

56 / 2024

New BRICS Member Climate Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

RUSSIAN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Author:

Nikita Lipunov

Editors:

Svetlana Gavrilova, Ph.D. in History (Lead Editor); **Konstantin Sukhoverkhov**;

Anastasia Tolstukhina, Ph.D. in Political Science; **Katerina Trotskaya**;

Daniil Rastegaev (Publishing Editor)

The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) is a non-profit organization focused on research in the field of international relations and developing practical recommendations for the benefit of Russian government bodies, business, NGOs and other organizations engaged in foreign policy activities. The Council was established by the decision of its co-founders in accordance with the order of the President of the Russian Federation, dated February 2, 2010 № 59-rp "On the Establishment of the Non-Commercial Partnership 'Russian International Affairs Council'."

RIAC is one of the leading national think tanks, exploring more than 20 research areas. The Council's expertise is in demand by Russian specialized agencies, the academic community, national and international business.

RIAC Board of Trustees is chaired by Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. RIAC President, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Igor Ivanov, served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia in 1998-2004 and Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation in 2004-2007. The Council's Director General is Ivan Timofeev. The Research Advisor of the Council is Andrei Kortunov.

FOUNDERS



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation



Russian Academy of Sciences



Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs



Interfax News Agency

The opinions expressed in this policy brief reflect solely the personal views and analytical outlook of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Russian International Affairs Council Non-Profit Partnership.

The full text of the policy brief is available on RIAC's website.

Cover photo: picture-alliance / Leo Postl

New BRICS Member Climate Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

Introduction

Climate change is identified in Russia's Climate Doctrine as "one of the most serious challenges of the 21st century,"¹ a statement that is hard to disagree with. Scientists around the world have agreed that anthropogenic factors play a key role in this process through greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. According to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), by 2020, the increase in global average temperature compared to the pre-industrial era (1850-1900) reached 1.1 degrees Celsius.² However, climate change mitigation measures currently pledged by nations are insufficient to maintain the rise in the global temperature within the limits set by the 2015 Paris Agreement.

BRICS countries play a crucial role in global climate policy. Even before its expansion, the association accounted for just under half of global carbon dioxide emissions (~47%).³ With the addition of Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia,⁴ Iran and Ethiopia in 2024, this figure exceeded 50% (51.76%).⁵ As BRICS now represents more than 45%⁶ of the world's population and its combined GDP makes up over a quarter of the global total (~27%),⁷ it becomes clear that the success of the global fight against climate change largely depends on this set of countries, as the mitigation

problem cannot be solved without decarbonizing BRICS economies.

While the five new BRICS members have very different approaches to climate policy, global climate change poses substantial economic, political and social challenges both for them and for other countries worldwide. Four of the new members are classified as developing countries (with Ethiopia being the only least developed country),⁸ and three of them have economies dependent on fossil fuels. At the same time, all five are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts: in the climate vulnerability ranking, the new countries fall into risk zones ranging from medium to very high.⁹ These circumstances make climate policy particularly relevant for all of them, both in terms of climate change mitigation and economic decarbonization (especially for the Gulf oil-producing countries) and adaptation.

Therefore, BRICS expansion opens new opportunities in climate change action for the entire association. This policy brief will examine the climate policies of new BRICS members and explore opportunities for expanding their climate cooperation with Russia and as part of broader BRICS initiatives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikita Lipunov is an analyst at the Center for Academic Diplomacy of the MGIMO Institute for International Studies (IMI MGIMO).

¹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated October 26, 2023, No. 812 "On Approval of the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation" // President of Russia. October 26, 2023. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49910/page/1> (in Russian).

² Climate Change 2023. Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers // Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2023. URL: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf

³ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁴ As of October 2024, Saudi Arabia has not officially confirmed its BRICS membership.

⁵ CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁶ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: World Bank Open Data // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ According to UNCTAD classification. See: Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

⁹ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative's "climate vulnerability" ranking, Iran ranks 54th, the UAE 70th, Egypt 78th, Saudi Arabia 86th, and Ethiopia 150th (with rankings going from least to most vulnerable countries). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

Overview of Climate Policies of New BRICS Members

EGYPT

Egypt ranks among Africa's fastest-growing economies. Over recent decades, the country's population has grown steadily, recently exceeding 100 million people. This growth has been accompanied by rising energy consumption in an economy heavily dependent on fossil fuel exports, particularly natural gas. The coun-

try stands as Africa's second-largest producer of this energy resource, accounting for about one-third of the continent's consumption. For these reasons, Egypt actively promotes natural gas as the primary "transition" fuel. Cairo's approach to climate policy can be described as moderate.

TABLE 1. CLIMATE PROFILE: EGYPT

UNCTAD Country Classification	Developing
Population	112,716,598
GDP (billion USD)	395.93
Year-on-year GDP change	+3.8%
GHG emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)	357.54
CO ₂ emissions (Mt)	265.96
Year-on-year CO ₂ emissions change	+6.54%
Share of global CO ₂ emissions	0.69%
Climate Vulnerability Index	0.396
Share of fossil fuels in primary energy consumption	94.6%
Share of renewable and nuclear (if any) energy in power generation	12.2%
Paris Agreement participation	Ratified on June 29, 2017
Year of latest NDC update	2023
Target year for carbon neutrality	Not set
Assessment of climate change measures	Highly insufficient

Source: Compiled by the author using data from UNCTAD,¹⁰ World Bank,^{11,12,13} Our World in Data,¹⁴ Worldometer,¹⁵ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative,¹⁶ IEA,¹⁷ UN Treaties,¹⁸ UN Climate Change¹⁹ and Climate Action Tracker²⁰

¹⁰ Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

¹¹ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: Population, total – Egypt, Arab Rep. // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=EG>

¹² According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP (current US\$) – Egypt, Arab Rep. // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=EG>

¹³ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP growth (annual %) – Egypt, Arab Rep. // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=EG>

¹⁴ Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., Roser, M. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions // Our World In Data. 2022. URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

¹⁵ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

¹⁶ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative for 2022 (climate vulnerability increases as the index approaches one). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

¹⁷ According to IEA data for 2022. See: Egypt // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/egypt>

¹⁸ Paris Agreement // UN Treaties Collection. URL: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

¹⁹ NDC Registry // UN Climate Change. URL: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

²⁰ According to Climate Action Tracker's 2023 assessment. See: Egypt country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/egypt/>

In 2022, Egypt adopted the National Climate Change Strategy until 2050.²¹ Its main goal is defined as “achieving sustainable economic growth and low-emission development in various sectors.” This involves increasing the share of renewable and alternative energy sources in primary energy consumption, reducing emissions from hydrocarbon use, including through the development of low-carbon technologies such as carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS), improving energy efficiency, and transitioning to sustainable consumption and production in non-energy sectors. A separate goal focuses on measures for adaptation and building resilience to climate change and its negative impacts, which includes improving health-care systems, as well as protecting ecosystems, natural resources, infrastructure and cultural heritage sites. The remaining three goals address the improvement of climate change management measures and climate financing infrastructure, the development of scientific

research and technologies, and raising general climate awareness.

