



ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN SHAPING AMBITIOUS NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS

Insights from India, Kenya, and South Africa

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BAU	Business-As-Usual
BEE	Bureau of Energy Efficiency
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CEA	Central Electricity Authority
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GLOBE	Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment
GNI plus	Global NDC Implementation Partners
GtCO ₂ e	Gigatons of Carbon Dioxide equivalent
Int. IDEA	International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance
KAM	Kenya Association of Manufacturers
KCCWG	Kenya Climate Change Working Group
KEPSA	Kenya Private Sector Alliance
KNCCI	Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LT-LEDS	Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MoECCF	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change
MtCO ₂ e	Million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent
NACOFA	National Community Forests Association
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSC	National Steering Committee
PACJA	Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance

PCC	Presidential Climate Commission
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RBI	Reserve Bank of India
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Executive Summary

As we approach COP 30 in Brazil in 2025, this pivotal moment presents an opportunity to enhance the ambition of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through strategic global engagement. At the heart of these efforts is the ratchet mechanism enshrined in the Paris Agreement, which enables countries to progressively increase their climate ambitions every five years. However, the current trajectory based on existing NDC pledges is insufficient, with a predicted rise in temperatures of 2.5 – 2.9°C above pre-industrial levels, which would be disastrous for the climate. This alarming gap emphasizes the need for stronger NDC commitments, including from Global South countries.

This study explores the role of elected representatives, particularly parliamentarians in the Global South, in making NDCs more ambitious. It focuses on three key countries from the Global South—India, Kenya, and South Africa—examining how parliamentarians can influence the NDC process. Our research identifies key ways parliamentarians can impact the formulation and implementation of NDCs, offering valuable insights for strengthening climate commitments globally.

Below, we give some insights into how parliamentarians can influence the NDC process.

- 1. Advocate for stronger NDCs at the international level.** At the international level, parliamentarians can push for stronger climate commitments by engaging with global climate bodies, promoting ratification of international climate treaties, and fostering collaborative dialogues on NDC targets.
- 2. Push for legislative action through parliamentary procedures.** Depending on the country, parliamentarians have significant leverage at the national level through legislative tools such as introducing bills, debating NDC-related motions, questioning government actions, and engaging in committee meetings. This gives them formal channels to drive the adoption of ambitious climate policies and push for more robust NDC commitments.
- 3. Wield influence through their formalized roles in the parliamentary committees.** In countries like Kenya, the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Environment, Forestry and Mining debates and reviews climate change matters where they can make efforts to ensure that the NDCs reflect broader public interests including economic and social concerns.
- 4. Advocate for ambitious NDCs in various public forums, building pressure on decision makers.** Parliamentarians can advocate for stronger NDCs using various domestic forums. For example, in South Africa, parliamentarians can convene constituency meetings to ensure that the diverse needs of communities—including businesses, labor groups, women, and youth—are considered in NDC targets. This inclusivity helps ensure that the NDCs are not just government-driven, but reflect the aspirations and developmental needs of all stakeholders.

1.0 Introduction

At the Paris Conference of Parties 21 (COP 21) in 2015, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), nearly 200 nations committed to keeping global warming well below 2°C, aiming for 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. Fast forward to last year, between July 2023 and June 2024, the global average temperatures experienced an alarming increase of over 1.5°C¹. While this temperature rise is a short-term occurrence, it serves as a critical reminder of the urgent need to address climate change aggressively. Scientists have repeatedly warned that failing to maintain temperatures below this threshold could drastically intensify climate-related disasters, such as floods, wildfires, and droughts. This recent spike does not yet signify a permanent breach of the 1.5°C target but underscores the unpredictability associated with our changing climate. It highlights the need for sustained and comprehensive global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance adaptation strategies.

At the global level, one of the most powerful mechanisms for raising climate ambitions was enshrined in the Paris Agreement at COP 21 in the form of a “ratchet mechanism” linked to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), that is, climate action plans that countries create for mitigation and adaptation every five years. The agreement contains provisions for countries to formulate more ambitious and effective NDCs. A United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) analysis² shows that current NDC pledges will put the world on a trajectory for a rise in average global temperatures 2.5-2.9°C above pre-industrial levels which would go well beyond the globally agreed Paris target and lead to extreme climate events around the world. In the run-up to COP 30 in Brazil in 2025, countries are expected to revise their NDCs in order to stay under the agreed temperature targets. This pivotal moment provides an excellent opportunity to enhance the ambition of NDCs through strategic engagements with key countries, including those from the Global South.

While different stakeholders work on different levers of change to make countries more ambitious on NDCs, the scale and type of role elected representatives or parliamentarians can play, especially in Global South countries, is poorly understood. We fill this gap by conducting a study to understand the role elected representatives can play in making NDCs ambitious. We focus on three key prominent countries in the Global South—India, Kenya and South Africa—as case study countries for this work. We selected these three countries for this study on the basis of a combination of strategic and practical considerations. We have included a mix of two lower-middle income countries (India and Kenya) and one upper-middle income country (South Africa) from the Global South³. Additionally, the researchers’ access to key stakeholders in these countries through parallel initiatives was another factor in determining their choice. Finally, another crucial determining factor was the availability of relevant data and documentation in English, which helped facilitate effective analysis through both a literature review and stakeholder interviews. By focusing on diverse case studies, we provide insights into the role elected representatives can play in the NDC process in Global South countries.

At the time of publishing this report, Kenya submitted its second NDC update to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), outlining

Table 1: Current NDC targets for India, Kenya, and South Africa

The table below shows the 2030 NDC targets for India, Kenya and South Africa.

