

# Climate Advisory Bodies: Experiences and Approaches for Effective Climate Change Policy

A discussion paper for the International Climate Councils Network (ICCN)

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## Executive Summary

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of official climate advisory bodies in supporting effective climate policy around the world. We aim to address the overarching question: “How do climate advisory bodies support climate policy and what factors influence success and pose challenges?” To address the question, this study explores and compares the experiences of nine climate change advisory bodies from across six countries: Finland, India, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Following a qualitative research approach, insights from key experts were gathered through semi-structured interviews covering the perceived impact of each profiled advisory body. Interviews were codified and responses included in this paper. Six country-specific case studies were prepared and can be found in the separate Annex. The experiences between countries were compared and synthesized across four thematic areas to facilitate further discussion at the meeting of International Councils. These thematic areas include:

- (1) operating effective climate advisory bodies;
- (2) enabling and influencing climate action;
- (3) facilitating just transitions; and
- (4) informing policy and overseeing delivery across key sectors and adaptation.

A summary of key highlights from the study follows. Insights and experience shared during the International Climate Councils meeting<sup>1</sup> are also incorporated.

### *Operating Effective Climate Advisory Bodies*

Interviewees identified several important operational and constitutional factors influencing the effectiveness of a climate advisory body:

- **Mandate established in legislation:** A mandate established in legislation is valuable in underpinning legitimacy and uptake of recommendations. Legislation can include mechanisms to formalize the relationship between the climate advisory body and government, and consideration of advice or findings. Furthermore, climate advisory bodies that are established by law have tended to benefit from long-term stability and permanence. That being said, there are some cases in which advisory bodies engaged in supplemental research endeavors that are beyond and complementary to their mandate have proved successful in advancing climate action and knowledge.
- **Independence:** In several cases, formal distance of the advisory body from government and interest groups was highlighted as a key factor for success.
- **Membership and leadership:** The composition, expertise, and reputation of advisory body members impacts its effectiveness. In all country cases, strong leadership was noted to play a critical role in ensuring that the body is able to effectively drive change.
- **Research practices, inputs and outputs:** A robust basis in the latest climate science and a broader evidence-led approach enables advisory bodies to provide objective and effective policy advice and evaluation (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). To provide scientific

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<sup>1</sup> The international Climate Councils meeting was held the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2021, with representatives from 22 Climate Councils from countries around the world.

evidence and supplement the expertise of members, several advisory bodies commission technical research from external sources or jointly prepare research between advisory body members and external experts. Data gathering is also made easier through strong connections and collaboration with government partners and made more robust by building a culture of high data quality and analytical credibility. Broader stakeholders are sometimes invited to provide input and feedback through consultations or peer review. Although constraining factors, including time constraints and the lack of a specific mandate, limit this practice.

- **Operations and budget:** Most profiled advisory bodies rely on administrative and executive support from a behind-the-scenes staff or secretariat particularly in cases where advisory body members are not paid or have other primary occupations. Of the cases assessed, all funding provided for the operations of the advisory bodies comes directly from the government. Some bodies have total autonomy in spending, while others are afforded less flexibility. Most country cases identified budget and resource constraints as limiting factors in acquiring the necessary number of staff to support and deliver the overall work of the advisory body. Some interviewees noted the need for additional funding—or clarity on future funding—for their respective advisory bodies to deliver effective and impactful work. Time and human capacity constraints, both within the advisory body and in government at large, were noted as challenges in a few country cases.

### *Enabling and Influencing Climate Action*

Climate change advisory bodies can convene stakeholders and guide national debate in order to build consensus for policy actions, including on politically sensitive or challenging topics (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). Advisory bodies apply different processes for engaging stakeholders and delivering advice and recommendations to enable and influence climate action:

- **Engaging with government:** Advisory bodies interact with government in different ways, sometimes requiring more deliberate coordination by advisory body members in order to be impactful. In a few country cases, the binding mandate for the government to respond to its advisors' recommendations drives impact.
- **Engagement with the public and private sector:** In most countries, close interaction with non-government actors is essential in bringing in external views, providing credibility, and amplifying key messages. In a few country cases, the public was noted to play an important role in exerting outside pressure, complementing the work of the advisory body.
- **Engagement with the media:** In most country cases, interviewees noted that it is important for the advisory body to make a point of maintaining a regular media presence.

### *Facilitating Just Transitions*

A few profiled climate advisory bodies have a focus on just transition-related issues. However, South Africa's Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) is the only independent body assessed in this study that has been established with a specific mandate to support a just transition. With South Africa's PCC being a fairly new body, it is too early to predict its impact and success. However, there are several considerations that provide a promising foundation:

- Councils can be particularly effective in this space by building off existing work and not reinventing the wheel.

- Effective just transition work will require more structured and in-depth engagement with major stakeholder groups than many councils undertake today.
- A key risk for councils working in this space is becoming a “talking shop,” particularly when salient topics like just transitions also require the implementation of actual projects and appropriate social safety nets. Accordingly, the advice from advisory bodies must be structured in a way to inform direct on-the-ground changes.

### *Informing Policy and Overseeing Delivery across Key Sectors and Adaptation*

When asked about specific examples of overall policy impact and challenges, interviewees provided a range of examples covering high-level, overarching influence on climate change policy and national discourse, as well as more detailed, sector- or policy-specific examples:

- **Raising the profile of climate change:** In all country cases, advisory bodies play an important role in drawing high-level attention to the topic of climate change and stimulating discourse. Advisory bodies can also drive progress and provide the necessary technical and political backing to affect the policymaking process, even in times of political transition.
- **Influencing sectoral policy and adaptation:** Councils have varying experience of successfully influencing policy. However, insights on how to do so include: being ready to capitalize on opportune moments to influence policy; the ability to reflect the perspectives of key stakeholder groups; robust analysis of policy options and ensuring advice has clear sectoral focus and specific recommendations without being over prescriptive. There were also positive secondary benefits, such as awareness-raising, consensus-building, and supporting multiple steps of the policy-making process beyond analysis.
- **Wider political context:** Timing and the growing recognition of the need for climate action were noted as critical influencing factors triggering a political response and leading to the establishment of a climate advisory body. Political buy-in and cross-party support were also noted as huge factors in driving impact and sustaining the climate advisory body.
- **Coordination challenges:** Coordination and managing shared responsibility with subnational and non-government stakeholders was noted as a challenge for advancing policy implementation in a few country cases, in part due to challenges associated with cost-sharing and decentralized resource management.
- **Challenging topics:** A range of contentious or challenging topics were highlighted as being difficult to navigate, particularly in areas that affect consumers, jobs, and social justice. In part due to a lack of political will and vested interests in these areas. Capacity also limits some Councils ability to provide comprehensive advice across all topics or issues.

