Harnessing Climate and SDG Synergies

CO-CONVENED BY

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

First Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergies | 16 July 2023

EXPERT GROUP – Co-leads and members

Luis Gomez Echeverri

Heide Hackmann

Barbara Buchner

Mercedes Bustamante

Felix Creutzig

Meagan Fallone

Kaveh Guilanpour

Ma Jun

Måns Nilsson

Tolullah Oni

Youba Sokona

Soumya Swaminathan

Kazuhiko Takeuchi

Diana Urge-Vorsatz

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Scope of the Report

- **Background** – building on global Climate and SDGs synergies conferences of 2019/2021/2022

- **Climate and SDG Synergies**
  - Science – extensive literature review
  - Synergies in Practice - policies, measures, enabling instrument and lessons learned from best practices
  - Reporting mechanisms – NDCs, VNRs, etc.

- **Increasing the ambition**
  - An analytical framework as tool for policy makers to advance synergies.
  - To help decision makers and actors from public, private and civil society sectors navigate the complexity of interconnections between society, technology, economy and environment

- **Conclusions and recommendations**
  - Recommendations for accelerated action designed to advance synergies and focused on answering 2 questions:
    - Why is synergistic action not happening at the necessary level?
    - How should we make it happen?
  - Making this report the foundation for a deeper and more rigorous analysis for preparation of report for major summits in 2024- including Summit for the Future

Why is the Report Needed

The problems and the challenges that the report addresses:

- Increasing recognition that synergies can result in win-win situations, but evidence is dispersed, scattered and often not easily accessible – Should a platform that gathers this evidence be created?
- The absence of tools for a) identifying and enhancing synergies, and b) for policy makers to enable and promote synergies – Would an analytical framework that is easy to use by policy makers be a good solution?
- How can finance be reformed to advance this agenda – and can the current debate on the need for reform of the global finance architecture make this a critical component of that debate?
- The adequacy or inadequacy of reporting mechanisms - if synergies are so essential for the success of the implementation of the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 – why are they not made a reporting pre-requisite?
- How can the topics of just transitions, leaving no one behind and equality be given higher attention in this and other debates?

Building on Outcomes of 3rd Global Synergies Conference in Tokyo

The following were considered essential for advancing synergies:

- Strengthening the evidence base for synergistic action
- Enhancing integrated planning
- Scaling up capacity building and sharing of good practices
- Developing and promoting partnerships for transformation
- Convening multi-stakeholder dialogues at all levels
- Informing key intergovernmental processes on climate and the SDGs.

State of synergy implementation: NDC-SDG overlaps

- Only 23 of the 173 NDCs explicitly refer to SDGs; none go into detail about how climate policy affects the SDGs' accomplishments.

- Significant overlaps between NDC climate activities and SDGs 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17

  -> these SDGs also receive the most climate-related official development assistance (ODA).

- Overlaps between SDGs and climate activities are more pronounced for low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

  -> Specifically, more associations (>200 NDC activities) between NDC activities and SDGs 2, 7, 15, and 17 for low-income countries

  -> For high income countries, less than 200 NDC activities linked to SDGs, mostly across SDGs 7, 9, 11, & 15

- Not many overlaps were reported between NDC activities and SDGs 1, 5, 10, and 16.

This shows the need for reporting the synergy more systematically in the NDCs and VNRs