NDC target category	India	Kenya*	South Africa
2030 unconditional NDC target			
Formulation of target in NDC	Emissions intensity of 45% below 2005 levels by 2030	GHG emissions lower by 32% by 2030 relative to the BAU scenario of 143 MtCO ₂ e (21% of the mitigation cost coverage from domestic sources)	-
Absolute emissions level in 2030 excl. LULUCF	4.6 GtCO ₂ e [103% above 2010]	126 MtCO ₂ e [104% above 2010]	-
2030 conditional NDC target			
Formulation of target in NDC	50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030	GHG emissions lower by 32% by 2030 relative to the BAU scenario of 143 MtCO ₂ e (79% of the mitigation cost subject to international support)	GHG emissions of 350–420 MtCO ₂ e in 2030
Absolute emissions level in 2030 excl. LULUCF	4.2–4.5 GtCO ₂ e [85–98% above 2010]	108 MtCO ₂ e [75% above 2010]	367–437 MtCO ₂ e [19%–32% below 2010]

Source: Climate Action Tracker⁴

an ambitious climate action plan for 2031–2035. The latest NDC targets reflect Kenya's commitment to effective power sector reforms and sustainability. Given this, our findings may not be immediately useful for stakeholders in Kenya. However, since NDC updates happen every five years, the research will be useful for future work in Kenya.

In the next section 2.0, we explain our research questions and methods. In section 3.0, we share our results for each of the three case study countries. In section 4.0, we share insights based on these case studies.

* Kenya's second NDC update (2031–35) aims to cut GHG emissions by 35% from a BAU level of 215 MtCO₂e by 2035, totaling 75.25 MtCO₂e in reductions. Of this, 15.05 MtCO₂e (20%) will be met domestically, while 60.20 MtCO₂e (80%) relies on international support through finance, investment, capacity building, and related mechanisms.

2.0 Research Questions and Methods

This study addressed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How does the NDC process work in different Global South countries?

Research Question 2: How can parliamentarians shape more ambitious NDCs?

To investigate these questions, we conducted research in three stages. In the first stage, we conducted a cross-jurisdiction literature review for three countries — India, Kenya, and South Africa — as case studies. The literature review encompassed a broad spectrum of sources ranging from academic papers and reports to government documents, among others.

For India, we reviewed official communications and reports disseminated by the Government of India. These include press releases, National Communication and Biennial Update Reports from the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC), and the Ministry of Finance sub-committee report on the Assessment of Financial Requirements for Implementing India's NDC. We also reviewed parliamentary records, and past reports of the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change, among others.

For Kenya, we reviewed Kenya's official NDC submission document, National Communication and Biennial Update Reports from the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry (MoECCF), along with other relevant materials retrieved from websites of Government Ministries.

For South Africa, we reviewed literature related to the legislative structure of South Africa and recently passed climate-related laws. We also reviewed the first update to the NDC targets submitted to the UNFCCC, technical analysis reports from the first NDC update, articles and media statements on parliamentary committee activities, as well as information from the websites of the Parliament and the Presidential Climate Commission. Additionally, reports and websites of various international forums for parliamentary engagement were also examined. Furthermore, we reviewed NDC Transparency Check reports by Climate Transparency⁵, country-specific documents related to the United Nations Development Programme's NDC Partnership initiatives, and NDC assessment reports by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

In the second stage, based on the literature review, we conducted semi-structured interviews with eight experts on the NDC formulation process across India, Kenya, and South Africa. The stakeholder cohort included representatives from:

- Government agencies involved in climate policy and NDC development;
- Climate and energy-focused think tanks, NGOs;
- Journalists specializing in climate policy and governance.

Finally, we synthesized information based on a literature review and interviews to answer both the research questions.

3.0 Results

In this section, we first provide details on how the NDC update process works in three Global South countries—India, Kenya, and South Africa. Next, we explain how elected representatives can influence the NDCs in these countries.

3.1 India

3.1.1 India: NDC process

As shown in Figure 1, the NDC formulation process in India follows a multi-stage approach: (I) Initiation, (II) Drafting, (III) Review, and (IV) Finalization.

(I) Initiation

The NDC process is initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). To aid itself in drafting the NDCs, the Ministry establishes two key institutional bodies: the National Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Council. The National Steering Committee comprises representatives from key Ministries such as the Ministry of Power, the Ministry of Coal, and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, among others. The rationale for constituting this committee is inter-ministerial coordination. The Technical Advisory Council is typically composed of climate experts and policymakers. This Council is tasked with providing scientific and technical guidance to the Ministry in the process of drafting NDCs.

(II) Drafting

In the next stage, MoEFCC undertakes extensive data collection from various bodies and agencies like the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)⁶ and the Central Electricity Authority (CEA)⁷ on indicators like emissions, inventory, and energy consumption. There are others, such as the Ministry of Finance's Climate Change Finance Unit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which provide inputs on financial mechanisms, international commitments, and economic considerations. Even state governments are involved, contributing mainly through their respective State Pollution Control Boards. This ensures the integration of sub-national perspectives in the drafting of NDCs. This data collection and analysis yields sectoral insights which are crucial to MoEFCC's designing of NDCs. Following these extensive consultations and data analysis, MoEFCC consolidates the findings and prepares a draft NDC document.

(III) Review

Once the draft NDC is prepared, it undergoes high-level governmental review by the Union Cabinet and/or the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). However, the exact high-level approval mechanism and final decision-making authority in this process remain inconclusive, and could be investigated in future studies.

