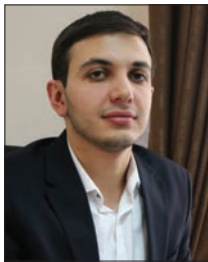




# Climate Change and Climate Diplomacy: A Perspective from Armenia



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## Introduction

The worldwide security scenario features a diverse set of converging risks, such as tensions among power centres, disagreements over geographical and political boundaries. These are not new risks. New risks and challenges, like rapid climate change, have emerged, which are, by no means, known in earlier humankind's history. And today, all of us are encountering great uncertainty and extreme vulnerability in the face of rapid climatic, technological and social changes. It is true that unprecedented innovations in science and technology make it possible to identify the risks and plan for appropriate responses in order to manage and minimize their negative impacts on countries. Scientific evidence leaves no doubt that the climate is changing: melting glaciers, increasing temperatures, drought, sea-level rise, and more frequent and more intense extreme weather events, and when they blend with political, monetary and ecological factors, they directly affect millions across the world, adding to, livelihood insecurity and sociopolitical tensions. In many regions, water will be scarcer, storms and floods would create more damages, and droughts will affect more adversely. These impacts threaten economic development, undermine livelihoods, and make the world more insecure and unpredictable. Therefore, Climate change is one of the key policy challenges in today's era. These are obvious to anyone who is aware of our planetary crisis and as this is too well known I am not giving a long of references to substantiate this.

Climate change is also one of the biggest security threats of the 21st century and "addressing climate change-related security risks is an important dimension of agendas to sustain the peace, stabilise communities, and prevent conflict" (Ivleva, D., et al. 2019). Therefore, a common strategy and binding goals are necessary on a planetary scale.

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Starting in the 1970s, climate science has matured, building on advances in numerical modelling and satellite imaging. The rapid developments in computer technology coupled with expansion of satellites and related infrastructure in monitoring the atmosphere revolutionized our understanding and responding to global climate change.

But to understand and prepare for the challenges of climate change, it was necessary to share scientific knowledge beyond borders and work on policy issues on a global scale. Hence climate change studies had to be done at different levels, leading to the understanding of global climate change. The realisation that while studying changes at regional levels was necessary but not sufficient to get the true global picture resulted in consultations and meetings. This resulted in the United Nations setting-up the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 1988. The IPCC's role is to publish reports that provide a clear and up-to-date picture of the current state of scientific knowledge relating to climate change. IPCC was formed as the global Panel with participation from states and the scientists were to provide the knowledge that would inform policy and 'translate' the scientific findings for policymakers, highlighting the threats, options and challenges. In that sense, IPCC was not just a scientific body. Policymaking and policy response is ingrained in its mandate. Thus climate change politics is inseparable from science and functioning of IPCC. IPCC housed in WMO and based in Geneva emerged as the global eyes and ears on global climate change.<sup>1</sup>

The international community kicked off the fight against climate change in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at the second Earth Summit. Following the conference, 166 countries signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which acknowledges humanity's role in global warming. The Rio Conference resulted in two other important conventions on biodiversity and desertification. The parties to the Convention have met annually from 1995 in Conferences of the Parties (COP) to assess progress in dealing with climate change and in limiting emissions of Green House Gases (GHGs).

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was concluded and established legally binding obligations for

developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in the period 2008–2012. The Kyoto Protocol has had two commitment periods, the first of which lasted from 2008–2012. The second one was from 2013–2020 and is based on the Doha Amendment to the Protocol, which has not entered into force. The 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference produced an agreement stating that future global warming should be limited to below 2.0 °C (3.6 °F) relative to the pre-industrial level. The Protocol was amended in 2012 to encompass the period 2013–2020 in the Doha Amendment, which as of December 2015 had not entered into force. In 2011, parties adopted the "Durban Platform for Enhanced Action".

As part of the Durban Platform, parties have agreed to "develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties" (COP 2012). Finally after much protracted negotiations and compromises, in 2015 the Paris Agreement was adopted, agreeing in on, emission reductions from 2020 on through commitments of countries in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with a view of lowering the target to 1.5 °C. That it has taken 27 years from forming of IPCC and twenty three year after UNFCCC, for Paris Agreement and this tells us that the progress has been uneven and slow, even as it was becoming clearer, year by year, that climate change could have grave consequences for survival of humankind.

The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016. Still, the progress is tardy and with the USA leaving the Agreement, there are doubts about achieving the targets. IPCC continues and the outcomes from IPCC assessments have been mixed. After analyzing the science and diplomacy nexus in IPCC, Ruffini states, "The IPCC has helped to guide and structure the discussions between states under the Climate Convention. The influence of science has, thus, proven to be important in some aspects, but failed in others. The IPCC' successive reports did not decisively impact the course of international climate negotiations. Similarly, while scientists have worked hard to publicize the predictable damage of global warming, policymakers to date have not taken radical decisions to reverse this trend" (Ruffini 2018).

