investments and development in this area and instead have scaled up investments in solar and renewable energy in both India and Australia (Hindu, 2016; Parkinson, 2016).

These developments and the apparent softening of commitments to build the currently planned coal capacity are not yet reflected in the energy and emissions scenarios for India. In our current policy projections, we assume coal-fired power plant capacity will increase by 177 GW from the current level of 186 GW, reaching 363 GW 2030. Based on the coal-fired power capacity in order of the global average in a factor of 2.8 in the period 2010–2030. India's 12th Five Year Plan sets a target of 60% for new coal plants using supercritical technology, but currently most plants still have less efficient subcritical technology (IEA, 2015d). Policy measures to make sure only new efficiencies consistent with supercritical or ultra-supercritical technology will not come into effect until 2017 (IEA, 2016).

Other policies

In 2010 the Indian Government introduced a coal tax of 50 rupees (0.8 USD) per metric tonne of coal produced and imported to acknowledge the externalities related to coal use and to encourage a switch away from coal-fired power. Since then, this tax—now called the Clean Environment Cess—was doubled three times, reaching 400 rupees per tonne in the 2016–2017 budget. The revenues from the coal tax feed into the National Clean Energy Fund, which promotes clean energy research and development. Part of the revenues has been earmarked for the implementation of 'Ultra Mega Solar Power' projects (EEFA, 2015; Mahapatra, 2016).

Apart from solar electricity demand projections, India has also set targets for energy efficiency in power grid losses. India has the highest aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) grid loss rate in the world (EEFA, 2015, estimated at 26%. In May 2015 the "National Smart Grid Mission" was approved to bring efficiency in power supply and facilitate the reduction in grid losses and outages (Government of India, 2015b).

Under the 'National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency,' India implemented its 'Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)' Mechanism, which resembles an emissions trading scheme (ETS). The first phase of the PAT scheme ran from 2012 to 2015. Currently the scheme is in its second phase (2016-2019). PAT mechanism is a market-based mechanism to enhance cost effectiveness in improvement of energy efficiency in the country's industrial and power generation facilities in eight sectors that, in total, cover 40% of India's 2007 GHG emissions.

The target is to achieve an energy savings of 23 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) by the participating facilities in 2015 (below the 2007–2010 baseline level). These targets are calculated for each installation separately; more efficient plants have lower SEC targets compared to more inefficient plants. Energy savings that exceed their target are awarded with Energy Saving Certificates that can be traded on the power sector (EDF, CDC Climat Research & IETA. 2015). The effect after 2015 heavily depends on the rules governing the continuation of the scheme, which have yet to be decided. In its NDC, India states that the continuation of the scheme will be assessed and designed in the next cycle, including additional sectors like railways, electricity distribution and refineries (Government of India, 2015a).

Assumptions

Historical emissions

Historical emissions are a combination of CO_2 from fuel combustion from IEA (2015c), CO_2 emissions from cement production from CDIAC (2014), other CO_2 emissions from JRC/PBL (2012), and non-CO_2 emissions from USEPA (2012). LULUCF emissions are taken from UNFCCC (2014) for 1994 and 2000, Government of India (2012) for 2007, and Government of India (2015a) for 2010.

Current policy projections

Current policy projections are based on the World Energy Outlook 2015 Current Policy Scenario (IEA, 2015a) combined with the US EPA non-CO_2 emissions projections until 2030 (US EPA 2012) and extrapolation of other CO_2 emissions based on JRC/PBL (2012), CDIAC (2014) and WDC/EIA/GCP (2014). The estimated renewable energy capacity, which we call current policies, is the sum of the Investment Policy Scenario, and additionally quantified and are expected to result in emission savings of 100 $MtCO_2e$ beyond the Current Policy Scenario in 2020 and 62 $MtCO_2e$ in 2030.

2020 pledge and NDC

For consistency with the current policy projections, the intensity targets for 2020 and 2030 are quantified based on GDP assumptions from the World Energy Outlook (IEA, 2015d). GDP is assumed to grow by on average 7.3% in the period 2014–2020, and 7% in the period 2020–2030. This is roughly in line with the historical GDP development until 2014 and the projections to 2019 from the IMF (2015). The 2020 pledge excluded agriculture. We assumed this is also the case for the 2030 target, even though it is not mentioned in the INDC. If agriculture were to be included, the resulting emissions level would be 15% higher (E.R.I.C.E.2016).

For the 40% non-fossil power generation capacity we analysed two ways of achieving the additional capacity needed beyond currently implemented policies and show the range of these two options, 1) based solar power, and 2) based on nuclear power. These two options represent the extremes in terms of emissions reductions. The emissions reduction compared to current policies is 17–24 $MtCO_2e$.

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