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"Creating a Climate Policy Review Mechanism"

Policy Brief, [Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements](#), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School

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Viewpoints

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SUMMARY

International climate negotiations are becoming increasingly focused on suites of emissions-cutting policies and measures, rather than solely on traditional targets and timetables, particularly for developing countries. This approach raises at least two important challenges for negotiators and policymakers. First, how can negotiators judge whether states' proposed policies and measures are commensurate with ambitious global goals for controlling emissions? Second, how can policymakers evaluate whether climate policies and measures (in both developed and developing countries) are succeeding and maximize the odds that countries will actually deliver needed emissions cuts? Answering both questions is essential to reconciling a bottom-up approach to climate change mitigation with top-down need for strong global emissions cuts.

Continuous collective examination and evaluation of existing and proposed national mitigation efforts will be needed to address both issues. States should create a multilateral Climate Policy Review Mechanism that would institutionalize this process. This would borrow from the successful use of "peer review" to help address other challenges including trade, monetary, and environmental policy. The effort should be anchored in a new international institution whose sole purpose would be to facilitate the review process or in an expanded International Energy Agency (IEA). Member countries would be required to participate in the review mechanism. (Depending on the circumstances under which the mechanism was created, membership could include all UNFCCC members or could be limited to G-20 nations.) In order to maximize states' cooperation, though, the body would have no authority to determine compliance with or prescribe enforcement action under any international treaty.

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A view of the summit of the Aid for Trade Review, at the World Trade Organization headquarters, in Geneva, Switzerland, Nov. 20, 2007. This is an example of an international governance peer-review process. AP Photo

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