With the Paris Agreement in force, the need for international co-operation in achieving the targets is obvious. International co-operation and co-operation at regional levels are *sine qua non* but these do not occur on their own. Climate Diplomacy has been defined as “climate diplomacy as encompassing a rich understanding of how to shape the national interest debate, through engaging new constituencies that can leverage change.

Among the actors in global climate change negotiations and policy setter, the European Union is an important one. While that is obvious, what is not widely known is that EU pursues climate diplomacy actively and this is part of its commitment to the de-carbonization of economies and societies. As the EU is engaged in using diplomatic channels and other sources to convince countries that the Paris Agreement should be complied with, it has more or less integrated climate diplomacy in its global engagement on climate change. In 2016, the Council of the European Union defined three strands that climate diplomacy has to build upon after COP21 (Climate Diplomacy, 2019):

- Continuing to advocate climate change as a strategic priority in diplomatic dialogues, public diplomacy and external policy instruments;
- Supporting the implementation of the Paris Agreement, in the context of low-emission and climate-resilient development;
- Increasing efforts to address the nexus between climate, natural resources, prosperity, stability and migration.

Moreover, early diplomatic engagement is imperative for confronting the geopolitical consequences and security implications of climate change. To address these challenges, a new profile of climate diplomacy is evolving for making use of a full range of policies, including development cooperation, conflict prevention efforts, and humanitarian assistance, in addition to more traditional measures of climate change adaptation and mitigation. These new approaches for foreign policy go beyond the traditional realms of climate policy. Moving from a risk analysis of climate-related threats to timely preventive action requires a greater commitment to integrating climate change concerns into development, foreign, and security policies (Carius, A, et al. 2017).

“Examples include strengthening diplomatic networks, building new alliances with partners, and raising awareness – not only of potentially negative climate change impacts but also of opportunities to embark on a sustainable transformation of our societies” (Adriázola et al. 2014).

It is also becoming increasingly clear that development and growth policies need to be climate-compatible. In fact, climate action presents great opportunities to grow the economy sustainably. Using cross-sectoral convening power, bilateral relations and multilateral fora, diplomats can promote a better understanding of these opportunities beyond the environmental policy community, and scope and facilitate bilateral cooperative action. Such an integrated approach will help to further foreign policy objectives, and support implementation of the Paris Agreement, while ratcheting up ambition over time (Carius, A, et al. 2017). Thus, Climate Diplomacy can go a long way in helping to create the conditions for sustainable transformations.

## Science, Data and Climate Change

While the technology necessary to monitor the climate effectively is already here, political will is still needed to transform our society into a system which openly shares data - noting that more than half of the data collected by government-operated Earth-observing satellites is still not freely shared. Open data policies are crucial to address the cross-cutting issue of climate change and to provide input for better decision making across many domains.

A bright illustration of how science helps to cope with climate-related issues is Copernicus Climate Change Service which supports society by providing authoritative information about the past, present and future climate in Europe and the rest of the World. It provides climate data and information on impacts on a range of topics and sectoral areas through our Climate Data Store (CDS). The CDS is designed to enable users to tailor services to more specific public or commercial needs (C3S 2019). Climate projections are obtained by running numerical models of Earth’s climate, which may cover either the entire globe or a specific region e.g. Europe. These models are referred to as Global





Source: <https://climate.copernicus.eu/about-us>

Climate Models (GCMs) – also known as General Circulation Models – or Regional Climate Models (RCMs), respectively.

In setting priorities for making projection results available, C3S has put a strong focus on providing quantitative information about the uncertainties in projected outcomes, taking into account various sources. Such uncertainties arise from differences in emission scenarios, differences among the formulations of numerical models, and the natural variability of the climate system on decadal scales. Although the available climate observations already provide a vast amount of information for the generation of climate services, it is legitimate to ask what can be done in the future to improve the quality and quantity of such information. For example, are climate services going to benefit from a substantial increase in the resolution of climate models, or should more resources be allocated to the production of larger ensembles which provide a better estimate of uncertainties?