(IV) Finalization

Upon the final approval, the finalized NDC document is submitted to the UNFCCC, thereby formalizing India's climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Figure 1: NDC formulation and finalization process in India

In India, the NDC process is initiated by the MoEFCC. It involves extensive data collection and consultations with ministries, agencies, and states. The draft NDC is then reviewed by high-level authorities before final approval and submission to the UNFCCC.



Source: Adapted from India's Third National Communication to UNFCCC⁸ and stakeholder interviews

3.1.2 India: Role of Elected Representatives

Elected representatives in India can shape NDCs in several ways.

At the international level: A parliamentarian in India can play a role in making India's NDCs ambitious by coordinating with international bodies to promote ambitious NDCs within the country. They can engage in diplomacy around NDCs becoming a node between the Indian government and international bodies.

At the national level: At the national level, parliamentarians can play a more nuanced role by pushing for representation in the National Steering Committee, ensuring that legislative voices contribute to key climate policy decisions. However, as of now, parliamentarians have no formal role in the NDC process.

Within the Parliament, parliamentarians can employ several tools to hold ministries accountable, including Questions, Private Member Bills, and Zero Hour discussions⁹. These mechanisms enable parliamentarians to scrutinise the actions of ministries such as the MoEFCC who are leading the NDC process. For instance, parliamentarians have introduced climate-friendly Private Members' Bills like the Net Zero Emissions Bill, 2022, tabled by Sujeet Kumar, Member of Parliament from Rajya Sabha (upper house)¹⁰, the Climate Change (Net Zero Carbon) Bill 2021 tabled by Jayant Sinha, Member of Parliament from Lok Sabha (lower house)¹¹. Such initiatives can be extended to NDCs.

Table 2 : Role of parliamentarians in shaping NDCs in India

This table outlines the multi-level avenues through which parliamentarians can influence and advocate for stronger NDCs—ranging from international treaty engagement to national legislative actions, committee participation, and collaboration with civil society and political peers.

National level	International Level	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advocate for the ratification of international climate treaties within the country;Engage with international bodies and governments to promote stronger climate commitments within the country through ambitious NDCs.
	Within Parliament		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Initiate Private Member Bills and Private Member Resolutions;Raise issues through tools like Zero Hour, Parliamentary Questions, matters raised under Rule 377 (Lok Sabha) related to NDCs;Bring up the issue of NDCs in their standing committee meetings;Write letters to MoEFCC, Cabinet and PMO about NDCs;Push for their own representation in the National Steering Committee, constituted by the MoEFCC for inter-ministerial coordination across all stakeholder Union Ministries.
	Advocacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborate with like-minded peers to form parliamentarian groups on NDCs;Develop forums for political party collaboration, inside or outside Parliament, on ambitious NDCs;Interact with local governments, industries and civil society organizations to push for stronger NDC commitments.

Financial oversight is another critical area where parliamentarians have some control. They can scrutinize the financial soundness, policy integration, and implementation of NDCs through budget debates, standing committees, and finance committees, while also using Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)¹² reports to hold the government accountable. They can write letters and draft charters to the MoEFCC, PMO, and Standing Committees. To further strengthen national climate action, Indian parliamentarians can develop forums for political party collaboration, fostering bipartisan efforts inside and outside Parliament. They can engage in advocacy by interacting with local governments, industries, and civil society organizations to push for stronger NDCs. Furthermore, Indian Parliamentarians can contribute to the formulation of NDCs by aligning their advocacy with existing national sectoral policies to make them more ambitious and broaden the scope of existing policies.

3.2 Kenya

3.2.1 Kenya: NDC process

As shown in Figure 2, the NDC formulation process in Kenya follows a multi-stage, multi-stakeholder approach. The process ensures a balance between institutional representation, public participation, and legislative scrutiny. Kenya's system incorporates both executive and parliamentary oversight, offering multiple intervention points for policymakers and several other stakeholders. Overall, the NDC formulation process in Kenya follows a multi-stage approach: (I) Initiation, (II) Drafting, (III) Review, and (IV) Finalization.

(I) Initiation

The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry (MoECCF) in Kenya initiates the NDC formulation process. Within the Ministry, the Climate Change Directorate (CCD) is the lead government agency¹³ responsible for overseeing the entire NDC formulation process. At the beginning of the process, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry forms a taskforce on the advice of the Climate Change Directorate (this is not a mandate but a usual norm) to oversee the NDC formulation process. Parliamentarians may or may not form part of this task force but usually they are. This taskforce is responsible for holding consultations, document reviews, drafting the NDCs, and incorporating comments and feedback received from different stakeholders and the public in the subsequent stages of the process.

This task force includes representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

- Key line ministries through their Climate Change Units (established by law in Kenya). These key ministries include the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the National Treasury and Economic Planning, Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, Ministry of Roads and Transport, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Urban Development and Public Works, among others. This ensures smooth inter-ministerial coordination;
- The Council of Governors¹⁴, which represents Kenya's county governments and ensures sub-national perspectives are incorporated;

- The private sector through bodies¹⁵ like the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA)¹⁶, Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM)¹⁷ and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI)¹⁸;
- Umbrella civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the Kenya Climate Change Working Group (KCCWG)¹⁹ and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)²⁰;
- Community-based organizations including those for indigenous communities, women and others like the National Community Forests Association (NACOFA);
- Specialized government agencies such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)²¹, Kenya Forest Service, Water Resources Authority, among others;
- Financial sector regulatory bodies, such as the Capital Markets Authority of Kenya and the Central Bank of Kenya, provide insights into climate finance and investment strategies.

The above examples of stakeholders reflect the involved and collaborative nature of the NDC process in Kenya. Additionally, the National Assembly Departmental Committee on Environment, Forestry and Mining and the Senate Standing Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources are important stakeholders consulted in the targeted consultation process.

