



*IOB report*

# Rising seas, raising ambitions

Evaluation of Dutch climate diplomacy 2018–2021

**June 2023**

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The Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Facility in Tonopah.

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Opening session COP26.

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visiting the Collins Glacier and Sejong Research Centre.

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Greta Thunberg joins young activists in front of UN Headquarters protest.

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Youth on stage at the COP25 in Chile.

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A woman in Ba Trang making biomass briquettes, a substitute for charcoal.

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Technician working at the Beco power plant in Mogadishu.

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Solar-fueled water pump at a farm in the Northern State.



# Executive summary

In 2018-2021, the Netherlands conducted a campaign to lobby other countries to raise their climate ambitions for the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP26).<sup>1</sup> A special team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an interdepartmental task force and numerous policymakers, as well as ministers and the prime minister, advocated for more ambitious emission reduction targets and accelerated climate action.

IOB has assessed the extent to which the campaign, which has now ended, achieved its objectives, examining success factors. The research team identified strategies used, effective aspects of the campaign and challenges. IOB also identified lessons for future diplomatic lobbying campaigns.

For both the global campaign and the country-specific campaigns, IOB examined how actors in the Netherlands and in the target countries were mobilised to advocate for higher climate ambitions, whether and how Dutch representatives contributed to agenda setting and whether they achieved longer-term results, in particular in Vietnam and Israel.

This summary provides answers to the six main evaluation questions and concludes with eight recommendations for future diplomacy campaigns.

<sup>1</sup> COP26 was originally scheduled for autumn 2020, but it was held in late 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Findings

Despite the challenges, the climate diplomacy team succeeded in integrating climate mitigation and adaptation considerations throughout the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and its partners. Dozens of embassies were mobilised, as well as experts, the private sector and non-governmental stakeholders, such as youth organisations.

Several embassies contributed to setting the agenda in their countries, notably by promoting renewable energy. In addition, Dutch embassies and the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG) continued to integrate climate adaptation into their cooperation with host countries. In some countries, the Netherlands managed to contribute to more ambitious climate targets and policymaking. This happened partly due to joint efforts of like-minded actors and favourable circumstances: international awareness and ambitions increased considerably during this period.

## 1. Dutch policy for climate diplomacy

*The initial mandate was broad and ambitious.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with other ministries, launched a climate diplomacy campaign to convince non-EU countries to make their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the UNFCCC more ambitious and to promote their long-term climate strategies.<sup>2</sup> The focus was on climate mitigation targets, while adaptation ambitions and promoting finance for adaptation were secondary objectives.<sup>3</sup>

The priority was to influence a group of around fifty countries that were among the biggest CO<sub>2</sub> emitters: thus, initially, their ambitions were broad and bold. From 2021, however, the campaign focused on a smaller set of countries and topics, driven by the climate diplomacy team's heavy workload. In 2021, the climate diplomacy team narrowed the list to around 34 target countries, 20 of which were given top priority.<sup>4</sup> The climate diplomacy team drafted several (informal) strategies and Theories of Change (ToC) to guide their work.

In addition to country-specific diplomacy, the Netherlands also lobbied for higher ambitions in the EU, participated in UNFCCC negotiations, and lobbied for higher ambitions in multilateral organisations and specific sectors such as water and agriculture. However IOB did not study these aspects in depth.

## 2. Capacities and resources for the campaign

*The climate diplomacy team was small compared with its mandate, but capable.*

A small core team at the climate cluster of the MFA's IGG department, four officers and a team leader coordinated both the global and the country-specific campaigns. In total, around 7.5 IGG staff were available for the campaign (including staff from the energy, food and water clusters). The team worked with and was supported by an interdepartmental task force.

The team appears to have had the skills, knowledge and access to relevant networks to be effective. It mainstreamed climate throughout the work of the ministry and mobilised other actors. However, compared to the important initial level of ambition, the broad mandate, and the many and increasing

<sup>2</sup> (1) Another part of the mandate focused on raising the (internal) ambitions of the EU. This was not the subject of this IOB study. (2) NDCs are national action plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and adapt to climate change impact (adaptation). Parties to the Paris climate Agreement are required to develop an NDC and update it every five years. See [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) | UNFCCC](#) and [All About the NDCs | United Nations](#).

<sup>3</sup> New, ambitious commitments by developed countries on finance were considered a precondition for the success of the negotiations on mitigation. The Netherlands supported the call by developing and vulnerable countries for more action and more finance for adaptation.

<sup>4</sup> To determine which countries to target, the team looked at the top 50 and top 25 greenhouse gas emitters, as well as the influence the Netherlands had in these countries. The number of target countries was 51 at the start of the campaign. Of the 51 embassies involved, 47 responded to our survey and 44 sets of answers were used for our qualitative comparative analysis. The climate diplomacy team decided to focus on the 20 biggest emitting countries, but in fact they used a list of 34 priority countries. These 34 (which later became 36) also had priority access to the Climate and Energy Response Fund, set up in 2021-2022.

demands they faced in the run-up to COP26, the team was actually very small.

### 3. Mobilisation of networks and actors

*The climate diplomacy team succeeded in mobilising colleagues and stakeholders.*

The climate diplomacy team started with an awareness-raising campaign among colleagues in The Hague and embassies abroad. With input from embassies, the team identified opportunities for advocacy and drafted strategies for Dutch representatives to raise climate ambitions on important occasions, such as ministerial meetings.

The climate diplomacy team thus mobilised colleagues from the MFA and other ministries for climate lobbying and advocacy. First, IGG put considerable effort into informing, training and mobilising other parts of the MFA, including the Directorate-General for Political Affairs (DGPZ) and the Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations (DGBEB), to integrate climate change into their work and deliver climate messages to partners, including governments. Beyond the MFA, IGG mobilised high-level representatives and officers from other ministries. Together, they set up an interdepartmental task force for information exchange and coordination. IGG, other officers from the MFA and other ministries also worked with like-minded organisations (such as the EU and the World Bank) and countries. They also joined issue-specific coalitions, such as alliances to phase out fossil fuels. The climate diplomacy team engaged regularly with all stakeholders. Their collaboration was close and led to concrete results.<sup>5</sup>

IGG also mobilised Dutch embassies worldwide by informing them about the country-specific campaigns, requesting them to promote climate ambitions and report back to The Hague. The climate diplomacy team supported diplomats well with an online toolkit and facilitated access to financing and expertise.<sup>6</sup> IGG provided consistent and up-to-date messages that embassies could access through the climate diplomacy toolkit.<sup>7</sup>

The campaign was generally successful in mainstreaming climate into the work of the MFA - as well as high-level representatives and other ministries.<sup>8</sup> This facilitated Dutch lobbying and advocacy in countries. Mainstreaming was initially achieved within the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) and development cooperation, but also in bilateral (political) dialogue. Mainstreaming climate in political policy (DGPZ) and trade promotion (DGBEB) generally was more challenging, especially in the beginning.

### 4. Implementation of strategies

*Both IGG and the most active embassies worked with like-minded stakeholders and seized opportunities.*

The embassies were the most important vehicle for country-specific lobbying. Both the climate diplomacy team in The Hague and embassies looked for opportunities to push for more ambition, being flexible and taking initiatives.

Although IGG did not have a formal communication strategy, the climate diplomacy team's communications – with regular and updated messages on behalf of the ministry - appear to have been effective, mobilising many embassies. Encouraged by IGG, the embassies promoted climate action throughout their work, in their annual plans and multi-annual strategies. Focal points on climate and water coordinated the embassies' work and reported back to The Hague. Some of them developed their own strategies for climate diplomacy, including the one in Hanoi.

<sup>5</sup> This conclusion applies to cooperation between the IGG, other ministries, but also Dutch embassies and other Dutch representatives.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, through the Energy Transition Facility and the Climate and Energy Response Facility, managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO).

<sup>7</sup> The CD toolkit is an instrument, mainly for embassies, provided by the IGG climate diplomat team and hosted by RVO/NL Branding, containing messages and other information about Dutch national and international climate policy, related policies and best practices. Regular messages through the formal diplomatic messaging system also kept the embassies informed.

<sup>8</sup> The Climate Envoy was one of the most visible Dutch representatives working on climate diplomacy.



The most active and most successful embassies conducted climate diplomacy activities on a regular basis.<sup>9</sup> They worked with the government and through multilateral, private and non-governmental stakeholders.<sup>10</sup> Embassies organised events on overarching topics to promote climate action in their countries, but also on niche issues such as green hydrogen, for example in Israel.

Embassies also organised dozens of visits from and to the Netherlands and facilitated exchanges with private sector and technical experts. In doing so, they often combined economic, climate diplomacy and/or water diplomacy. Embassies also worked together with the EU and like-minded partners in démarches and dialogue with their host government. Many also involved youth and other (non-governmental) stakeholders in the policy dialogue.

## 5. Effects of climate diplomacy in targeted countries

*Where climate diplomacy was conducted consistently and with like-minded partners and stakeholders, it contributed to agenda setting and higher climate ambitions in target countries, as seen in our two country cases, Vietnam and Israel.*

The ultimate aim of the campaign was to increase the climate ambitions of non-EU countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions. An analysis of the responses to a survey shows that activities and results reported by 18 embassies (out of 44) point to success: their efforts may very well have contributed to higher-level results, such as the government of the country increasing its mitigation ambitions.<sup>11</sup> The most common result reported by embassies was a public commitment to a more ambitious mitigation policy by the host country.

In countries where the Netherlands contributed to ambitious actions (e.g. steps in the energy transition) or formal commitments by the government, embassies worked with like-minded actors through multiple stakeholders. The IGG team and its instruments – the climate diplomacy toolkit, and funds and expertise – helped the embassies to mobilise others: companies, experts, in some countries youth, as well as the EU, like-minded countries, the World Bank and the United Nations.

The case studies in Vietnam and Israel were selected to enable IOB to identify how successful campaigns may have worked.<sup>12</sup> These cases show that consistent efforts to put climate ambitions on the agenda can be effective. There are concrete indications that the Dutch embassies there also contributed to emerging policymaking, for example in the field of clean energy.

### *Brief description of the Vietnam and Israel country cases*

#### **Vietnam**

In Vietnam, the Netherlands, the EU and like-minded partners urged the government to set more ambitious climate and energy targets. The Dutch embassy pushed for better indicators for EU budget support, which contributed to better indicators, mostly more ambitious wind power targets. More generally, the embassy advocated for off-grid power solutions, especially wind energy, but this did not result in specific new targets. Vietnam has become much more ambitious on renewable energy in the past five years. This ambition was supported by an international lobby to phase out coal power and resulted in a tremendous growth in the renewable energy sector – solar and wind power.

<sup>9</sup> By successful embassies we mean embassies that, through our survey, analysis, interviews and case studies, appeared to have been very active and have plausibly claimed results.

<sup>10</sup> This cooperation with stakeholders appears to have been close and yielded results.

<sup>11</sup> In total, 47 out of 51 embassies responded to our survey and 44 sets of answers could be used for a qualitative comparative analysis that identified impact pathways for 18 potentially successful embassies. These 18 supported activities and strategies that may have had meaningful results: outcomes and impact because the government or other stakeholders increased their climate actions, ambitions and/or policies. High-level policy ambitions are usually, though not always, reflected in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions to the UNFCCC.

<sup>12</sup> These two cases represent best practice and are not representative of the country-specific campaigns. Through process tracing, the research team studied promising diplomatic processes to learn how they worked.

**Israel**

In Israel, the Dutch embassy helped put green hydrogen on the agenda, by organising a course, mini-symposia, a summer school and a visit to the Netherlands. Gradually, a network of hydrogen experts – private, academic and public – from both countries emerged, well-positioned to influence decision-makers. Although Israel does not have an ambitious climate policy yet, the embassy's efforts and this network have helped pave the way for such a policy.

In both cases, the context was favourable, with many international actors promoting renewable energy.

## 6. Success factors

*Successful embassies worked consistently with various like-minded actors, mobilising them and working together. Cooperation with the Dutch private sector and experts was particularly valuable.*

### Positive factors

- *The use of different channels.* According to our analysis, successful embassies promoted climate ambition through several channels: (1) bilaterally, (2) through multilateral organisations, the EU and like-minded partners, (3) through the Dutch private sector and experts, and (4) through youth and other non-governmental organisations.<sup>13</sup>
- *A concerted effort by like-minded stakeholders.* Cooperating with like-minded actors worked well in lobbying governments to adopt more ambitious climate and energy policies, together with like-minded countries, European Union, World Bank, UN, coalitions of the willing and alliances.
- *The use of Dutch companies and Dutch technical experts.* In the two country cases and other successful campaigns, we saw practical cooperation with the Dutch private sector, consultants and/or academic experts, with small grants and concrete results.<sup>14</sup> Economic cooperation and innovation attachés have been helpful in this context, for instance in Israel, facilitating access to Dutch expertise and services and sustainable technologies.
- *Economic incentives.* Private sector investment and the likelihood of commercial success have helped convince governments to commit to ambitious climate targets and policies. Climate action has inspired climate ambition. We saw this in Vietnam and Israel.
- *Capacity and a proactive stance.* On average, the most successful embassies devoted more capacity to the climate. Those in Hanoi and Tel Aviv also had a proactive ambassador and/or deputy ambassador as well as a climate change and water officer. These embassies identified opportunities for lobbying and collaboration and started many initiatives. They were also constantly beating the drum on priority topics. We saw the same proactive stance in the climate diplomacy team in The Hague.

### Negative factors

- *High ambition, low capacity.* The global campaign, led by the climate diplomacy team, started with a very ambitious and general mandate that went beyond the Dutch sphere of influence. At the same time, compared to the original ambitions, the team itself was small, which resulted in a huge workload.<sup>15</sup>
- *Coherence.* Economic interests have long been a priority for the MFA and embassies, including trade promotion for the fossil fuel industry. In addition, the Netherlands has a big carbon footprint and has only recently stepped up its own climate ambitions. Both elements made the Netherlands less of a credible spokesperson in lobbying other countries for higher mitigation targets.

Reflecting on the answers to the six research questions, we conclude that the climate diplomacy team has succeeded in mainstreaming climate change – integrating mitigation and adaptation ambitions – throughout the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. IOB has seen that embassies helped to set the agenda in their countries, for instance on renewable energy topics. In some cases, the Netherlands contributed to more ambitious climate targets and policymaking.

<sup>13</sup> The word 'bilateral' refers to contacts between two national governments.

<sup>14</sup> Such support was provided by RVO, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, among others.

<sup>15</sup> From 2021, the team applied a narrower focus on the campaign, making the amount of work more manageable.

## Recommendations for diplomacy campaigns

What lessons can the Ministry of Foreign Affairs learn from the climate diplomacy campaign for future diplomacy campaigns? And what good practices can it replicate?

The first two recommendations are based on the challenges encountered by the campaign.