## Conclusion

Drawing from the findings of the study, the authors have identified **recommendations** to underpin effective climate advisory bodies:

1. Advisory bodies should be provided with an official, and if appropriate, legal mandate and the resources necessary to provide effective advice and scrutiny on climate action. The roles and responsibilities of the advisory body and Government, and procedures for their engagement, should be transparently outlined.
2. Advisory bodies should apply the latest science and robust analytical methods to inform evidence-based advice and assessments.
3. Advisory bodies should select members with deep technical expertise, who are leaders in their respective fields spanning a range of subject areas most relevant to enabling climate action. Members should enjoy strong public and stakeholder trust and act in an objective capacity.
4. Advisory bodies should build in a role for high-profile leaders suited to the national context and political system of the country.
5. Advisory bodies should establish appropriate and transparent stakeholder processes to engage key actors responsible for climate policy implementation, including subnational and regional governments and the private sector, to better support development and implementation of recommendations.
6. Advisory bodies have experience in a range of challenges and topics. Where one entity is struggling, another may be making progress. Therefore, advisory bodies should consider targeted exchange and outreach to their peers.

# Introduction

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## Background

Expert advisory bodies—entities established by government to provide ongoing advice on matters requiring substantive scientific and technical analysis—have long played a critical role in informing many fields of policy, including medical safety, food and agriculture, education and training, economic development, and environmental standards (Crowley and Head 2017). Indeed, policymakers at all levels of decision-making often solicit and rely on scientific advice from analysts and experts in the design, validation, and implementation of policies. This external advice, informed by independent research and deliberation, can improve the suitability of policy options and encourage sound and informed decision-making, particularly as the scale and complexity of policy challenges have intensified in an increasingly globalized world (Crowley and Head 2017).

Traditionally, there have been a variety of reasons why governments assemble these bodies to inform the policymaking process. Most importantly, perhaps, is that when a wide variety of options exists for solving a particular challenge, governments have noted that expert advisory bodies are well-equipped to weigh these options and advise on a practical path forward, lending credibility to the ultimate decision that is reached (Cash et al. 2002). This emphasis on evidence-based policymaking has evolved over time to address what has often been considered a “gap between research and practice or policy” (Oliver et al. 2014). Bodies of scientific and/or technical experts, which are independent from governing entities themselves, are also viewed as important for deflecting partisan politicization and “lowering the heat [on] sensitive issues” (Crowley and Head 2017). The premise here is that a body of technical experts that is independent and not driven by external vested interests is well-suited to provide an unbiased and de-politicized assessment of what is, in fact, best for public well-being on a controversial issue.

In recent years, the field of climate change policy has become a common issue on which independent bodies of scientists, economists and experts from a range of fields are being assembled to advise and scrutinize governments. Indeed, given the complexity and breadth of climate change policy options available to governments and the strong public dispute that often envelops the issue, independent and apolitical climate advisory bodies have been increasingly called on across a wide array of national contexts (Goulder and Hafstead 2017; Hulme 2009). Particularly as countries work to strengthen the mitigation and adaptation ambition exemplified in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans and Long-Term low-emissions development Strategies (LTS), as well as associated domestic policy and law, decision-makers are turning to these advisory bodies for evidence and analysis to inform nonpartisan decisions to guide decarbonisation and improved climate resilience, while ensuring key economic, technical-feasibility, and public interest considerations are reflected.

## About This Paper

In light of the recent proliferation of climate advisory bodies in recent years, and the increasing need for effective climate policy, there is a growing interest in the role of such organisations, what factors underpin their effectiveness and what conditions render them able to successfully influence policy outcomes.

This paper seeks to begin to examine some of these issues following a qualitative research approach by exploring the overarching question of “how do climate advisory bodies support climate policy and what



factors influence success and pose challenges?” In analyzing existing climate advisory mechanisms around the world with different structures and objectives, this paper considers the following four areas:

1. Practical factors underpinning their effective operation (such as resourcing, mandate, constitution etc.);
2. Lessons from and best practice in enabling and influencing climate action (working and consulting with a range of stakeholders);
3. Principles for facilitating just transitions (issues of equity, fairness, inclusivity)
4. Approaches to inform policy and overseeing delivery across key sectors and adaptation (tools, methods, challenges)

The following analysis was prepared for presentation at a May 2021 meeting of International Climate Councils, where participants discussed experiences and challenges and how the climate council model can most effectively provide evidence-based input into government policy over the coming decade.

This study is organized into three sections:

5. A synthesis of key takeaways across climate advisory bodies from six case study countries
6. Six in-depth case studies of advisory bodies’ experience from six countries (Annex B)
7. A high-level landscape analysis of climate advisory bodies from around the world (Annex C)

The experiences of nine climate change advisory bodies from across six countries were selected for this study (see Table 1). The selection of case study countries was intended to capture a range of experiences across mitigation and adaptation and across different sectors; a broad geographical representation; diverse advisory body characteristics, including the age, form, and role of the advisory body; and different national characteristics, including approaches to climate change and development planning and level of economic development. Given the short time frame of the study an additional consideration included WRI’s existing relationships with experts to expedite the data collection phase. The selected case studies are not comprehensive of all advisory body experiences but rather aim to provide an in-depth look into a diverse group.

