

Dominican Republic NDC Analysis

Executive Summary

With a score of “NDC We Want” in the World Wildlife Fund’s NDC Assessment checklist, the Dominican Republic’s (DR) 2020 NDC Update showcases significant progress over its predecessor. As Central America and the Caribbean’s second largest economy, it must lead by example.

- Two of the standout differences between its 2016 and 2020 NDCs are length (whereas the 2015 NDC had three pages, the 2020 NDC Update totals 167 pages) and themes addressed (the former omitted several topics, which the update addressed by dedicating sections to women and gender, civil society and youth).
- The DR also increased its emissions reduction goal, from 25% to 27% by 2030, and completed its update following a national campaign that brought together a wide range of viewpoints following countrywide climate vulnerability assessments.
- According to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the country has a 43.6% forest coverage rate, with intentions to increase it to 45%. The country also hosts some of the Caribbean’s most important clean energy projects, including the Girasol (Sunflower) Solar Park, the region’s largest photovoltaic energy plant.

The current administration has made efforts to expand sustainable development to the country’s most vulnerable communities, specifically the western provinces, to foster dignified lives, create more jobs, and bolster economic growth. To fulfill the Dominican Republic’s full climate ambition, the government should pair these initiatives with nature-based solutions, increased civil society participation and climate mitigation strategies.

Introduction

According to the 2015 Global Climate Risk Index, the Dominican Republic is the 8th country most vulnerable to extreme weather events. In 2020, the country contributed 0.08% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, with the coal and oil industries making up 83.6% of this total. It is also a heavily urbanized country, with 81% of its population concentrated in cities. As

one of the most biodiverse countries in the Caribbean, protecting and restoring its ecosystems lies at the heart of its nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and post pandemic recovery. During the 2022 Regional Congress on Forests and Sustainable Landscapes, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources announced that forests currently cover 43.6% of the country's territory (April 2022). However, in a previous study from 2018, the Ministry of Environment indicated that the country devoted 35.2% of its territory to agriculture, while only 0.012% of its land and sea area was devoted to its 128 national protected parks.

These facts characterized the backdrop against which the Dominican Republic shared its first nationally determined contribution (NDC) in 2017, and its NDC update in 2020. While the DR has ushered in milestones such as inaugurating the Caribbean's largest solar park (120 megawatt capacity) in 2021, the country still faces significant socioeconomic and environmental challenges. In its country profile, the World Food Programme (WFP) found that 40.4% of people in the DR live in poverty¹, a number that increased following the onset of the pandemic and despite an increase in social spending to mitigate its effects.

Emissions

In its first NDC, the DR committed to reducing 25% of its emissions by 2030, using 2010 as the baseline year and undertaking reviews every five years. In its updated NDC, the country increased its ambition by committing to a 27% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to a business as usual² (BAU) scenario by 2030, with a target of 20 % conditional on external finance and 7% unconditional on domestic finance (5% dependent on the private sector and 2% on the public sector). This last part on financing is significant, since the first NDC made no mention of how much the public sector would contribute to the country's emissions goal. Subsequently, the first NDC did not quantify the available mitigation options, whereas the updated NDC mentions forty six options, distributed into the following categories:

1. Energy sector (27 options, focusing on electricity, energy efficiency and transportation)
2. Industrial Product and Process Use (4 options)

¹ Someone who lives on less than USD 2 dollars a day.

² A scenario in which nothing is done to mitigate the effects of climate change.

3. Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (10 options)
4. Waste Sector (5 options)

As a developing country according to its capabilities, the DR is ready to report three gasses in the first NDC implementation period (2021-2025): carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrogen dioxide (N₂O), which it will prepare with support from the National Ozone Layer Protection Program (NOLPP). To support this goal, the DR issued decree 541-20 in October 2020, which created the National System for the Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) of Greenhouse Gasses. Article I, Paragraph III states: "All national, regional or sectoral information systems that contain information relevant to climate change, vulnerability and risk management studies can operate together with and enrich the National MRV System".

In the updated NDC, the DR commits to reorienting public investment towards less carbon-intensive activities and increasing public spending on climate change professionals and technicians, as well as other financial tools available through public-private partnerships, foreseeing support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to fulfill its conditional objective. To achieve these objectives, the NDC will require USD \$8.9 billion to reduce emissions, and concerned parties will meet every three years to assess the implementation status of the NDC Action Plan, created with the NDC Partnership and led by the National Steering Committee, which consists of the:

1. National Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism;
2. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources;
3. Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development, and
4. Ministry of Finance.