Evidence of synergies-Climate change and SDGs-some examples

SDG	Number (%) of NDC activities globally that relate to the SDG (out of 8139 climate activities)	Climate action and synergy	Case study	Reference
1. No poverty	155 (1.9)	Implementing urban poverty reduction programs that integrate climate resilience and low-carbon development can improve the living conditions and livelihoods of the urban poor, while also reducing emissions and enhancing adaptive capacity.	In Ahmedabad, India, the Slum Networking Project has provided basic services such as water supply, sanitation, drainage, solid waste management, street lighting, and paved roads to over 100,000 slum dwellers, while also promoting low-carbon solutions such as biogas plants, solar panels, and rooftop gardens.	Lamb *et al*. 2019
7. Affordable and clean energy	1375 (16.9)	Solar systems help not only connect small communities that are detached from national electricity grids, thereby allowing users to pursue productive activities such as education and employment, but it also represents a sustainable energy solution	In rural parts of Southern Belize, three Mayan women, trained by Barefoot College India, are installing solar systems, to four indigenous communities impacting over 1000 residents, and helping avoid 6.5 tonnes of carbon emissions. In only just the Graham Creek village, they powered 25 homes benefiting over 150 residents, as well as a primary school with 30 children.	(UN News, 2022)
15. Life On Land	1025 (12.6)	Action measures aimed at controlling or reducing pressures on the paramo and to mitigate negative actions by extractive activities in the area helps communities undertake more sustainable livelihoods, while the establishment of conservation areas, and measures to reduce risks associated with climate change improves advances made in climate actions.	The GEF Small Grants Programme and two other organisations have formed an alliance called Guardianas de los Páramos (Paramos Women Guardians) to support a number of local projects aimed at protecting the environment and preparing for climate change in the Paramos Pisba and TotaBijagual-Mamapacha. Aqueduct modifications and the use of homegrown agroecological gardens are also part of the projects, which aim to lessen the need for environmentally damaging traditional production methods. The alliance places a special emphasis on women's engagement	(UN News, 2022)

Some examples of best practices

Country	Climate policy/programme	Co-benefits	Focus SDG
New Zealand	Active travel intervention- 'ACTIVE' (Activating Communities to Improve Vitality and Equality)	• Annual benefits for health in the intervention cities were estimated at 34.4 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) • 2 lives saved due to reductions in cardiac disease, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory disease.	3
USA, Turkey, Germany, India, China, and Brazil	LEED certification of buildings	• Saved $7.5B in energy costs • Averted 33MT of CO2, 51 kt of SO2, 38 kt of NOx, and 10 kt of PM2.5 from entering the atmosphere, amounting to $5.8B (lower limit = $2.3B, upper limit = $9.1B) in climate and health co-benefits from 2000 to 2016.	3, 7, 11
UK	'Boilers on Prescription' project	• 60% reduction in the number of GP appointments needed by patients taking part in the scheme along • Accident and Emergency attendance being reduced by 30%. • Investing £1 in keeping homes warm is estimated to save the NHS £0.42 pence in direct health costs.	3, 8, 11
Casamance Natural Subregion	Access to clean cooking solutions	• SDG 5 represented 60–97% of the total economic benefits. • GHG emissions reduction per person were approximately 0.5 ton of CO2-eq • Health co-benefits (SDG 3) represented <1% of the total economic benefits. • Annual economic benefits were 316.03 euros and 159.31 euros in Senegal, 334.84 euros and 144.50 euros in the Gambia and 192.58 euros and 96.55 euros in Guinea Bissau, respectively.	3, 5, 7

Climate and SDG synergies: what stands between

Knowledge

- Insufficient knowledge of SDG and climate interactions
- Lack of accessible and applicable methodologies and tools that map the nature and magnitude of interactions
- Challenges in understanding and aligning climate actions across all SDGs to ensure synergies and impacts

Economic

- Limited national budgeting on addressing synergies
- Lack of enabling financial instruments
- Lack of knowledge and evidence on the benefits and costs of co-benefits and trade-offs
- Lack of climate finance flowing to those countries facing highest risk and greatest adaptation needs

Political

- Clash of political priorities and motivation
- Lack of transparency in responsibility for implementation
- Lack of collaboration between governments and other actors
- Lack of consistency on commitments to equity, gender equality and other social justice and rights commitments across all indicators that would underpin climate justice and therefore advance synergy and impact on climate action and all SDGs

Towards a framework for action

Recognising that:
All sustainable development efforts must be integrated with efforts to ensure a *safe and just climate system*

A framework for action:
- A structured approach to understanding and organizing complex information on the relevant interconnected social, economic, technological, and ecological systems
- Supports informed decisions, actions, monitoring and learning to maximize positive outcomes for people & planet
- More than a set of tools or methods for identifying synergies
- Builds on existing tools, evidence, experiences, and methods from research and practice