**Table 1. Climate Change Advisory Bodies Included in this Study**

| Country        | Climate Change Advisory Body  | Abbreviation (used in this paper) |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Finland        | Finnish Climate Change Panel  | FCCP                              |
| India          | Prime Minister’s Climate Change Council   | IPMCCC                            |
| Mexico         | Climate Change Council  | MC3                               |
| Mexico         | The Office of Coordination of Evaluation of the National Policy on Climate Change | MEC                               |
| New Zealand    | Climate Change Commission   | NZCCC                             |
| New Zealand    | Interim Climate Change Committee  | NZICCC                            |
| New Zealand    | Adaptation Technical Working Group  | NZCCATWG                          |
| South Africa   | Presidential Climate Commission   | PCC                               |
| United Kingdom | Climate Change Committee  | UK CCC                            |

Source: WRI Authors

To inform this study, WRI collected responses from experts, including current and former advisory body members, government counterparts, and climate policy experts. A long list of more than 60 potential experts was identified and a total of 28 responses was collected through in-depth interviews and written survey responses. Experts that agreed to participate were asked a series of questions in order to identify the perceived impact, factors influencing success, and challenges facing the advisory body. Interviews and survey responses were codified and details included in this paper are cited with a response code. For full details describing the methodology used in this research, including the list of interviewees and survey questions, see Appendix A.

The responses provided a wide range of information covering the perceived impact of the advisory body on climate change policy, factors that enabled success, and challenges limiting overall effectiveness of the body. The authors reviewed this information, and common themes as well as unique factors were documented in the forthcoming synthesis section. If a specific country or advisory body is not mentioned under a particular theme or factor, this does not mean it isn't relevant. Rather, the respondents simply did not provide any reflections on the particular aspect in question. The responses also informed the preparation of six case studies exploring the experiences of the profiled advisory bodies in Finland, India, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. In addition, the insights and experiences reflected in the Chairs Summary of the May 2021 meeting of International Climate Councils are also reflected in the paper.

In addition to the synthesis and case studies that this paper offers, the authors also present a global landscape analysis based on desk research describing the basic setup and function of all identifiable national climate change-related scientific advisory bodies (see Appendix B). This landscape analysis, which describes the dates of activity, scope of coverage, membership, key responsibilities or mandate, foundation for establishment, and autonomy from government of each advisory body, is a descriptive collection of the basic functioning of each body, including those not explored further within the case studies that follow.

# Synthesis of Experiences, Common Lessons, and Key Takeaways

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## 1. Operating Effective Climate Advisory Bodies

When considering the efficacy of climate advisory bodies, it is important to first understand each body's institutional setup and the way in which it is designed to operate. Advisory bodies are highly diverse with different formal and informal roles within their national climate policy frameworks. Some are newly established, while others have been operating for a decade or longer (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). To this end, this section synthesizes key reflections from the interviews related to the mandate; legislation; independence; membership; research practices, inputs, and outputs; and operations and budget of the profiled advisory bodies that have contributed to their overall effectiveness in influencing policy outcomes.

### 1.1 Mandate

**Climate advisory bodies benefit from having a clearly defined mandate which sets out their powers, duties and role, whilst retaining some freedom to identify priorities.** The mandate of climate advisory bodies varies but most have a core study to provide evidence, analysis and advice to government on the setting of targets and/or the development of climate change policies. Some have a role in monitoring progress or acting a watchdog, and others have a stronger stakeholder representation role. Some advisory bodies will be more concerned with particular issues (e.g., NZCCATWG only provided advice on adaptation or resilience-building; South Africa's PCC advises on a just transition toward low-emissions development) but many bodies have a broad mandate, with some agency to determine priorities. Their mandate should be clearly set out, and include details of how they will operate, how they will be resourced, how they will interact with government and other key stakeholders and what powers they have.

### 1.2 Legislation

**Having a mandate and role enshrined in law helps to provide authority and stability to a climate advisory bodies work.** Finland's Climate Change Act of 2015 granted a legal status for the previously established FCCP, Mexico's Office for Coordination of Evaluation (MEC) and MC3 were established by the country's General Climate Change Law of 2012, New Zealand's NZCCC was established by the country's Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act of 2019, the UK's UK CCC was established by the country's Climate Change Act of 2008, and South Africa's PCC is currently established under the president's executive power to do so but will become a formal statutory body in South Africa after the country's Climate Change Bill is passed (SN3). Legal status enables climate advisory bodies to operate more effectively by providing a strong mandate for their role and a degree of insulation from changes of Government, which in turn lends a greater degree of authority to their work.

### 1.3. Independence

**Independence of the advisory body enhances the ability to tackle topics with objectivity and provides credibility, promoting confidence among key stakeholders including the public.** Independence can be established in a number of ways, including by being enshrined in an advisory bodies mandate, or through the composition of its membership or leadership (i.e. with representation from non-Government members). In New Zealand, the NZCCATWG was independent through its composition, but

it did not have an independent mandate in statute (NN2). The NZCCC, on the other hand, is a crown entity, which reports to a minister but is independent and can call the government to account through its legislative mandate. Each member of the NZCCC has a crown warrant that endows them with certain responsibilities and powers to be used with prudence; most notably, that the government can't actually tell the NZCCC what to do (NG3). In the United Kingdom, the UK CCC membership is comprised of independent experts from science, academia, and business and who are not nominated by political parties or political committees (UN2, UG1, UN7). The UK CCC's members have been described as "trusted arbiters" and "knowledge brokers" (UN3) and have a reputation for strong quality and rigor (UG1, UN8). The UK CCC has historically been used by all political parties; in this way, it is seen as a trusted and independent source (UN2; Averchenkova et al. 2021).