In June 2023, Egypt submitted its updated NDC,²² which still does not specify a target year for achieving carbon neutrality, however it does include three sector-specific goals. By 2030, compared to the business-as-usual scenario, Egypt aims to reduce electricity emissions by 37% by increasing the share of renewable energy sources (RES) to 42% — with the original deadline shortened by five years. For reference, this figure was only 12.2% in 2022.²³ While developing renewable energy, Egypt continues to heavily invest in fossil fuel extraction, exceeding the investments in clean energy and thus undermining their impact. The other goals concern the oil and gas sector and transport sector, where GHG emissions are planned to be reduced by 65% and 7% respectively. According to expert forecasts, Egypt can easily achieve these goals even following its current development trajectory,²⁴ which indicates their lack of ambition.

TABLE 2. SWOT ANALYSIS OF EGYPT'S CLIMATE POLICY

Strengths Steady growth of renewable energy investments International initiatives for attracting climate financing Aspiration to play an active role in global climate policy	Weaknesses High economic dependence on fossil fuels and substantial investments in this sector Low ambition in climate goals and insufficient climate measures in the context of global climate change mitigation Dependence on external climate financing
Opportunities Increase in climate investments, including renewable energy Development of low-carbon technologies (e.g., CCUS) Development of the carbon offset market	Threats Maintaining a high carbon intensity economy for the foreseeable future Dilemma between economic growth and economic decarbonization

Source: Compiled by the author

Egypt seeks to play an active role in global climate policy: in 2022, it hosted the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP-27) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

in Sharm el-Sheikh. Its main source is the Nexus of Water, Food and Energy programme launched in 2022, under which various governments, international development banks and private sec-

²¹ Egypt National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) 2050 // Ministry of Environment. URL: <https://www.eeaa.gov.eg/Uploads/Topics/Files/20221206130720583.pdf>

²² Nationally Determined Contribution to combat climate change under the Paris Agreement. See: Egypt's Second Updated Nationally Determined Contributions // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2023. URL: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2023-06/Egypt%20Updated%20First%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contribution%202030%20%28Second%20Update%29.pdf>

²³ According to IEA data for 2022. See: IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/egypt>

²⁴ Egypt country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/egypt/>

tor and philanthropic representatives co-finance Egyptian climate projects. As of 2023, the program's budget stood at \$14.7 billion, and the country's government presents it as a "model" example of a public-private-philanthropic partnership for other countries.²⁵

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE is among the world's top ten oil producers. Despite efforts to diversify the economy, the oil and gas sector still accounts for more than a quarter of GDP, while fossil fuels dominate the country's primary energy consumption (92.7%²⁶). The Emirates is not only one of the world's wealthiest nations but also ranks among global leaders in per capita carbon dioxide emissions. Combined with challenging climate conditions and high vulnerability to climate change, this presents the UAE with the classic "developing country dilemma" between decarbonizing the economy and maintaining economic growth rates. Abu Dhabi's climate policy is largely shaped by these factors.

In 2021, the Emirates became the first Middle Eastern country to set a carbon neutrality goal by launching the "Net Zero by 2050" strategic initiative.²⁷ In 2023, on the eve of the COP, the UAE adopted its Long-Term Strategy (LTS), which outlines their plan for achieving carbon neutrality. Among other things, it details sectoral measures for decarbonizing power generation, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture, and waste management.²⁸

During their COP presidency, the Emirates also updated its NDC, setting climate targets through 2030.²⁹ By then, the UAE aims to reduce its total net GHG emissions by 19% compared to its

In the UNFCCC negotiation process, Cairo emphasizes the principles of climate equity, a just transition, "common but differentiated responsibilities," and advocates for more ambitious global climate goals and increased green financing for developing countries.

2019 baseline year – going somewhat further than many developing countries, which typically set their interim targets relative to business-as-usual scenarios. Sector-specific reductions are also planned, with the building sector accounting for the largest share (56%), followed by the power sector (51%). Electricity decarbonization is expected to rely heavily on increasing the share of renewable and nuclear energy, which already accounts for 18.4% of the total.³⁰ On the eve of COP-29 in Baku, the UAE published its third NDC version with even more ambitious targets for 2035: it now plans to reduce GHG emissions by 47% compared to the 2019 baseline.³¹

In its climate change mitigation efforts, Abu Dhabi prioritizes renewable energy development, energy efficiency and storage solutions, hydrogen energy, CCUS technologies and green materials. The UAE is actively investing in renewable technologies (with plans to invest \$54 billion by 2030³²) – primarily in solar energy – and positions itself as one of the global leaders in this field, having hosted the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) since 2009. Abu Dhabi plans to significantly increase its hydrogen production to 14.9 million tonnes annually by 2050, with blue and green hydrogen each accounting for 47.5% of the total.³³ Carbon capture and storage technologies are expected to deliver up to one-third of all GHG emission

²⁵ Egypt's Nexus for Water, Food and Energy Programme – the Blueprint to Fight Climate Change? // World Economic Forum. 2023. URL: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/09/egypt-water-food-and-energy-nexus-programme-blueprint-fight-climate-change/>

²⁶ According to IEA data for 2022. See: United Arab Emirates // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/united-arab-emirates>

²⁷ UAE Announces Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative // Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations. October 7, 2021. URL: https://uaeun.org/press_release/uae-announces-net-zero-by-2050-strategic-initiative/

²⁸ The United Arab Emirates' First Long-Term Strategy (LTS) Demonstrating Commitment to Net Zero by 2050 // UNFCCC. URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UAE_LTLED5.pdf

²⁹ Accelerating Action Towards a Green, Inclusive and Resilient Economy. Third Update of Second Nationally Determined Contribution for the UAE // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2023. URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2023-07/Third%20Update%20of%20Second%20NDC%20for%20the%20UAE_v15.pdf

³⁰ According to IEA data for 2022. See: United Arab Emirates // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/united-arab-emirates>

³¹ The United Arab Emirates' Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0). Accelerating Action Towards Mission 1.5C // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2024. URL: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2024-11/UAE-NDC3.0.pdf>

³² UAE to Allocate \$54 Billion for Sustainable Energy Investment by 2030 // ESG News. November 5, 2024. URL: <https://esgnews.com/ru/uae-to-commit-54-billion-for-sustainable-energy-investment-by-2030/> (in Russian).

³³ Accelerating Action Towards a Green, Inclusive and Resilient Economy. Third Update of Second Nationally Determined Contribution for the UAE // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2023. P. 59. URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2023-07/Third%20Update%20of%20Second%20NDC%20for%20the%20UAE_v15.pdf

reductions in industry by 2050,³⁴ though their development remains rather limited at present.³⁵ Additionally, the Emirates are turning to carbon offsets to achieve their ambitious climate goals. For instance, Dubai-based Blue Carbon has

leased forested areas the size of the United Kingdom across Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Liberia to generate carbon credits for Emirati oil and gas companies, a move that has faced sharp criticism.³⁶

TABLE 3. CLIMATE PROFILE: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

UNCTAD Country Classification	Developing
Population	9,516,871
GDP (billion USD)	504.17
Year-on-year GDP change	+3.4%
GHG emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)	298.96
CO ₂ emissions (Mt)	218.8
Year-on-year CO ₂ emissions change	+2.03%
Share of global CO ₂ emissions	0.57%
Climate Vulnerability Index	0.382
Share of fossil fuels in primary energy consumption	92.7%
Share of renewable and nuclear (if any) energy in power generation	18.4%
Paris Agreement participation	Ratified on September 21, 2016
Year of latest NDC update	2024
Target year for carbon neutrality	2050
Assessment of climate change measures	Critically insufficient

Source: Compiled by the author using data from UNCTAD,³⁷ World Bank,^{38,39,40} Our World in Data,⁴¹ Worldometer,⁴² Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative,⁴³ IEA,⁴⁴ UN Treaties,⁴⁵ UN Climate Change⁴⁶ and Climate Action Tracker⁴⁷

The UAE identifies energy (especially electricity), infrastructure, healthcare, environment and food systems as priority areas for adaptation measures.

