

# EQUITY AND THE AMBITION RATCHET

TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL 2018 FACILITATIVE DIALOGUE

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## REPORT

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NOVEMBER 2017





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- World Federalist Movement – Canada

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- Aotearoa New Zealand Human Rights Lawyers Association
- Human Rights Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand

Our pre-Paris report "*Fair Shares: A Civil Society Equity Review of the INDCs*" is available at [civilsocietyreview.org/report](http://civilsocietyreview.org/report)

## SUMMARY

*We are not on track to achieve the principal aim of the Paris climate agreement: keeping global temperature rise to well below 2°C, while pursuing 1.5°C. More ambition is urgently needed.*

*This ambition will not be easily achieved. Real cooperation will be necessary, and it will not be possible without equity on both the mitigation and adaptation sides of the climate challenge.*

*The first round of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) — the proposed reductions in domestic greenhouse gas emissions that countries presented at the Paris climate summit in 2015 — implies at least 3°C of warming. Fortunately, the Paris Agreement offers ways of securing increased ambition, while taking due account of “means of implementation and support” and being conducted “in the light of equity.”*

*Despite the Trump administration’s chilling threat to abandon the Paris Agreement, the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue, a key part of the agreement’s ambition ratcheting mechanism, has to be more than a meaningless talk shop. The reality is that, if the Paris temperature limits are not to be breached, all countries need to take on more mitigation than currently pledged.*

*This means different things for different countries.*

*It is essential that wealthier countries urgently and dramatically deepen their domestic mitigation. And, if they are to contribute their fair shares, they must also support additional actions outside their own borders. Meanwhile, many developing country pledges do meet or exceed their fair shares. Yet, they too will have to do much more: the 1.5°C objective requires profound action in developing countries that cannot realistically, or fairly, be expected without meaningful levels of international support.*

*Ultimately, the challenges here will crystalize around the 2023 Global Stocktake, but the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue will set important precedents. Thus, it must pioneer a process for assessing the adequacy and fairness not only of collective ambition, but of individual country contributions as well.*

*To that end, Parties should prepare to justify their efforts as fair contributions to a shared 1.5°C global effort. They should do so in transparent ways, measuring their contributions against fundamental equity principles. If their contributions fall short, they must be prepared to quickly strengthen them.*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 2018 FACILITATIVE DIALOGUE

Devastating hurricanes, floods, forest fires and droughts are becoming ‘the new normal’ as global temperature rise exceeds 1°C above preindustrial levels. Given the catastrophic impacts we are already seeing, a rise above 1.5°C — or especially 2°C — is terrifying to contemplate. Urgent action is needed at a global scale to avoid the worst impacts, for people and the planet. The Paris Agreement’s keystone objective of limiting warming to 1.5°C is essential for catalyzing the rapid, large-scale global action that is now needed. But, already, many fear that it’s only a false promise. Which is exactly what it will turn out to be if there is no ramped-up ambition to back it up — and the agreement’s lack of binding commitments means that we are already facing an uphill battle.

The pledges that were tabled in Paris fall far short of the agreement’s stated temperature objectives. Crucially, the agreement contains core “ambition” or “ratcheting mechanisms” for continually strengthening pledges in an equitable manner. Given the insufficiency of the initial pledges, these mechanisms are absolutely key to meeting the agreement’s temperature goals, and to its ultimate success.