#### 1.4. Membership

**The work of climate advisory bodies benefits from representation from a diverse set of professional backgrounds and expertise.** South Africa's 22-person PCC comprises representatives from business, youth, labor, academic, advocacy, civil society, research institutions, and traditional leadership (The Presidency 2020). Members of New Zealand's NZCCATWG were specifically selected to exhibit a "diverse set of skills and experience" (NG3), while NZCCC members are required to have "at least two sets of experience relevant to the Commission" in areas specified in the Climate Change Response Act 2002 (NN2). Finland's Climate Change Act goes even further in guaranteeing this diversity of representation on its FCPP panel by explicitly requiring that the members of the panel must represent different scientific disciplines (FG2). In India, the fact that the IPMCCC included eminent civil society members was noted as a huge advantage, lending credibility and authority to the body's recommendations (IN5, IG4). The key consideration here is for advisory bodies to have access to the necessary expertise and experience required to fulfil their duties effectively whilst remaining nimble to respond to particular issues of interest at any given time. Gaps in experience can be filled through consulting with wider groups of experts or advisory groups, or through short term appointments.

#### 1.5. Leadership

**In all country cases, strong leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that the body can effectively drive change and requires appointing experts who have a respected voice among key stakeholder groups and has strong political reach.** In the United Kingdom, the strength and credibility of the chairs of the UK CCC has been identified as a key driver in its success (UG1, UN2). For example, the previous Chairman, Adair Turner is a well-known economist, whilst current Chairs, Lord Deben, a former conservative minister and Baroness Brown, a respected engineer, are recognized public figures with strong ability to communicate the rationale for their recommendations to influential audiences (UG1). In South Africa and Mexico as well, the leaders or commissioners of respective advisory bodies profiled in this survey are well-known to the public (The Presidency 2020, MN1), having previously occupied or currently occupying high-profile societal roles that can automatically lend them an air of credibility. In India, interviewees noted that it was very important that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was on the IPMCCC; his office was seen as very critical to its success (IN5).

#### 1.5. Research Practices, Inputs, and Outputs

**To provide scientific evidence and supplement the expertise of members, several advisory bodies commission technical research from external sources.** Climate advisory bodies agree that a robust

scientific basis enables them to provide objective and effective policy advice and evaluation (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). As well as developing their own evidence-base and analysis, advisory bodies can fill evidence-gaps by collaborating with or commissioning third parties. For example, in New Zealand the NZCCC outsourced green economy modeling to a company with more modeling expertise. Further, they contracted out several studies on different topics, including the level of methane reduction required to be compatible with 1.5 degrees warming in the latter part of the century (NN1, NG3). In India, a technical study was commissioned to examine the impacts of climate change, and of the shift away from fossil fuels. The study was led by a team of experts within government in collaboration with non-governmental research entities, including the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). The study then served as input to discussions of the IPMCCC (IG4, IN1, IN5). This study was, in part, necessary to strengthen the body's scientific work by integrating findings from more specific national studies, particularly those related to adaptation and water (IN1). In Finland, research activities are undertaken through panel members' university or research institutes (Weaver et al. 2019). As part of Mexico's National Climate Change System (SINACC), the Mexican Climate inter-Ministerial Commission is supported by the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, the technical branch of the national climate change policy responsible for conducting studies that support climate-related policies (e.g. NDCs and the country's long-term strategy under the Paris Agreement) (Government of Mexico 2013). When the UK CCC prepares reports, wider expertise from academia, think tanks, financial services, and other areas is drawn on to contribute. For example, the Sixth Carbon Budget technical report on the UK path to Net Zero included research carried out by several organizations (UG1) (Committee on Climate Change 2019 and Committee on Climate Change 2020).

**It is important to have arrangements in place to enable access to good quality data, including with government agencies.** In the United Kingdom the UK CCC has a Memorandum of Understanding with Government to facilitate data and information sharing. The secretariat of the UK CCC has good capacity and budget, and so is able to engage on the research and models in a rigorous way to ensure analytical credibility (UN7, UN3). In New Zealand, between 2019 and 2021 (during the preparation of draft advice), the NZCCC also conducted a number of engagements with government agencies and ministries, which granted access to various databases and resources (NN1).

**Advisory bodies undertake literature reviews to build on existing knowledge, identify gaps, and inform the theory of change.** In South Africa, the work of the PCC is not starting from scratch, but rather building upon (and not duplicating) years of learning and experiences on just transitions. The commission plans to draw learning from a broad array of sources, including the South African government and other social partners (SN3, SN1), as well other jurisdictions that have undergone transitions away from fossil fuel reliant economies while at the same time entrenching just transition considerations. In Finland, reports are mainly based on literature reviews to identify gaps; original research is then conducted to fill these through quantitative and qualitative analysis (FN1). The MEC in Mexico also reviews scientific literature to design its theory of change and evaluation methods (MN1).

**Wider stakeholders are sometimes invited to provide input and feedback through consultations or peer review, although constraining factors, including time constraints and the lack of a specific mandate, limit this practice.** In Finland, various stakeholders are consulted throughout the research process of the FCCP and some results have also been published in scientific journals, which undergo their own review processes (FN1). The NZCCC conducted an open consultation period in which experts were able to provide input through more than 100 small group interactions which generated over

15,000 comments (NN1). In the UK, a citizen's assembly was established in 2020 to provide views on how the UK should respond to climate change, which was facilitated in part by the UK CCC. The views of the Assembly are now reflected in the UK CCC's advice to Government (UN3, AN1).

**Advisory bodies use a range of analytical tools and methods to develop robust, evidence-based advice.** In New Zealand, as described earlier, the NZCCC has worked alongside external consultants to construct a macro-economic model of the country's economy to explore different policy implications on emissions and GDP. The open-source code supporting this model is due to be publicly available for others to make use of as well (NN1). In South Africa, too, the PCC notes that the body will undertake detailed modeling exercises to examine the transitions required in all sectors of the economy, noting particularly the trade-offs and impacts on employment and the most vulnerable populations (SN1, SN3). Other frequently mentioned tools that the profiled advisory bodies use to convey and communicate their results include reports and briefs. In Mexico, for example, the MC3 had developed recommendations for planning instruments to lead the national climate policy.

**Advisory bodies communicate their advice and findings to Government, parliament and the public through a variety of channels.** Mexico's MEC presents its recommendations directly to the Congress (MN1). Finland's FCCP communicates its advice and recommendations through various means, including research reports and policy briefs, as well as memos to government, where feedback has sometimes been sought (FN1, FG2). In New Zealand, the NZCCC's recommendations are presented to the minister for climate change and the standing government, which are then passed to individual agencies (NN1). Advisory bodies should adapt their messaging and method of communication depending on the intended audience.