Despite seemingly ambitious climate goals and detailed plans for economic decarbonization, the UAE does not intend to reduce investments in its oil and gas sector in the long term.

³⁴ The United Arab Emirates' First Long-Term Strategy (LTS) Demonstrating Commitment to Net Zero by 2050 // UNFCCC. P. 58.
URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/UAE_LTLEDS.pdf

³⁵ UAE Country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2024. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/uae/>

³⁶ A UAE Company Has Secured African Land the Size of the UK for Controversial Carbon Offset Projects // CNN World. November 23, 2023.
URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/22/climate/uae-cop28-adnoc-fossil-fuels-expansion-climate-intl/index.html>

³⁷ Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

³⁸ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: Population, total – United Arab Emirates // World Bank. 2023.
URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AE>

³⁹ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP (current US\$) – United Arab Emirates // World Bank. 2023.
URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AE>

⁴⁰ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP growth (annual %) – United Arab Emirates // World Bank. 2023.
URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=AE>

⁴¹ Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., Roser, M. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions // Our World In Data. 2022.
URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁴² According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022.
URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁴³ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative for 2022 (climate vulnerability increases as the index approaches one). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁴⁴ According to IEA data for 2022. See: United Arab Emirates // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/united-arab-emirates>

⁴⁵ Paris Agreement // UN Treaties Collection. URL: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁴⁶ NDC Registry // UN Climate Change. URL: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

⁴⁷ According to Climate Action Tracker's 2024 assessment. See: UAE country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2024.
URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/uae/>

According to experts, this effectively negates the country's climate change mitigation efforts and

makes them critically insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement objectives.⁴⁸

TABLE 4. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE UAE'S CLIMATE POLICY

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious climate goals and a well-developed regulatory framework • Investments in renewable energy, hydrogen power and low-carbon technologies • Independence from external climate financing sources • Aspiration to play an active role in global climate policy 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High economic dependence on fossil fuels and substantial investments in this sector • Critical insufficiency of actual climate measures to meet Paris Agreement targets
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further measures to diversify the economy and reduce its resource dependence • Development of carbon markets • Development of CCUS technologies • Development of renewable energy, particularly solar power 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued high investments in the oil and gas sector • Dilemma between economic growth and economic decarbonization

Source: Compiled by the author

In the UNFCCC negotiation process, the Emirates advocate for the interests of developing and particularly oil-producing (OPEC) countries and even attempts to mediate between them and developed nations.⁴⁹ This is precisely why

the country sought to host COP28, which ultimately received mixed reviews from experts and the public. According to media reports, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, CEO of the Emirati state oil company ADNOC, who presided over the Dubai Conference, covertly used it to secure new deals.⁵⁰

SAUDI ARABIA

As the world's second-largest oil power⁵¹ and with an economy entirely dependent on fossil fuels (99.9% of primary energy consumption⁵²), Saudi Arabia faces climate-related challenges similar to its eastern neighbour. Like Abu Dhabi, Riyadh has no intention of reducing investments in oil and gas projects in the foreseeable future, instead advocating for "alternative" approaches to climate change mitigation. These often prove to be merely superficial measures, as they cannot offset the damage caused by fossil fuel use.

of the comprehensive reform programme Vision 2030, which among other goals aims to gradually diversify the resource-oriented economy, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud launched the Saudi Green Initiative.⁵³ The project aims to help the country achieve its climate goals by reducing GHG emissions, launching an afforestation campaign to plant 10 billion trees, and protecting land and seas by designating 30% of the country's terrestrial and marine territory as protected areas.

Saudi Arabia aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 but has yet to present a comprehensive climate strategy or even an action plan, limiting itself to ambitious declarations. In 2021, as part

That same year, the Kingdom submitted an updated NDC, planning to reduce GHG emissions by 278 million tonnes of CO₂e compared to the baseline year of 2019.⁵⁴ Since the new NDC ver-

⁴⁸ UAE Country Summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2024. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/uae/>

⁴⁹ Adrianov, A. Climate Mediator: How Abu Dhabi Wants to Influence the Fight Against Global Warming // Forbes. August 31, 2023. URL: <https://www.forbes.ru/mneniya/495383-klimaticeskij-posrednik-kak-abu-dabi-hocet-povliat-na-bor-bu-s-potepleniem> (in Russian)

⁵⁰ COP28 President Secretly Used Climate Summit Role to Push Oil Trade with Foreign Government Officials // Centre for Climate Reporting. November 27, 2023. URL: <https://climate-reporting.org/cop28-president-oil-climate/>

⁵¹ Leading Oil-producing Countries Worldwide in 2023 // Statista. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/237115/oil-production-in-the-top-fifteen-countries-in-barrels-per-day/>

⁵² According to IEA data for 2022. See: Saudi Arabia // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/saudi-arabia>

⁵³ Saudi Green Initiative // Saudi Vision 2030. URL: <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/explore/projects/saudi-green-initiative>

⁵⁴ Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2021. URL: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/202203111154--KSA%20NDC%202021.pdf>

sion more than doubled the target figure, Saudi Arabia declared this new goal to be “the most ambitious possible.” This target does not represent a fixed unconditional commitment, as it will depend on the kingdom’s economic growth rate and its long-term success in economic diversification. Here, Saudi Arabia’s NDC envisions two

scenarios for determining “dynamic baselines.” The Kingdom will either export hydrocarbons and invest the proceeds in economic diversification or focus on industrialization with the “sustainable use” of fossil fuels if exports cannot be increased due to global economic decarbonization.

TABLE 5. CLIMATE PROFILE: SAUDI ARABIA

UNCTAD Country Classification	Developing
Population	36,947,025
GDP (billion USD)	1 070
Year-on-year GDP change	-0.8%
GHG emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)	811.11
CO ₂ emissions (Mt)	607.9
Year-on-year CO ₂ emissions change	+2.93%
Share of global CO ₂ emissions	1.58%
Climate Vulnerability Index	0.411
Share of fossil fuels in primary energy consumption	99.9%
Share of renewable and nuclear (if any) energy in power generation	0.6%
Paris Agreement participation	Ratified on November 3, 2016
Year of latest NDC update	2021
Target year for carbon neutrality	2060
Assessment of climate change measures	Critically insufficient

Source: compiled by the author using data from UNCTAD,⁵⁵ World Bank,^{56,57,58} Our World in Data,⁵⁹ Worldometer,⁶⁰ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative,⁶¹ IEA,⁶² UN Treaties,⁶³ UN Climate Change⁶⁴ and Climate Action Tracker⁶⁵

As its framework approach to decarbonization, Riyadh advocates building a “circular carbon economy” based on four Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle and remove GHG emissions. Saudi Arabia plans to diversify its economy while simultaneously reducing its climate impact through im-

proved energy efficiency, the development of renewable and hydrogen energy, the implementation of CCUS technologies, increased use of natural gas in power generation and the reduction of methane emissions.