(II) Drafting

The taskforce formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry conducts an extensive review and analysis¹³ of sectoral data and climate documents like the Mitigation Technical Analysis Report, Adaptation Technical Analysis Report, and Vision 2030 Document. Based on this review and the consultation findings, the first draft of the NDC document is prepared before being forwarded for extensive public review and consultation.

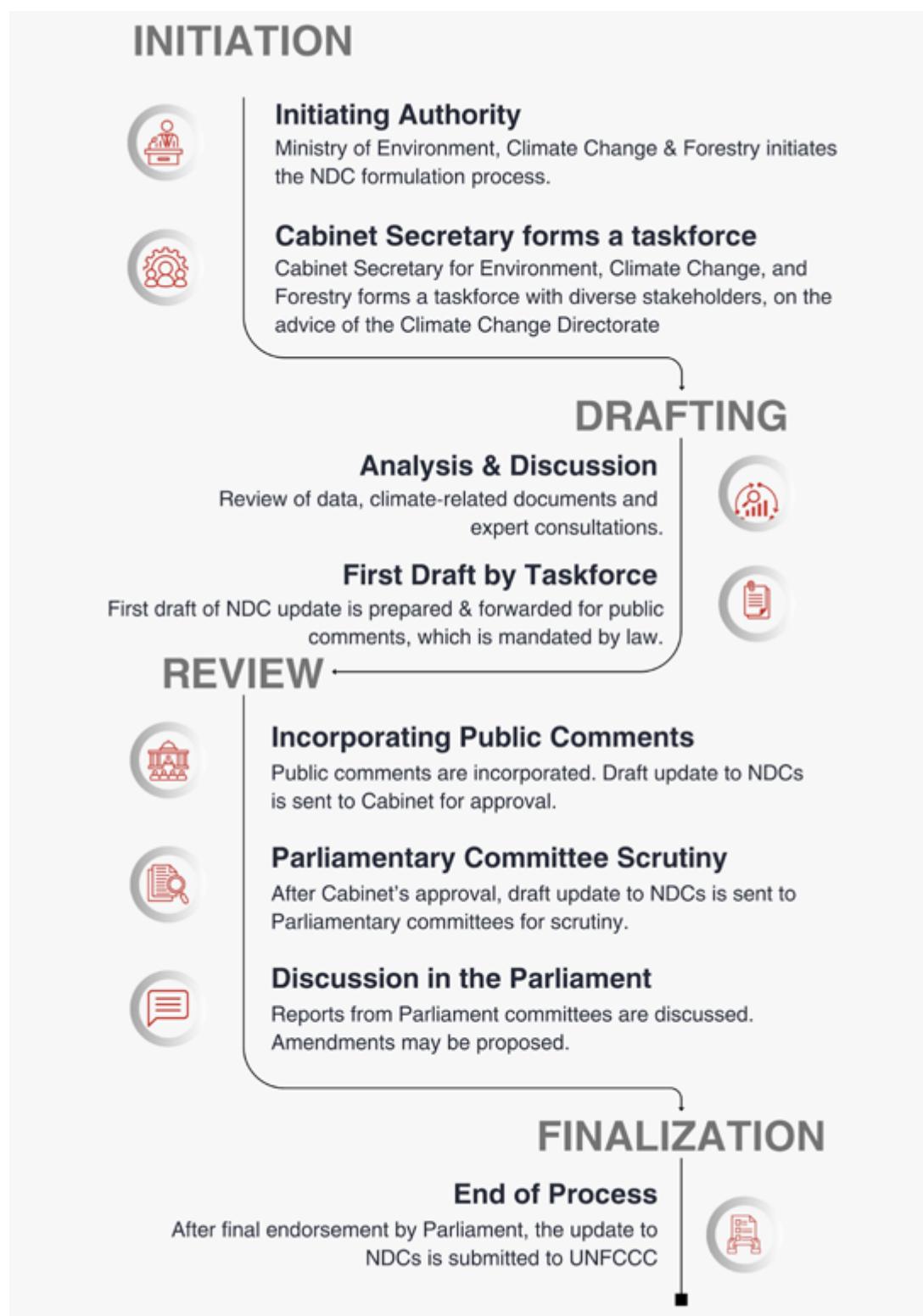
(III) Review

Public consultation is a mandatory part of the NDC process in Kenya. The call for public comments is advertised in major newspapers and government websites, allowing citizens to submit recommendations to the authorities. This stage also provides an additional strategic opportunity for parliamentarians to engage their constituents and specific communities, ensuring that public concerns and regional priorities are reflected in the final document. It is important to note here that the law in Kenya requires public participation, hence public comments and how they have been incorporated into the country's NDCs form part of the submissions to Parliament later on in this process (described in the next paragraph).

Once public input is incorporated into the draft document by the taskforce, the revised NDC draft is submitted to the Cabinet for its approval, thereby paving the way for tabling of the document in the Parliament for further legislative review. The Parliament then sends the document to the Standing Committees (see Figure 2). The Standing Committees then scrutinize the document, and their reports are subsequently debated on the floor of Parliament. During this phase, parliamentarians may propose amendments to the document before giving their final approval.

Figure 2: NDC formulation and finalization process in Kenya

In Kenya, the NDC process is led by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry (MoECCF) through its Climate Change Directorate. A multi-stakeholder taskforce is formed to coordinate consultations and draft the NDC. The draft undergoes public review, with citizen input shaping revisions. After Cabinet's approval, the document is tabled in Parliament for further scrutiny and potential amendments before final endorsement and submission to the UNFCCC.