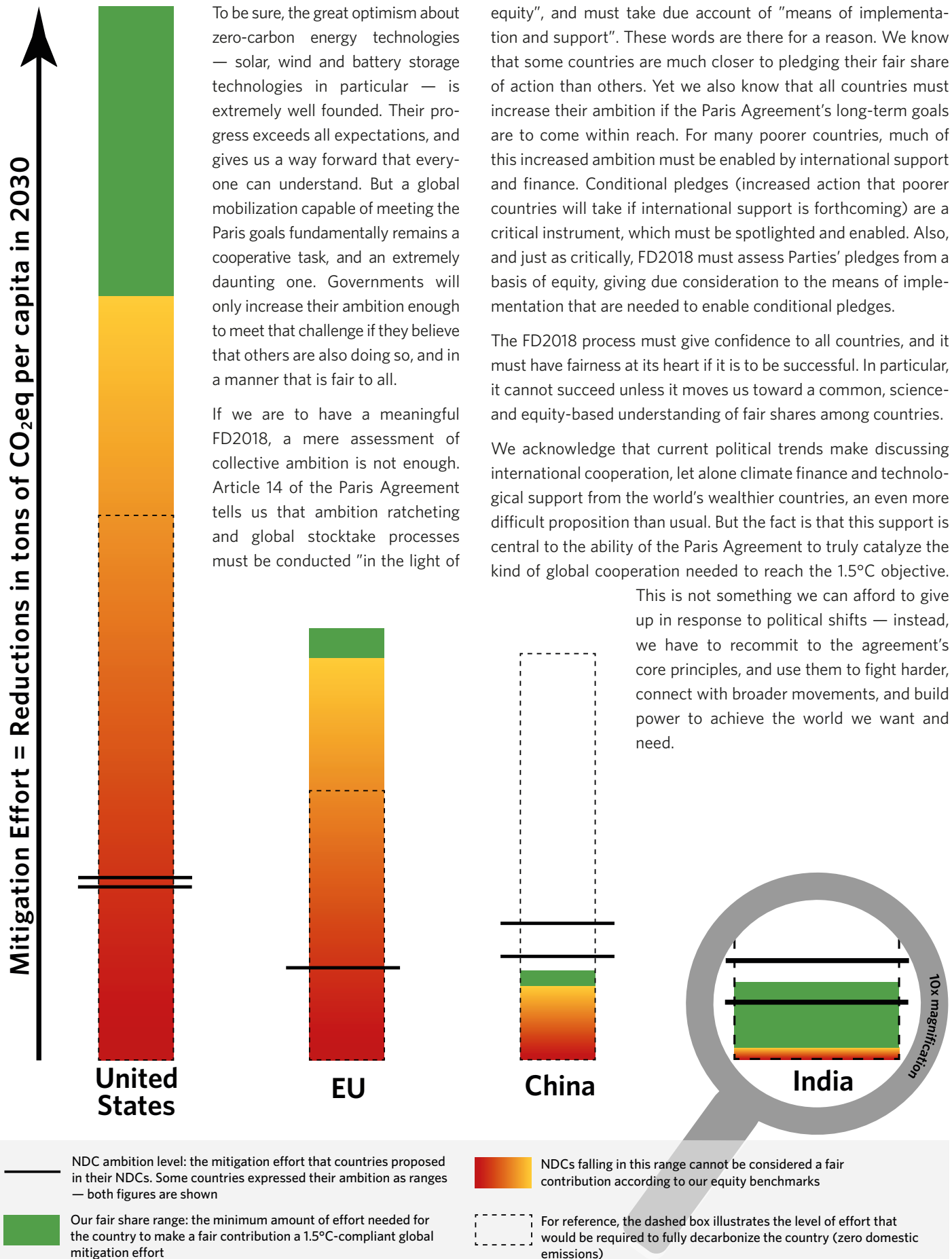
The 2018 Facilitative Dialogue (FD2018) is a crucial initial step for this set of mechanisms. It’s an opportunity to assess and

correct our collective course, and a key moment for countries to step forward together to ramp up ambition. FD2018 can not be allowed to become a meaningless talk shop, or indeed a technical discussion that ignores hard questions about ambition and finance. Rather, it must spur an increase in climate action and result in concrete outcomes. If it fails to do so, it will seriously compromise the ambition mechanism, and by so doing threaten the efficacy of the Paris Agreement as a whole, with devastating consequences throughout the world.

“ **All countries need to take on more mitigation than currently pledged. This means different things for different countries.** ”

## EQUITY AND AMBITION

The global climate regime hinges on two principles: ambition (the strength of countries’ pledged action, including international support) and equity (the idea that countries with more responsibility for causing the problem, and more capacity to act, should do more than others). Neither of these principles can be ignored. Only together can they enable the transition we need.



Note: “Effort” is expressed per capita mitigation in 2030 relative to baseline projection. India’s numbers are small compared to the other countries; we applied 10x magnification. The US NDC is for 2025, but we extrapolate it to 2030 to make it comparable to others. See appendix for methodology and numbers for this graphic.<sup>3</sup>

## FAIR SHARES ASSESSMENT OF NDCs

For this briefing, we have built on the analysis of mitigation fair shares that we published in 2015<sup>1</sup> and 2016<sup>2</sup> to assess countries' climate commitments against a range of 'fair share' benchmarks.