Legal Framework

The DR's updated NDC relies on a comprehensive legal framework, adopting a multisectoral approach to work on adaptation. Some of the most important instruments include:

Constitution of the Dominican Republic (updated in 2015)	In Article 194, the Constitution states that it is a priority of the State to formulate and execute a territorial organization plan that ensures the efficient and sustainable use of the country's natural
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	resources, in accordance with climate change adaptation.
Law No. 1-12 National Development Strategy 2030 of the Dominican Republic (2012)	It proposes "a society with a culture of sustainable production and consumption, which manages risks and the protection of the environment and natural resources equitably and efficiently, and promotes adequate adaptation to climate change."
Law No. 64-00 on Environment and Natural Resources (2000)	Establishes the norms for the conservation, protection, improvement and restoration of the environment.
Sectoral Law No. 202-04 on Protected Areas (2004)	Guarantees the conservation and preservation of representative samples of the Dominican Republic's ecosystems, to ensure the permanence and optimization of the environmental and economic services these ecosystems offer to present and future generations.
National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Dominican Republic (PNACC-RD) 2015-2030	Aims to reduce climate change vulnerability and facilitate the integration of climate change adaptation into new and existing policies, programs, and activities. Focuses on six axes: water and food security; climate resilient cities; health; ecosystems, biodiversity and forests; tourism and coastal-marine resources.
Decree 601-08 creating the National Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism (CNCCMDL).	The National Council's goal is to formulate, design and execute the necessary public policies for the prevention and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and the adaptation to the adverse effects of Climate Change, as well as to develop climate action programs, projects and strategies relative to the fulfillment of the commitments assumed by the Dominican Republic in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the instruments derived therefrom.

Youth

The first NDC briefly mentioned a training program for trainers and teachers. However, it did not address youth's role in mitigating and adapting to climate change, nor expected program outcomes. There was only a passing mention of youth and future generations in the context of human resources, and no mention of the need to include youth in decision making processes.

In its updated NDC, the country devotes an entire section to youth, guiding readers through the country's legal frameworks supporting the strategic role of young people. To frame this section, the NDC began by outlining Article 55, paragraph 13 of the DR's Constitution:

"The value of young people as strategic actors in the development of the Nation is recognized. The State guarantees and promotes the effective exercise of their rights, through policies and programs that permanently ensure their participation in all areas of national life and, in particular, their training and access to their first job".

The NDC also acknowledges the DR's General Law on Youth (49-00) from 2000, which defines the legal, political and institutional framework guiding the State's actions towards youth. This law created the Ministry of Youth, and lays the foundation for greater inclusion and development of Dominican youth.

Furthermore, the NDC mentions the 2010-2030 National Development Strategy (END), which dictates youth's participation at the highest level through the National Youth Council. The 2020-2030 National Youth Plan complements the aforementioned document, since it serves as the main public policy instrument for bolstering the needs of youth from a participatory perspective, built with and by young people. This plan, in turn, is divided into six axes: education, employment and entrepreneurship, health, a healthy environment (with a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation), justice and security, social and political participation, and inclusion. After outlining the axis' legal framework, the NDC mentions its goals for youth:

1. Ensure youth participation at national and international climate change decision-making arenas;
2. Develop and implement a National Network of Youth and Climate Change, which will allow the integration of the youth perspective within national climate instruments;

3. Ensure the education, awareness and capacity of young people to sustain lifestyles in harmony with nature, and for the mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
4. Ensure sustainable, safe and healthy mobility for young people that meets their needs in harmony with a healthy environment;
5. Strengthen institutional capacities for the inclusion of the youth approach in the design and implementation of plans, policies and programs related to the preservation of the environment.

Women and Gender

In a study from 2021, the World Bank Group found that 50.1% of the Dominican Republic's population is female. Through its first NDC, the DR became one of the first countries to incorporate a gender perspective in the document. The text reads:

*Aware that climate change will impact vulnerable groups of people in different ways, **the gender perspective is a cross-cutting issue in the national development model.** Therefore, the role of women as agents of change is recognized, and their participation is encouraged in the transformation of society towards a low-carbon and resilient development.*

In the updated NDC, the country makes significant strides by deeming gender equity, youth and human rights cross-cutting elements of the country's climate change sphere. One of the main implementation roadmaps for the NDC's gender equity goals is the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan for the Dominican Republic (PAGCC-RD). The PAGCC arose as the result of a national consultation that took place between September 2016 and March 2017, led by the National Council for Climate Change and Clean Development Mechanism (CNCCMDL), the Global Gender Office (GGO) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Overall, the PAGCC sets guidelines that will enable men and women to address the challenges of sustainable development and climate change from a fairer, more equitable and egalitarian perspective.

Recognising the role of women as agents of change and encouraging their participation is a step in the right direction. Considering that the DR is the fourth most unequal country in Latin America and the Caribbean for gender equality, the NDC update was necessary and urgent.