⁵⁵ Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

⁵⁶ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: Population, total – Saudi Arabia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=SA>

⁵⁷ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP (current US\$) – Saudi Arabia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=SA>

⁵⁸ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP growth (annual %) – Saudi Arabia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=SA>

⁵⁹ Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., Roser, M. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions // Our World In Data. 2022. URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁶⁰ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁶¹ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative for 2022 (climate vulnerability increases as the index approaches one). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁶² According to IEA data for 2022. See: Saudi Arabia // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/saudi-arabia>

⁶³ Paris Agreement // UN Treaties Collection. URL: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁶⁴ NDC Registry // UN Climate Change. URL: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

⁶⁵ According to Climate Action Tracker’s 2023 assessment. See: Saudi Arabia country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/saudi-arabia/>

In the field of energy efficiency, Saudi Arabia is implementing a dedicated Energy Efficiency Program that covers industry, buildings and land transport – three economic sectors that account for 90% of national energy demand.⁶⁶

By 2030, Saudi Arabia aims to increase the share of renewables in primary energy consumption to 50%.⁶⁷ Despite the country's considerable potential in solar energy (ranked 6th globally) and wind power (ranked 13th globally),⁶⁸ this scenario seems unrealistic as this figure stood at merely

0.1% in 2022.⁶⁹ The National Renewable Energy Program is intended to help achieve this goal.⁷⁰

Saudi Arabia plans to increase the production of both green and blue hydrogen. The country is building the world's largest green hydrogen production facility, NEOM, with an expected capacity of around 600 tonnes of hydrogen daily after 2025.⁷¹ As for blue hydrogen, which relies on carbon capture and storage technologies, Saudi officials believe Riyadh has the potential to become a global leader in its production.⁷²

TABLE 6. SWOT ANALYSIS OF SAUDI ARABIA'S CLIMATE POLICY

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence from external climate financing sources World's largest CCUS and hydrogen energy projects Aspiration to be a regional leader in climate action 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High economic dependence on fossil fuels and substantial investments in this sector Critical insufficiency of actual climate measures to meet Paris Agreement targets
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further measures to diversify the economy and reduce its resource dependence Development of CCUS technologies Development of renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power Development of carbon markets 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining substantial investments in the oil and gas sector Dilemma between economic growth and economic decarbonization Disruptive role in the UNFCCC negotiation process

Source: Compiled by the author

The Kingdom has been actively developing and promoting CCUS technologies as a mitigation measure for several decades. In this field, Riyadh plans to expand its carbon capture and storage capacity to reach 44 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions by 2035.⁷³ One of the world's largest CCUS hubs is currently under construction in the Saudi industrial city of Jubail. Upon commissioning, which is planned no later than 2027, its capacity will reach up to 9 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions.⁷⁴ Saudi oil and gas giants are also setting

carbon capture and storage targets: for instance, Saudi Aramco has set a goal of 11 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions by 2035.⁷⁵

Saudi Arabia is also focusing on the development of carbon markets. In 2021, the Kingdom launched a voluntary carbon market for the Middle East and North Africa,⁷⁶ and at COP27 announced the establishment of a national Green-house Gas Crediting & Offsetting Mechanism.⁷⁷

⁶⁶ According to Climate Action Tracker's 2023 assessment. See: Saudi Arabia country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023. P. 4.
URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/saudi-arabia/>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ According to assessments in the Shell Global Energy Resources Database. See: Energy resource database // Shell.
URL: <https://www.shell.com/news-and-insights/scenarios/what-scenario-planning-models-does-shell-use/energy-resource-database.html>

⁶⁹ According to IEA data for 2022. See: Saudi Arabia // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/saudi-arabia>

⁷⁰ Why Invest in Renewable Energy // MISA. 2024. URL: <https://misa.gov.sa/app/uploads/2024/03/investsaudi-renewable-energy-brochure.pdf>

⁷¹ NEOM Green Hydrogen Complex // Air Products and Chemicals. URL: <https://www.airproducts.com/energy-transition/neom-green-hydrogen-complex>

⁷² Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2021. P. 5.
URL: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/20220311154---KSA%20NDC%202021.pdf>

⁷³ Global Status of CCS 2023. Scaling Up through 2030 // Global CCS Institute. 2023. URL: https://res.cloudinary.com/dbtfcnfj/images/v1700717007/Global-Status-of-CCS-Report-Update-23-Nov/GlobalStatus-of-CCS-Report-Update-23-Nov.pdf?_i=AA

⁷⁴ Ibid. P. 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid. P. 49.

⁷⁶ Moneer, Z. Carbon Trading in the MENA Region: Opportunities and Challenges // Middle East Institute. October 9, 2023.
URL: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/carbon-trading-mena-region-opportunities-and-challenges>

⁷⁷ GCOM Announcement at COP27 // Designated National Authority (DNA), Ministry of Energy, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
URL: <https://gcom.cmdna.gov.sa/Home>

Saudi Arabia's climate change mitigation initiatives extend beyond national borders to encompass the regional level. In 2021, Riyadh launched the Middle East Green Initiative, aimed at uniting regional efforts for more effective climate action.⁷⁸ The initiative plans to plant 50 billion trees across the Middle East (approximately 5% of the global afforestation target) and reduce emissions by 670 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions, which essentially matches the combined NDCs of regional countries without requiring additional efforts.

In terms of adaptation, Saudi Arabia prioritizes water resource management, marine ecosystem protection, urban infrastructure planning, afforestation and combating desertification. The latter issue is particularly relevant for the Kingdom, which hosted the 16th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in December 2024.

In UNFCCC negotiations, like many developing countries, Saudi Arabia advocates for principles

of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities, linking climate action with other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, many practitioners note that Riyadh is playing a disruptive role in the UNFCCC negotiation process. According to media reports, Saudi Arabia's leadership deliberately opposes global efforts to phase out fossil fuels by developing carbon-intensive infrastructure projects in Asian and African countries.⁷⁹

Despite high-profile economic diversification initiatives and ambitious climate goals, experts assess Saudi Arabia's actual climate action measures as critically insufficient, with its "floating" 2030 targets deemed incompatible with Paris Agreement objectives.⁸⁰ Overall, Riyadh views the green agenda as externally imposed and clearly contradicting its long-term economic interests. Nevertheless, the kingdom cannot remain a passive observer in global climate policy and is therefore trying to adapt and even influence global processes from within.

IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the world's largest hydrocarbon producers and a developing nation with steadily growing energy demand. Since 2020, the Iranian economy has been gradually recovering from the latest round of US sanctions under Donald Trump and the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching its 2015 levels.⁸¹ This recovery has been largely supported by economic diversification measures and growing oil and gas revenues, which still account for a significant portion of Iran's GDP (23%⁸²). Nevertheless, due to ongoing sanctions, the country's economic situation remains unstable, significantly limiting Tehran's capacity to combat climate change.