1. a. *The mandate for a diplomacy campaign should be clear, focused and realistic.*  
b. *The capacity of the unit responsible for this campaign should suit the mandate: a team that is big enough.* Otherwise, the campaign team's focus should be more precise and limited.
2. *Draft a clear Theory of Change (ToC) and/or intervention logic.* Make it formal and get *high-level agreement* on this, engaging Director-Generals. Such a ToC and coherent, high-level support would give the campaign team more authority.

The following four recommendations are inspired by good practices from the climate diplomacy campaign.

3. *Specify the strategy for each target country and/or topic of your diplomatic lobbying*, including the deployment of staff with the right expertise and networks. Identify the stakeholders you want to mobilise. Embassies can play an important part in this.
4. *At the same time, be flexible: keep an eye out for openings, seize opportunities and allow embassies to seize them too*, by giving them room to manoeuvre. In the climate diplomacy campaign, the core team and successful embassies did this.
5. *Continue to beat the drum and foster your reputation.* The consistent promotion of priority topics and areas of expertise helps the Netherlands and each embassy to build and cultivate its relationship with the target country and to be seen as a reliable partner. This has been the case, for instance, with climate messaging on water and climate adaptation.
6. *Offer concrete benefits, such as technical expertise or help in accessing finance*, to complement your advocacy. Economic incentives and the prospect of commercial viability encourage buy-in from stakeholders.

To conclude, some final reflections. First, a possible challenge for Dutch climate diplomacy is that the climate diplomacy team no longer exists as a separate unit. Its work has been integrated into the IGG department. Mainstreaming a topic carries the risk of 'away-streaming'.

7. *Consider reviving a diplomacy campaign when there is renewed momentum for a policy priority:* in the case of climate, for instance, the momentum around a new COP and new submissions of Nationally Determined Contributions.

Second, the question of coherence and credibility warrants further reflection.

8. *Put your money where your mouth is.* Diplomacy campaigns by Dutch representatives could be more credible if Dutch national practice and policies matched the objectives of their lobbying in other countries.



# 1

## Introduction

After the Paris Agreement, the international community wanted to ensure the implementation of the climate commitments adopted at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as concrete new plans and targets for emission reductions. In 2018, the UN Secretary-General asked the Netherlands to be an advocate for higher ambitions and to lobby other countries. In response, the government decided to set up a temporary climate diplomacy campaign, with a coordination team at the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). This team mobilised Dutch and international partners and engaged dozens of embassies in climate advocacy in their countries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, COP26 was postponed for a year and the Dutch campaign continued until late 2021.



The Policy & Operations Evaluation department (IOB) has carried out an evaluation of this climate diplomacy campaign, focusing on the bilateral campaign and specifically the work of Dutch embassies. It is part of a series of climate-related studies that inform the periodic review of the international climate policy of the Netherlands in the period 2016-2021.<sup>ii</sup> The main objective of this study was to identify which lessons from the climate diplomacy campaign can inform new policy and can be applied to future diplomacy lobbying campaigns.

Our central question was: to what extent was the bilateral climate diplomacy campaign effective, contributing to higher climate ambitions in the targeted countries? Further research questions were as follows:

1. What was the Dutch policy for climate diplomacy?
2. What capacities and resources did the climate campaign team have?
3. Which networks and actors did the IGG team mobilise?
4. What strategies were implemented, globally and in country-specific campaigns?
5. How effective was the campaign in the target countries?
6. What were the success factors of the climate diplomacy campaign?

### Limitations

This study focuses on the campaign directed at the climate ambitions of non-EU countries and does not include the campaign directed at EU internal targets, nor the strands directed at multilateral institutions and specific sectors. International efforts such as the UNFCCC negotiations are also outside the scope of this study. Furthermore, interdepartmental cooperation is not a key topic either. And policy coherence will be the subject of a separate, ongoing IOB study.<sup>16</sup>

As the climate diplomacy campaign aimed to raise ambitions in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions, it focused on mitigation. In the country cases, IOB selected the energy-related efforts by the Dutch embassies because they showcased interesting diplomatic efforts. Therefore, although adaptation had long been a priority of the MFA and development cooperation in particular, it is not given the same attention in this study.

### Methodology

Following preliminary document reviews and interviews, the research team set up a survey for embassies in the target countries and conducted a qualitative comparative analysis of the responses. Forty-four sets of answers to the survey were used in this analysis. The embassies in Vietnam and Israel emerged as two cases where it was likely that we would be able to verify the results of Dutch climate diplomacy, through a form of 'process tracing', with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the campaigns there and identifying more general lessons.

For this evaluation, we conducted 67 interviews with 57 people between October 2019 and April 2023:

- 40 general interviews with 24 people at the Dutch MFA and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)
- 14 interviews with 15 people for the case of Israel
- 13 interviews with 18 people for the case of Vietnam

A more detailed description of our methodology can be found in the Terms of Reference<sup>iii</sup> for this study. A detailed description of the methodology used for qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is provided in Annex B.

<sup>16</sup> The periodic review of policy coherence in the areas of water, food security and climate and energy will be finalised in 2024. A smaller study on the Dutch Action Agenda on Policy Coherence for Development was published earlier in 2023: [Report — Evaluation of the action plan on policy coherence for development | Report | Policy and Operations Evaluation Department \(IOB\) \(iob-evaluatie.nl\)](#).



# 2

## Policy and strategy

### 2.1. Introduction: general policy and mandate

The evaluation period runs from late 2018, when the climate diplomacy campaign kicked off, until late 2021: the time of the UNFCCC's 26th Conference of the Parties, which was postponed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dutch policy on climate diplomacy was described in the Terms of Reference of this study.<sup>iv</sup> This study focuses on the efforts of Dutch embassies in non-EU countries, especially the 44 embassies that participated in our survey.

This chapter provides a summary of the policy and an update on developments after 2021, as well as a description of the strategies used and a reconstructed policy strategy of the climate diplomacy campaign. This chapter focuses mainly on the policy and strategy developed by IGG, which initiated, supported and enabled the country-specific campaigns considered in later chapters. We will highlight the cases of Vietnam and Israel. Figure 1 shows key moments and events in the climate diplomacy campaign, described in this chapter.

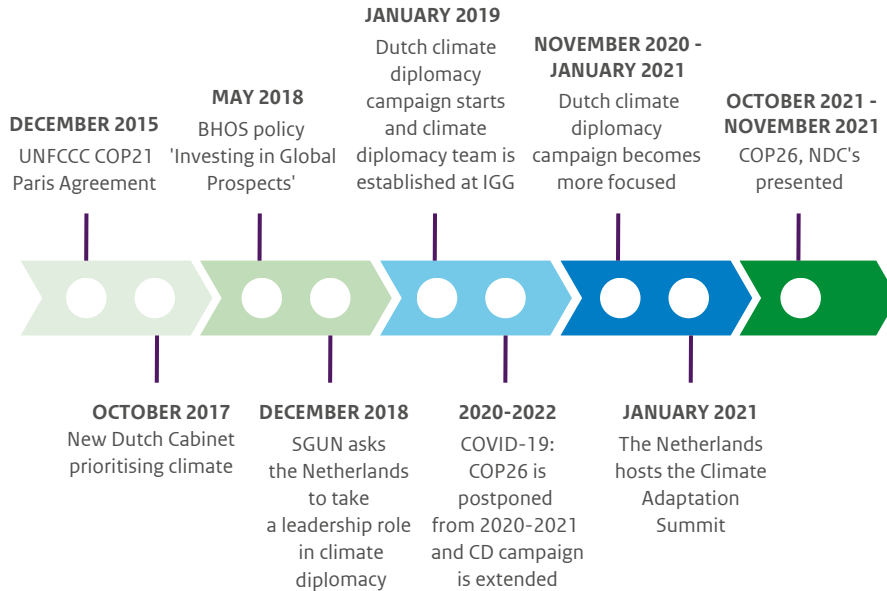


Figure 1: Timeline of key events and moments leading up to and during the CD campaign.

### Mandate

When a new Dutch cabinet was installed in October 2017, climate change policy became a higher priority, including for the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS).<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, climate diplomacy became more important: not only in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations, but also in lobbying other countries to become more ambitious in their mitigation (reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) and adaptation policies.

After the Paris Agreement, policymakers felt the need to promote its implementation to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and prepare the world for the impacts of climate change. From September 2018, the Dutch cabinet further intensified its diplomatic lobbying on climate, following a request from the UN Secretary-General. He asked the Netherlands to take a leading role in this area and to encourage other countries to be more ambitious in their targets and policies. Prime Minister Rutte agreed to take on this role and decided on a temporary lobbying campaign.<sup>18,19</sup> Its key objective was to increase the climate ambitions of non-EU countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs),

<sup>17</sup> This minister is responsible for international climate (and environmental) policy, in particular policy concerning developing countries, and for coordinating the budget for international development, including ODA. The Minister for Climate and Energy Policy (in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy - EZK) is responsible for national climate policy.

<sup>18</sup> Critics have pointed out that the Netherlands accepted this leadership role, even though its domestic actions to reduce GHGE had not yet achieved the previous cabinets' ambitions, suggesting a lack of policy coherence. This could affect the legitimacy of the Netherlands as an advocate for more ambitious plans by other countries. Some IGG staff responded that the Netherlands currently has very ambitious targets and is catching up in its performance. Also, the Netherlands provides substantial sums of climate finance to developing countries (around two billion euros between 2016 and 2019), which enhances its credibility.

<sup>19</sup> Based on the example of the lobby for Dutch membership of the UN Security Council. However, unlike that campaign, the team was not a stand-alone unit, but embedded in IGG, with ties to IGG's ongoing work on climate. In addition to the Prime Minister, the Minister for BHOS was involved, as the coordinator for international climate policy.

with a focus on mitigation targets.<sup>20</sup> This effort aimed to contribute to a successful COP26 in Glasgow, where updated or new NDCs would be presented to kick-start ambitious climate action.<sup>21 vi</sup> In practice, the campaign focused not only on NDCs, but on raising countries' climate ambitions more generally.

The MFA set up a climate diplomacy team within the IGG climate section (IGG/KL), as part of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS). The focus of this IOB study is on the country-specific lobbying (rather than on the multilateral, sectoral and EU lobbying efforts), as this was the latest and most conspicuous instrument of Dutch international climate diplomacy, announced to parliament and all Dutch embassies.

The campaign focused mainly on promoting mitigation targets in line with the Paris Agreement.<sup>22</sup> Increasing adaptation ambitions and promoting finance for adaptation were secondary objectives. While the emphasis was on influencing the largest emitters, i.e. the G20 countries, the list of targeted countries varied between late 2018 and 2021.

### Developments since 2021

From late 2021, after COP26, the climate diplomacy team at IGG ceased to exist as a separate entity, and its members were dispersed into IGG's thematic clusters on mitigation, adaptation, climate finance and forests. IGG's climate section continued to conduct and promote climate diplomacy, albeit no longer in the form of a targeted campaign. In 2022, a new cabinet and a new Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Minister Schreinemacher, took office. She issued a policy note in June 2022 emphasising the importance of climate policy and committing to invest more in international climate action.<sup>23vii</sup> In the same year, the cabinet published an interdepartmental International Climate Strategy, coordinated and drafted by IGG. This strategy includes a commitment to step up bilateral and multilateral climate diplomacy.<sup>24viii</sup>

## 2.2. Reconstructed climate diplomacy strategy

This chapter has mainly described the strategy and preparatory, enabling efforts for the climate diplomacy campaign conducted and coordinated by the IGG team. Figure 2 below presents a reconstructed climate diplomacy strategy of the country-specific campaign. It shows IGG and Dutch embassies, their activities and the stakeholders involved. This figure is explained in more detail in Annex D. We introduce it here to provide a basic understanding of the strategy used. Later in this report, the application of the strategy in country-specific campaigns will be examined to assess the effectiveness of Dutch climate diplomacy efforts. Chapters 3 and 4 will describe and analyse the country-specific campaigns by the embassies, highlighting the cases of Vietnam and Israel.

<sup>20</sup> Another key objective was to encourage other countries to develop long-term climate strategies. Also, a parallel strand of the campaign, the so-called EU track, aimed for the adoption of an EU-wide target of 55% emission reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality ('net zero target') in 2050. This strand was led by the Integration of Europe Department (DIE) and the Permanent Representation to the EU.

<sup>21</sup> For the COP26, parties were requested to submit new or updated NDCs; 130 of them did so, in 96 NDCs: see unfccc.org [Full NDC Synthesis Report: Some Progress, but Still a Big Concern | UNFCCC](#) and the NDC Synthesis Report of 17 September 2021.

<sup>22</sup> More specifically, the 2018 Cabinet mandate stated that the campaign's goal was to influence countries' climate ambitions to achieve an increase in the level of ambition in NDCs; global ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement; the agreement on climate ambitions by all economic sectors; long-term climate strategies to be submitted by as many countries as possible (non-EU countries); and boosting the climate adaptation agenda worldwide (see also the Terms of Reference for this study). By bilateral, we often mean government-to-government lobbying, but in practice country-specific CD campaigns turned out to engage and target many non-governmental – civil society and the private sector – stakeholders as well.

<sup>23</sup> 'Do what we do best', 24 June 2022. [Rijksoverheid.nl Policy Document for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation: Do what we do best | Policy note | Government.nl](#). It includes a commitment to increase climate finance to 1.8 billion euros in 2025 (including private sector finance mobilised by public finance) and to double finance for forest protection.

<sup>24</sup> [The Netherlands' Global Climate Strategy | Publication | Government.nl](#). 'The government will step up multilateral and bilateral climate diplomacy, increase climate finance, phase out support for unabated fossil fuel energy activities abroad and make trade missions, embassies' economic services and support for public infrastructure projects in developing countries greener, all in partnership with knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and the business sector.'