## Climate Change and the Commitments of Armenia

Armenia is a country of climatic contrasts: because of intricate terrain, one can find high climate diversity over even a small territory. The country has almost all types of climate, from arid subtropical to cold high mountainous climates. The geographical location of Armenia (a landlocked mountainous country with

vulnerable ecosystems), and the country's need to ensure its national security, necessitates the prioritisation of climate change. Geographically, Armenia is peculiar for its high seismic and exogenic processes, which provoke earthquakes, landslides and erosion. The landslide hazard zone covers one-third of the country, primarily in foothill and mountain areas. Nearly 470,000 people are exposed (around 15 percent of the total population) to landslide risk. Hydro-meteorological disasters have become more frequent and intense in the last few decades. Floods, mudslides, and debris flows threaten half of the country's territory, mainly in medium-altitude mountainous areas, where they typically occur once every three to ten years. About 15 percent of agricultural lands in Armenia are prone to droughts, worsening the situation with the erosion and salinity of lands. While the landslides are very rare in Armenia, they are typically caused by floods, which are more common and occur once in 6.5 years approximately, causing on average 0.7 million US\$ of losses per year (Yerevan, 2018).

Armenia ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a non-Annex I country in 1993, UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol - in 2002, Doha Amendment of Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement in 2017. The current national program for Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) under the UNFCCC was adopted in 2015. It is an integrated strategy aimed at ensuring effective adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change

and fostering climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that does not threaten food production. Armenia issued three National Communications on Climate Change (in 1998, 2010, and 2015), and Biennial Update Reports on UNFCCC in 2016 and 2018. The Council with its working groups establishes a consistent process for coordination of climate change policy, enhances cooperation at the international and regional levels, as well as professional training and education on climate change-related issues. Armenia adopted a national disaster risk management strategy in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The strategy sets seven broad objectives, including (i) reduction of deaths from disasters; (ii) reduction of the number of people suffered from disasters; (iii) reduction of economic damages from disasters; (iv) reduction of the effects of disasters on essential infrastructures and services including health and educational institutions; (v) development of local disaster risk management strategies; (vi) international cooperation; (vii) enhancement of early warning systems.

Since the UNFCCC ratification, once every five years the Government of Armenia approves the list of measures for implementing the country's commitments under the international environmental conventions including the UNFCCC. The last one, approved by the RA Government Protocol Decision N 49-8 of December 8, 2016, includes inter alia the measures to be implemented within 2017-2021 in fulfillment of the obligations and provisions arising from the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement and assigns the responsible agencies. In particular, the list includes the activity for "Preparation of the Second Biennial Update Report as well as upcoming biennial reports and their submission to the Convention". Climate change is a challenge with many dimensions and hence a number of ministries are in charge of dealing with climate change-related issues. Therefore in 2012, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia adopted Decree N 955 "On the establishment of an Inter-agency Coordinating Council on the implementation of the requirements and provisions of the UNFCCC and the approval of the composition and rules of procedures of the Inter-agency Coordinating Council".

The Council is composed of representatives of 13 ministries, 3 state agencies adjunct to the Government and 2 independent bodies – the Armenian Public Services Regulatory Commission and Armenian National Statistical Service. The Council ensures high-level support and policy guidance thus giving sustainability to the preparation of the national communications and biennial update reports. To support the operations of the Council on the fulfillment of the reporting requirements including the process of producing GHG inventories, a working group was also established comprised of the representatives of the ministries, state agencies as well as climate change experts and consultants.

These steps taken by Armenia confirm that it is committed to the global goals on reduction of emissions. Translating this into action is a major challenge in terms of resources, institutions, and, for Armenia, pursuing reductions in emissions, planning and achieving adaptation and mitigation strategies is not a matter of choice. There are no other options.

I suggest that Climate Diplomacy can be harnessed for inter alia, helping Armenia to reduce the emissions, build and enhance resilient capacity. This calls for developing a strategic plan on climate diplomacy. This can be an integral part of the climate change strategy and that of Science Diplomacy. Under this Armenia can enhance its global engagement on climate change and work with the EU on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate diplomacy should enable more access to funds and technology, capacity building in tackling climate change and deepen collaboration in climate change matters. Given its location and on account of strategic importance, it will be logical if the EU supports Armenia to tackle climate change. The modalities for the same can be worked by the EU and Government of Armenia.

## Conclusion

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets set out in the 2030 Agenda explicitly elaborate on economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. Sustainable Development Goal 13 emphasizes the urgency of taking action to combat

climate change and its impacts by calling for actions to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity with respect to climate hazards.

Undoubtedly, moderating or avoiding the risks associated with climate change is urgently needed. With cutting-edge technologies on hand, international diplomatic community and scientific community are able to prevent the negative impacts arising from climate hazards and in slowing the process of climate change, thus reducing the risks of conflicts, livelihood insecurity and sociopolitical tensions.

#### Endnote

- 1 For reasons of space I am not discussing the classic on this topic 'Structure and Agent in the Scientific Diplomacy of Climate Change : An Empirical Case Study of Science-Policy Interaction in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' by T. Skodvin (Springer 2000)

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