Despite its high vulnerability to climate change, Iran remains one of the few countries worldwide that have not ratified the Paris Agreement. At

COP26 in Glasgow, representatives of the Islamic Republic explicitly linked their ratification of the agreement to the lifting of international sanctions. This position reflects the nature of Iran's entire climate policy. As a major fossil fuel producer and GHG emitter (accounting for 1.78% of global emissions⁸³), Iran attempts to use climate policy as diplomatic leverage in its relations with Western powers. Tehran's instrumentalization of the climate agenda for foreign policy purposes is further demonstrated by its boycott of COP28 over the presence of the Israeli delegation.⁸⁴

The low priority of climate issues on Iran's domestic agenda is clear from its limited and piecemeal approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The country still lacks a carbon neutrality target, and its National Strategic Plan on Cli-

⁷⁸ MGI: Powering Regional Climate Action // Saudi Green Initiatives. URL: <https://www.greeninitiatives.gov.sa/about-mgi/>

⁷⁹ Cheap Cars, Supersonic Jets and Floating Power Plants: Undercover in Saudi Arabia's Secretive Program to Keep the World Burning Oil // Centre for Climate Reporting. November 27, 2023. URL: <https://climate-reporting.org/undercover-saudi-arabia-keep-burning-oil/>

⁸⁰ Saudi Arabia country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/saudi-arabia/>

⁸¹ When the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme was signed in 2015, it was followed by the removal of various restrictions, which led to economic growth over the following two years. See: GDP (current US\$) – Iran, Islamic Rep. // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IR>

⁸² Iran GDP // Trading Economics. URL: <https://tradingeconomics.com/iran/gdp>

⁸³ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁸⁴ Media: Iranian Delegation Boycotts COP28 Over Israel's Presence // TASS. December 1, 2023. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/19432311> (in Russian).

mate Change has not been updated since 2017.⁸⁵ Shortly before signing the Paris Agreement in 2015, Tehran submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which remains the Islamic Republic's latest public climate commitment.⁸⁶ According to the document, Iran plans to reduce its GHG emissions by 2030 by 4% (unconditional target) to 12% (conditional

target) compared to the baseline scenario. Experts calculate that the country will achieve this target without significant effort, as the "baseline scenario" has been generously overestimated. However, this will actually result in an emission increase of 125-145% compared to 2010 levels.⁸⁷ Consequently, Tehran's stated climate targets are assessed by experts as "critically insufficient."

TABLE 7. CLIMATE PROFILE: IRAN

UNCTAD Country Classification	Developing
Population	89,172,767
GDP (billion USD)	401.5
Year-on-year GDP change	+5%
GHG emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)	935.35
CO ₂ emissions (Mt)	686.4
Year-on-year CO ₂ emissions change	+1.27%
Share of global CO ₂ emissions	1.78%
Climate Vulnerability Index	0.365
Share of fossil fuels in primary energy consumption	98.7%
Share of renewable and nuclear (if any) energy in power generation	6.1%
Paris Agreement participation	Signed on April 22, 2016, not ratified
Year of latest NDC update	–
Target year for carbon neutrality	Not set
Assessment of climate change measures	Critically insufficient

Source: Compiled by the author using data from UNCTAD,⁸⁸ World Bank,^{89, 90, 91} Our World in Data,⁹² Worldometer,⁹³ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative,⁹⁴ IEA,⁹⁵ UN Treaties,⁹⁶ UN Climate Change⁹⁷ and Climate Action Tracker⁹⁸

⁸⁵ National Strategic Plan on Climate Change // Climate Change Laws of the World. 2017.

URL: https://climate-laws.org/documents/national-strategic-plan-on-climate-change_dcfb?id=national-strategic-plan-on-climate-change_cbe2

⁸⁶ Intended Nationally Determined Contribution // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2015.

URL: <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Iran/1/INDC%20Iran%20Final%20Text.pdf>

⁸⁷ Iran Country Summary // Climate Action Tracker. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/iran/>

⁸⁸ Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

⁸⁹ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: Population, total – Iran, Islamic Rep. // World Bank. 2023.

URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=IR>

⁹⁰ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP (current US\$) – Iran, Islamic Rep. // World Bank. 2023.

URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IR>

⁹¹ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP growth (annual %) – Iran, Islamic Rep. // World Bank. 2023.

URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=IR>

⁹² Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., Roser, M. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions // Our World In Data. 2022.

URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁹³ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022.

URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

⁹⁴ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative for 2022 (climate vulnerability increases as the index approaches one). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁹⁵ According to IEA data for 2022. See: Iran // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/iran>

⁹⁶ Paris Agreement // UN Treaties Collection. URL: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁹⁷ NDC Registry // UN Climate Change. URL: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

⁹⁸ According to Climate Action Tracker's 2023 assessment. See: Iran (Islamic Republic of) country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2023.

URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/iran/>

Sanctions and economic instability have forced the Islamic Republic's government to revise its already modest climate measures and significantly reduce investment in renewable energy. This is reflected in Iran's main economic planning document, the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan for 2023-2027. Compared to its predecessor, it contains virtually no environmental and climate measures, such as mitigation, renewable energy development or adaptation,⁹⁹ and focuses instead on economic recovery. Nevertheless, the government still intends to commission renewable energy projects with a total capacity of 10 GW by 2026.¹⁰⁰ A number of planned climate change

measures, including adaptation initiatives, are outlined in Iran's most recent National Communication to the UNFCCC of 2017,¹⁰¹ though these can hardly be considered relevant now due to significant political and economic changes.

Nevertheless, Iran has taken several steps in climate action in recent years, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹⁰² The country has launched a National Smart Emission Inventory System for GHG emissions and developed a draft National Climate Finance Strategy, while also assessing the impact of global climate measures on the Iranian economy.

TABLE 8. SWOT ANALYSIS OF IRAN'S CLIMATE POLICY

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of a "smart" national GHG emissions inventory system 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2015 Paris Agreement not ratified Lack of a carbon neutrality target or other forms of climate planning Need for, but limited access to, external climate assistance High dependence of the economy on fossil fuels
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further measures to diversify the economy and reduce its resource dependence Development of renewable energy technologies Development of nuclear energy 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct dependence of climate policy on the country's international standing and its use as a foreign policy instrument Economic instability caused by international sanctions Non-participation in the Paris Agreement Dilemma between economic growth and economic decarbonization

Source: Compiled by the author

As a result, Tehran's climate policy has become hostage to its international political situation, which significantly hampers both its independent climate action efforts and its ability to attract external support, including financial and

technological assistance. Iran's NDC states that achieving its climate goals would only be possible "in the absence of any forms of restrictions and sanctions."¹⁰³

ETHIOPIA

With Africa's second-largest population (126.5 million people¹⁰⁴) and one of the continent's

fastest-growing economies,¹⁰⁵ a significant share of agriculture in GDP (37.64% in 2022¹⁰⁶) and a

⁹⁹ Evaluation of 7th Development Plan on Environmental Issues // Tehran Times. February 2, 2024. URL: <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/494431/Evaluation-of-7th-development-plan-on-environmental-issues>