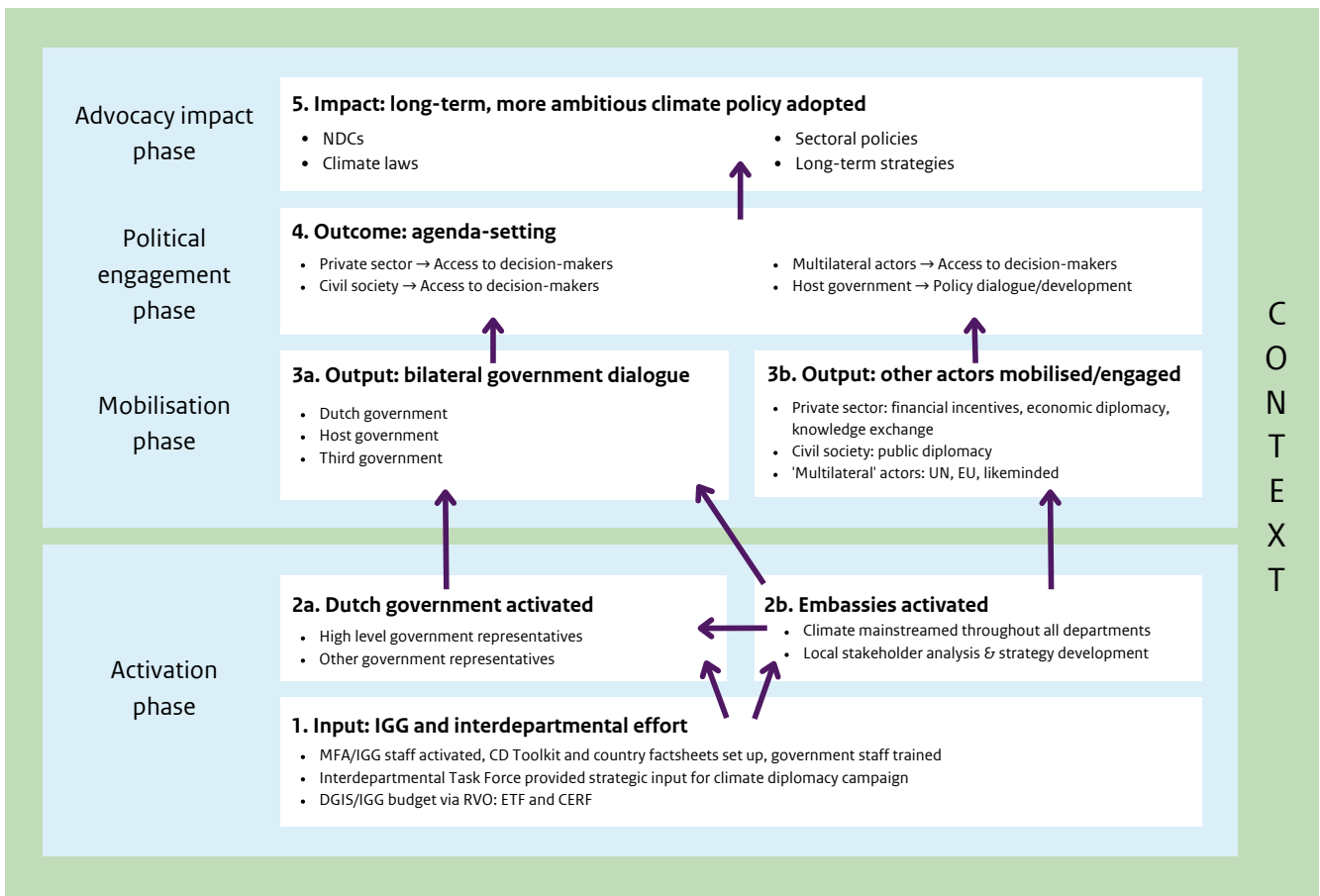


Figure 2: Reconstructed CD strategy of country-specific campaigns. Arrows indicate causal links.

This figure illustrates the diplomatic lobbying process and strategy as follows.

- In the activation phase, IGG coordinates climate diplomacy efforts, works to raise awareness and provides tools for others within the Dutch government.
- The MFA/IGG provides others in the MFA and other ministries with the knowledge, means and training, so that:
  - High-level representatives (ministers, envoys, high-level officials) and others at Dutch ministries become climate diplomats.
  - The embassies become active, integrating climate into their work, developing analyses and strategies, and feeding information back to actors in The Hague.
- Dutch representatives engage in bilateral dialogue with the host government, sometimes involving third governments.
  - Dutch embassies support and strengthen the voice of other advocates: the private sector and knowledge institutes, civil society including youth organisations and NGOs, and international actors such as the UN, EU, and like-minded countries.
- Engagement with government and access to decision-makers, as well as policy dialogue, leads to agenda setting: climate ambitions appear on the agenda. Joint advocacy efforts eventually contribute to long-term, more ambitious climate, reflected in NDCs, climate laws and policies, and long-term national strategies.
- The context changes over time, and embassies and IGG adapt the diplomatic process and strategy accordingly, for instance by taking into account changing political circumstances or new opportunities in the climate and energy sector.

## 2.3. Global strategy

The government-wide action plan on global climate diplomacy was agreed in the autumn of 2018, together with the mandate for the campaign and its interdepartmental task force. It contained ‘strategies’ with objectives, short-term actions and medium-term action plans for the global lobbying campaign, including elements for the country-specific lobbying campaigns.<sup>ix</sup> The instruments identified in this plan include bilateral visits to key target countries, international events, international knowledge institutes, international partnerships and cooperation with the private sector, including through trade missions.

The original action plan did not specify how the climate diplomacy (CD) core team at IGG would work. In 2019, the team had only four policy officers – each of whom focused on a geographic region – and a leader, with around 3.5 additional IGG staff supporting the campaign.<sup>25</sup> The core team quickly began informing all embassies of its objectives and expectations, requesting them to conduct country-specific, bilateral campaigns in the run-up to COP26 and to report back. IGG regularly sent such instructions, for instance in the run-up to the Climate Adaptation Summit, COP26 and COP27, mobilising Dutch representatives to engage in climate diplomacy.<sup>x</sup>

The IGG CD team continuously tried to integrate or mainstream the ambitions of the climate diplomacy campaign.<sup>26</sup> First and foremost, they encouraged their colleagues at IGG, DGIS, as well as the Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations (DGBEB) and the Directorate-General for Political Affairs (DGPZ) (including the regional desks) to integrate climate considerations into their work and to include climate messages in Dutch representatives’ speaking notes. The Ministers for BHOS and the DGIS supported these efforts and were themselves advocates of ambitious climate action. It was a challenge, however, for IGG – which had traditionally focused on development cooperation and the poorest countries – to conduct an advocacy campaign and influence policymaking with a focus on the mitigation ambitions of the G20 countries. In this context, it was initially challenging to mainstream climate into the trade-related work of the DGBEB and the political work of the DGPZ, although IGG did manage to put climate on the agenda of bilateral dialogues.<sup>xi</sup>

The team, together with members of an interdepartmental task force, also encouraged other ministries to promote climate ambitions, working with the Climate Envoy and the Water Envoy.<sup>27</sup> They thus tried to ensure that high-level representatives delivered consistent climate messages at bilateral and multilateral meetings. The demands on the team continued to increase up to COP26, and several people interviewed suggested the team was a victim of its own success. An employee satisfaction survey in 2021 confirmed that staff at IGG’s climate section had a heavy workload, which was reflected in an extremely low score, although staff was also highly motivated.<sup>xii 28</sup>

In addition to IGG’s CD team, experts from other ministries regularly contributed to the campaign, facilitated by the interdepartmental task force.<sup>29</sup> In 2022, IGG drafted an International Climate Strategy with this task force.<sup>30</sup> Although the process helped to coordinate all stakeholders’ efforts, this document reflects the status quo of the policy and practice of the ministries involved, and does not yet consistently

<sup>25</sup> This number includes staff working on the CD campaign part-time from the clusters dealing with energy, water and food security, so 7.5 staff in total. This number was published in late 2018, when the campaign got its mandate from cabinet. A later document, setting out an action plan drafted by IGG in April 2019, for agreement with the Director-General (DGIS), mentioned 8.5 staff.

<sup>26</sup> Some people interviewed suggested that the organisational setting of the climate team in the MFA could be improved. For instance, setting up a climate (diplomacy) team under the direct responsibility of the Secretary-General or DGPZ at the MFA would give the campaign team more authority and help them mobilise other stakeholders. It would help them mainstream the campaign’s cause throughout the MFA and enhance accountability.

<sup>27</sup> These envoys represent Dutch government as a whole and work closely with the MFA/IGG, but the Climate Envoy is housed in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, and the Water Envoy in the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

<sup>28</sup> The score was 1.5 out of 10, indicating a very heavy workload. The survey also showed that, at the same time, staff was highly motivated. Adding to the workload was the fact that the climate was allegedly among the top 3 topics in speaking notes (source: interviews and CD Team work plan 2021). In 2022, the management board of the MFA decided to dedicate additional capacity to climate change in 14 Dutch embassies and representations (14 local staff and one diplomat) and at IGG (6 staff).

<sup>29</sup> The task force consists of representatives of the MFA, EZK, Finance, I&W, LNV (and since 2023, VWS, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport).

<sup>30</sup> [The strategy is available in English and online](#); Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 2022–2023, 31 793, no. 231.

make clear strategic choices based on a joint analysis of Dutch strengths and weaknesses for the longer term.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3.1. Country selection

The original mandate of the global climate campaign was to increase substantially the ambition of non-EU countries in their NDCs. To this end, the IGG-led interdepartmental task force identified 51 countries, mostly G20 and other countries that were the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. The CD team and the interdepartmental task force assessed these countries against criteria based on opportunities for the Netherlands in the fields of trade, development cooperation and within the fields of work of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (I&W) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV). In the process, the list of target countries was reduced to 45, with a focus on 34 and later 36, in line with decisions on target countries for the new Climate and Energy Response Facility (CERF).<sup>32xiii</sup> The Prime Minister and other ministers were regularly provided with a list of very brief climate messages for up to 20 priority countries to use in bilateral talks when they went to international meetings such as the G20 and COPs.

It should be noted that most of the target countries were middle-income countries or even high-income countries, which are not the countries that IGG normally focuses on, requiring a more political focus from a directorate traditionally focused on development cooperation. It was a challenge for IGG and the CD team to combine IGG's policies and programmes for the poorest countries with a diplomatic lobby for climate ambitions.<sup>xiv</sup> In this lobby, the most vulnerable countries were allies rather than target countries for raising climate (mitigation and finance) ambitions.

In addition to countries targeted to increase their ambitions, the CD team identified another group of countries that the Netherlands could work with to promote the ambitions of third countries. In addition to the most vulnerable countries, examples include Costa Rica as co-chair – with the Netherlands – of the NDC Partnership, the United Kingdom as the incoming chair of COP26 and New-Zealand as an ally in encouraging other countries to phase out coal.<sup>xv</sup>

In 2019 and 2020, the CD team had become well known throughout the MFA, including the embassies. It received an increasing number of requests for speaking notes and advice. In early 2021, the CD team decided to focus on 20 countries that were among the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) and could be more ambitious in their national mitigation targets. The plan was to pay particular attention to major Asian countries, as well as tropical forest countries and Africa.<sup>33</sup>

#### Country selection

When the Climate and Energy Response Facility was set up in 2021-2022, target countries were assigned points to determine which would receive priority support (the A list, with around 20 countries) or secondary attention (the B list, with around 16 countries).<sup>34</sup> The A list was essentially the same as the one used by the CD team as priority target countries for their campaign.

From 2021, the CD team decided to work proactively only towards the priority countries and to provide speaking notes or assistance to the rest only on request. Occasionally, they started saying no to requests because of the very heavy workload. They sometimes referred embassies and other Dutch stakeholders to model texts in the climate diplomacy toolkit, so they could draft their own speaking notes and speeches.

<sup>31</sup> The International Climate Strategy does not have a strict focus on priority topics. In contrast, the CD campaign did narrow its focus on certain topics and countries from 2021 onwards.

<sup>32</sup> The number of countries on the list varied from 34 to 36. It was revised when CERF was set up and when the BHOS policy note was drafted, adding its priority countries to the list of target countries for climate diplomacy.

<sup>33</sup> The team drafted a work plan with strategic choices for 2021, selecting around 20 countries and a strategy for engaging high-level representatives and like-minded partners to raise the NDC ambitions of the targeted countries. China, India, Japan, South Korea, Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo were specifically mentioned. Israel was mentioned because opportunities for green technology were identified.

<sup>34</sup> The number of countries on the list varied from 34 to 36. It was revised when CERF was set up and when the BHOS policy note was drafted. The A list went from 12 to 16 countries and the B list from 22 to 20 countries. Currently, in 2023, these lists contain 21 (A list) and 15 (B list) countries. The 16 'combination countries' identified in the BHOS policy notes were added to the A list, and Jordan was moved to the B list.

As Vietnam and Israel are this study's country cases, it is interesting to note that Vietnam was part of the list of targeted countries throughout the campaign and that Israel was on and off the list. Vietnam is on CERF's A list and Israel is on its B list.<sup>xvi</sup>

### 2.3.2. Topics and partners

From the outset, the CD team identified promising sectors and themes for each country, with input from the embassies and the interdepartmental task force. In this context, *government-to-government* (bilateral) advocacy was seen as an important vehicle for climate diplomacy – the most important one.

The team identified cooperation with the *private sector* as an important additional channel to promote higher climate ambitions, including by explaining the business model for climate investments and green recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. The climate diplomacy team drafted an informal Theory of Change to guide their work with the private sector.<sup>xvii</sup>

Another strand of work was supporting *young climate activists* to empower them and promote climate ambitions globally. In this context, the climate diplomacy team supported a coalition of young Dutch activists. They also facilitated the development of a global youth network, the We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership (WAT-GP).<sup>xviii</sup> Through small grants and practical assistance, about a dozen embassies supported such youth organisations in their countries.<sup>35xix</sup> In 2021, IGG decided that the climate diplomacy team would become more reactive in this area, believing that the ownership and sustainability of the networks should be carried by the youth themselves. At the same time, IGG continued to support WAT-GP and facilitate contacts with decision-makers.<sup>xx</sup>

Cooperation with NGOs was not generally seen as a priority in the climate diplomacy campaign. Dutch embassies regularly work with NGOs, but in the target countries, they are often considered more as implementers of development projects than as partners in climate diplomacy.

In 2021, the climate diplomacy team also identified *sectors* that could contribute most to GHG emission reductions and where Dutch efforts could add value: energy/recycling and land use/forestry. The latter led to a renewed focus on tropical forests, in particular Brazil and Indonesia. For climate mitigation and the clean energy transition, they identified Asia as an important region because it is home to many of the biggest emitters, such as China, India, Japan, Indonesia and South Korea.

As for adaptation and increasing climate resilience, this was an important topic from the outset, particularly from the perspective of the DGIS and development cooperation, but also the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. The CD team highlighted Africa as an important region in this context, as it is home to a significant number of Dutch development cooperation partner countries.<sup>36xxi</sup>

In practice, the team worked flexibly, responding to requests for assistance and improvising where opportunities or challenges arose. The team also seized opportunities on other topics, including signing declarations and joining coalitions around COP26 to promote a joint lobby, and national and global action in important sectors. For instance, the Netherlands joined the Export Finance for Future (E3F) group, which is committed to greener export finance policies and ending government support for the fossil fuel energy sector.<sup>xxii</sup> Another notable set of activities concerned the *phasing out of coal*: IGG and the Dutch Climate Envoy were active in the Powering Past Coal Alliance. This resulted in cooperation with and lobbying directed at South Korea, as well as discussions with Japan and Australia.<sup>37xxiii 38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> As responses to the IOB survey showed. Youth representatives were becoming very vocal at the time, including through climate marches by students. The embassies and the IGG CD team enabled about a dozen of them to participate in the COP26 and COP27 and to meet with Prime Minister Rutte.

<sup>36</sup> When the list of target countries for CERF was drawn up in 2021, African countries were given extra credits, increasing the odds that they would be selected.