Aim of the framework for action:
To help decision makers and actors from public, private and civil society sectors navigate the complexity of interconnections between society, technology, economy and environment including interdependencies within and between countries, sectors, social groups, scales and generations *while strengthening the monitoring, evaluation and learning capability of all actors involved.*

A framework for system-wide and transformative change
Moves beyond a reliance on **incremental improvements or adjustments** that dominate sustainable development efforts to focus on **system-wide and transformative changes** in the economic, political and socio-cultural systems and institutional structures creating and perpetuating the unsustainable and inequitable trends we see today

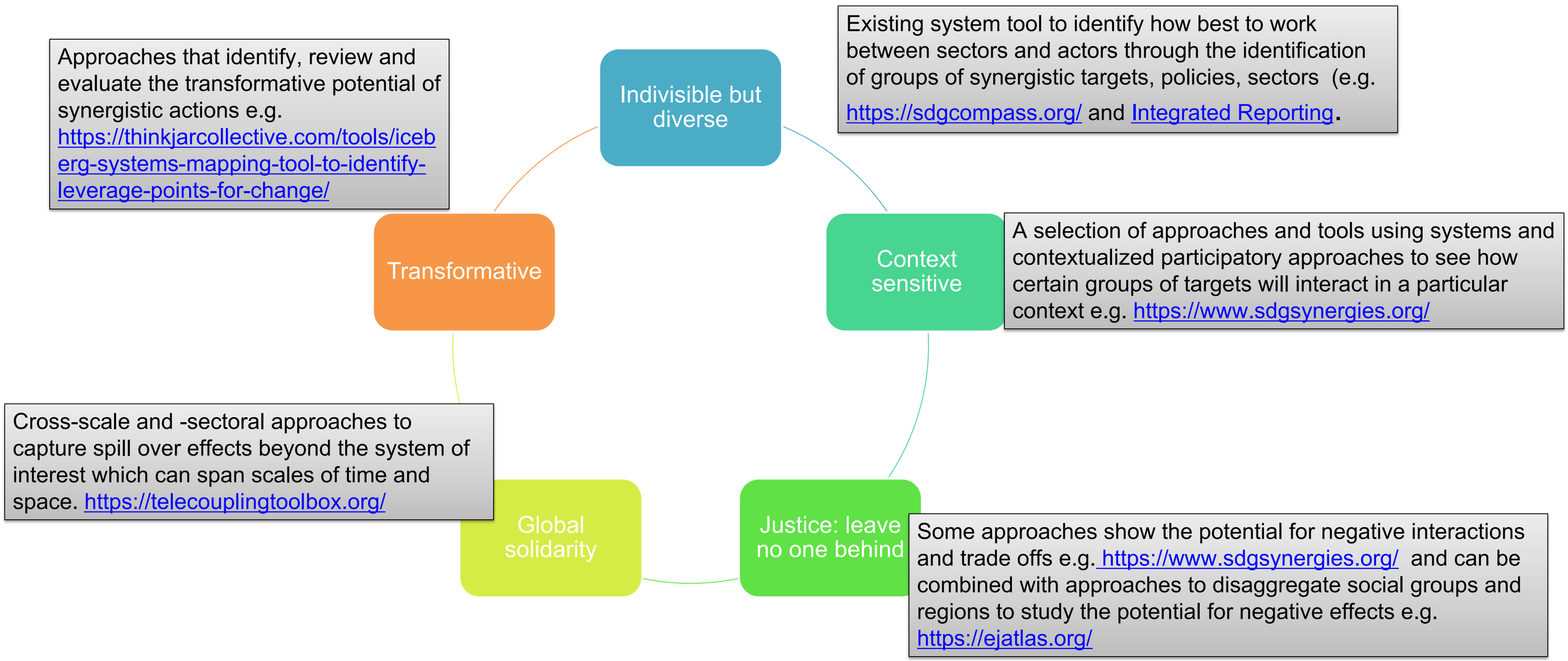
Five principles guiding a framework for action