#### 1.6. Operations and Budget

**Of the advisory bodies assessed, meetings are held in the range of every week to every quarter.** The South African PCC intends to meet quarterly, with smaller working groups meeting more regularly (SN3). Mexico's MEC holds weekly meetings (MN1). Some advisory bodies are required to meet at a certain minimum frequency. Regular meetings facilitate ongoing work and continued influence.

**The support of a secretariat or behind the scenes staff is critical to functioning of many climate advisory bodies and helps to maximize the impact of the expert adviser's time. The resourcing of such secretariat varies hugely across different advisory bodies.** The UK's UK CCC and New Zealand's NZCCC are both supported by large secretariats of more than 30 staff members (UN4, UN7, NN1), while Finland's FCCP relies on support from three full time expert staff members (FG2); and Mexico's MCICC also cites housing and staffing support from the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (MN1). South Africa is currently in the process of setting up a secretariat to support the work of its PCC. In India, the Prime Minister's Office provided support for the IPMCCC during its dates of activity and supported the drafting of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) (IG4). Secretariat and support staff undertake a range of duties including internal analysis, evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement, policy development and report writing. The resourcing of these secretariats was identified by advisory bodies as a major influence of their ability to fulfil their duties effectively (International Climate Councils Meeting May 2021).

**Of the cases assessed, all funding for the operations of the advisory bodies comes directly from the government.** In Finland, the funding for FCCP is technically administered by the Ministry of the Environment, while the FCCP de facto decides on how it is spent (FG2, FN1). Similarly, in New Zealand,

the NZICCC's funding is also from the Ministry for the Environment (NG3). In Mexico, C3 does not receive direct federal budget (MN1, MG3) support. In the United Kingdom, the CCC receives the entirety of its funding from the national government (UN2).

**Some bodies have total autonomy in spending, while others are afforded less flexibility.** The UK CCC, for example, has independence on how it spends the budget, with total programmatic autonomy (UN2). On the other hand, New Zealand's NZICCC did not have complete control over its spending during its years of operation (NG3). The NZCCC is funded through Vote Environment but is solely responsible for its budget expenditure.

**Sufficiency and certainty of funding was identified as a key factor in the successful operation of advisory bodies.** For example, in the United Kingdom, an interviewee noted that the UK CCC could benefit from further funding to conduct additional communications and outreach on recommendations (UN5); another referenced a call for a more independent budget that is sheltered from budgetary cuts (e.g., akin to the national audit office) (UG1, UN8). In New Zealand, the NZICCC's funding structure was complicated, because the committee was not a legal body and so did not get direct funding. There was also a lack of clarity on how much funding would be allocated on an annual basis, which was problematic as it was only possible to hire and plan on a short-term basis (NG3)

## 2. Enabling and Influencing Climate Action

Climate change advisory bodies can convene stakeholders and guide national debate in order to build consensus for policy actions, including on politically sensitive or challenging topics (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). The processes for engaging with stakeholders and delivering advice is thus another important component to explore. Accordingly, this section synthesizes lessons that emerge in three areas when looking across the advisory bodies profiled in this work: (1) engaging with government for impact, (2) engaging with the public and private sector for impact, and (3) engaging with the media..

### 2.1. Engaging with Government for Impact

**The impact of advisory bodies' advice can be supported through a healthy working relationship with government, whilst still maintaining independence.**

The integrated approach is exemplified by the UK CCC whereby the advisory body and relevant government teams have frequent interactions that render the body a permanent feature of the national discourse about climate change. This highly collaborative process "builds a platform of consensus with the actors who are charged with implementing the recommendations before the recommendations even come out" (AN1). Therefore, when the research and recommendations of the UK CCC are published, government is ready to quickly accept them as credible and valuable; the close relationship between the government and the body creates strong buy-in and co-ownership of projects (AN1).

**A binding requirement for the government to respond to its advisers' recommendations can help advice have a greater impact.** In both the United Kingdom and in New Zealand, the government is required to respond to advice offered by the UK CCC and NZCCC, respectively. Indeed, the UK Climate Change Act requires the government to respond within a limited amount of time to some of the UK CCC's advice and recommendations (UG1, UN2). This call-and-response mandate has been cited as a key driver of the UK CCC's success, creating a consistent drumbeat that drives climate action in the United Kingdom forward (UG1, UN2, UN6). However, it has been noted that when governments are off course

for meeting targets, adequate time during the call-and-response period needs to be provided for establishing plans to get back on track and for evaluating such proposals (UN4). In New Zealand too, the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 includes a similar requirement, thereby necessitating that the government consider and engage with each of the NZCCC's recommendations (NN1) (New Zealand Parliament 2019).

**Advisory bodies can still have influence and impact through more informal interactions but often to a more limited extent.** The advice and recommendations of most of the advisory bodies in this study are of a nonbinding nature, wherein the government is not obligated to consider the information with which it has been presented. Engagement varies greatly: In one case (MC3), the government considers the recommendations in policy design but only when there is enough political buy-in; while in another (FCCP), there is continuous consultation and presentation of reports at the request of the government. In a third case (NZCCC), there are fairly extensive (though independent) consultations to give input on draft advice; and in a fourth case (IPMCCC), there is close collaboration with the executive branch for coordinated discussion and policy planning with different ministers in one forum (MN1, FG2, FN1, NG3, NN1, IN1, IN5, IN2).

## 2.2. Engaging with the Public and Private Sector for Impact

**In most countries, a close interaction with nongovernment actors is essential to bringing in external views and for providing credibility and validation.** Engagement with public and private actors, although not formally required, increases public awareness and can gain public traction on the recommendations provided by an advisory body. In the cases of the IPMCCC and the UK CCC, engagement with the public is informal. Nonetheless, respondents agreed that it is key to reach out to stakeholders when preparing assessments and reports (IG4, UN2). These stakeholders are approached for inputs and are seen as vital informants of reports, publications, and policy matters (IG4, IG3). For example, in India, engagement with solar industry experts and consultancies was critical during the development of the National Solar Mission. The engagement was informal, but due to the special envoy for climate change's reputation and status, he was able to engage key stakeholders at a senior level.(IG4). In terms of validation processes, this may include collecting information from stakeholders to validate findings from published scientific research (e.g., FCCP), or meeting regularly with a variety of stakeholders to have iterative exchanges about priority themes or make revisions that can strengthen preexisting work (e.g., NZCCC).