The underlying framework we have used is designed to quantify and compare a wide range of views on both capacity and responsibility, and is explained in the online appendix.<sup>3</sup>

Countries' NDCs are placed within global mitigation budgets designed to maintain a minimal chance of keeping warming below 1.5°C and a 66% or higher chance of keeping it well below 2°C. In this report, our 'fair share range' is bounded at one end by our '1950/Medium Progressivity' and at the other end by our '1850/High Progressivity' equity benchmarks, which use cumulative greenhouse gas emissions since 1950 and 1850, respectively, as a basis for calculating national historical responsibilities. Both benchmarks use a \$7,500 annual per capita threshold below which individual income is exempted from the calculation of national capability, while the 1850/High Progressivity benchmark weighs incomes above this threshold increasingly strongly. This makes the capacity calculation sensitive to national income distribution, allowing capacity to be defined in a manner that varies with income levels, specifically excluding the incomes of the poorest. Also, both benchmarks weigh responsibility and capacity equally.<sup>3</sup>

For illustration, we review the fair shares for the US, the EU, China, and India against the pledges they made in their NDCs for emission reductions in 2030 (for the US we interpolate a 2030 figure from its 2025 and 2050 pledges<sup>3</sup>).

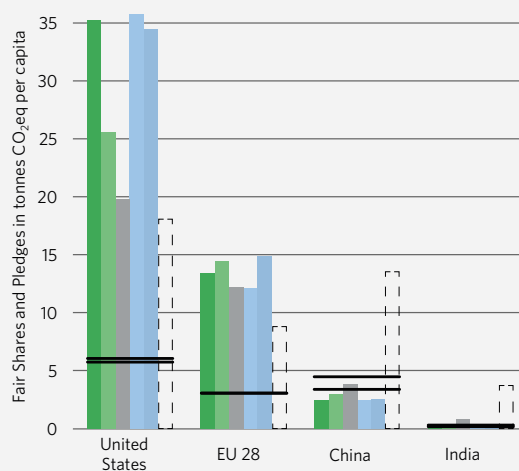
## IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS IN THE FIGURE

**USA and the EU:** The US and EU NDCs each amount to about a fifth of their respective fair shares. It's important to note, however, that the fair shares of the US and EU — like other wealthy countries with high capacity and responsibility — exceed what could realistically be done domestically (the dotted line represents complete decarbonization — the Paris global goal for mid-century). In practice this means that to achieve their fair shares, the US and EU must substantially increase their domestic action to reduce emissions, and provide finance, technology and capacity to support more emissions reductions in developing countries.

**China and India:** China's pledge exceeds its fair share. But if China is to decarbonize at a rate that is plausibly consistent with the global 1.5°C, or even the well below 2°C objective, China — and every other country — will need to scale up mitigation massively. India's NDC is slightly above or roughly in line with its fair share (depending on whether the higher or lower end of its NDC range is considered). But, as with China, much more of India's domestic mitigation potential must be unlocked to bring global ambition on a 1.5°C, or even well below 2°C, path. International support for capacity building, technology and finance will be essential to help enable this.

**In general, our fair shares analysis of the NDCs shows that:**

- » The ambition of all major developed countries falls well short of their fair shares, which include both domestic action and international finance.



**Figure 2: Equity Benchmarks in Context**

This figure shows the same two equity benchmarks as those bounding the 'fair share' range in Figure 1, but represented differently (green bars). It also shows a third benchmark, in which historical responsibility is calculated from 1990 and capacity considered in a less progressive manner (with a \$2,500 per capita income exemption threshold). This benchmark, though not part of the fair shares range used in this report, is included for reference as it reflects some politically salient viewpoints. This figure further shows (the two blue bars) the results of considering only capacity (with strong progressivity; light blue) or only historical responsibility (from 1850; dark blue), respectively. Finally, it shows (the dotted line box) a benchmark that represents full domestic decarbonization in 2030.<sup>3</sup>