Source: Adapted from Kenya's NDC submission document¹³ and information gathered from stakeholder interviews

(IV) Finalization

The final endorsement of the NDC by the Parliament is a necessary requirement, following which the document is sent to the Cabinet for final approval. After the Cabinet's approval, the government submits the new NDC to the UNFCCC. However, some interviewees indicated that sometimes the viewpoint of the Kenyan Cabinet can outweigh the parliamentary input in shaping the final NDC document.

3.2.2 Kenya: Role of Elected Representatives

Kenya's institutionalized process, as depicted in Figure 2, provides multiple potential avenues for deeper legislative engagement. Here, we identify several stages where elected representatives can influence the NDC process in Kenya.

At the international level, Kenyan parliamentarians can participate in global climate platforms to understand what ambitious targets would look like for Kenya. On those platforms, they can also advocate for more ambitious targets within the country. Parliamentarians can engage with development partners to secure technical support and explore climate finance opportunities, influencing the ambition of Kenya's NDCs. Regionally, they can participate in parliamentary dialogues to share best practices, address common vulnerabilities, and tackle challenges in NDC formulation. Their attendance at international forums ensures they remain informed about global climate discussions, enabling them to integrate innovative solutions into national policies. Through these multifaceted efforts, Kenyan parliamentarians ensure that the country's climate commitments are comprehensive, inclusive, and aligned with both national priorities and global standards.

At the national level, Kenyan parliamentarians play a critical role in shaping the NDCs. They can introduce and debate bills that establish institutional frameworks for NDC commitments, use Question Time to scrutinize government actions, and table substantive motions on NDC formulation under Articles 117 and 125²² of the Constitution of Kenya. Parliamentarians can also contribute to plenary debates on proposed NDC components, ensuring alignment with Kenya's overall climate goals (in the past, they have ensured alignment with Kenya's overarching climate documents like Vision 2030 and the National Climate Change Action Plan). They also have the power to summon Cabinet Secretaries and technical experts for explanations and demand reviews of stakeholder consultation processes during NDC formulation.

Beyond the Parliament, parliamentarians can engage with local governments, industries, and civil society organizations to push for stronger climate commitments. Public outreach remains essential, with parliamentarians engaging with specific communities and the broader public to enhance climate awareness and ensure grassroots concerns are reflected in policy discussions. Additionally, depending on the decision of the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry, Parliamentarians may also sometimes be a part of the task force that the Cabinet Secretary forms to oversee the NDC formulation process. Being part of this task force would then allow them to collaborate with community leaders to advocate for local interests and engage with international bodies like the UNDP through its NDC Partnership program²³.

Table 3: Role of parliamentarians in shaping NDCs in Kenya

This table highlights the ways in which parliamentarians can shape ambitious NDCs—through international collaboration, legislative tools within the Parliament, public engagement, and formal roles in institutionalized NDC formulation processes.

International Level	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage with global initiatives like the Global NDC Implementation Partners (GNI plus)²⁴ and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in order to gain access to policy, technical, financial, governance-related, and legal expertise essential for understanding NDC targets required for meeting climate targets, and push for ambitious NDC targets within the country.
National level	Within Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce and debate bills that establish institutional frameworks for developing NDC commitments; ▪ Use Question Time and Standing Orders to probe government actions related to NDCs; ▪ Table substantive motions about the NDC formulation processes; ▪ Contribute to plenary debates on proposed NDC components; ▪ Summon the Cabinet Secretary and technical experts for explanations regarding the NDC process; ▪ Examine alignment with the National Climate Change Action Plan; ▪ Review the report submitted annually to Parliament on the status of implementation of international and national obligations to respond to climate change, and progress towards attainment of low-carbon, climate-resilient development (mandated by law in Kenya).
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage with the general public, NGOs and others on ways to make NDCs more ambitious.
	NDC formulation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parliamentarians may also have a role to play in the task force formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry.

3.3 South Africa

3.3.1 South Africa: NDC process

South Africa has a well-defined planning and institutional framework for updating its NDC targets. As shown in Figure 3, the NDC formulation process in South Africa follows a multi-stage approach: (I) Initiation, (II) Technical analysis and benchmarking assessment, (III) Stakeholder consultations, (IV) Capacity building and awareness workshops, and (V) Finalization.

(I) Initiation

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) serves as the focal point for the NDC update. It coordinates with stakeholders across various sectors and leads the planning process to develop the updated NDC. South Africa's first NDC update, finalized in 2021, set targets for 2025 and 2030. The DFFE has already

initiated the second NDC update, which will establish targets for 2035.

(II) Technical Analysis and Benchmarking Assessment

The DFFE collaborates with knowledge partners to conduct technical analyses and benchmarking assessments to determine NDC targets. For the first NDC update, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) provided technical support. While the UCT provided support in defining mitigation target ranges²⁵, the CSIR focused on the adaptation component²⁶. To establish GHG emissions in 2025 and 2030, the UCT study considered two economic growth rates and two policy implementation scenarios (existing and planned), and modelled both scenarios with both growth rates. The UCT study also provided a “fair share” framework²⁷ to evaluate whether South Africa’s mitigation targets for 2025 and 2030 could be considered a fair contribution to global mitigation efforts. Meanwhile, the CSIR study developed a framework for the adaptation component of South Africa’s NDCs for 2020–2030. It included climate risk and vulnerability assessments, adaptation cost measures, and key adaptation priorities across the sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, biodiversity, health, human settlements, and water.