Loss and damage

The first NDC did not include a loss and damage component. The NDC update, however, took into account the country's status as a small island developing state (SIDS). Due to this status, the DR is constantly threatened by meteorological events such as droughts, storms and hurricanes. This represents serious challenges and threats to sectors such as water, tourism, agriculture, food security, infrastructure and energy. In order to understand the impact and extent of losses and damages generated by these events, the country has sought to strengthen its capacity to assess losses. Together with the World Bank Group (WBG), the country conducted studies showing that damages associated with climate shocks between 1961 and 2014 were equivalent to 0.69% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the same research, the DR and the WBG found that due to climate shocks, the November 2016 - April 2017 rainy season resulted in losses estimated at USD \$862 million. This represented 6.6% of the budgeted public expenditure for 2017 and 1.1 % of GDP in 2017.

Under the Loss and Damage pillar, the country expects to improve disaster vulnerability analyses through the National Emergency Commission's Integrated Information System. The NDC will strengthen capacities to manage slow onset events (i.e droughts) through an Early Drought Alert System to speed up the activation of prevention and preparedness measures. Developing this System is one of the NDC's most urgent projected outcomes, since studies found that annual precipitation will decrease 15% by 2050 over the entire national territory.

Recommendations

A comprehensive NDC lays the foundation for countries to proceed with more ambitious, inclusive and equitable climate action. In the case of the Dominican Republic, its NDC Update better aligns with the Paris Agreement's goals and countrywide calls to take bolder steps to

combat climate change. Nonetheless, there are a number of practical steps the country can take to successfully implement its NDC action agenda:

1. Ambition. While the DR has shown that it is capable of developing a strong and inclusive NDC, we invite decision makers to increase ambition and equity. The country should increase its commitment to reduce GHG emissions, and include climate refugees as well as other omitted vulnerable groups in its future NDC Update.
2. Climate change education. In 2012, the National Council for Climate Change published the *National Strategy to Strengthen Human Resources and Skills for Moving Towards Green, Low Emission and Climate Resilient Development* to help teachers understand the causes and impacts of climate change, and facilitate community-based learning. Our first recommendation would be for the Dominican government to continue these efforts, with an emphasis on:
 - a. Equipping teachers in the country's most vulnerable learning institutions with the tools to teach climate change in their classrooms;
 - b. Involving students in the process by asking what they know about climate change, how it affects them and what they would like to learn about it;
 - c. Conducting presentations about climate change education during parent-teacher meetings.
3. Forest coverage. The Dominican government previously expressed its intention to ensure 45% national forest coverage. While a commendable effort, the Ministry of Environment should codify what counts as forest coverage. By clarifying this term, environmental experts will be better equipped to determine restoration objectives and ways in which interventions will not negatively impact communities who live in these areas.
4. Energy equity. For the DR's actions to reflect its NDC commitments, the National Statistics Office (ONE) should conduct gender-disaggregated research in the sciences and engineering sectors, as well as other key areas, involved in deploying mitigation and

adaptation-oriented climate solutions. Following this process, it must create an enabling environment that will encourage more women to apply to positions in these projects.

5. Participatory approach and youth integration. The Climate Reality Project's Operation COP, an initiative with the goal of educating youth between the ages of 18 and 28 on climate change policy, and preparing them to represent their countries during COP, started in the DR in 2022. This involvement builds upon the DR's participation in COP26, which UNFCCC applauded for including young climate leaders in its delegation. We welcome the DR's inclusion in this regional programme, and encourage the country to continue creating spaces where vulnerable communities can take meaningful climate action.

Conclusion

During the drafting process of this analysis, the Dominican Republic went through one of its biggest environmental and political challenges in history: the assassination of its Minister of Environment, Orlando Jorge Mera, in June 2022. Since then, the former Minister of Economy, Planning and Development, Miguel Ceara Hatton, was named Minister of Environment. Taking this context into consideration, the Dominican Republic's greatest challenges will be ensuring the continuity of decisions made by the previous Minister, holding policy makers accountable to campaign trail promises, and helping these initiatives thrive past the country's next presidential election in May 2024.

Furthermore, the government must follow up on its extensive policy portfolio supporting NDC implementation, in particular its NDC Action Plan (unveiled during the 2022 Latin America and Caribbean Climate Week), gradually and reasonably increase its ambition, facilitate decision making spaces and positions for individuals most vulnerable to climate change, and follow up on promises to include more women and youth in relevant positions. Where the near future is concerned, the Dominican Republic appears committed to amplifying the role of youth in important climate change decision making spaces.

In May 2022, the government announced the country's inaugural "Operation COP," a multistakeholder effort that equips 40 young people with the knowledge and tools necessary to become effective climate leaders. The Dominican Republic's COP delegation will then select 4 participants from this group to represent the country during the year's Conference of the Parties. Ultimately, we hope these precedents pave the way for intergenerational equity, more representative leadership and increased participatory processes in spaces devoted to climate change and environmental conservation.

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