- » The majority of developing countries have made mitigation pledges that exceed or broadly meet their fair share. But they also have mitigation potential beyond both their NDC pledges and their fair shares. Unless that potential is unlocked, and ambition is increased, the world will not keep the well below 2°C objective, let alone 1.5°C, within reach.
- » Most developed countries have fair shares that are larger than could be met exclusively within their borders, even with extremely ambitious domestic actions. Therefore in addition to very deep domestic reductions, the remainder of their contribution must be made by enabling an equivalent amount of emissions reduction in developing countries through financing and other support.
- » Cooperation between developed and developing countries is critically important to enable scaled-up ambition. This means genuine cooperation wherein developing countries offer conditional NDCs that go beyond their own fair share of the global mitigation effort, while developed countries ensure the means of implementation to realize these additional efforts.

**Developing countries — a just transition:** As mentioned above, most developing country governments have made mitigation pledges in their NDCs that exceed or broadly meet their fair shares. This is encouraging, but it's not enough. Those developing countries that have not yet pledged to unconditionally undertake at least their fair share's worth of mitigation must do so now. At the same time they must be clear and unrelenting in their claims for international climate finance, which they absolutely need if they are to curb emissions enough to meet the Paris temperature goals.

The larger context here must be remembered. If the world is to avoid catastrophic climate change, poorer countries now have no choice but to shift to alternative development trajectories at an extremely rapid pace. While we aspire to this developmental shift in order to achieve equitable, thriving societies, there is an injustice in already disadvantaged countries having to work with a much narrower set of options, on an extremely difficult timeline.

The long-term goal has to be a just, systemic transformation. Civil society and people's movements in developing countries are pressing their governments to fulfil their pledges with decisive moves away from fossil-fuel dependent and growth-oriented economies that perpetuate inequality. This means planning for ambitious leapfrogging to zero-carbon societies, assessing the necessary resources, and internalizing how such development trajectories can enhance well-being and provide meaningful economic development.

### Trump claims that the US's NDC is unfair. Is it?

On 1 June 2017, President Trump announced that he would cease implementation of the US NDC because of the "draconian financial and economic burdens the [Paris] agreement imposes on our country," further noting that the agreement "disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries" and that "the bottom line is that the Paris Accord is very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States".

President Trump is wrong on all counts. The US was alone responsible for the contents of its NDC, which was built on existing US efforts to sustainably reduce emissions — efforts that pre-dated the Paris Agreement. Further, the agreement serves the long-standing US national interest by demanding strong transparency from all countries, including major developing economies like India and China.

Paris is not a 'bad deal' for the US. In fact, the agreement's bottom-up structure for national climate pledges actually originated with the US. What would absolutely be a bad deal is the abandonment of Paris' promise of a stronger and fairer regime. This would be a betrayal of people everywhere, particularly poor and vulnerable people, and as recent hurricanes have shown, Americans are among their ranks. There are plenty of people within the US who are not at all able to cope with climate impacts, and who desperately need the Paris regime to live up to its aspirational goals.

As for global fairness, the US's NDC speaks for itself. In terms of both capacity and historical responsibility, the US NDC amounts to about a fifth of the country's fair share.

### Developed country mitigation ambition and climate finance:

Much of the finance that developing countries need to achieve their Paris goals is properly seen as the responsibility of the wealthy countries. And to the extent that adequate finance for adaptation and for loss and damage is not on the table, this is only more true. As the impacts of climate change worsen, countries are compelled to prioritize disaster recovery. This will significantly affect their ability to self-finance ambitious mitigation programs.

Even today, however, the money can be found. Various innovative mechanisms can generate revenue in equitable ways. Possibilities include aviation levies, financial transaction taxes, progressive carbon taxes, special drawing rights, and so on. The bottom line here is that while the redirection of private finance is critical, it is not the whole story. Developing countries must be empowered to rapidly shift to zero-carbon energy, and public finance has a critical role to play in building democratic, renewable energy systems for people and communities. It is short sighted to pretend otherwise.