Currently, South Africa is collaborating with the NDC Partnership²⁸ for support with strategy and knowledge. The NDC Partnership supports countries in enhancing NDC ambition and quality, integrating NDCs into national budgets and development plans, accelerating implementation, and mobilizing climate finance. Additionally, the DFFE has engaged with the 2050 Pathways Platform²⁹ to learn from international experiences and best practices. This collaboration aims to help refine South Africa’s Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) and align it with the NDC framework³⁰.

(III) Stakeholder Consultations

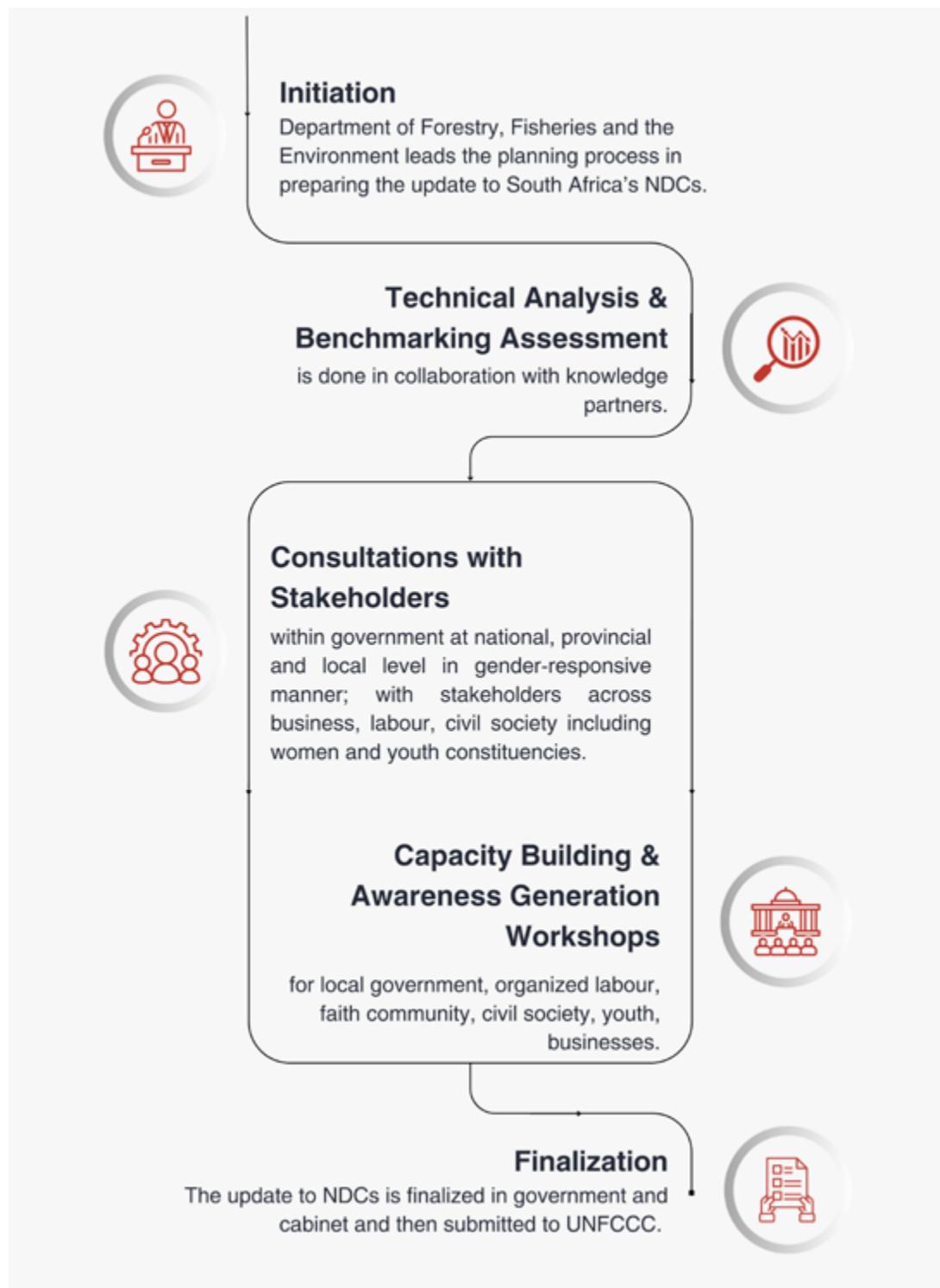
Following the technical analyses and benchmarking assessments, the DFFE considers various scenarios and target ranges to determine the updated NDC targets. It then conducts consultations across national, provincial, and local government levels. The proposed scenarios and target ranges for the updated NDC targets are also presented to the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), which comprises key ministers, industry experts, academics, civil society representatives, financial institutions, municipal governments, labor unions, trade associations, and climate activists. To ensure the updated NDC targets are just, inclusive, and representative of diverse perspectives, consultations³¹ extend to businesses, labor groups, civil society organizations, and women and youth constituencies.

(IV) Capacity Building and Awareness Workshops

While stakeholder consultations continue, the PCC organizes capacity-building and awareness workshops³² on NDC targets for local governments, faith-based organizations, labor unions, youth, businesses, and civil society. These workshops aim to enhance stakeholders’ understanding of South Africa’s NDC update process, highlight economic opportunities in climate-compatible development, and equip social partners for informed and effective engagement on the development of the country’s NDC update. The inputs received during the workshops and consultations culminate in a series of reports³³ containing the PCC’s recommendations on the NDC.