¹⁰⁰ Iran Wants to Deploy 10 GW of Renewables over the Next Four Years // PV Magazine. January 1, 2022. URL: <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2022/01/03/iran-wants-to-deploy-10-gw-of-renewables-over-the-next-four-years/>

¹⁰¹ Third National Communication to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change // UNFCCC. URL: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Third%20National%20communication%20IRAN.pdf>

¹⁰² Iran // United Nations Development Programme Global Climate Promise. URL: <https://climatepromise.undp.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/iran>

¹⁰³ Intended Nationally Determined Contribution // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2015. P. 4. URL: <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Iran/1/INDC%20Iran%20Final%20Text.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Population, total – Ethiopia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ET>

¹⁰⁵ Africa Dominates List of the World's 20 Fastest-Growing Economies in 2024 – African Development Bank Says in Macroeconomic Report // African Development Bank. February 16, 2024. URL: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/africa-dominates-list-worlds-20-fastest-growing-economies-2024-african-development-bank-says-macroeconomic-report-68751>

¹⁰⁶ Ethiopia: Share of economic sectors in the gross domestic product (GDP) from 2012 to 2022 // Statista. URL: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/455149/share-of-economic-sectors-in-the-gdp-in-ethiopia/>

minute share in global CO₂ emissions (0.05%¹⁰⁷), including historically, Ethiopia presents a distinctive national context for climate policy. As the only least developed country (UNCTAD

classification) among new BRICS members, it is the most dependent on external assistance for climate action, while facing the lowest expectations regarding its climate targets.

TABLE 9. CLIMATE PROFILE: ETHIOPIA

UNCTAD Country Classification	Least Developed
Population	126,527,060
GDP (billion USD)	163.7
Year-on-year GDP change	+6.5%
GHG emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)	303.88
CO ₂ emissions (Mt)	21.1
Year-on-year CO ₂ emissions change	+2.7%
Share of global CO ₂ emissions	0.05%
Climate Vulnerability Index	0.522
Share of fossil fuels in primary energy consumption	9.7%
Share of renewable and nuclear (if any) energy in power generation	100%
Paris Agreement participation	Ratified on March 9, 2017
Year of latest NDC update	2021
Target year for carbon neutrality	2050 ¹⁰⁸
Assessment of climate change measures	Almost sufficient

Source: Compiled by the author using data from UNCTAD,¹⁰⁹ World Bank,^{110,111,112} Our World in Data,¹¹³ Worldometer,¹¹⁴ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative,¹¹⁵ IEA,¹¹⁶ UN Treaties,¹¹⁷ UN Climate Change¹¹⁸ and Climate Action Tracker¹¹⁹

Biomass accounts for the bulk (87.2%¹²⁰) of Ethiopia's primary energy consumption, while its electricity generation relies entirely on renewables, with hydropower dominating at 96.7%.¹²¹ Look-

ing ahead, the government plans to diversify its renewable energy mix, aiming to reduce hydropower's share to 55% by 2040.¹²² Currently, less than half of Ethiopia's population has access to

¹⁰⁷ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

¹⁰⁸ Mentioned in climate strategy scenarios but not designated as a target.

¹⁰⁹ Data Hub. Countries, all groups hierarchy // UNCTAD. URL: https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_All_Hierarchy.pdf

¹¹⁰ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: Population, total – Ethiopia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ET>

¹¹¹ According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP (current US\$) – Ethiopia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=ET>

¹¹² According to World Bank data for 2023. See: GDP growth (annual %) – Ethiopia // World Bank. 2023. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ET>

¹¹³ Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., Roser, M. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions // Our World In Data. 2022. URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

¹¹⁴ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer. 2022. URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

¹¹⁵ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative for 2022 (climate vulnerability increases as the index approaches one). See: ND-GAIN Country Index // Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative. 2022. URL: <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

¹¹⁶ According to IEA data for 2022. See: Ethiopia // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/ethiopia>

¹¹⁷ Paris Agreement // UN Treaties Collection. URL: https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

¹¹⁸ NDC Registry // UN Climate Change. URL: <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

¹¹⁹ According to Climate Action Tracker's 2022 assessment. See: Ethiopia country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2022. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/ethiopia/>

¹²⁰ According to IEA data for 2022. See: Ethiopia // IEA. 2022. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/ethiopia>

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ethiopia's Long-Term Low Emission and Climate Resilient Development Strategy (2020–2050) // UNFCCC. P. 26. URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ETHIOPIA_%20LONG%20TERM%20LOW%20EMISSION%20AND%20CLIMATE%20RESILIENT%20DEVELOPMENT%20STRATEGY.pdf

electricity, which has prompted a government initiative to achieve nationwide electrification by 2025.¹²³ Though transport and industry are the main sources of CO₂ emissions (50% and 41% respectively¹²⁴), carbon dioxide is not the country's predominant GHG. The bulk of Ethiopia's emissions consists of methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O), primarily originating from the agricultural sector.¹²⁵

In its updated 2021 NDC, Addis Ababa sets two emission targets for 2030: an unconditional 14% reduction compared to the baseline trajectory, and a more ambitious conditional target of 68.8%.¹²⁶ The main reductions are expected in the Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector, primarily through moving away from biomass as the main household energy source. Conversely, emissions in the energy and industrial sectors are projected to increase due to rapid economic growth and urbanization. According to the baseline scenario, agri-

culture will continue to account for the majority of GHG emissions in 2030, representing 83% of the total.¹²⁷

Experts assess Ethiopia's unconditional 2030 target as compatible with the 1.5 °C target of the Paris Agreement, considering fair share principles, and rate Addis Ababa's overall climate efforts as "almost sufficient."¹²⁸ Sectoral measures through 2050 are outlined in the long-term low-carbon development strategy.¹²⁹ Interestingly, while Ethiopia has not set a carbon neutrality target, its long-term strategy scenarios reference 2050 as a benchmark year.

Ethiopia plans to gradually increase its carbon absorption capacity through additional afforestation measures. In 2019, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali launched the nationwide Green Legacy initiative, under which 25 billion seedlings have already been planted across the country, with plans to match this number over the next four years.¹³⁰

TABLE 10. SWOT ANALYSIS OF ETHIOPIA'S CLIMATE POLICY

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low carbon intensity of the economy and negligible share in global CO₂ emissions • 100% renewable energy share in power generation, advanced renewable energy technologies • Near-complete alignment of climate policy with Paris Agreement objectives 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy dependence on external climate financing • Climate policy stagnation due to domestic political tensions
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced food security through agricultural transformation • Converting the land use and forestry sector into a net carbon sink • Gradual shift away from biomass in household energy consumption through universal electrification 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the economy's carbon intensity due to growth and urbanization • Persistently high methane and nitrous oxide emissions from agriculture

Source: Compiled by the author

Adaptation plays a crucial role in Ethiopia's climate policy, as the country is extremely vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and is already suffering from natural disasters. Ad-

aptation measures are detailed in the NDC and cover agriculture, forestry, land use, natural resource management (including water resources, with the National Blue Economy Strategy adop-

¹²³ National Electrification Program 2.0 // POWER Magazine. 2019.