Framework for action:
To enable the systemic identification, review and evaluation of complex synergistic actions and importantly an assessment of their transformative potential

Guides decision makers through five core principles that are central to the 2030 Agenda and Paris agreement

Principles are not exhaustive but rather illustrative of what we have learnt so far in implementing sustainable development and climate policies in an interconnected, unequal and unpredictable world

Framework links principles to existing methods and tools



Towards a framework for TRANSFORMATIVE action

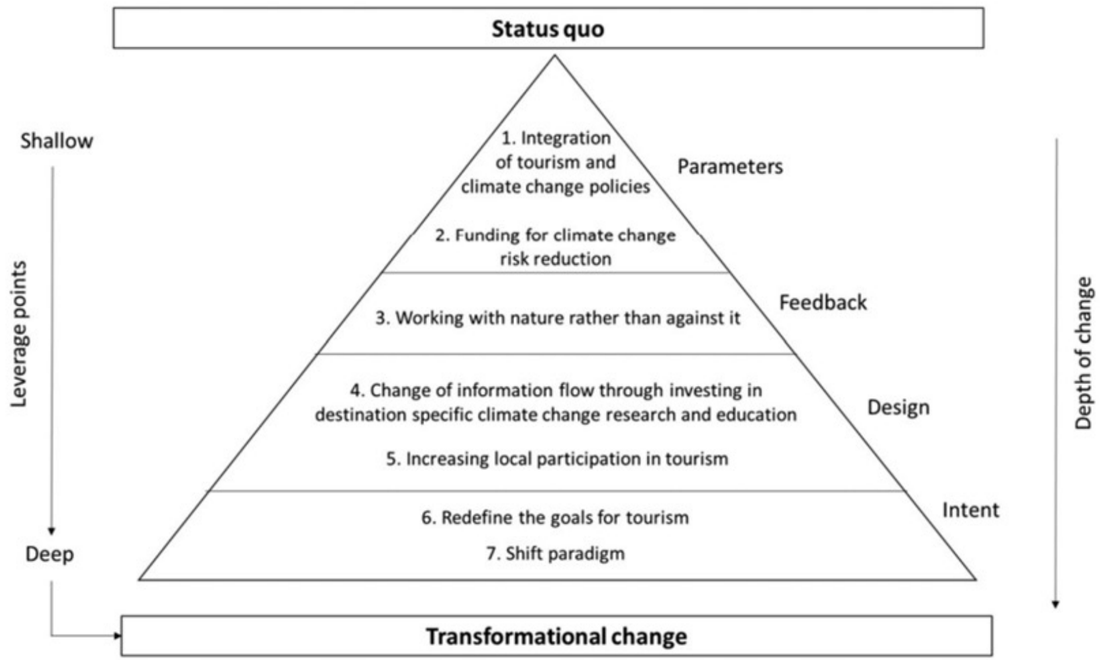


Figure 3. Leverage points for climate risk reduction in Vanuatu destinations and level of change required to implement them (Source: Adapted from Abson et al., 2017; Meadows, 2008).

(Loehr & Becken, 2023).

Three-year project to identify actions for the tourism sector to reduce climate change risks,

- seven leverage points for action were identified
- one of the deeper points of engagement involved redefining the goals of the tourism system from a narrow focus on economic outcomes to rather focus on the wider sustainability and resilience outcomes to which tourism contributes (e.g., national emissions reduction targets, biodiversity conservation, an increase in equity and equality, education and health).

The opportunities for synergistic outcomes of such a shift in goal and outcomes is system wide and therefore transformational.

