

The Sustainable development Policies and Measures (SD-PAMs)

By Stanford A.J. Mwakasonda

*Energy Research Centre, University of Cape Town
South Africa*

South Africa made a submission to the United Nations Climate Change Convention negotiation process in Bali, Indonesia, on sustainable development policies and measures (SD-PAMs) pledge that builds on existing commitments of developing countries. The basis of this approach lies in the fact that almost all developing countries are signatories to the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, both of which take into consideration issues of sustainable development. Convention Articles 2, 3.4, and 4.1, as well as Kyoto Protocol Article 10 dwell on matters generally pertaining the implementation of commitments in a manner that promotes sustainable development.

The SD-PAMs approach is built on the premise that developing countries would need to make a pledge to implement and accelerate national sustainable development plans. The pledge, and subsequently a 'commitment', would not necessarily be measured directly in GHG emissions units, but rather in Sustainable Development (SD) units – building a 50 000 energy efficient homes, rather than a specified reduction in tons of CO₂ emissions.

SD-PAMs commitments would initially be voluntary, although they could be made mandatory for at least some developing countries. To formalize the approach, some need for reporting and oversight through the Climate Change Convention would be necessary. Reporting would assist in monitoring whether SD-PAMs are actually implemented, and this would require some institutional capacity in the pledging country. At the same time, reporting can help to correct the mis-perception that developing countries are doing nothing on climate change.

At the international level, reviewing the pledges would require a decision of the Conference of the Parties to establish a registry of SD-PAMs. Rather than creating an entirely new institution, suggestions have been made to create a special SD-PAMs reporting registry within the existing framework of the UNFCCC. Such a registry would record data based on regular reporting by Parties on their SD-PAMs, and support from the Secretariat for maintaining the records of implementation. If voluntary reporting proves successful, a next step would be to make reporting of SD-PAMs mandatory for a group of middle-income developing countries. Some developing countries might view this as intergovernmental control over national policy making, which could present a political obstacle. However, there need be no prescribed list of SD-PAMs, leaving it to the country to define its own policies, much as this study has examined energy policies that would make South Africa's development more sustainable.

In short, developing countries would formulate, implement and report on SD-PAMs. Reporting and international review seem consistent with a facilitative approach to compliance.