URL: <https://www.powermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ethiopia-national-electrification-program.pdf>

¹²⁴ Ethiopia Emissions // IEA. URL: <https://www.iea.org/countries/ethiopia/emissions>

¹²⁵ Ritchie, H., Roser, M. Ethiopia: CO₂ Country Profile // Our World in Data. URL: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/ethiopia>

¹²⁶ Ethiopia's Updated NDC // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2021.

URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Ethiopia%27s%20updated%20NDC%20JULY%202021%20Submission_.pdf

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ethiopia country summary // Climate Action Tracker. 2022. URL: <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/ethiopia/>

¹²⁹ Ethiopia's Long-Term Low Emission and Climate Resilient Development Strategy (2020-2050) // UNFCCC. URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/ETHIOPIA_%20LONG%20TERM%20LOW%20EMISSION%20AND%20CLIMATE%20RESILIENT%20DEVELOPMENT%20STRATEGY.pdf

¹³⁰ Green Legacy. URL: <https://greenlegacy.et/green-legacy/home>

ted in 2023¹³¹), energy, transport, urban planning, healthcare and natural disaster risk reduction.

Ethiopia will not be able to achieve its stated climate goals without external assistance. According to NDC calculations, mitigation and adaptation measures require \$316 billion, of which

80% needs to be attracted as external climate financing.¹³² Furthermore, Addis Ababa's climate policy implementation was severely affected by the civil war in Tigray in 2020-2022, and ongoing domestic political tensions may have negative effects in the future.

Climate Policy of New BRICS Members: Challenges and Opportunities

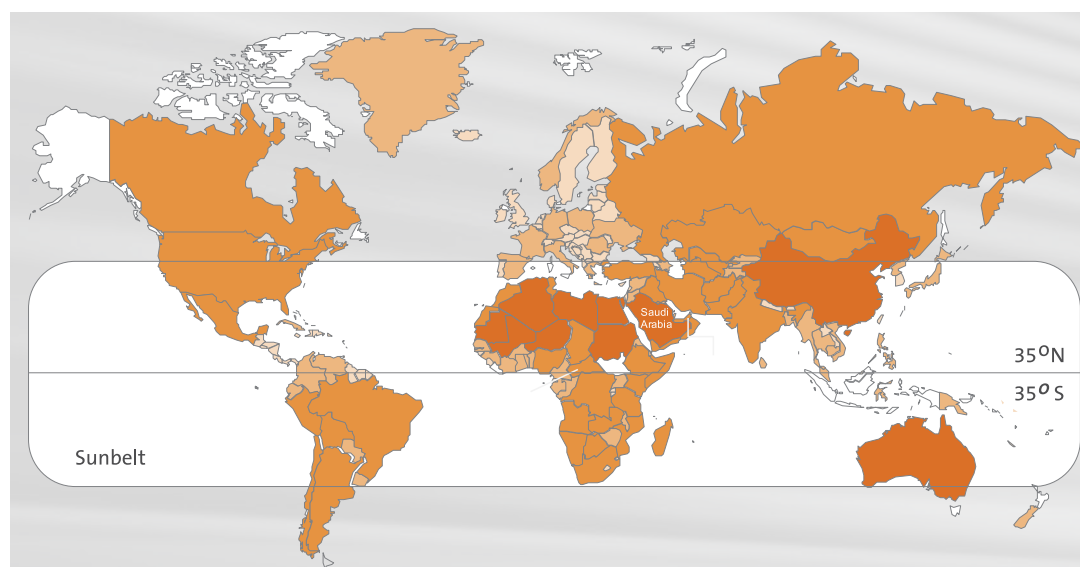
As developing countries, four of the five new BRICS members are subject to moderately ambitious climate policy requirements under the UNFCCC, not only due to their level of economic development but also because of their limited historical contribution to global emissions. Nevertheless, all five countries are currently experiencing intense economic growth and increasing energy consumption, collectively accounting for 4.67%¹³³ of carbon dioxide emissions, which is almost equivalent to Russia's annual emissions. At the same time, all five new members are in climatically vulnerable regions of the Middle East, North and East Africa, making them particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change.

Each new member country has its own starting point in climate change mitigation. For some – UAE and Saudi Arabia – climate policy serves as

an effective foreign policy tool, while for others – Ethiopia and Iran – it remains peripheral to domestic politics and is complicated by unstable national or international conditions. Four of the five new members are oil and gas producing countries, for whom the energy transition poses a serious economic and political challenge, with climate policy being a necessary measure. Nevertheless, all five countries possess enormous renewable energy potential (particularly in solar and wind power, see Figures 1 and 2). Regarding climate financing, new BRICS members are quite diverse: while some desperately need external assistance for energy transition (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran), others (UAE, Saudi Arabia) rely on their own resources.

Now, onto examining the opening opportunities for Russia and the expanded BRICS as an actor of global climate policy.

FIGURE 1. CENTRALIZED SOLAR POWER GENERATION (DARKER COLOUR INDICATES HIGHER POTENTIAL)



Source: MISA¹³⁴

¹³¹ National Blue Economy Strategy of Ethiopia 2023-2027 // FAOLEX Database. URL: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/eth215770.pdf>

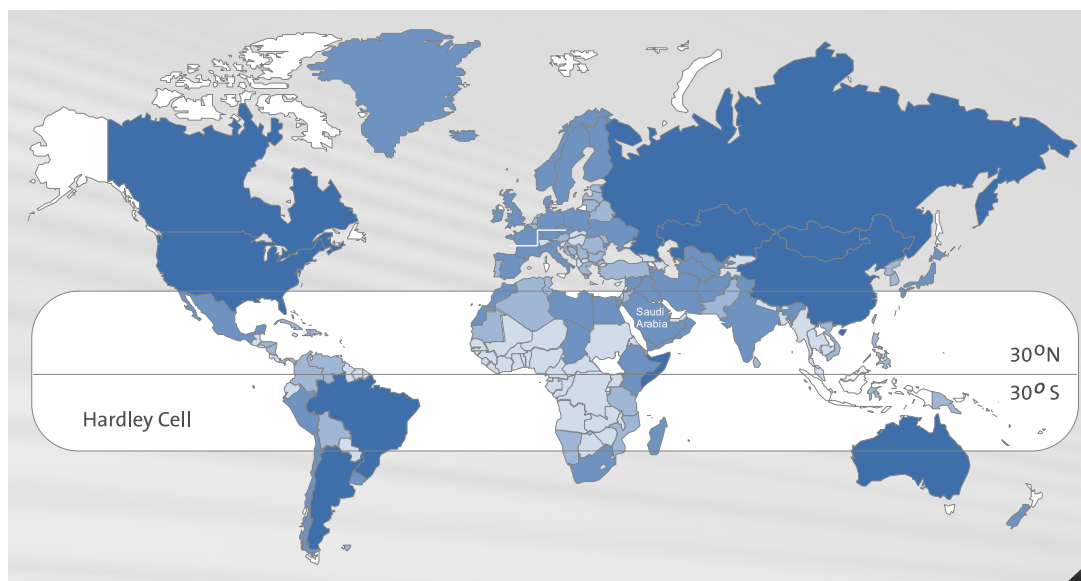
¹³² Ethiopia's Updated NDC, pp. 21-22 // UNFCCC NDC Registry. 2021.