<sup>37</sup> Related to this, in an OECD DAC declaration for COP26, donor countries including South Korea but excluding Australia and Japan, pledged to phase out investments in coal projects abroad. Japan and Korea were also big investors in coal projects in Vietnam, and Australia was importing coal from there. For instance, the Dutch Climate Envoy and the embassy in Tokyo participated in lobbying the Japanese government.

<sup>38</sup> The COVID-19 crisis provided an additional topic for the campaign: the Netherlands lobbied bilaterally and at international meetings for 'building back better' and green recovery, asking for financial support to integrate climate considerations.



*Examples of global Dutch campaigning on adaptation (finance) and mitigation (coal and just transition)<sup>xxiv</sup>*

We will highlight two cases where Dutch climate diplomacy helped put issues on the international agenda, using dozens of opportunities, channels, stakeholders and spokespersons.

The Netherlands consistently advocated for prioritising climate adaptation and pushed donors to increase financing for adaptation and to achieve a balance between mitigation and adaptation financing (50-50). The Netherlands helped set up a handful of coalitions and initiatives of like-minded actors and participated in others, such as the Alliance of Finance Ministers for Adaptation, the Coalition of Climate Adaptation Action Coalition and the Global Adaptation Centre. With the Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management in the lead, the Netherlands also organised the Climate Adaptation Summit, featuring high-level participants from countries all over the world. This global focus on adaptation was in line with the efforts by embassies to promote and support adaptation measures, often in the water sector, for instance in Vietnam.

On climate mitigation, the Netherlands actively promoted (a) the phasing out coal and (b) a just energy transition. Regarding (a), the Netherlands lobbied countries investing in coal overseas, including Japan and Korea, involving the embassies in Tokyo and Seoul and the Climate Envoy. Regarding (b), it participated in discussions on the G7 and EU support for Joint Energy Transition Programmes, for example in Indonesia and Vietnam.

The campaign also planned to use multilateral climate diplomacy.<sup>39</sup> One plan was to work together in the EU to lobby third countries to be more ambitious on climate mitigation in the run-up to COP26.<sup>40</sup> Two other priorities for multilateral diplomacy were climate adaptation (with emphasis on Africa) and climate finance, promoting greener investments by the multilateral development banks. The latter was already important before 2018, with active and ongoing lobbying to encourage the World Bank and others to 'green' their investments.

### 2.3.3. Instruments

One instrument that helped keep embassies informed and up to date was the *climate diplomacy toolkit*: an online platform, hosted by NL Branding at RVO, with messages and news about climate diplomacy.<sup>xxv</sup> It provided thematic factsheets and standard messages for country-specific lobbying campaigns, as well as information on Dutch expertise in green technology. From 2020, the toolkit included examples from embassies containing good practices to inspire other embassies including from Israel, South Africa and Vietnam.<sup>41</sup>

Funding for climate activities was one way of supporting embassies and target countries to promote climate mitigation (with a focus on energy) and adaptation (resilience). A specific instrument used to support embassies' climate diplomacy was the *Energy Transition Facility (ETF)*, funded by IGG (DGIS) and hosted by RVO. It provided small grants to finance experts, studies and technical assistance in the

<sup>39</sup> For ease of reference and for the QCA analysis, the research team grouped intergovernmental and supranational institutions under this category, including the EU and like-minded coalitions.

<sup>40</sup> In addition, as a separate campaign set out in the original action plan of late 2018, DIE (the department responsible for dealings with the EU) in collaboration with like-minded EU member states, lobbied to make the EU's own climate targets more ambitious.

<sup>41</sup> The best practice factsheets have varied over time. Currently, the climate diplomacy toolkit also includes sheets about Australia and Central America.

Middle East/North Africa region, based on proposals from embassies, with the aim of supporting climate diplomacy. In 2021-2022, a successor fund was set up, the *Climate and Energy Transition Facility* (CERF), with more money and accessible to a wider list of countries.<sup>42xxvi43</sup>

*The Climate and Energy Response Facility* has applied the lessons learned from the CD campaign: it started with a Theory of Change on the energy transition and specified strategies for each priority country and topic. CERF supports concrete activities for the purpose of climate diplomacy, with DGIS/IGG funding, managed by RVO. It benefits from a substantial number of staff who act as focal points for priority countries and help develop strategies for each target (A list) country in collaboration with the embassies. It focuses on a set of topics where the Netherlands ‘adds value’ (niches) and specifies a couple of priorities per country.

Another instrument was the interdepartmental task force, which met at least once every two weeks under the leadership of the climate diplomacy team to exchange information, discuss opportunities and set priorities for climate diplomacy. There was another, similar group, led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy (EZK), which coordinated, in particular, the UNFCCC negotiations and preparations for the COPs. The campaign seems to have been a combination of efforts by different ministries, sometimes keeping the focus on their own sectoral priorities, even in their collaboration with embassies: EZK focusing on the UNFCCC negotiations, MFA/DGIS on development cooperation (renewable energy and adaptation), I&W on water and adaptation, LNV on agriculture (including trade), while the Climate Envoy mostly worked for and with EZK and the MFA as well as the Prime Minister.<sup>44xxvii</sup> The International Climate Strategy (2022) reflects an effort to make Dutch climate diplomacy more coherent and strategic.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Finally, the *Climate Envoy* has been a visible Dutch representative at the forefront of the climate diplomacy effort. During the campaign, the envoy acted as a striker in the team, scoring goals on a pass from the climate diplomacy team, according to interviewees. He also played a visible part in COP26 and COP27, at times replacing ministers or even the Prime Minister as the Dutch representative. The envoy also tried to mobilise other Dutch actors, arguing that ‘everyone is a climate diplomat’.<sup>xxix</sup>

#### 2.3.4. Conclusions on the global campaign

Effective advocacy requires the enabling factors, capacities and organisational requirements described in our Terms of Reference. The CD team consisted of only a handful of officers, but they appear to have had the skills, knowledge and access to the right networks. They also appear to have had an effective communication strategy, producing consistent messages and enabling embassies to use similar messaging. They stayed in touch with the embassies in target countries.<sup>xxx</sup> In addition, the team worked with like-minded organisations and countries. In The Hague, the interdepartmental task force provided a platform for information exchange and coordination. The IGG climate diplomacy team was also flexible, creative and able to improvise. Their strategy was sufficiently adaptable, and they occasionally updated the list of target countries and topics. They took initiatives and often acted proactively, rather than simply responding to requests from embassies and senior management.

<sup>42</sup> The ETF supported embassies in countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa, while CERF is accessible to countries from other regions as well, provides larger amounts and is supported by more capacity and expertise from RVO. According to one person involved, CERF reflected the lessons learned throughout the climate diplomacy campaign and was based on a TOC drafted especially for CERF. As described above, when CERF was set up, target countries were assigned points to determine which would receive priority support (the A list of 12 and later 16 countries) or secondary attention (the B list of 22 and later 20 countries). The decision was based on criteria such as being a DGBEB/DIO or DGIS priority country, being a VNO-NCW target country in Africa, and providing opportunities for Dutch initiatives. In 2022, when the BHOS policy notes were drafted, including 16 partner countries where combined tracks with trade and aid programmes would be developed, these 16 were added to the A list if they had not already been included (and Jordan moved from the A to the B list).

<sup>43</sup> An additional instrument for embassies is the country-by-country climate analysis that IGG supports with the help of the World Resources Institute, with a focus on adaptation. RVO officers dealing with CERF also provide help with climate analysis and strategy per target country.

<sup>44</sup> While noting that interdepartmental cooperation was not a topic of this study, IOB has the impression – based on interviews – that the global climate diplomacy campaign has not always been a combined, concerted and synergistic effort.

Furthermore, the CD team mobilised dozens of embassies and other actors to lobby for higher climate ambitions, mainstreaming climate throughout the work of the MFA and other ministries. They did this at the request of these other stakeholders, but also provided them with the tools (climate diplomacy toolkit, information and support) to conduct climate diplomacy themselves.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## 2.4. Country-specific campaigns: strategy, activities and channels

### 2.4.1. Strategy

At the start of the campaign, embassies in key target countries worked with the CD team in The Hague to analyse the context and identify priorities for climate lobbying and advocacy in their country. During the campaign, IGG country focal points also commented on the annual plans and Multi-Annual Country Strategy (MACS) of priority target countries. They suggested additions, trying to promote higher climate ambitions in these countries.<sup>xxxix</sup> In the two case study countries, Vietnam and Israel, we found that the annual plans and the MACS contained references to diplomacy and significant plans related to climate, albeit not as an overarching priority topic.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Some embassies have focal points for climate change – often the same officers who are responsible for water. In the case of Vietnam, we note that the officer responsible drafted a strategy for the embassy on climate adaptation. We also learned that one or two embassies organised regular meetings to coordinate among the climate change focal points in each section.

### 2.4.2. Activities and channels

The most active embassies used various kinds of activities and channels to promote more ambitious climate action in their countries, encouraged and supported by the climate diplomacy team in The Hague. The survey of embassies confirmed this, as the next chapter will explain.

*Activities:* The embassies organised bilateral talks, visits, meetings, events and conducted some public diplomacy, such as publishing articles. They supported youth organisations and/or NGOs and invited them to events. The embassies also supported and convened private sector companies and experts, providing technical expertise to local actors. Innovation attachés, agriculture attachés, diplomatic and local staff working on climate, water and energy collaborated in these activities.

*Channels:* First and foremost, embassies conducted bilateral dialogues and used bilateral visits to convey climate messages, up to the ministerial level and sometimes even the prime ministerial level. Long-standing relations with the host country government and a positive reputation on specific topics facilitated this bilateral dialogue. Second, the embassies participated in like-minded and EU démarches with their host governments. They also coordinated with like-minded partners, including the World Bank. Third, embassies supported Dutch companies, consultants and other experts to promote technologies and deliver their services and technical assistance. Fourth, in at least 16 countries, the embassies supported youth and other non-governmental organisations.<sup>45xxxiv</sup>

In addition, in some of the target countries, the Netherlands provided development assistance and other forms of support for climate action, mostly through multilateral organisations and NGOs.

### 2.4.3. Conclusions on the country-specific campaigns

The climate diplomacy team and embassies worked together to identify priorities for the campaigns in their specific countries. Focal points from IGG also commented on annual plans and MACS and suggested additions, promoting higher climate ambitions.

Embassies used a variety of activities and channels to promote climate ambition in their countries, benefiting from long-standing bilateral relationships and an understanding of the local context. Embassies put in considerable effort and combined different activities on priority topics, beating the drum over the years.<sup>xxxv</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Information provided by IGG in interviews and e-mails earlier in 2022 suggest that the embassies in 12 countries supported youth organisations, but our survey responses suggest that at least 16 did so; see Chapter 3.

The agriculture and innovation attachés at the embassies studied seem to have integrated climate change consistently into their work, collaborating with several stakeholders in the 'Dutch diamond' or 'triple helix'.<sup>46</sup>

We will elaborate on aspects of the country-specific campaigns in the following chapters.

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<sup>46</sup> The Dutch diamond refers to an approach where private sector, knowledge institutes, civil society and government work closely together. The triple helix refers to organised collaboration among academics, government and industry.





# 3 Outcomes: survey and analysis of embassies' campaigns

This chapter first describes the outcomes of a survey on climate diplomacy that IOB sent to 51 Dutch embassies to learn more about the country-specific campaigns. Section 3.1 presents an analysis of 44 sets of responses. Section 3.2 describes the results of a qualitative comparative analysis based on these responses, looking for patterns between Dutch diplomatic activities and increased climate ambitions of the target countries.

## 3.1. Survey outcomes

### 3.1.1. Introduction

In 2019, at the beginning of the campaign, the climate diplomacy team drew up a list of 51 target countries with a view to increasing their climate ambitions, and with an emphasis on climate mitigation targets. IOB sent a survey to the embassies in these 51 countries to gather information on country-specific efforts. The research team received 45 complete sets of responses, 44 of which could be used in

a qualitative comparative analysis.<sup>47</sup> The list of 44 countries where the respondents work is presented in Annex C.

IOB started this study by conducting interviews with policy officers in IGG's climate section, mostly (former) members of the climate diplomacy team. The research team also interviewed focal points for climate change at four active embassies: those in Israel, South Africa, South Korea, and Vietnam. IOB selected these four at the suggestion of IGG and because these four embassies had submitted best practice factsheets for the climate diplomacy toolkit.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In addition, IOB studied diplomatic messages and other reports on climate diplomacy.<sup>48xxxvii</sup> These interviews helped identify topics, activities, channels and outcomes that should be mentioned in the survey. For instance, we learned that many embassies had conducted the following activities: organising bilateral meetings, organising visits to and from the Netherlands, organising events in or with the host country, and publishing articles and using social media.

The IOB team then identified survey questions in four categories. The first category concerned the effort embassies put into climate diplomacy and the capacity they had. The second looked at the topics the embassies were focusing on and the activities they were undertaking. The third category concerned outcomes, higher-level impact and effectiveness of climate diplomacy. The last set of questions considered the context that might have influenced the other categories.

It should be noted that the responses on outcomes were self-reported by one person per embassy. This may have led to a bias, i.e. embassies claiming more success than independent observers would give them credit for. Embassies with greater capacity or more active staff may also report more activities and greater effectiveness of activities. Also, certain respondents may be more critical about what constitutes effectiveness of activities, and thus respond differently. Self-reporting may also have led to an input biased towards the topic that the respondent was responsible for, for instance water and development cooperation rather than energy and trade promotion, or vice versa.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.1.2 Results

#### Effort

The survey contained seven questions on effort, ranging from the actual capacity available in the embassy, to its commitment to climate diplomacy, to the contact staff had with The Hague. Each question contained a statement and respondents indicated to what extent they agreed with it on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).<sup>50</sup>

The first statement regarding capacity was 'We dedicated more than ½ FTE on average' and the second was 'We dedicated more than 1 FTE on average'. Figures 3 and 4 below present the results, showing that 60% of the embassies agreed with the first statement and 31% with the second statement, indicated in different shades of green.<sup>51</sup>

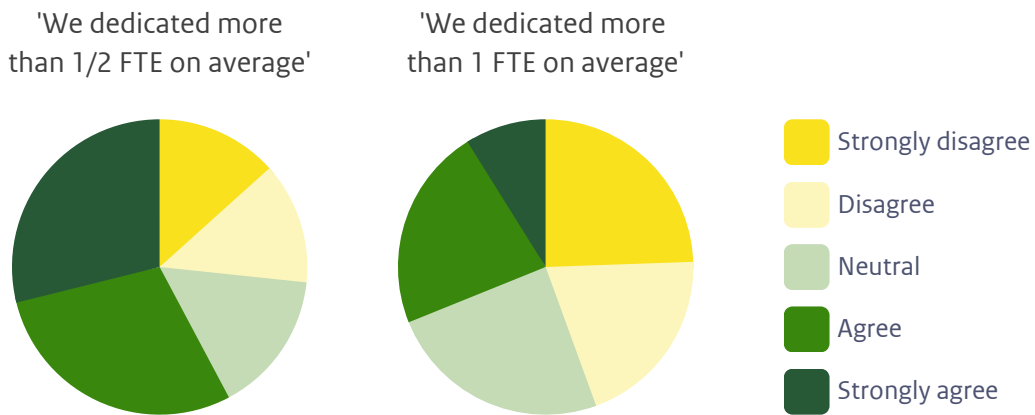
<sup>47</sup> One of the answers was from the Middle East and Northern Africa regional focal point for energy and climate, which we were unable to process for comparison with other embassies and in the qualitative comparative analysis. In addition, there were two sets of answers that were not complete and therefore could not be used for analysis.