**In a few country cases, the public also plays an important role in shaping the political playing field, giving greater weight to the work of the advisory body.** In the case of the United Kingdom's target for net-zero GHG emissions, for instance, the NGO community had already put forward a call for a very ambitious earlier timeline for achieving climate neutrality. In comparison, the UK CCC's timeline for 2050 seemed more plausible (UG1). At the same time, a center right think tank - Bright Blue - issued its "Hotting Up" report in May 2018, in time for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Climate Change Act, thereby further increasing pressure to act (UN5). Moreover, in the case of banning the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles, groups like Extinction Rebellion had already been calling for action, and the UK CCC provided objective analysis on the feasibility of such moves (UG1). In Finland, too, political pressure to act from civil society and industry was also cited as important in assisting the FCCP in influencing climate policy (FN1).



### 2.3. Engaging with the Media

**In most cases, interviewees noted that it is important for the advisory body to closely follow the headline news and to make a point of maintaining a constant media and social media presence.** As noted by respondents from New Zealand, the urgency of climate change makes it important to be prominent in the news and headlines because unclear or inaccurate messages are a risk to support for the uptake of the advisory bodies' recommendations (NN1, FG2). The UK CCC reports are also well publicised when they are published (and they are well-designed, which aids in communication) (UN2). Even when legislation does not specify a mandate to communicate with the media, it is seen as crucial in spurring the behavioral changes needed to achieve many ambitious climate goals (UG1, UN7, UN8).

### 3. Promoting a Just Transition

When crafting climate policy, it is vital that policymakers consider how their proposals can ensure that the transition to a low-carbon society is socially and economically fair and equitable. In particular for marginalized and vulnerable people, across both mitigation and adaptation (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021). This section, accordingly, synthesizes information about how the climate advisory bodies profiled in this paper—particularly South Africa's PCC, which was designed exclusively to advise on this issue—examine and advise on the promotion of a just transition.<sup>2</sup>

**Just transition is increasingly an area of focus for advisory bodies.** In South Africa, most notably, the PCC was established to “advise on and facilitate a common understanding of a just transition, cognizant of the socio-economic, environmental, and technological implications of climate change . . . [covering] adaptation, mitigation as well as means of implementation” (The Presidency 2020). The PCC will also provide a platform for stakeholders to engage in discussions about job vulnerabilities and job resilience in South Africa (The Presidency 2020). New Zealand's NZCCC is mandated to consider just transition in a number of ways in the development of emissions budgets and adaptation planning (although this was not covered during interviews). The United Kingdom's UK CCC is also increasingly focused on expanding the scope of its recommendations, going beyond environmental aspects to also include jobs, spending and other relevant areas (UN4).

**In this study, South Africa's PCC is the only independent body that has been established with a specific mandate to support a just transition.** The idea for the PCC originated at South Africa's Presidential Jobs Summit held in October 2018, when social partners agreed that an independent statutory body should be formed under the Climate Change Act or Bill to coordinate and oversee the just transition, including examining how to maximize the opportunities for jobs (Government of the Republic of South Africa 2018). In September 2020, South Africa's cabinet formally approved the PCC, with members appointed in December 2020. With the commission being a fairly new body, it is too early to predict its impact and success. However, several early factors indicate a positive trajectory:

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<sup>2</sup> A just transition is becoming more topical as countries transition toward low-emissions and climate-resilient development. This transition will require fundamental transformations across all sectors of the economy and will disproportionately affect those whose livelihoods are tied to a high-carbon economy, including millions of fossil fuel industry workers. Governments and the international community are increasingly recognizing the moral, economic, and political imperatives of ensuring that action on climate change does not neglect hardships that may be imposed on these workers, their families, and their surrounding communities.

- **The PCC undertook a landscape assessment of the existing work on just transitions, understanding what more needs to be done without duplicating prior efforts.** The work of the PCC did not start from scratch, but rather built upon years of learning and experience on just transitions, both domestically and internationally (SN1, SN3).
- **The PCC embodies a “social partnership” around a just transition, comprising senior members from most major stakeholder groups in South Africa, in order to establish a shared vision for the country** (SN1, SN2, SN3). This social partnership also extends outside the PCC, through broad engagement processes that the commissioners will help to design and facilitate (SN2, SN3).
- **The PCC is developing technically and socioeconomically feasible pathways for achieving a just transition to net-zero emissions in South Africa.** This includes detailed modeling to examine the transitions required in all sectors (e.g., energy, industrial processes, land use and ecosystems, water and food security, the built environment and infrastructure). In particular, examining the trade-offs (SN1, SN3), as well as impacts on employment and the most vulnerable people (SN3). The pathways are coupled with social dialogue processes that together will aim to identify the policy and regulatory measures required to accelerate progress in particular sectors (SN3).
- **The PCC intends to present recommendations to inform actual project implementation,** that is, looking at the factors needed to get projects focused on a just transition completed, including the availability of climate finance (SN1). This includes identifying pilot projects that could provide a real opportunity to test concepts and build confidence toward a just transition in South Africa, without going as far as being an implementing body (SN2).

**The PCC is situated within the president’s office and chaired by the president.** This cements the importance of a just transition and the work of the body, and facilitates access to all government departments (SN1, SN3).

#### 4. Influencing Policy and Overseeing Delivery across Key Sectors and Adaptation

The final section of this synthesis examines lessons on influencing policy and overseeing delivery across key sectors, drawn from the nine profiled advisory bodies. When asked about specific examples of overall policy impact, interviewees provided a range of examples covering high-level, overarching influence on climate change policy and national discourse, as well as more detailed, sector or policy-specific examples. The takeaways derived from these responses are summarized into the following categories: impact with respect to overall climate policy; impact with respect to influencing sectoral policy and adaptation; impact with respect to political context; and challenges and limitations.