URL: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Ethiopia%27s%20updated%20NDC%20JULY%202021%20Submission_.pdf

¹³³ According to Worldometer data for 2022. See: CO₂ Emissions by Country // Worldometer.

URL: <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>

¹³⁴ Why Invest in Renewable Energy // MISA. 2024. URL: <https://misa.gov.sa/app/uploads/2024/03/investsaudi-renewable-energy-brochure.pdf>

FIGURE 2. ONSHORE WIND POWER GENERATION (DARKER COLOUR INDICATES HIGHER POTENTIAL)

Source: MISA¹³⁵

FOR RUSSIA

Russia can leverage its traditionally strong industries to support new BRICS members in their fight against climate change. First, in energy transition – through continuing current and launching new civilian nuclear projects. Currently, Rosatom is building nuclear power plants in Egypt (El Dabaa) and Iran (Bushehr), though there is significant potential for more projects both in these and other member countries. Second, Russia could help new members ensure food security, not only through exports of various food products but also by sharing agricultural technologies.

At the same time, new BRICS members also have valuable climate change mitigation expertise to share with Russia. First, the Persian Gulf monarchies and Egypt are actively developing carbon capture and storage technologies, which could

be of interest to Russia's energy sector as it builds its CCUS capacity. Second, under sanctions and the cessation of cooperation with Western countries, Russia faces an urgent need to develop other low-carbon technologies,¹³⁶ which some new BRICS countries have mastered, for example in industrial and building sectors. Finally, renewable energy technologies remain relevant for Russia, with some new members of the association actively investing in this area.

Additionally, the participation of five new countries in BRICS opens significant opportunities for Russia in the joint development of blue and green hydrogen energy (KSA, Egypt, UAE), as well as sustainable mobility. Mutually experience exchanges in developing regulated and voluntary carbon markets could also prove beneficial.

FOR BRICS

BRICS advocates for a fairer system of international relations, which should (and can) be reflected in its global climate position. By promoting more equitable energy transition pathways and countering excessive politicization and economic instrumentalization of the climate agenda in the international arena, the association can achieve leadership in climate change

mitigation. It can also become a role model for the developing countries of the Global South, taking the initiative from Western developed nations. In its expanded composition, BRICS can offer the world a new development model that "reconciles" economic growth and sustainable development; however, will require close coordination of climate policies among its members.

¹³⁵ Why Invest in Renewable Energy // MISA. 2024. URL: <https://misa.gov.sa/app/uploads/2024/03/investsaudi-renewable-energy-brochure.pdf>

¹³⁶ See: Sukhovikhov, K.K. Prospects for Russia's Green Transition Under Western Sanctions Pressure // RIAC. December 15, 2022. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/perspektivy-zelenogo-perekhoda-rossii-v-usloviyakh-sanktsionnogo-davleniya-stran-zapada/> (in Russian).

These ideas have already been reflected in the final declaration of the BRICS Kazan Summit, including the principles of a just transition, common but differentiated responsibilities and technological neutrality.¹³⁷ During Russia's BRICS presidency, a Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development was established, and a Framework for Climate and Sustainable Development was adopted. In late August 2024,

BRICS members signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the BRICS Carbon Market Partnership.¹³⁸ This appears to be a promising area of cooperation within the association, particularly considering the experience of its new Middle Eastern members. BRICS is also set to establish a Climate Research Platform, which is crucial for a more objective assessment of global climate changes.

Conclusions

Under the UNFCCC, new BRICS members are not expected to pursue particularly ambitious climate policies. These five countries are all experiencing rapid economic and energy consumption growth, with their combined CO₂ emissions roughly matching those of Russia. At the same time, all new members are especially vulnerable to climate change impacts, making a just energy transition a crucial issue for them.

BRICS expansion has increased the divergence in climate policy approaches among member countries, as new members typically treat climate policy as a reactive, forced measure rather than a priority. This misalignment will slow down progress and limit both the depth and scope of climate cooperation within the expanded BRICS. Any further expansion is likely to make climate cooperation even more challenging, despite the organization's role as a key platform for developing nations.

Each new BRICS member has its own distinct approach to climate policy, with varying priorities and implementation tools. For the four oil and gas producers – Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran – the energy transition presents both economic and political challenges, with climate policy largely being adopted out of necessity rather than choice. New BRICS members vary significantly in their financial capacity for mitigation and adaptation: while some are in dire need of external assistance, others can rely on their own resources.

Nevertheless, BRICS expansion opens up new opportunities in climate change action, both for each of its founding nations, including Russia, and for the association as a whole.

Russia can contribute to new BRICS member climate efforts through its traditional strengths: civilian nuclear power and food security. At the same time, new BRICS members have valuable climate-related expertise to share with Russia: experience in carbon capture and storage technologies, other low-carbon solutions, particularly in industrial and building sectors, as well as renewable energy technologies. BRICS expansion creates significant opportunities for Russia in the joint development of both blue and green hydrogen energy, as well as sustainable mobility. The mutual exchange of experience in developing regulated and voluntary carbon markets could also prove beneficial. For BRICS itself, the expansion will strengthen its position in advocating for fairer energy transition pathways and countering the excessive politicization and economic instrumentalization of the climate agenda in the international arena, particularly by developed Western nations.

Russia's chairmanship of the association in 2024 has laid the groundwork for the future development of common carbon markets and joint climate research.

At the same time, the expansion has increased the disparity between BRICS member approaches to addressing climate change, largely due to the rather conservative climate policies of its new members. This factor will complicate and slow down climate-related cooperation within BRICS.

Following the accession of Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Ethiopia, BRICS has transformed into a leading platform that represents the inter-

¹³⁷ For example, paragraph 81 of the Kazan Declaration. See: Kazan Declaration. Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security // Russian Federation's BRICS Chairship in 2024. URL: https://cdn.brics-russia2024.ru/upload/docs/Kazan_Declaration_FINAL.pdf?1729693488349783

¹³⁸ BRICS Countries Sign Memorandum on Carbon Market Partnership // Rossiyskaya Gazeta. August 30, 2024. URL: <https://rg.ru/2024/08/30/strany-briks-priniali-memorandum-o-sozdanii-partnerstva-po-uglerodnym-rynkam.html> (in Russian).

ests of Global South countries. In this context, given sufficient political will, the association – as a multiplier of member international efforts –

has a unique historic opportunity to establish itself as a leader in global climate policy and make it more equitable.

Acknowledgements

The author extends his gratitude to Konstantin Sukhoverkhov, RIAC Programme Manager, and Ekaterina Bliznetskaya, Lecturer in Environment and Natural Research Studies at MGIMO University, whose support made this policy brief possible. Special thanks also go to “Environmental Issues and Policies of Countries and Russian Regions” participants at the All-Russian scientific

conference with international participation, “Regional Geoecological Problems in the Context of Global Changes,” held on November 11-13, 2024, at the Faculty of Geography of Lomonosov Moscow State University, and to the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, for their valuable questions and comments.



Российский совет
по международным
делам

Tel.: +7 (495) 225 6283
Fax: +7 (495) 225 6284
welcome@russiancouncil.ru

119049, Moscow,
8, 4th Dobryninsky pereulok

russiancouncil.ru