<sup>48</sup> We mainly analysed formal MFA messages, letters to parliament and policy documents.

<sup>49</sup> In addition to the considerations in this text box, the answers to the question on effectiveness may also have been biased by respondents reporting more activities and results than requested. For instance, where a maximum of three activities could be selected, some embassies selected more than three answers.

<sup>50</sup> In the survey responses and in Figures 3 and 4 below, 1 means the respondent strongly disagrees, 2 means the respondent disagrees, 3 is neutral, 4 means the respondent agrees, and 5 means the respondent strongly agrees.

<sup>51</sup> If the respondents selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree', we included them in this percentage. The same applies to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' for percentages regarding disagreement. We will apply this to all percentages in this chapter.

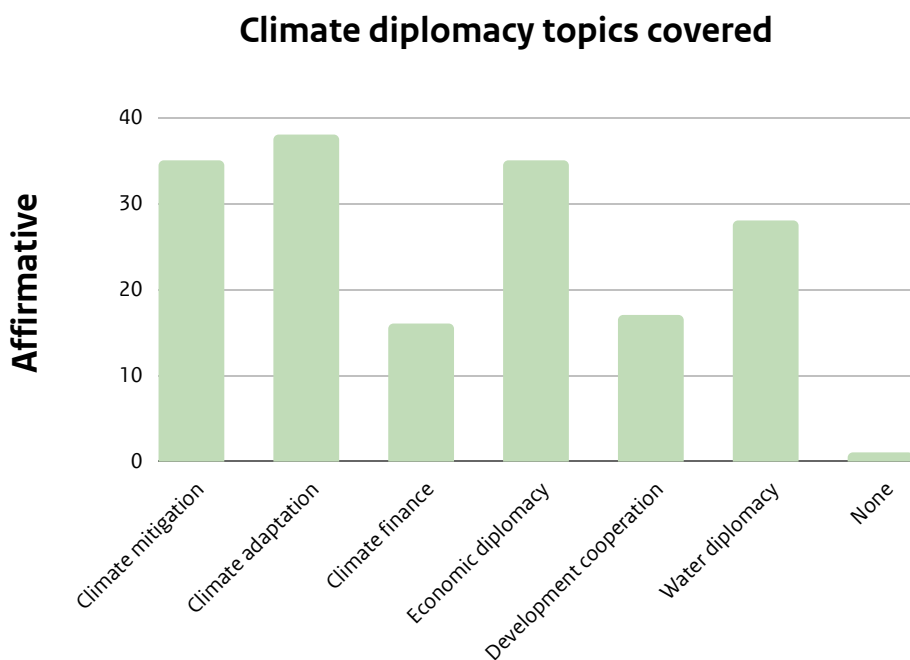


**Figure 3 & 4:** Pie charts showing responses to the statement 'We dedicated more than 1/2 FTE on average' and 'We dedicated more than 1 FTE on average'

Twenty-five embassies agreed that they had integrated climate systematically into their work, and 36 agreed with the statement 'The embassy was committed, including at the level of the ambassador'. Only six embassies agreed with the statement that they only carried out activities on an ad hoc basis or when asked to do so by the MFA in The Hague. The answers to the question of how often embassies were in contact with IGG in The Hague varied, but this was to be expected as the climate diplomacy team gradually focused on a smaller group of countries, as described in the previous chapter.

**Topics, activities and channels**

The survey asked embassies what topics Dutch climate diplomacy focused on in their country. The most frequently mentioned topic was climate adaptation. In the open questions, five respondents added 'climate-smart agriculture', which is both an adaptation and a mitigation topic. Respondents also often selected water diplomacy (promoting Dutch expertise and cooperation on water), which is also closely related to climate adaptation. Climate change mitigation and economic diplomacy were reported 34 and 39 times respectively. Climate finance and development cooperation were mentioned the least. Figure 5 presents the responses to this question.



**Figure 5:** Bar graph on CD campaign topics. The vertical axis represents the number of respondents indicating that their embassy covered the topic.

Second, respondents could indicate which activities they had undertaken by identifying several activities among the 21 pre-defined in the questionnaire and by adding additional activities in an open-ended question. To prepare for the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), we grouped the various activities into four channels (bilateral, multilateral, youth organisations/NGOs, and Dutch knowledge from knowledge institutes and private sector) and into five activity sets (policy dialogue, visit from or visit to the Netherlands, events, and media articles). Many activities fit both a channel and an activity set (type of activity), but there are also activities that fit a channel but do not fit an activity set (or activity type), and vice versa.<sup>52</sup>

The following activity sets were distinguished:

- Policy dialogue (conducted at various levels, e.g. the ambassador level)
- Visits from the Netherlands, e.g., by the Climate Envoy or Prime Minister
- Visits to the Netherlands, e.g., by politicians or scientists
- Events, e.g. organising a meeting and inviting stakeholders
- Article, e.g. published in a newspaper

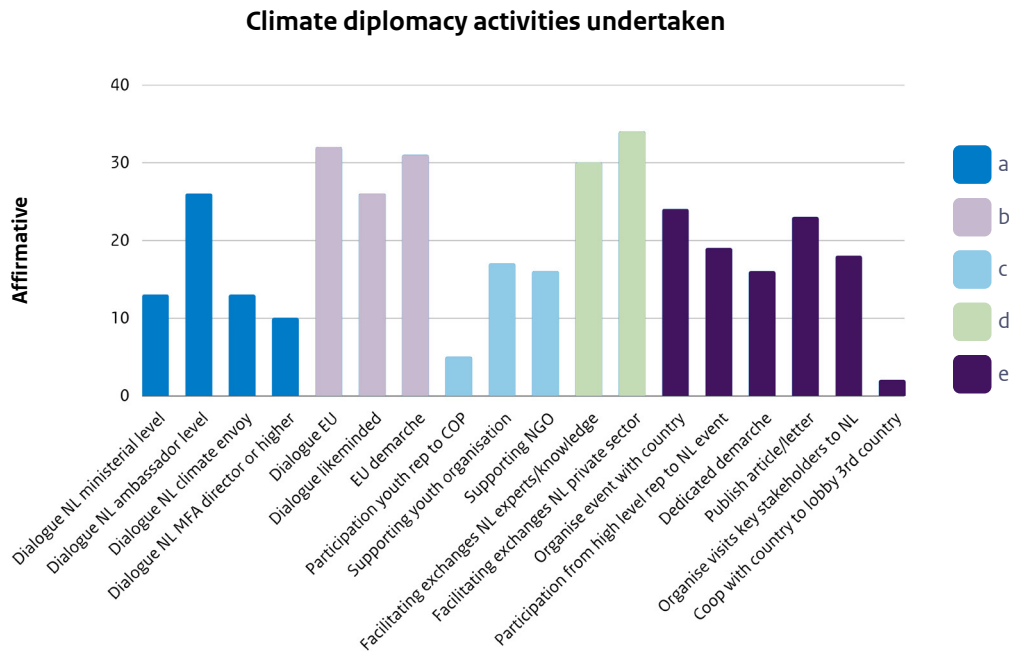
The following channels were distinguished:

- *Bilateral diplomacy*, which distinguishes between different types of government-to-government dialogue. Dialogue at ambassadorial level was the most common, reported by 26 respondents.
- *Multilateral diplomacy*, which in our classification also includes working via the EU (delegation in the country). Thirty-two respondents selected participating in an EU dialogue on climate, making it the most common activity in this channel. It is striking that these respondents also often reported having participated in an EU demarche in the run-up to a major climate event.
- *Youth organisations and NGOs*, which refers to activities such as supporting (local) organisations and groups. The former was reported 17 times, the latter 16 times.
- *Dutch knowledge/private sector*, which combines facilitating exchanges with Dutch companies/private sector and exchanges with Dutch knowledge institutions/experts. The distinction between these activities is sometimes hard to make, since experts or consultants may be from the private sector, from a knowledge institution or from the public sector or subsidised by the public sector. The activities in this channel were the activities reported most often, with 34 respondents indicating that they facilitated exchanges with the private sector and 30 respondents stating that they facilitated exchanges with Dutch knowledge institutions. In 29 of these cases, these activities were reported simultaneously.

<sup>52</sup> 'Activity set' equals 'type of activity', the term used in the next chapter on QCA. The term 'channels', as used in the figures on the CD strategy presented in this section 3.2 and the next chapter, is used as a technical term for a group of actors that are part of climate diplomacy activities conducted to achieve certain objectives.



Figure 6 below shows the frequency with which respondents reported activities. The activities in dark blue (a) are part of the *bilateral* channel, the activities in light purple (b) are part of the *multilateral* channel, the activities in light blue (c) are part of the *youth and NGOs* channel, and the green (d) activities are part of the *Dutch knowledge/private sector* channel. Activities that do not belong to any channel are shown in dark purple (e).



**Figure 6:** Bar graph on CD activities, coloured by channel. The vertical axis represents the number of respondents indicating that their embassy has undertaken an activity (rep = representative; coop = cooperation).

In response to an open question, respondents could add an activity or specify, for example, which events the embassies organised or which organisations they worked with. New activities that were mentioned include ‘Connecting the country to a global network’, ‘Chairing a donor group’, and ‘Providing technical assistance’.

**Effectiveness of activities**

Finally, the survey asked embassies which activities they considered to be most effective in achieving results.<sup>53</sup> They thought the most effective activity was the engagement of the Dutch private sector (18 embassies), followed by exchanges with Dutch experts/knowledge institutions (16 embassies). In answers to open questions, several embassies emphasised that they found it effective not only to push countries to higher levels of ambition, but also to offer support through Dutch knowledge sharing. These were also the kind of activities that most embassies had conducted.

The third-most effective activity was conducting a bilateral dialogue on climate at the Dutch ambassador level, selected by 15 embassies, which was also one of the most reported activities (i.e. often repeated and considered successful). In their answers to open questions, the embassies stressed that they considered the dialogue to be particularly effective when it took place on a regular basis.

Fourteen embassies referred to an event that they had organised together with the country’s authorities as effective. ‘Cooperating with a country to lobby third countries for higher climate ambitions’ was reported by one embassy only and ‘Securing participation by a youth representative of a country to the COP UNFCCC’ by two embassies.

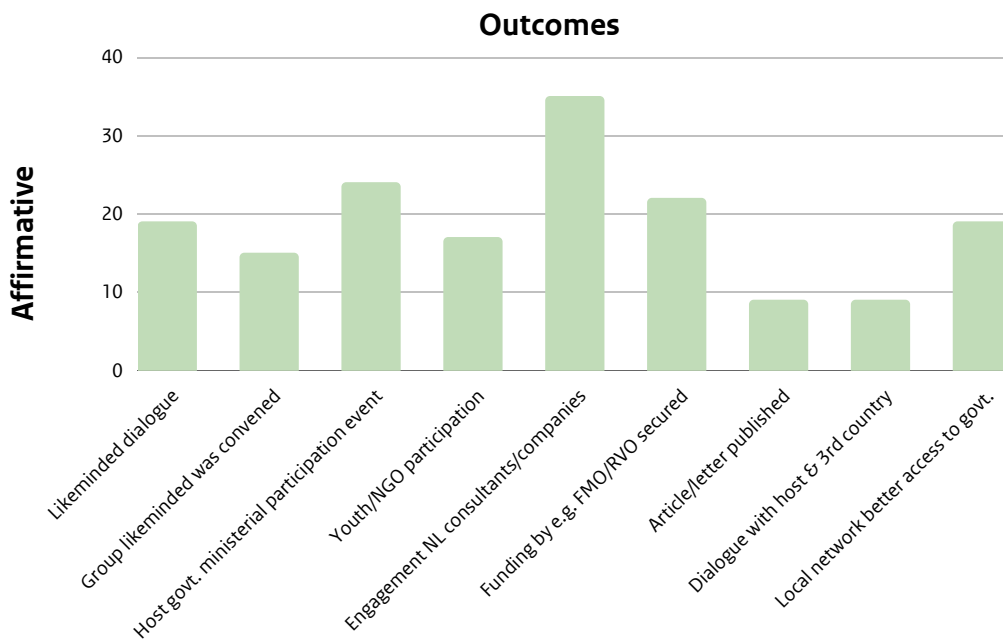
<sup>53</sup> Respondents were supposed to select a maximum of three answers for this question, but some selected more than three answers.

**Outcomes and impact**

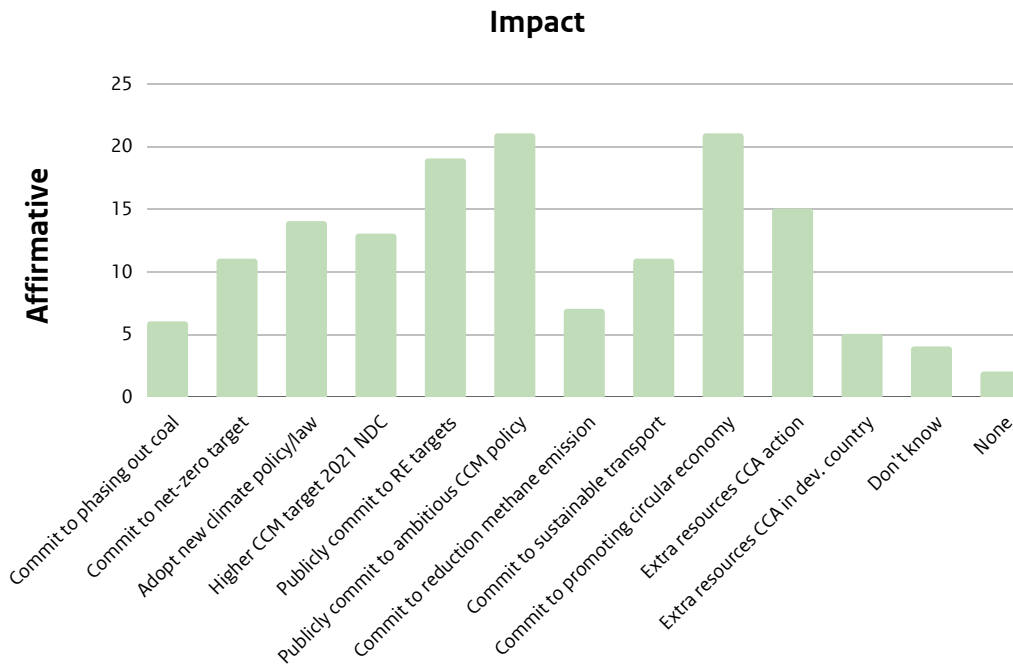
The survey asked the embassies what immediate results or effects they had achieved, as well as what higher-level results or impacts they had achieved. By far the most commonly reported immediate impact was the engagement or hiring of Dutch companies and/or consultants by the host country in climate-related projects, reported by 35 embassies. The second-most reported result was the participation of one or more ministers from the host country in a high-level climate event (24).