## NOTES

1 <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report>

2 <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report2016>

3 Full details of the methodology used here, and the numbers behind the graphics, can be found in the appendix. The appendix also contains individual

assessments of the NDCs of all countries as well as a third politically-salient benchmark ('1990/Low Progressivity') for which our findings also apply. The appendix also describes the global mitigation pathway used in this report. See <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report2017/appendix>.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The world needs a thorough, rapid, gender-fair, economically just transition to a sustainable and equitable economy. This can only happen within a new era of global cooperation, one that must necessarily include the fair sharing of efforts and resources. In the short term, this means not only a more urgent redirection of private capital flows, but also the delivery of significant amounts of public climate finance. In this context, the Parties must soon deliver a credible plan that squarely addresses three overarching challenges:

### Urgency

The commitments captured in the first round of NDCs will not even suffice to keep temperatures “well below 2°C,” much less to a limit of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Even if all countries met their existing commitments, the world would be on track to a devastating 3°C temperature rise or more, with a real chance of tipping the global climate system into catastrophic runaway warming.

Despite today’s unhappy political circumstances, this reality must be universally recognized and turned to action. We must cease to pretend that we are on track. The Parties must very soon increase ambition far beyond the Paris pledges. This increase must begin before 2020, and at the same time FD2018 must focus on ratcheting up the first round of NDCs.

This ratcheting must involve much stronger contributions by developed countries, and increased ambition by many developing countries as well. A key element of this strengthening is the pairing of international support with scaled-up conditional elements of developing country NDCs, so that these elements have a real chance of being realised.

### Adaptation and loss and damage

It is important to stress that equity refers not only to the mitigation challenge, but to adaptation and loss and damage as well. In fact, these challenges may be greater than the challenge of mitigation itself. Currently, estimates of global adaptation need are both preliminary and radically incomplete. We can be sure there are ‘unknown unknowns’ around the corner, and the adaptation need will be immense. Adaptation finance must not continue to be neglected.

The 2018 process cannot be about mitigation alone. It must also include meaningful support for both adaptation and loss and

damage. After all, as the FD2018 drives us toward the Global Stocktake, we know that failing to make real progress on either adaptation or loss and damage will seriously erode trust and undermine the deeper cooperation that will be needed to effectively face the overall crisis.

### Equity

FD2018 must lay the groundwork for a productive discussion of ambition ratcheting, which must take place “in the light of equity” (Paris Agreement, Article 14). Parties must justify their pledges as fair contributions to a 1.5°C global effort, and they should do so in clear and transparent equity terms that can be universalized and applied to all Parties at all levels of development, to help shed light on countries’ implicit expectations of one another. National capacity, historical responsibility, level of development, adaptation need — all these are key.

**“ Ultimately, the challenges here will crystalize around the 2023 Global Stocktake, but the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue will set important precedents. ”**

It’s essential that FD2018 not only leads to increased ambition in the short term, but also establishes a framework within which a common vision for climate equity can evolve. This framework must bridge different national views and deepen our understanding of the many ways in which injustice blocks climate ambition while equity, in sharp contrast, can drive fair and ambitious action by all countries. Such a mutual understanding among Parties would support much greater cooperation, enable meaningful self-assessment and peer-assessment, and break ground toward meaningful exchanges on equitable differentiation and fair paths toward the fulfilment of the Paris objectives.

Ultimately, the challenges here will crystalize around 2023’s Global Stocktake, but key precedents will be set with FD2018. It must pioneer a transparent process for assessing the adequacy and fairness not only of collective ambition, but of individual country contributions as well. To that end, it must define processes that provide the information, analysis and insights required for meaningful exercises in mutual assessment and comparison, all of which must take place within the context of our now sharply limited global carbon budget. The point must be to mediate a meaningful discussion that takes us beyond empty claims.

## ABOUT THE CIVIL SOCIETY EQUITY REVIEW GROUP

As social movements, environmental and development NGOs, trade unions, faith and other civil society groups, we have come together to assess the commitments that have been put on the table through the UN climate negotiations.

We seek to identify which countries are offering to do their fair share

and which need to do more, and to present recommendations on how to close the emissions gap.

Analytical support is provided by the Climate Equity Reference Project, an initiative of EcoEquity and the Stockholm Environment Institute. [www.ClimateEquityReference.org](http://www.ClimateEquityReference.org)

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CLIMATE EQUITY REFERENCE  
PROJECT



A makeshift seawall in Patuakhali, Bangladesh, a region prone to frequent cyclones and devastating floods  
Photo credit: Brandon Wu/ActionAid