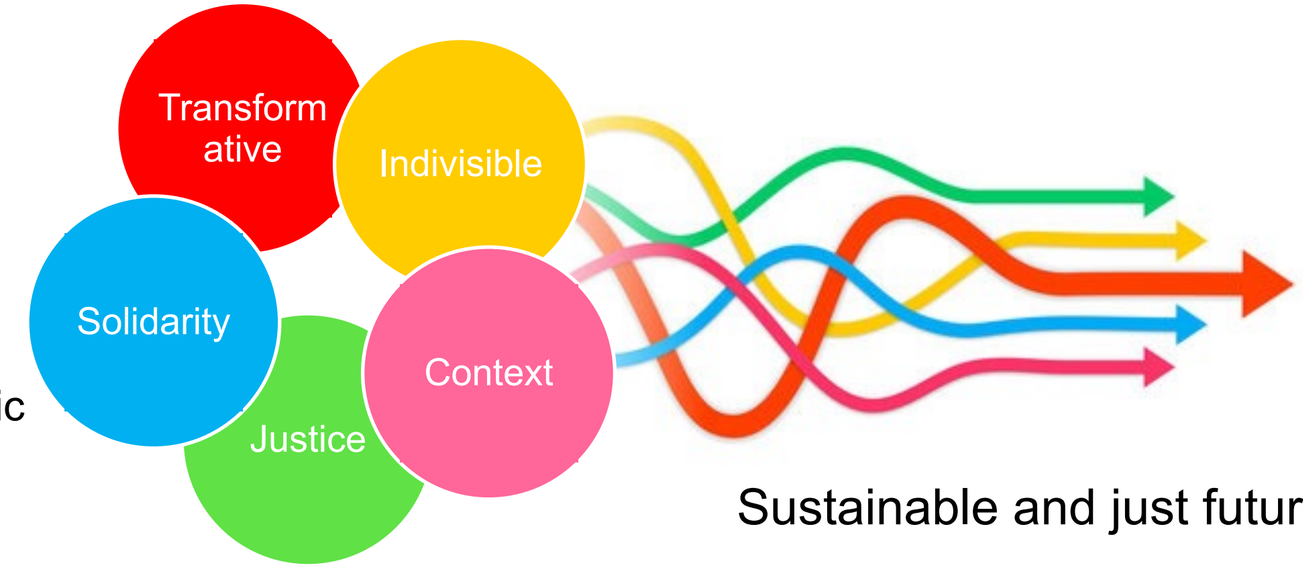
Moving from integration to implementation: the principles are interconnected

Many existing approaches focused on procedure and institutional arrangements needed to ensure integration and coherence (**indivisible and context sensitive**)

This is important but does not specify the process and action.

Principles of **justice, solidarity and transformative** change have fewer available tools but are key as implementation moves to more substantive and specific strategies and actions

It is likely that by focusing on the often-neglected principles of **justice, solidarity and transformative** change, the other principles will also be maintained.



Climate and SDG synergies: Some Key Messages (1)

- **Benefits of synergistic approach:** The magnitude of co-benefits and trade-off shows increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- **Systemic evaluation:** Lack of standardized methods for interaction mapping and quantification of co-benefits and trade-offs of climate actions and SDGs
- **Most popular:** Predominant co-benefit evaluated in literature: air quality, whereas SDG7 seems to be the one which most (16.9%) of the NDCs have targeted
- **Synergy in the lower income countries:** NDCs of low and lower-middle-income countries illustrate greater overlaps between climate activities and SDGs
- **Investment:** Large investment gaps and political will hinder progress in SDG and climate actions -> can be overcome by synergies
- **Distributional impacts of synergy:** Important to understand distributional impacts for effective policymaking

Climate and SDG synergies: Some Key Messages (2)

- **Science vs applied policy:** Significant disconnect between scientific evidence and applied policy action:
  -> Shortage of skilled practitioners who can adopt systems thinking
  -> Complex governance and institutional arrangements prevent sharing of information and collaboration

- **Synergies are context-dependent**: The nature and magnitude of synergy may change depending on the context- for instance:
  - In the global south, GHG mitigation actions are frequently focused on land use and related SDGs
  - Whereas in the global north, countries are frequently focused on clean energy and cost-effectiveness

- **Local and Global benefits:** Localization of progress and impacts of climate actions, co-benefits and SDGs

- **Framework for reporting:** There is a need for a framework for reporting and monitoring NDC,VNR, co-benefits, and SDG synergies.

- **Integration is the key:**
  - Climate and development objectives must be effectively integrated financially and budgetarily across sectors

Thank you for your attention