In terms of higher-level impact, 22 respondents reported that the government in their host country had publicly committed to a more ambitious mitigation policy and another 20 countries had committed to renewable energy and/or energy efficiency targets. In 22 countries, the government committed to promoting a circular economy. In the open answers, two embassies added that their country had signed an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding, and two embassies said that their host country wanted to work with green hydrogen.

It is important to note in this context that several respondents mentioned it would be a stretch to link the outcomes or impacts directly to Dutch climate diplomacy efforts. They emphasised that climate diplomacy was often a combined effort with other countries, the EU or like-minded partners, supporting third countries' governments in raising their climate ambitions and promoting these efforts.



**Figure 7:** Bar graph on outcomes. The vertical axis represents the number of respondents indicating that their embassy has achieved outcomes on a topic.



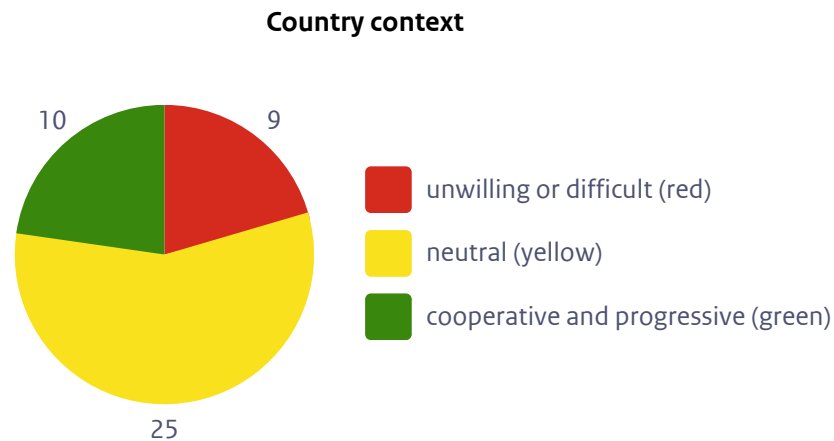
**Figure 8:** Bar graph on impact (CCM = climate change mitigation; CCA = climate change adaptation; dev. = development).

**Context**

Two respondents mentioned international or multilateral initiatives and agreements, such as the Just Energy Transition Partnership, as positive external factors. Another enabling factor that respondents identified was the favourable reputation of the Netherlands. Respondents mentioned two external factors related to public opinion in the country: (1) the presence of a strong public will to preserve biodiversity and (2) the occurrence of natural disasters that lead people to vote for a more climate ambitious government. Respondents also referred to the importance of ‘good people’ working at the embassy.

The negative external factors mentioned were related to a conflict situation, in several cases. Instability in the country, an unstable government, not prioritising climate or sanctions against the country were mentioned in this context. Respondents also mentioned the occurrence of natural disasters, high energy prices or economic insecurity. Finally, in relation to government, respondents stated that reluctance to make decisions at a lower level of government, a pro-fossil fuel government or weak EU coordination on climate diplomacy negatively affected the results of Dutch climate diplomacy.

Finally, the IGG CD team identified target countries as either (1) cooperative and progressive (green), (2) unwilling or difficult (red) or (3) neutral (yellow). We used these categories to analyse the responses to the survey in the QCA.<sup>xxxviii</sup>



**Figure 9:** Pie chart representing respondents' countries, conform the IGG categorisation of countries based on local context [xli].

In the 26 countries for which the qualitative comparative analysis (described below) could not identify a potentially successful pathway – could not find likely results of the climate diplomacy campaign – on average less effort (FTE) was available for climate diplomacy. The QCA did not identify this as a relevant factor for success, but the survey suggest that it is a factor. In addition, the respondents who reported the most negative contextual factors were from countries where the QCA did not identify successful pathways. In the same vein, in seven out of the nine countries identified by IGG as ‘red’ countries, respondents reported no results.

## 3.2. Outcomes: analysis of the embassies' campaigns

### 3.2.1. Introduction

Following the survey, the research team aggregated and analysed qualitative data from 44 embassies. We used qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) of these data to look for patterns between Dutch diplomacy activities and increased government climate ambitions, as reported by embassy staff. This section briefly explains the method, model and analyses used, and presents the results.

#### Framework for the analysis

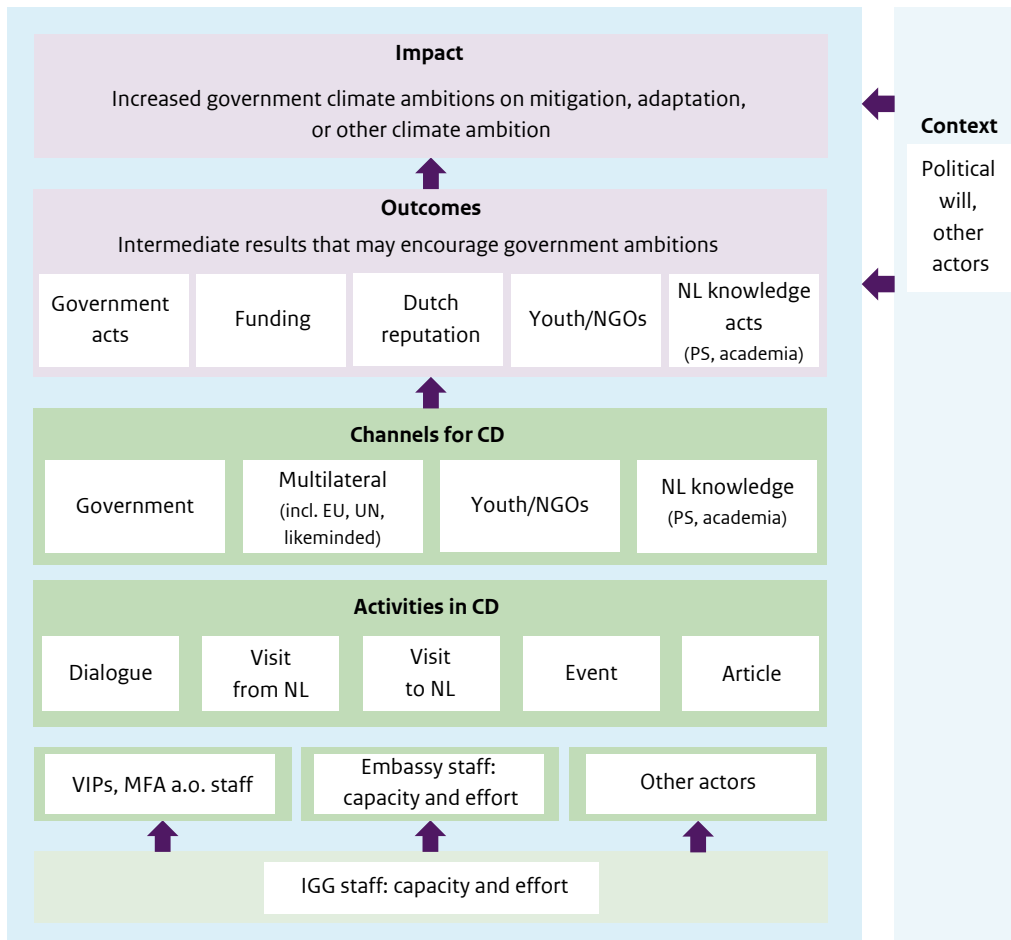
The research team classified the survey answers to enable analysis, for instance by grouping activities into categories and stakeholders into channels. The team looked for patterns between efforts, activities, outcomes and impacts. The following analyses conducted were carried out:

1. Outcome, explained by combinations of effort, four channels, total activities and context. <sup>54</sup>
2. Impact, explained by combinations of effort, four channels, total activities and context.
3. Outcome, explained by combinations of effort, five types of activities and context.
4. Impact, explained by combinations of effort, five types of activities and context.
5. Impact, explained by combinations of five outcome components and context.

Annex B describes the methodology used for this QCA in more detail, and Figure 10 below shows what activities, channels, outcomes and impacts mean for the purpose of this analysis.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Total activities’ means the aggregated variable, including several activities. Channels means the set of actors that – in this case – Dutch embassies mobilised and supported to promote climate ambitions in the host country.





**Figure 10:** Representation of the framework for analysis of country-specific CD campaigns.<sup>55</sup>

Knowledge = knowledge institutions and experts; PS= private sector, multilateral = international and supranational entities including UN, EU and like-minded alliances.

### 3.2.2. Results of the analysis

#### *A combination of diplomacy channels is needed to increase government ambitions*

There is no country where one diplomacy channel alone has shown results. Instead, a combination of diplomacy efforts seems to have been effective in increasing government climate ambitions in several countries. We found three effective combinations:

- Government-to-government diplomacy, combined with diplomacy through like-minded countries, the EU, or multilateral organisations. According to the QCA, this was effective in Vietnam and Japan.
- Government-to-government diplomacy, combined with support to youth organisations or NGOs. According to the QCA, this was effective in Israel, Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates.
- Support to youth organisations or NGOs, combined with diplomacy through like-minded countries, the EU or multilateral organisations. According to the QCA, this was effective in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

There are many countries where the combination of support to youth organisations or NGOs and the involvement of Dutch knowledge institutes or the private sector resulted in intermediate results, but not yet to increased government ambitions.

<sup>55</sup> The place of ‘Dutch reputation’ in this framework reflects both the fact that the Dutch reputation improves by working with the partners (channels) in the box below, and the fact that this reputation helps Dutch representatives to contribute to higher-level results: more ambitious climate policies.

*A combination of several types of activities is needed to increase government ambitions*

There is no country where one type of activity alone produced results. In most countries where Dutch diplomacy does seem to have influenced government climate ambitions, this was due to the combination of in-country dialogue, visits by Dutch representatives to the country and visits by country representatives to the Netherlands.

*Most promising countries for follow-up research in this study*

Based on the QCA analyses, two countries are most promising for follow-up in the context of this evaluation, because several analyses confirmed the pattern between diplomacy efforts and increased government ambitions there, and because different diplomacy efforts were used.

- *Israel*, where government-to-government diplomacy combined with support to youth organisations or NGOs seems to have been effective. Moreover, support to youth organisations or NGOs combined with the involvement of the Dutch private sector or knowledge institutes contributed to intermediate results. Israel is also one of the countries where the combination of several types of activities contributed to the government's ambitions and intermediate results.
- *Vietnam*, where government-to-government diplomacy combined with diplomacy through like-minded countries, the EU or multilateral organisations seems to have been effective. Moreover, this combination of diplomacy efforts also produced intermediate results. Vietnam is also one of the countries where the combination of several types of activities contributed to the government's ambitions and intermediate results, as the detailed results in Annex B demonstrate.

Note that this selection of two embassies, which are likely to have been successful, leads to a positive bias: the case studies are not representative of all Dutch embassies. This selection was made to allow for process tracing, and the next chapter will describe how two specific diplomatic processes may have contributed to the results in terms of higher climate ambitions in Vietnam and Israel.





# 4

## Case studies: Vietnam and Israel

In the previous chapter, the qualitative comparative analysis identified the Dutch embassies in Vietnam and Israel as two of the most active embassies, with potentially successful climate diplomacy campaigns. In the QCA, all five analyses confirmed the relationship between diplomacy activities, outcomes and impacts in Israel, and four did so in Vietnam. Based on the QCA and interviews, we defined a hypothetical causal mechanism for each country: one in Vietnam, involving the EU in promoting renewable energy; and one in Israel, promoting hydrogen in cooperation with experts and the private sector.

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine whether the identified causal mechanism in each specific context leads to the claimed outcome. As mentioned in our ToR,<sup>xxxix</sup> the overarching objective of the climate diplomacy campaign (raising the ambitions in NDCs of the target countries) is relatively lofty and ambitious. Therefore, this part of our study also focuses on intermediate outcomes, such as the mobilisation of relevant actors and agenda setting. At the end of this chapter, we will identify successful aspects of the campaign and lessons learned that may be applicable to other campaigns and settings.

## 4.1. Vietnam

### 4.1.1. Introduction

Following the QCA, we expected to see two impact pathways with relevant channels in Vietnam: one through the multilateral channel (UN, EU and/or like-minded) and one through the bilateral, government-to-government channel. In this section, we will examine one specific case where the Netherlands tried to influence Vietnam’s ambitions on renewable energy, through the multilateral channel: EU budget support for the energy sector in Vietnam. The Netherlands contributed to more ambitious indicators for this EU support, especially for wind power. We have identified a causal mechanism and will explain how it worked.

#### *Brief description of the Vietnamese context*

Vietnam is a one-party socialist republic in Southeast Asia. It is a lower middle-income country with one of the world’s fastest-growing economies. Its economy, historically based on agriculture but now with a large industrial sector, is driven by the Communist Party’s five-year plans. Vietnam’s energy sector is dominated by the state-controlled Vietnam Electricity Group. In 2021, Vietnam’s population was around 97.5 million people. Vietnam has a tropical climate.

### 4.1.2. Dutch objectives, policies and strategies

The Netherlands has a long-standing relationship with Vietnam. Before 2011, this relationship was mainly based on development cooperation. After that, ODA was phased out, and economic cooperation and trade promotion became more important, with the Netherlands being an important investor and trading partner. The countries agreed on two Strategic Partnership Agreements as a basis for bilateral cooperation and dialogue: (1) on agriculture and food security and (2) water and climate change.<sup>xi</sup> Prior to the climate diplomacy campaign, adaptation was a higher priority than mitigation.

The *Multi-Annual Country Strategy* sets out the MFA’s strategy for Vietnam for the period 2020-2023. It emphasises business opportunities and expertise in the fields of environmentally sustainable development, water and adaptation, and agriculture. It also aims to encourage Vietnam to participate actively in multilateral climate initiatives, and determine ambitious goals and budgets for mitigation and adaptation.<sup>xii</sup>

In 2020 and 2021, the *Dutch country-specific climate diplomacy campaign* selected Vietnam as one of the target countries. The climate diplomacy team considered the country as neither progressive nor reluctant in terms of political will on climate ambition, but as a neutral, or ‘yellow’ country. The interdepartmental task force identified priority topics and objectives:<sup>xiii</sup> They wanted Vietnam to:

- become a regional promoter of climate action; and
- commit to a net-zero carbon emission target for 2050.

In addition, the Netherlands saw opportunities for:

- cooperation in agriculture, nature and water; especially on adaptation and water in the Mekong Delta; and
- cooperation on renewable energy, most notably in offshore wind and solar energy; and to promote the phasing out of coal power.

