



Climate diplomacy: Understanding Ethiopia's national engagement

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*IIED's Climate Change Group has been providing support to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group at the UNFCCC since 2001. They are currently working with in-country LDC experts to understand the existing infrastructures for undertaking climate diplomacy, and to identify policy recommendations for furthering this work. Mr. Gebru Jember Endalew of Ethiopia, an LDC group core team member, has produced three research papers as material for a forthcoming IIED Briefing. Recognising that effective climate diplomacy must be firmly rooted within the national interest, the three research papers look at: **Understanding national engagement; Understanding national policies and drivers;** and **Drawing conclusions and recommendations.** In this first paper on understanding national engagement the research looks at: the national understanding of climate change diplomacy; the national system for engaging in climate diplomacy; what ministries, institutions or bodies engage in this effort; how the media is used; and whether climate diplomacy is done in coordination with other nations.*

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National understanding of climate diplomacy

Ethiopia started to undertake climate diplomacy in 2009 with the then Prime Minister, H.E. Meles Zenawi, becoming actively engaged in different *fora* at both national and international levels. Ethiopia's engagement contributed significantly to the establishment of the *Conference of African Heads of State on Climate Change* (CAHOSCC), which has served as the political wing of African climate change negotiators up until now (see section 3 below). In Ethiopia there is now considerable understanding about climate change diplomacy among higher decision makers, as well as at the mid-level experts level. The system still starts from the Prime Minister's office, where the current PM also remains engaged at national and international levels. Climate diplomacy is undertaken at different levels across the country, with for instance regular debriefing of parliamentarians taking place at federal level. Mass awareness creation campaigns also take place across the country using the 'Climate Hearing' initiative that has helped to provide evidence of climate change and variability, as well as people's perception about the cause of it. In addition there has been awareness raising with NGOs/CSOs and with academia through conferences, and meetings and panel discussions have been held across the country on different occasions.

The 'Climate Hearings' were an initiative of Oxfam America and the Climate Change Forum-Ethiopia (CCF-E). The main reason for having mass mobilisation was to provide awareness to the nation in general and vulnerable communities in particular, starting with parliamentarians and covering most of the regions. They were also a means to make the global community aware about the impact of climate change on communities in order to come up with a binding agreement to address it. The hearings became a means for the voices of vulnerable communities to be heard by the international community: They collected evidence about people's perception about climate change, made them aware about what is happening globally, and provided debriefings about the status of the climate change negotiations. These hearings were held frequently during the preparation for COP15 in Copenhagen, covering much of the country and with dissemination via short videos. They then continued after COP15, addressing the outcomes of COP15 and subsequent COPs and were expanded over the remaining regions of the country until 2014.ⁱ

Climate diplomacy began at home and has grown up to the international level — contributing to the success achieved so far.

The national system for engaging in climate diplomacy

Ethiopia's first national climate change conference took place on January 15, 2009, and was attended by high level government officials, CSOs, UN, bilateral and multilateral organisations, as well as the private sector. The then prime minister of Ethiopia Meles Zenawi opened the conference.ⁱⁱ It resulted in the creation of the Climate Change Forum-Ethiopia (CCF-E) in order to ensure a coordinated effort in addressing climate change.ⁱⁱⁱ The conference also helped in bringing different actors together and aligning Ethiopia with regional and global movements. P.M. Meles also proposed having a strategy that would guide the country to follow a green development path. This resulted in the Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy (CRGE), with its vision of targeting Ethiopia to reach middle-income country status with a carbon neutral economy by 2025. In line with efforts to reach an agreement at global level, action on the ground also took place via mobilising resources locally. Under Meles' leadership, Ethiopia had a leading role in UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign and a total of 1.7 billion trees were planted since 2007, the third largest contribution after India and China.^{iv}

It was following the establishment of the Climate Change Forum-Ethiopia, as a preparation for COP15, that the 'Climate Hearings' were held across the country. These hearings were successful in addressing the need to bring the voices of vulnerable communities to international events. During the hearings parliamentarians, famous people like athletes, public figures and elderly people were all engaged.

Among the areas where hearings were held in 2009 was Assela, which is the birthplace for most of the famous internationally renowned athletes like Haile Gebreselassie and Derartu Tulu. More than 10,000 people were able to participate in one event to talk about climate change and its impact in their locality. The event was started with a reflection from these athletes on the current weather changes and its effect on the Assela community. Derartu said 'We used to be able to practice running at all hours of the day—the weather in Assela was perfect for running. But now, even this morning, at 10:00 a.m., it was already getting too hot, making the 3km opening running event more difficult than it should have been'. Haile Gebreselassie also stated "This is an issue affecting all of us. I won't stop making my voice heard until I see some change, even if Copenhagen does not make a difference I won't stop".