Figure 3: NDC formulation and finalization process in South Africa

In South Africa, the NDC update process begins with advanced technical analyses. It then shifts to a participatory phase, engaging stakeholders across all levels of government to gather insights and ensure the updated NDC targets are inclusive and ambitious. While stakeholder consultations continue, capacity-building and awareness workshops are held for community groups and local governments. Lastly, after government finalization and cabinet approval, the updated NDC targets are submitted to the UNFCCC.



Source: Adapted from South Africa's First NDC, 2020/21 Update document submitted to the UNFCCC³⁴ and expert consultations

(V) Finalization

Lastly, the DFFE finalizes updated NDC targets after considering feedback and inputs from consultations and workshops, along with the PCC's recommendations. Once finalized, the targets are submitted to the Cabinet for approval. Upon receiving approval, the government formally submits the updated NDC targets to the UNFC-CC.

3.3.2 South Africa: Role of Elected Representatives

There are various ways in which parliamentarians can influence the NDC process in South Africa.

At the international level, South African parliamentarians can shape the NDC process by leveraging international platforms that promote cooperation and knowledge-sharing. Forums such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association³⁵, Climate Parliament³⁶, the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)³⁷, and Int. IDEA³⁸—where South Africa is a member country—offer valuable opportunities for parliamentarians to learn best practices and bridge knowledge gaps in NDC policies. These platforms can also enable parliamentarians to strengthen North-South and South-South collaborations on climate finance, capacity development, and technology transfer—key elements for achieving NDC targets. By actively participating in these forums, they can advocate for more ambitious climate commitments (provided there is adequate international support) and ensure that South Africa's NDC targets are robust and aligned with global standards while remaining just and inclusive.

At the national level, South African parliamentarians can influence the NDC process and targets through legislative action, policy and bylaw oversight, stakeholder engagement, and advocacy. In their legislative role, they can ensure that climate policies, legislations, and bylaws reflect the developmental needs and aspirations of diverse communities while aligning with South Africa's NDC commitments. Various parliamentary standing and portfolio committees serve as key platforms where parliamentarians can advocate for the inclusion of mitigation and adaptation measures in climate-related laws, push for the swift adoption³⁹ of the Climate Change Act 2024 regulations aligned with NDC targets, and ensure necessary budget allocations to achieve these targets through standing committees on Finance and Appropriation.

Parliamentarians can also provide oversight⁴⁰ to ensure effective NDC implementation. Through parliamentary committees such as the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment, they can offer expert insights, bringing in perspectives from the ground that inform government decision-making. Their role in monitoring progress allows them to hold the government accountable and recommend improvements to bodies such as the Presidential Climate Commission⁴¹, a key institution in the NDC update process, although the DFFE is ultimately responsible for any NDC updates. By reviewing policies and tracking implementation, parliamentarians can help ensure that NDC commitments translate into real action.

Engaging stakeholders⁴⁰ can be another key function of parliamentarians in the NDC update process. By holding constituency-level meetings, they can not only

gather local input but also raise awareness of NDC targets among local governments, businesses, labor groups, faith communities, women, and youth. Parliamentarians can also endorse the inclusion of mitigation and adaptation needs of diverse communities and regions within NDC targets. Furthermore, they can promote just transition policies through NDC targets for vulnerable communities, such as those dependent on coal. These efforts can ensure that updated NDC targets—both mitigation and adaptation—reflect the needs of diverse regions and groups, promote social equity, and remain just and inclusive.

Table 4: Role of parliamentarians in shaping NDCs in South Africa

South African parliamentarians can influence NDC updates through global advocacy, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. Nationally, they can support policy adoption, legislative scrutiny, and implementation oversight. They can also engage stakeholders at the constituency level, and recommend the integration of local priorities into NDC targets.

International level	Advocacy	<p>Leverage multilateral platforms such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Climate Parliament to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exchange best practices and policy insights on NDC updates; ▪ Foster collaboration between Global North and South for capacity building, climate finance, and technology transfer to timely achieve NDC targets; ▪ Advocate for more ambitious NDC commitments.
National level	Stakeholders' engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Convene stakeholder meetings at the constituency level to raise NDC awareness so that different social groups can effectively engage and share their inputs during NDC-related consultations and workshops organized by the PCC and the DFFE.
	Within Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure inclusion of diverse communities' developmental needs and aspirations in upcoming NDC-related legislations/amendments via their roles in various portfolio and standing committees in Parliament; ▪ Advocate for the swift finalization of regulations (e.g., Climate Change Act 2024 regulations) aligned with NDC targets and push for their earliest implementation through parliamentary committees; ▪ Ensure adequate budgetary allocations for the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures in line with NDC targets through the Standing Committees on Finance and Appropriations; ▪ Review the status of NDC implementation and make recommendations to commissioners in the Presidential Climate Commission.
	Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Endorse the incorporation of local climate change mitigation and adaptation needs within NDC targets; ▪ Promote just transition policies through NDC updates for vulnerable communities (for instance, coal-dependent communities).

4.0 Discussion and Insights

There are several similarities and differences in the NDC processes between India, Kenya and South Africa. Kenya follows a bottom-up approach, incorporating multiple layers of stakeholder engagement, including parliamentarians, civil society, and local government representatives. This provides numerous avenues to influence policy decisions at various stages. Conversely, India's approach is largely top-down, where government agencies play a dominant role in drafting NDCs with limited scope of external input. This leaves parliamentarians with few structured opportunities to shape climate commitments. Additionally, public consultations are a mandatory part of Kenya's NDC process, ensuring greater transparency and public participation, and in turn, additional avenues for parliamentarians to engage in the process in a focused manner. In India, no such obligation exists, further reinforcing the bureaucratic control over NDC formulation. In the case of South Africa, the NDC update process follows a hybrid approach. The DFFE, in collaboration with knowledge partners, initiates the process with country-level technical analyses and benchmarking assessments for both mitigation and adaptation components. At the next stage, the process becomes more participatory, involving consultations across all levels of government—national, provincial, and local—along with diverse stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that stakeholder feedback is incorporated to refine NDC targets. Similar to Kenya, stakeholder consultations make South Africa's NDC update process both transparent and participatory.