##### 4.1. Raising the Profile of Climate Change

**Advisory bodies play an important role in drawing high-level attention to the topic of climate change and stimulating discourse.** In Mexico, the establishment of the National System for Climate Change (SINACC), and the Inter-ministerial Commission for Climate Change (MCICC), provided a robust institutional forum for addressing climate change across both federal and subnational stakeholders. These two fora also have been useful for reviewing and agreeing on planning instruments and the federal budget (MG3). The interface of MCICC-SINACC has also facilitated the development of joint state and municipal climate actions throughout the country (MG3). MEC, too, provides a forum to address

and recommend actions comprising national and subnational issues. In New Zealand, since the NZCCC has published its draft advice on emissions budgets, there has been a more mainstream conversation about the need for climate action and, particularly within the business community, a growing willingness to act without waiting for government policy (NN1). In Finland, the FCCP's role in the eight-party roundtables on climate policy ahead of the 2019 parliamentary elections and Finnish EU presidency was influential in contributing to the level of ambition and scientific insights that came out of these discussions (Laine et al. 2019). The FCCP has also promoted a holistic understanding of climate policy throughout Finland, raising awareness of linkages between different sectors and particularly highlighting the important role of the land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) sector in unlocking emissions reductions and removals (FN1).

**Advisory bodies can also stimulate progress and provide the necessary technical and political backing to affect the policymaking process, even in times of political transition.** In New Zealand, the recommendations of the NZCCATWG were implemented, and included: setting up the NZCCC in 2019 (NN2); undertaking a national risk assessment (which has since been completed); and developing a national adaptation plan (now under way). In India, during the meetings of the IPMCCC, proposals for the national missions<sup>3</sup> were discussed. Council members provided their advice and recommendations, shaping their formulation, building consensus around their approach, and ultimately expanding the number of missions to eight (IN5, IN2, IG4). The support and buy-in of the IPMCCC for what was being put forward in the NAPCC was critical in ensuring it was implemented and provided the necessary political and technical support to instruct the responsible ministries (IG4). In the United Kingdom, interviewees noted several examples in which the UK CCC has had a significant impact on the policymaking process. These include setting the country's net-zero target (UG1, UN4, UG1, UN8) and carbon budgets (UG1, UN2, UG1, UN8), banning the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles (UG1, UN4, UG1, UN8), promoting offshore wind (UG1, UN4), supporting electricity market reform (UN3), enhancing green finance (UN4), opposing the Cumbrian coal mine (UG1, UN8), and championing flood policy (UN7). Finally, in Finland, interviewees noted that the FCCP was particularly influential in defining Finland's climate targets, including 2035 carbon neutrality and the 2040 and 2050 targets, as well as in overseeing ongoing revision of Finland's Climate Change Act (FN1, FG2).

#### 4.2. Influencing Sectoral Policy and Adaptation

**There are numerous examples of advisory bodies effectively influencing sectoral and adaptation policy.** In New Zealand, the NZICCC advanced policy progress on reducing biogenic emissions from agriculture, which accounts for half of the country's emissions. The body's work ultimately led to a new policy proposal to address biogenic emissions from agriculture (which were included in the country's 2009 Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) legislation, but are not yet implemented in practice). The NZICCC's work led to establishment of He Waka eke Noa, which is a public-private partnership tasked with proposing an alternative pricing system for farm-level agriculture emissions and methods for measuring them. In India, the National Solar Mission was given pride-of-place and continues to be one of the most impactful missions of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, followed closely by the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency. (IN5). In the UK, the UK CCC has helped strengthen the

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<sup>3</sup> India's National Action Plan for Climate Change includes eight national missions representing integrated strategies and programs for addressing climate change. Implementation of each national mission is led by the relevant ministry (e.g., the National Solar Mission is led by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy).

government's response to adaptation. But it has been more challenging to promote than action on mitigation, in part due to the difficulty in identifying clear and meaningful targets (UN7, UG1, UG4).

#### 4.3. Wider Political Context

**In a number of cases timing and the growing recognition of the need for climate action were noted as critical influencing factors in triggering a political response, and leading to the establishment of a climate advisory body.** In Finland, the level of recognition of the problem has significantly increased in the past few years. In part because of increasingly clear messages from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate science, and related pressure from various societal actors to step up climate action. The context has changed, and in 2018 all major political parties, bar one, agreed to significantly increase national climate policy ambition and make climate change one of the government's priorities. A similar change in context has been described in New Zealand as well. Indeed, there had never been cross-party support for climate action until recently, bolstered by a groundswell of public support and increased understanding of climate science. All of these factors gave political leadership the confidence and ability to drive through legislation, and to do it together with the opposition (NN2). In India, timing was also noted as key in setting up the IPMCCC. The period between 2006 and 2008 was a time when global pressure was mounting for India and China to become more integral parts of the response to climate change. There was a sense within the government that a response was diplomatically prudent, which ultimately contributed to the formation of the IPMCCC to support a coordinated response (IN1).

**Political buy-in and cross-party support can be a significant factor in driving impact and sustaining the work of the climate advisory body.** In New Zealand there was cross-party support for the Zero Carbon Act of 2019, which has been largely maintained (NN2). Up until then, there had been regular policy swings across parties. Agriculture was particularly contentious, and there was a strong sector resistance to pricing methane emissions through a carbon tax or the ETS. This moved on following the 2018 elections, with the prime minister elevating climate change in her policy priorities. She appointed a Minister of Climate Change through her A loose coalition with the Green Party, who then successfully negotiated cross-party support for the Climate Change Response Act and its implementation (NN2). The UK CCC has conducted its work under four different prime ministers, both from the center left and center right parties. Its advice has been accepted no matter the political context in part because the United Kingdom has forged political consensus on the need to address climate change (UN6). India faces a unique political constraint, in that the IPMCCC hasn't met in over five years, although it hasn't officially disbanded. By the time the new government came into power in 2014, there was no longer political buy-in to the body, essentially weakening it to the point of nonexistence.