*Climate adaptation* has long been a key area of cooperation for the Dutch embassy. This work has had a



special focus on the Mekong Delta, where the Netherlands has been a consistent and respected partner since around 2009.<sup>56xliii</sup> In 2020, the embassy's climate and water focal point drafted an informal strategy on climate adaptation.<sup>xliv</sup>

#### *Example of embassy activities on adaptation<sup>xlv</sup>*

The embassy organised a local conference on adaptation (a pre-CAS event) in January 2021. They also managed to get a video message from the Vietnamese Prime Minister for the high-level opening session of the CAS (Climate Adaptation Summit). Also, in the run-up to COP26, the Dutch embassy organised an event in Hanoi on climate adaptation and the Mekong Delta.

Regarding *climate mitigation*, the embassy decided to focus on the promotion of offshore wind energy around 2019, also with a view to promoting Dutch business opportunities. The embassy also put energy on the agenda in the Development Partners Working Group.

#### *Example of a global initiative relevant to Vietnam: coal power<sup>xlvi</sup>*

The Netherlands also promoted the phasing out of coal. At the global level, the Netherlands joined the Powering Past Coal Alliance. It also held bilateral talks with Japan, South Korea and Australia, including in Tokyo and Seoul. The former two are large investors in coal projects in Vietnam and the latter is an exporter of coal to Vietnam.

### 4.1.3. Vietnamese policies

Vietnam has come a long way in the last five years. Initially, the country was reluctant to embrace renewable energy and energy efficiency, and to phase out coal-fired power plants, because of its continued economic growth and the need for its industry and citizens to have a reliable, uninterrupted supply of electricity. The government believed that wind and solar could not provide this.<sup>xlvii</sup> However, in recent years, encouraged by the international community, the private sector and technological developments, the government has committed to increasing the share of renewable energy in the mix and has facilitated a rapid growth of wind and solar power by developing regulations and issuing permits.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Vietnam presented an Indicative Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2015.<sup>57 xlix</sup> This INDC commits to an 8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE) by 2030 (unconditionally, i.e. without international support) compared to a business-as-usual scenario, which could increase up to 25% with international support. However, it uses 2010 as a baseline. In 2020, Vietnam drafted an updated NDC for COP 26, committing to a GHGE reduction of 9% by 2030, which could increase up to 27% with international support. It uses 2014 as the base year. This NDC had to be revised after the Prime Minister announced a net-zero emissions target for 2050 at COP26. The revised and updated NDC (2022) has a reduction target of 15.8% and a conditional target of 43.5% (but the baseline year is still 2014). As for coal, the NDC now foresees a transit to cleaner fuels at coal-fired power plants.

Other recent strategies and plans also reflect a higher level of ambition, including the National Climate Change Strategy to 2050 (2022),<sup>i</sup> the Methane Emission Reduction Action Plan to 2030 (2022)<sup>ii</sup> and the eighth five-year Power Development Plan (PDP8, draft, yet to be adopted).<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Dutch cooperation in the Mekong Delta has been an important programme for Dutch development cooperation in Vietnam, integrating various sectors, involving the Ministry of I&W and many Dutch experts, including key support for the Mekong Delta Plan. In April 2019, a visit by Prime Minister Rutte (including a trade mission) and the Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management Van Nieuwenhuizen addressed cooperation on the agricultural transition in the Mekong Delta, and an MoU was signed, as well as a joint declaration to make Vietnam a convening country for the Global Commission on Adaptation. Such cooperation reinforced the Netherlands' reputation as a trusted partner.

<sup>57</sup> The INDC formally became Vietnam's NDC in October 2016.

#### 4.1.4. Case: Promoting renewable energy through EU budget support

We identified a pathway where the Netherlands worked through the EU to promote renewable energy in Vietnam, and the Dutch claimed a particular success: influencing an EU budget support programme for the energy sector to make its indicators for disbursement more ambitious on renewable energy and/or the phasing out of coal. Dutch informants said that this is how the Netherlands had promoted the phasing out of coal power plants,<sup>58</sup> but the story turned out to be more nuanced.<sup>58</sup> <sup>liv</sup>

The pathway we found is highlighted in bold on the left in Figure 11 below: this figure shows how the embassy and DIE (the EU department of the MFA), through the EU and like-minded partners, aimed for more ambitious government ambitions.

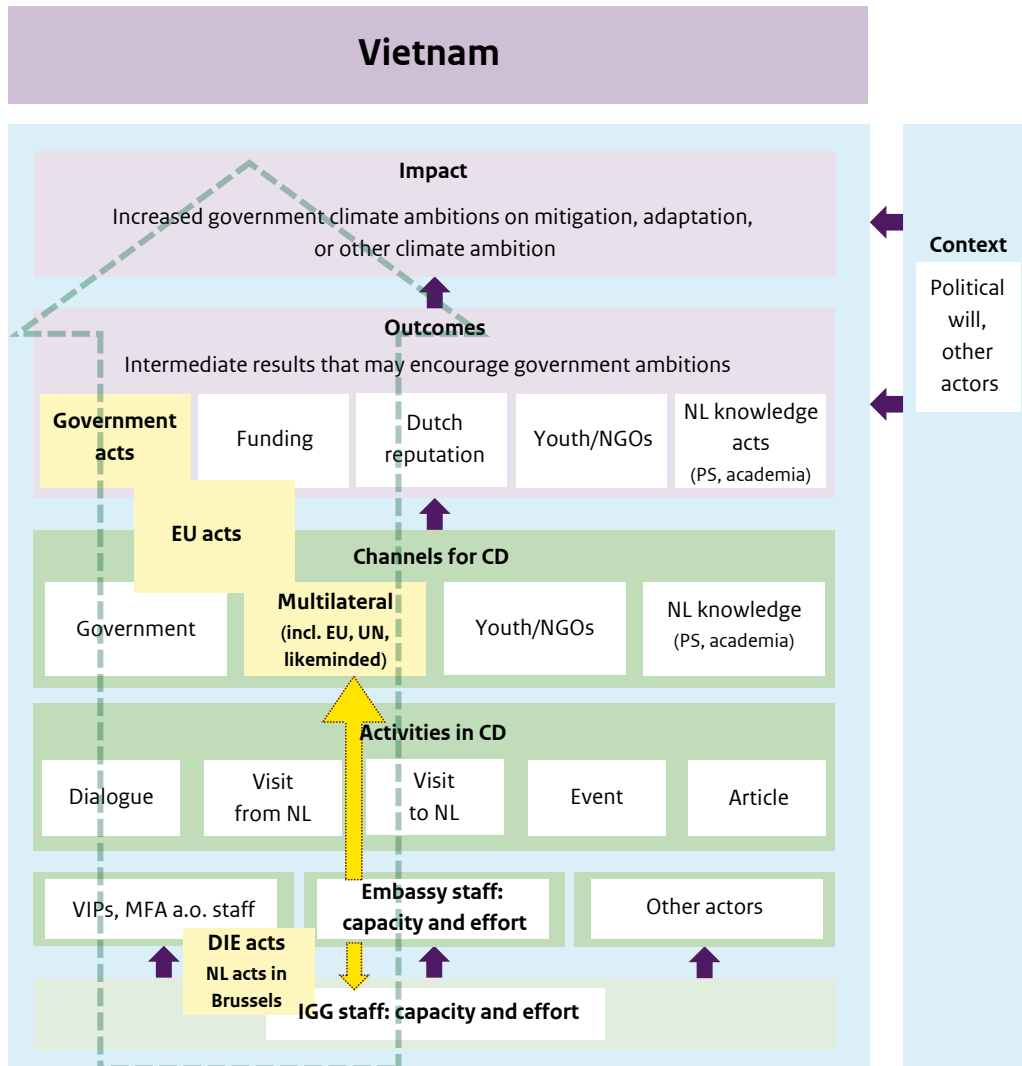


Figure 11: The impact pathway found in Vietnam in the model used for QCA.

For this pathway, government-to-government efforts were not a topic of interest, because they were separate and focused on adaptation, the private sector and economic development rather than Vietnam’s policies on renewable energy. IOB did not find a clear impact pathway here.

#### Background

Vietnam is one of the first countries where the EU is trying to work as one (‘working better together’, a Team Europe Initiative).<sup>lv</sup> The EU Development Counsellors in Hanoi meet on a regular basis to coordinate and cooperate. They also engage in climate diplomacy, including joint démarches in the run-up to the COPs of the UNFCCC.<sup>lvi</sup>

<sup>58</sup> A diplomatic message by the Dutch embassy of 22 January 2021 was more modest: it merely claimed the commitment of the EU to strive for better indicators.

The EU has been providing budget support to Vietnam for its energy sector since 2017. In the first support programme, the focus was on improving energy access for Vietnamese citizens, even though some Member States were already advocating a stronger focus on renewable energy.<sup>59</sup> When this programme ended, the EU envisaged a second round of support. An amount of 121 million euros was earmarked for budget support, plus 21 million euros for related technical assistance.<sup>lvii</sup>

Discussions on the objectives of this programme started in late 2019. EU budget support is provided by the Commission, which is responsible and does not require Member States' approval of the performance indicators, according to EU representatives.<sup>lviii</sup> However, the EU delegation in Hanoi agreed to discuss the support with its members, the development counsellors there. Eventually, the committee dealing with the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) in Brussels had to approve the budget support.<sup>lix</sup>

#### *Impact pathway, Figure 12*

The figure below shows the steps taken by the Netherlands promote renewable energy (RE) targets in EU budget support and the interactions between the EU and Vietnam, indicating a possible causal mechanism. The steps were broadly as follows:

1. The Dutch embassy and like-minded countries in Hanoi wanted budget support for the energy sector to focus on renewable energy, with more ambitious indicators, which led to step 2.
2. The embassy mobilised actors in The Hague, in particular DIE, which led to step 3.
3. DIE mobilised like-minded countries and the Commission in Brussels, in the context of the DCI Committee, which did not have a major impact on the decision to provide EU support, nor on the EU delegation in Hanoi (a dotted arrow leads from step 3 to step 4).
4. Discussions continued between the EU delegation and members, particularly in Hanoi, which provided input for the EU position in step 5.
5. The EU delegation negotiated with the Vietnamese government to reach a financial agreement for the support. Some indicators in the resulting log frame were more ambitious, especially the wind power indicator.
6. These EU efforts and related climate diplomacy had some effect on the Vietnamese government, which has worked towards more ambitious policies (a dotted arrow leads from step 5 to step 6).

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<sup>59</sup> The first budget support programme had to be revised before the decision was adopted following objections from several Member States, including the Netherlands.

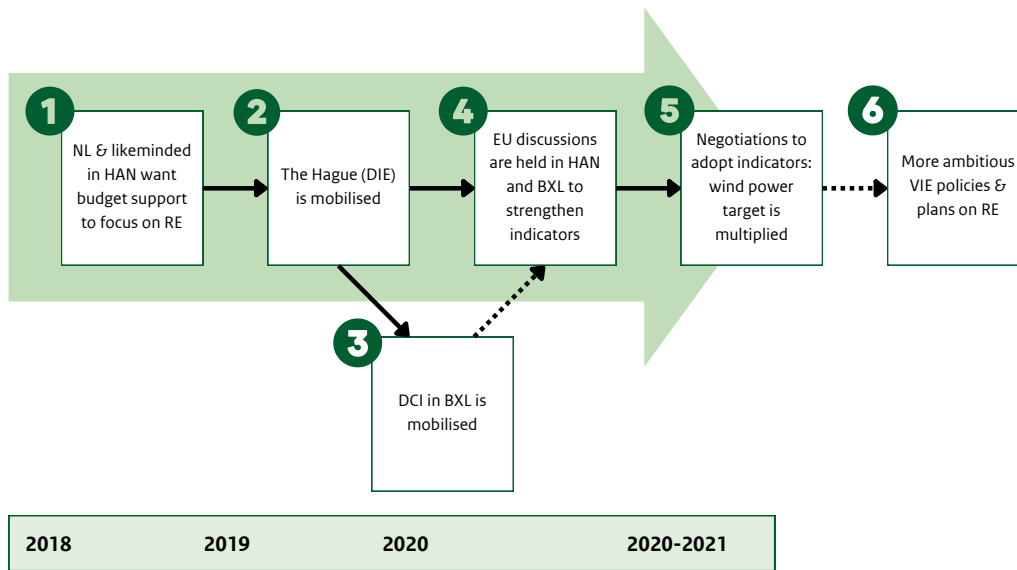


Figure 12: Process tracing mechanism Vietnam. (BXL = EU in Brussels).

### The steps and mechanisms

The Dutch embassy in Hanoi tried to promote renewable energy by lobbying for more ambitious performance indicators for the disbursement of the EU budget support.<sup>60</sup> This EU programme aimed to improve energy efficiency, increase the share of renewable energy and improve Vietnam’s energy information system.

#### Step 1. The embassy wanted budget support to focus on renewables: awareness raising

In 2018 or 2019, the Dutch embassy was alerted by the Belgian embassy, among others, that there was an issue with the EU budget support for the energy sector. As Vietnam had many coal-fired power plants and was planning to build even more to meet the growing demand for electricity, the Netherlands and Belgium were concerned that the EU support might be used to develop coal-fired power plants rather than for the transition to clean energy. The Netherlands raised this issue with donors in the Development Working Group.<sup>61</sup> The embassy also discussed it among like-minded donor countries to coordinate positions. The Commission itself put the budget support on the agenda for discussion with development counsellors in Hanoi in late 2019 and early 2020.<sup>62</sup>

In December 2019, the Dutch embassy contacted the EU department (DIE), as well as the climate diplomacy team at IGG.<sup>62</sup> The embassy explained to DIE that without conditionality in the budget support, the government could continue to invest in the existing range of energy sources, including coal.<sup>63</sup>

#### Step 1 (continued). Embassy in Hanoi mobilises like-minded countries

From December 2019 to February 2020, the Dutch embassy in Hanoi was in constant contact with like-minded representatives to coordinate positions. The Netherlands asked the EU to promote a greater share of renewable energy through the budget support targets and specifically the development of offshore wind energy in Vietnam.<sup>64</sup> The Dutch and Danish ambassadors jointly raised the issue at a meeting of EU Heads of Mission.<sup>65</sup> Then, the Commission agreed to organise an expert meeting in January 2020 to discuss the budget support in more detail with members. In this context, the Dutch embassy and like-minded countries advocated for a higher target for the share of renewable energy in the mix, as well as for Direct Power Purchase Agreements, and off-grid wind power.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The budget support programme is not conditional, but payment of the flexible tranches (disbursement after the initial batch) depends on progress against certain performance indicators, which are specified in a log frame for each target in the EU’s financial agreement with Vietnam. The Netherlands and like-minded countries tried to make these indicators more ambitious.

<sup>61</sup> The Netherlands co-chaired this group with the UN Resident Coordinator and the World Bank in 2018, helping to put energy on the agenda and showcasing Dutch efforts in the field of energy.