Also in preparation for COP15—to create a common position across the African continent and in order to give political leadership guidance to the technical negotiators to speak with one voice during climate change negotiations—the *Conference of African Heads of State on Climate Change* (CAHOSCC) was established in 2009 by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government meeting, held 1-3 July 2009 in Sirte, Libya. The CAHOSCC started its work in earnest during COP15 held in Copenhagen, Denmark and continued through to COP21. There were ten member states at the establishment including: Algeria, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa, plus the chairperson of the African Union. The first CAHOSCC meeting also resulted in an agreement that Ethiopia should lead CAHOSCC. Hence, P.M. Meles Zenawi led the CAHOSCC for two terms from COP15 to COP17—which were held in Copenhagen, Cancun and Durban respectively.

P.M Meles was also assigned by the secretary general of the United Nations to co-chair the high level advisory group on climate change financing, together with Prime Minister of Norway. The purpose of the task was to study potential sources of finance for mitigation and adaptation activities in developing countries, with a set target of US \$100 billion per year by 2020. They were able to deliver the result during COP16. Ethiopia's engagement in global climate change negotiation, started by P.M. Meles Zenawi, has continued with his successor, P.M. Hailemariam Desalegn up until COP21.

Strong coordination and an effective institutional set up are among the prerequisites for achieving set targets at national level.

The ministries, institutions and bodies engaged in climate diplomacy

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC), the National Focal Point to the UNFCCC, is mandated by the Government of Ethiopia to spearhead and coordinate environment, forest and climate change issues in the country. The ministry prepares regulatory instruments and plays a regulatory role: ensuring the mainstreaming and implementation of environment, forest and climate change issues in sectoral programmes and plans; coordinating implementation of the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy across sectors; and carrying out capacity-building activities for sectoral and regional bodies in the country.

The Government of Ethiopia has set up a national financial mechanism, the CRGE Facility, in order to support the realisation of the priorities set out in the CRGE strategy, as well as the development and implementation of CRGE investment plans. The facility has also been established to help Ethiopia fully benefit from the different forms of finance currently and potentially available, and to help mobilise and allocate finance in accordance with the prioritised needs defined by the CRGE strategy. The drive for having such a facility was to mobilise, access and combine domestic and international funding, as well as public and private sources of finance, through grants as well as guarantees and results-based payments. It also allows direct access to international climate funding by ensuring compliance with international standards and requirements. This has resulted in the facility being accredited for the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund (GCF).^v The Government of Ethiopia has already committed its contribution to the CDGE Facility on a continuous basis. Applicable contributions from the domestic

private sector will also be considered and supported with appropriate policy instruments. Developing systems and manuals for accessing finance from international sources, including bilateral and multilateral, has been put in place, for instance the facility is able to implement projects with a fund generated from bilateral partners. Proposals have also been prepared and submitted to the GCF.

The CRGE Ministerial steering committee, chaired by the Prime Minister's office, oversees and gives guidance to the Facility. It comprises CRGE implementing ministries like the MEFCC, Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC), Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MoANR), Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MoLF), Ministry of Industry (MoI), Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity (MoWIE) and Ministry of Transport (MoT). This committee meets regularly and gets updates on the status of implementation of the CRGE and the integration process; approves documents such as the Climate Resilient Strategies for agriculture, forestry as well as the water and energy sectors before they are implemented; and also gives direction on outstanding issues.

The CRGE Ministerial Steering Committee also determines the CRGE Facility priorities.^{vi} The Facility has management and technical committees, which are chaired by the MoFEC and MEFCC respectively. The management committee is supported by a secretariat placed in the MoFEC that works closely with the technical committee. An advisory group comprising of different stakeholders also gives input to the process. Besides these committees, the sectoral ministries, which are covered in the CRGE, have set up a CRGE unit that follows the day-to-day activities of their ministries.

How the media is used in climate diplomacy

The media have been engaged in both regular and occasional events in Ethiopia. Both print and electronic media have been used in disseminating climate related events, and the coverage of events using different local languages has been followed. For instance, there is a regular education and awareness creation programme undertaken by Forum for Environment (FFE), a local environmental NGO, as well as other actors using TV and Radio.