#### 4.4. Challenges and Limitations

**Budget and resource constraints was commonly identified as limiting the work of the advisory bodies.** Compared to most of its peers, the UK CCC has a more generous and stable resource base, as well as independence on how it spends its budget (UN2, UN3). It has been suggested that the UK CCC could benefit from further funding to conduct additional communications and outreach on its recommendations (UN5), and bolster the adaptation committee, which has a significantly smaller budget than its mitigation focused sister-committee (UN7, UG1, UN8). In New Zealand, funding was also identified as a constraint, particularly around the implementation of the NZCCATWG's recommendations (NN2, NN4). Many developing country advisory bodies are considerably more constrained compared to their developed country peers, with committee members providing services

on an unpaid basis, and largely without support from a dedicated secretariat.. Increasing resourcing for these bodies was identified as a key way to enhance their impact (International Climate Councils Meeting, May 2021).

**Coordination and managing shared responsibility with subnational and nongovernment stakeholders is often a challenge for advancing policy implementation.** In New Zealand, one of the biggest barriers to climate action is a lack of agreement between central and local government on how funding for adaptation could be cost-shared. There are 11 regional authorities and 67 local authorities all addressing climate change impacts, adaptation, and mitigation. Therefore, country-wide coordination can pose a significant challenge to the implementation of the NZCCC's recommendations (NN2). For example, a recommendation to accelerate the roll-out of electric vehicles and networks requires a coordinated and efficient response by the private and public sector at the national and local level (NG3). In India, there was broad agreement about the need for a dedicated mission to address the fragile Himalayan ecosystem; but the government struggled with implementation in partnership with subnational governments, where there was less buy-in for the project (IG4).

**Advisory bodies face challenges in addressing contentious topics, particularly in areas that affect consumers, jobs, and social justice.** Although the UK CCC has been successful in shaping carbon budgets, the net-zero target, and select policies with broad public backing (e.g., phasing out petrol fueled cars and promoting offshore wind), interviewees noted that its success has been more limited on issues that are politically challenging (UG1). Respondents pointed out that the UK CCC's job is ultimately to recommend the target (UG1, UN8). Sometimes policy is implied, but recommendations regarding how the target is to be achieved is a delicate line to tow (UG1, UN8). Areas in which the UK CCC has been less successful pertain to issues such as aviation, in which there has been a lack of willingness to put costs on consumers through the tax system (UN4), as well as issues such as farming, diet, carbon pricing and heating homes. (UN4). In Finland, one interviewee suggested the FCCP has made limited progress influencing the LULUCF and agriculture sectors because they are politically sensitive. The FCCP report on social justice and climate policy has also had a more limited impact as these topics often raise controversy (FG2). Interviewees from South Africa also recognized that the PCC may face challenges from vested interests when defining a shared vision for a just transition in South Africa.

## Conclusion

This study provided a range of insights and information about the profiled climate advisory bodies. While the methodology does not allow for strong correlation or causality to be determined in terms of factors that have influenced effectiveness, the paper concludes here with some reflections from the authors regarding the critical factors identified in the literature, as well as several questions for discussion and further research.

Through this exercise, the authors have identified the following list of **best practices and recommendations** for effective climate advisory bodies:

1. A strong legal foundation and clear mandate, to better equip the advisory body with capacity and resources to make recommendations that the government will consider, and to which the government will respond.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies should be provided with an official, and if appropriate, legal mandate and necessary resources to provide effective advice and scrutiny on climate action. The roles and responsibilities of the advisory body and Government, and procedures for their engagement, should be transparently outlined.

2. The advisory body earns and maintains the trust of policymakers and wider stakeholders by providing credible and objective input, underpinned by scientific and evidence-based analysis.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies should apply the latest climate science and robust analytical methods to inform evidence-based advice and assessments.

3. The ability and freedom of the advisory body to conduct its work, independent of political or vested interests, is essential for providing robust, credible advice and support to the government. Appointing members with senior-level and diverse technical expertise to the advisory body will propel its capacity to drive policy impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies should select members with deep technical expertise, who are leaders in their respective fields spanning a range of subject areas most relevant to enabling climate action. Members should enjoy strong public and stakeholder trust and act in an objective capacity.

4. Strong leadership, either by participation in the advisory body at the highest political level (e.g. president or prime minister) or through the inclusion and engagement of key political champions, will facilitate deep engagement with the government and bolster climate policy impact.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies should build in a role for high-profile leaders, suited to the national context and political system of the country.

5. Advisory bodies have also struggled to achieve policy impact in areas where implementation responsibility is shared between different stakeholders, including the national and subnational government, the private sector, and individuals. As well as where financial resources are limited, both in the advisory body to support sufficient human capacity to deliver work, and among entities responsible for implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies should establish appropriate and transparent stakeholder processes to engage key actors responsible for climate policy implementation, including subnational and regional governments and the private sector, to better support development and implementation of recommendations.

6. Advisory bodies are challenged to develop recommendations and drive policy impact on politically sensitive topics, particularly on issues that are highly polarized or technical or where in-depth, country-specific analysis is more limited.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Advisory bodies have experience in a range of challenges and topics. Where one entity is struggling, another may be making progress. Therefore, advisory bodies should consider targeted exchange and outreach to their peers.

Finally, the authors also note two critical external factors influencing the effectiveness of the profiled advisory bodies:

1. The level of climate change awareness, support for climate action, and the degree of political pressure exerted by broader civil society and key non-governmental and public-sector stakeholders, on both the government and the advisory body, are important factors determining how strong recommendations will be, and whether or not they will be accepted and prioritized by the government.
2. Cross-party or bipartisan support for climate change action, and broad political buy-in for the work of the advisory body is a critical foundation for advice and recommendations to be translated into climate policy. And to ensure the advisory body's longevity and overall influence.

Although these factors are outside of the control of the advisory body itself, these are critical aspects to be considered by the broader community of climate change actors within a country, and are important aspects to consider when strategizing about how best to create the enabling environment for climate policy impact.

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