The role and scope of parliamentarians in influencing the NDC formulation process varies significantly between India, Kenya and South Africa, primarily due to differences in institutional frameworks, governance structures, and policymaking approaches. In Kenya, the system is more institutionalized, allowing parliamentarians more direct avenues to shape the NDCs (as part of the taskforce formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry). By contrast, in India parliamentarians have to largely rely on self-driven advocacy as they have limited formal avenues for legislative participation. Whereas in South Africa, there appears to be no formal institutional requirement to engage parliamentarians in the multi-stage NDC update process. However, South Africa's general participatory approach, which involves diverse stakeholders and various levels of government, provides formal opportunities for parliamentarians to contribute in making NDC targets more ambitious and inclusive.

Based on our analysis, we find key ways in which parliamentarians can influence the NDC process:

1. Parliamentarians can act as global climate advocates. In all three countries, parliamentarians have the power to shape climate action by championing for stronger NDCs. They can advocate for ambitious commitments from their national governments by engaging with international climate institutions and advocating for treaty ratifications within their countries. At the international stage, they can also engage in knowledge exchange and build collaborative climate campaigns.
2. In all three countries, parliamentarians can strategically leverage parlia-

mentary mechanisms available to them to influence NDC-related aspects of their national climate policy. For example, they can propose new legislations, scrutinize government decisions, initiate debates on NDC commitments, and actively participate in discussions and meetings of committees under the legislature of their country.

3. In Kenya, parliamentarians are able to participate in the NDC process through the taskforce formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Forestry on the advice of the Climate Change Directorate. Additionally, they have other strategic intervention points such as public consultation. By mindfully leveraging these opportunities for influence, they can help shape NDC targets to align with national priorities, ensuring that grassroots economic and social considerations are factored in. They can ensure public issues are incorporated in the NDCs, thereby making NDCs more holistic. For Kenya, for instance, the NDCs go beyond just emissions reduction and also capture adaptation. However, in India, parliamentarians don't have as much of a role in NDC formulation or even pathways to ensure that public issues and diverse stakeholder viewpoints are incorporated in the NDCs.
4. In all three countries, parliamentarians can formally convey key demands through letters, petitions, and policy charters to relevant authorities. By drafting well-researched appeals, endorsing expert recommendations, and pushing for official responses, they can keep NDCs on the national agenda. These efforts create a direct channel to elevate concerns, influence decisions, and drive more ambitious climate commitments.
5. As India, Kenya and South Africa are all multi-party democracies, parliamentarians can enhance national climate action by fostering cross-party collaboration for making NDCs ambitious. Dedicated cross-party dialogue platforms can help build consensus on key climate priorities and drive ambitious policy commitments at the party level. This can also encourage parliamentarians to integrate climate action into their political agendas. By working across political party lines, they can ensure more cohesive and sustained climate strategies that endure political shifts and secure long-term commitment to national climate goals.
6. Across the three countries, parliamentarians can also use public platforms to shape climate discourse and push for stronger NDCs. By engaging with constituents and diverse interest groups—businesses, labor, women, youth, and indigenous communities—they can ensure broader representation in climate commitments. Through public awareness and inclusive discussions, they can build pressure on policymakers to adopt NDCs that go beyond what traditional governments typically consider, making them more ambitious, inclusive, and responsive to real-world needs.
7. In general, across India, Kenya, and South Africa, parliamentarians can elevate the voices of NGOs, CSOs, and environmental groups by championing their causes in legislative debates, endorsing their research, and lending credibility to their advocacy. By publicly supporting climate campaigns and

highlighting them in parliamentary discussions, they can bring grassroots concerns to the national stage. This strengthens climate advocacy efforts and ensures that NDC commitments reflect the priorities of those actively engaged in environmental action.

While the above insights might be useful for both parliamentarians and groups that work with parliamentarians, the study has some limitations. First, across all three countries, there is a notable lack of publicly available official documentation outlining the NDC formulation process. This scarcity of primary records constrains the ability to independently verify certain aspects of institutional arrangements and decision-making mechanisms. Second, even as interview insights were instrumental in filling information gaps, responses may reflect subjective perspectives, institutional positions, or personal biases. Different stakeholders may emphasize different aspects of the NDC process based on their roles and priorities. Finally, this study does not focus on implementation processes that countries might have for achieving their set NDCs. Despite these limitations, this analysis provides insights into the role parliamentarians can play in shaping ambitious NDCs.

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APPENDIX: List of experts consulted for this report

Country	Name of expert	Designation/Organization
INDIA	Chetan Bhattacharji	Journalist and Governing Board Member, Care For Air
	Archana Chaudhary	Associate Director, Climate Trends
	Dhruba Purkayastha	Director (Growth and Institutional Advancement), Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)
	Shubhashis Dey	Executive Director, Solutions for Sustainable Living (SoSuL)
KENYA	Wycliffe Amakobe	Climate Change and Energy Specialist, Kenya Climate Change Working Group (KCCWG)
	Hillary Korir	Climate Finance Specialist, The National Treasury of Kenya
	Mary Mutemi	Ex-Programme Manager, Green Africa Foundation
SOUTH AFRICA	Brett Cohen	Independent Consultant and Honorary Professor, University of Cape Town



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