FFE is a not-for-profit and non-political Ethiopian Residents Charity Organisation serving as a platform for environmental advocacy and communication. FFE focuses on environment and climate change related issues including: Forestry, Protected Areas, Urban Environment, Energy, and Climate Change. The tools used to achieve the objectives for raising awareness and environmental advocacy activities include: capacity building, training, network building, communicating information, policy level discussions, public meetings, commissioning research, publications, radio programmes, and incentive and acknowledgement schemes. For instance, the 'Akirma' Magazine has been published since 1998,^{vii} and radio programmes like [EBC FM 97.1 Radio Programme](#), and the 'Akirma' TV programme supported by the Strategic Climate Institutions Programme (SCIP), has run from April 2013 – July 2015. They have all been used as a means of creating massive awareness across regions within the country. The TV programme was broadcast in collaboration with the MEFCC. It addresses the challenges of climate change, policy and implementation responses, and what needs to be done at local and international levels. The programme is disseminated by Ethiopian Broadcasting Services (EBS) TV, a privately held media company, covers much of the country, and has been watched by most of the people who have access.

Media coverage of pre and post COPs, and other similar events, is done via having a team of media personnel together with the Ethiopian negotiating team. Live coverage of the status and results of the negotiations have been disseminated using the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). Government and private newsletters have also been used in disseminating information and creating awareness. A climate change campaign has been conducted using electronic media, especially during the preparation for COP15 in 2009 and afterwards. The 'Climate Hearings' (section 3 above) officially started on September 14, 2009 covering most of the vulnerable parts of the country, and within two months fed into the COP15 process. Briefings were held after COP15, starting with Parliamentarians. The hearings and mass awareness creation activities were subsequently continued

over the remaining regions of the country. A short summary of the 'Climate Hearings' was also disseminated using YouTube all over the world.

Engaging the media facilitates massive awareness creation across the country, which will also increase the engagement of the people in realizing the set targets.

Climate diplomacy coordination

Ethiopia is a seat for the African Union and the location for a large number of diplomats. National, regional and international conferences, meetings and panel discussions are held in Addis Ababa a lot of the time. For instance, the first climate change conference, which was held in Addis Ababa in 2009, engaged most of the diplomats and contributed a lot towards the idea of creating the political wing of African negotiators, CAHOSCC. Most climate change related meetings held in Ethiopia are also done in close collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia. For instance, Ethiopia has been working closely with the African Union member states since the establishment of CAHOSCC, , and also working closely with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)-African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) in the preparation for annual conferences on Climate Change and Development in Africa.

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) has been established to serve as a centre for knowledge generation on climate change in Africa. ACPC is working with countries towards having improved climate information that is used for the day-to-day activities of countries, and also to serve as an input for decision-making. This support is provided through the ClimDev-Africa programme, a joint initiative of UNECA, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and African Union Commission (AUC). Through this programme countries have been supported in improving their analytical capability, knowledge management and dissemination mechanisms. ACPC serves communities and governments as well as the Regional Economic Communities in Africa. In order to contribute to addressing Africa's climate challenges, the centre is working in partnership with different stakeholders. It has focused its work programme into three broad areas including: Knowledge generation, sharing and networking that consists of research, knowledge management and peer learning, and outreach activities; Advocacy and consensus building; and Advisory services and technical cooperation, which comprises capacity mobilisation, capacity building and technical assistance.

Coordination in Ethiopia also takes place via a partnership agreement called 'Lima Declaration' signed between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, France, Denmark and Sweden. Its purpose is to work together for an ambitious outcome in Paris and also to support the realisation of the CRGE. This declaration expanded and renewed the achievements of the strategic partnership between Ethiopia, UK and Norway, which was held during the international launching of the CRGE in Durban, South Africa during COP17. The partnership aims to continue the already on-going political collaboration for advancing international climate policy, the UNFCCC process, for an ambitious and comprehensive agreement accepted by all parties, as well as technical and financial support for the implementation of the CRGE strategy. The European Union and the United States of America have recently joined the Lima Declaration.

Climate diplomacy will have major impact if addressed at regional, continental as well as global level.

Endnotes

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- i Oxfam America -Climate adaptation in Ethiopia <http://policy-practice.oxfamamerica.org/work/in-action/climate-adaptation-in-ethiopia/>
- ii UNEP, Addis Ababa highlights Vol 6, no.2 February, 2009.
- iii [Oxfam international press release on the establishment of Climate Change Forum Ethiopia](https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2009-01-15/ethiopia-national-forum-coordinate-action-climate-change)
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- iv UNEP news centre - Tribute to Meles Zenawi, 22 August 2012
<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=2692&ArticleID=9256>
- v http://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/184476/GCF_B.12_32_-_Decisions_of_the_Board_Twelfth_Meeting_of_the_Board_8_10_March_2016.pdf/020edfa1-53b2-4abf-af78-fccf5628db2a?version=1.1
- vi <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/3ET00>
- vii Akirma Magazine - <http://ffe-ethiopia.org/index.php/media/magazines/akirma-magazine/>

Published by IIED, 22/09/2016

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