<sup>62</sup> Usually, the DIE asks the regional department, and sometimes the thematic department, for input on decisions to be made in the DCI committee. In this case, the embassy was already discussing it among like-minded stakeholders and with the Commission.

The embassy coordinated with Belgium, Denmark, Germany (GIZ), Ireland and Finland. In particular, it worked with countries that had an interest in the offshore wind industry. France and Italy also spoke in favour of more ambition on renewable energy. Outside the EU, the World Bank and Norway did the same. In addition, the embassy worked with the United Kingdom on the topic: the country had left the EU but was ambitious in this area and was the organiser of COP26.<sup>lxvii</sup>

### *Step 2. The Hague is mobilised and provides high-level guidance*

In the week before the DCI meeting, DIE consulted with the Director of IGG and the Deputy DGIS, while it became clear that like-minded countries were not going to block the support (see step 3).<sup>lxviii</sup> They decided that the Netherlands could go along and agree to budget support on the condition that (1) Member States would be involved in the drafting of performance indicators, which (2) should be ambitious to achieve better results towards renewable energy, and (3) that the Commission would report back to Member States on progress against the indicators. In their discussions on the Dutch positions, senior policymakers proposed that a larger share of the budget support (the ‘flexible share’) should be made conditional on such progress. They also suggested that all EU budget support should be aligned with the Green Deal.<sup>lxix</sup>

Subsequently, the DIE prepared a Memorandum to the Minister for BHOS, asking her to agree to the following position at the DCI committee of 26 February.<sup>lxx</sup> The minister agreed. The Netherlands would:

- Abstain from voting if the indicators were not ambitious enough to help increase the share of renewables in the energy mix.
- Request the Commission (together with Germany) to take measures to ensure that the support is not used to support coal-fired power plants.
- Request the Commission to involve Member States in the development of performance indicators for disbursements and report back to them on progress.

### *Step 3. The Hague tries to influence the Brussels DCI: like-minded countries and the Commission*

Earlier in February 2020, the European Integration Department (at the MFA, DIE) contacted its counterparts from like-minded countries – representatives in the DCI committee – to explore cooperation. Subsequently, DIE and its German counterparts agreed to send written questions to the Commission.<sup>lxxi</sup> In fact, several EU Member States – Belgium, France, Spain and the Netherlands – sent written questions, calling for greater ambition on renewable energy. In its written reply, the Commission said it was confident that the financial assistance would not be used to finance coal-fired power plants. It added that the primary objective of budget support was to assist beneficiary countries to achieve their own objectives using their internal systems.<sup>lxxii</sup>



*The Dutch questions and the Commission's answers, provided to the DCI on 26 February 2020, included the following:*

- How will it be ensured that the Power Development Plan 8 is as ambitious as possible?
  - Answer: The EU would have an ongoing discussion with Vietnam on the development of the plan in the context of the Energy Partnership Group (VEPG) and the bilateral policy dialogue.
- Can a higher share of the budget support be made variable and disbursed according to the progress made on performance indicators?
  - Answer: The typical share of budget support is around 60% fixed, 40% variable. In this case, however, the variable share has already been increased to almost 60%. The Vietnamese government would not have enough predictable income if this were to increase further.
- Can the Commission ensure that the performance indicators will be sufficiently ambitious to achieve results and improvements that would not have been achieved without the budget support?
  - Answer: The performance or disbursement indicators are the Commission's executive competence, since they are not part of the draft implementing act (but of the financing agreement). However, Member States could suggest amendments, and the Commission would keep them informed in Hanoi.

Through the contacts DIE had with like-minded DCI representatives, it became clear that other EU Member States would not block the EU budget support. Although the Dutch policymakers involved were disappointed with the answers and their technical, procedural nature, they thought it best not to be the only Member to not vote in favour and advised the minister accordingly, as described above (step 2).<sup>lxxiii</sup>

### *Step 3 (continued). At the DCI in Brussels, NL, like-minded countries and the Commission agree*

On 26 February, at the DCI, all Member States agreed to the budget support.<sup>63lxxiv</sup> The Netherlands, as well as Denmark, Germany, France and Belgium, did ask for more ambitious performance indicators. The Dutch delegation mentioned offshore wind and the need for Vietnam to develop alternatives to the plans for coal-fired power plants. They also said that all EU stakeholders should lobby in Hanoi to help increase the ambition of Vietnam's upcoming power development plan, the PDP8.<sup>lxxv</sup>

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### *Step 4. Discussions within the EU in Hanoi and Step 5. Negotiations with Vietnam*

Following the adoption of the EU Decision on budget support in May 2020, the Commission negotiated with Vietnamese government representatives on the phrasing of the indicators in the financing agreement. This was agreed in December 2021, just before the deadline. The EU kept Member States informed on these negotiations in Hanoi – and Member States such as the Netherlands continued to put forward ambitious positions for improving the performance indicators (step 4).<sup>lxxvi</sup>

As EU representatives explained, one issue that prevented a major increase in ambition was that the targets and indicators (log frames) for budget support must be based on, and not go beyond, the country's own targets and policies.<sup>lxxvii</sup> In the case of Vietnam, targets and indicators were based on the 7th Power Development Plan (PDP) and the Energy Efficiency Plan for 2019–2030, among others. The EU tried to include targets from some draft policies, such as the draft of the new PDP8, and also used the actual state of affairs in 2021 for the baseline data. EU representatives said that the targets and indicators in the final financial agreement represented a more realistic level of ambition, more in line with actual policy and practice than the 2020 document.<sup>lxxviii</sup> This 'realistic level of ambition' includes indicators that are more concrete, sometimes more ambitious, but sometimes similar to the draft indicators in the 2020 document.

The wind power indicator is probably the one that changed the most (between the original May 2020 indicators and the ones from December 2021), whereas the other indicators did not become much more ambitious. The final indicator on wind power includes a range, two figures, for kWh electricity production

<sup>63</sup> All Member States agreed to this support, according to the (DIE) delegation's report of the meeting. For the decision, see 'COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 12.5.2020 on the financing of the Annual Action Programme in favour of Viet Nam for 2020' and its Annex, the 'Action Document for the EU – Viet Nam Sustainable Energy Transition Programme' and its performance indicators for disbursement of the flexible tranches. This support builds 'on the ongoing Energy Sector Policy Support Programme to enhance Access to Sustainable Energy in Rural Areas of Viet Nam, which started in 2017, this action aims at contributing to a sustainable energy transition in Viet Nam.'

in 2025, including both the PDP7 and PDP8 figures.<sup>64</sup> At the time of the negotiations between the EU and Vietnam in 2021, the actual amount of annual electricity generated from grid-connected wind power was around 1 billion kWh, according to the EU delegation, while the indicator for disbursement of the flexible tranche in 2025 was between 10 and 18 times this amount. The EU delegation explained that this reflected the largest increase in ambition, while the other indicators did not seem to represent a significantly higher level of ambition.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Another issue that prevented ambitious indicators was that the time horizon could go beyond the end date of the budget support programme, which in this case was 2025 (rather than 2030 or 2050). This meant that the desire of the Netherlands and like-minded countries to have offshore wind power specifically mentioned in the log frame was unrealistic, in the EU's view, as it would be impossible to build an offshore wind park by 2025.<sup>lxxx</sup>

Finally, reflecting on the potential longer-term impact of climate diplomacy on Vietnam's climate and energy policies (step 5), the EU, the Netherlands and like-minded countries continued to encourage the government to be more ambitious, including through the Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group.<sup>65lxxxi</sup> Moreover, in 2022 the government adopted an updated NDC and several strategies and policies that reflect a higher level of ambition, as described in 4.1.3 above.

When it comes to phasing out coal-fired power plants, the current government plans and policies still include plans to build a dozen new ones. However, we are told that investors and donors no longer want to invest in coal, so it is likely that they will not actually be built.

#### *Conclusions on the process and on the Netherlands' influence on renewable energy ambitions*

*The Netherlands' effort:* The embassy succeeded in mobilising like-minded countries in Hanoi and Brussels, as well as policymakers in The Hague. First, the Netherlands promoted coordination and action by like-minded countries, contacting them in Hanoi and Brussels for joint advocacy. Then, through officers at DIE and IGG, the embassy managed to engage decision-makers in The Hague. It should be noted that while this effort was successful, it would be impossible, because too labour-intensive, to conduct such a lobbying campaign for every country where the EU provides budget support (as one officer remarked).<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Dutch representatives claim to have played an important part in the discussions on EU budget support. The Netherlands helped to set the agenda: it was a strong lobbyist in the EU and Vietnam to increase the share of renewable energy in the mix, as well as for private sector access and offshore wind.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> However, it was not just a Dutch effort, as several like-minded Member States were also involved. The Netherlands was one of a group of active partners, albeit one of the most vocal and proactive.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

*EU efforts:* The indicators for EU budget support were redrafted to include a bit more ambition and detail on renewable energy. The indicators had to be based on Vietnam's targets, rather than the higher or long-term ambitions that the Netherlands and some others wanted. The target on wind power became at least ten times more ambitious, but no offshore wind target was included in the final log frame. The final level of ambition was always going to be based on Vietnam's own policies and targets, and could therefore not go beyond existing commitments.

In terms of the overall aim of promoting climate ambitions, renewable energy and emission reduction targets in Vietnam, EU representatives (including the Netherlands) claimed to have had an influence, leading to more ambitious targets, such as the net-zero target in 2050 announced by the Prime Minister at COP26.<sup>lxxxv</sup> EU contacts also claim to have contributed to favourable policies for increasing the share of renewable energy in the mix and discouraging coal-fired plants.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> They did this not only through discussions on budget support, but also through discussions around COP26 (including the Netherlands) and the Just Energy Transition Programme (JETP) (where the Netherlands was not a partner but did

<sup>64</sup> The EU delegation provided us with a confidential version of the financial arrangement from late 2021, which shows the detailed final targets and indicators, and they explained them in an interview. The log frame includes kWh target amounts of wind power (as well as solar power) based on PDP7 and PDP8.

<sup>65</sup> The Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group was established in 2017. It is chaired by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and co-chaired by the EU Delegation to Vietnam and the World Bank. The Dutch embassy has participated in its high-level meetings and several technical meetings.

engage) and the Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group (where the Netherlands is engaged).<sup>lxxxvii66</sup>

Finally, we note that Vietnam tried not to be influenced by outside actors when drafting its revised NDC in 2022, according to a person involved in the process at the time.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

Overall, the Netherlands was successful in mobilising the right actors in this context and in helping to set the agenda in Vietnam. It contributed to joint efforts to promote more ambitious Vietnamese policies, including the phasing out of coal-fired power, and Vietnamese commitments and policies from 2022 onwards are indeed more ambitious.

#### *Evidence for the conclusions*

The Netherlands actively lobbied the EU in Hanoi and Brussels to increase its demands to the government. The evidence we found for this active lobbying is strong, including interviews, e-mails and meeting reports.

The EU's results in encouraging Vietnam to adopt more ambitious targets through the budget support programme were limited and were bound to be so. The evidence for this conclusion is strong (written documents and interviews).

The Dutch influence on these EU efforts was moderate: the Dutch embassy remained actively involved in discussions on renewable energy and in EU meetings, but the EU position did not change substantially. Looking at the year 2021, the evidence for this moderate influence is weak, as we have no written information on the negotiation process after the Decision of May 2020, except for the final agreement in late 2021.<sup>67 lxxxix</sup>

#### **4.1.5. Conclusions and lessons learned in Vietnam**

We will briefly reflect on which aspects of the Vietnam case might be useful in other contexts. In this case, the Netherlands has, to some extent, contributed to higher climate ambitions through a concerted effort by like-minded stakeholders, with close coordination between Dutch actors in Hanoi and The Hague. The Netherlands was instrumental in promoting such concerted action.

At the same time, other factors were equally, if not more, important in raising Vietnam's formal commitments. For instance, the Vietnamese Prime Minister unexpectedly announced a net-zero target for 2050 at COP26, which required his policymakers to adjust the relevant policies and laws. Also, the EU had started to push actively for renewable energy and climate action through the Green Deal and high-level contacts worldwide, including in Vietnam.<sup>68 xc</sup>

It can be concluded that promoting a concerted effort by like-minded stakeholders can be effective, especially when other favourable contextual factors are in place.

In Vietnam, the private sector companies turned out to have considerable influence, providing economic incentives and making the business case for renewable energy. The EU delegation noted that the Netherlands, like the other member states, had its own private sector and interests in mind when pushing for offshore wind targets. Indeed, the embassy worked closely with Dutch companies present in Hanoi to promote sustainable development and trade and investment opportunities. This also helped to demonstrate the business case for climate-friendly investments to Vietnamese counterparts.

<sup>66</sup> This programme, JETP, involves cooperation between G7, EU and multilateral donors on the one hand, and Vietnam on the other, to support investment and progress in renewable energy. An agreement on JETP was signed in late 2023. The Netherlands was not part of the core group. The EU also promoted renewable energy through the Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group, described in step 5 above.

<sup>67</sup> In addition, we have seen through interviews and email communication that the Dutch embassy was actively engaged in discussions on energy, including through the Viet Nam Energy Partnership Group.

<sup>68</sup> For example, the Vice-President and the Commissioner [visited Vietnam](#) in February 2022.

*Example of private sector influence*<sup>xcii</sup>

One striking example of how the private sector can speed up progress, which a few interviewees mentioned, was the multinational/Danish company LEGO, which managed to secure a commitment from the authorities on access to renewable energy before deciding on a large investment (in 2022). This meant that the government had to create an enabling environment by changing regulations and providing permits where necessary.

## 4.2. Israel

### 4.2.1. Introduction

In the QCA, all five analyses confirmed the relationship between diplomacy activities, outcomes and impacts for Israel, and two combinations of diplomacy channels were the most promising.<sup>69</sup> The first was the combination of the Youth and Dutch knowledge channels, while the second was the combination of Government (bilateral) and Youth. We will examine the process by which the Netherlands shared knowledge and organised events on green hydrogen to promote the energy transition and explore opportunities for Israeli-Dutch cooperation, through the Dutch knowledge channel.

*Brief description of the Israeli context*

The state of Israel was founded in 1948. The country has been characterised by ongoing (regional) instability since the State's foundation, despite the signing of peace agreements (e.g., the Abraham Accords, 2020<sup>xcii</sup>). Recent years have seen a severe political crisis, with five Knesset elections and four government elections in four years. The installation of a far-right government in December 2022 increased regional and national instability. There is also the absence of a constitution and a relative lack of policies.<sup>xciii</sup> In 1949, the first Knesset (Israeli parliament) failed to agree on a constitution, leading to the adoption of 13 Basic Laws over the years. Another important characteristic is that the country is relatively small and densely populated, with 7.8 million people. Israel has long been known as a start-up nation, famous for its advanced technology sector and the highest number of technology companies per capita. Finally, the country is located in a climate hotspot, with increasing impacts such as rising temperatures and water and energy shortages.

### 4.2.2. Dutch objectives, policies and strategies

In their initial strategic selection of priority countries, the climate diplomacy (CD) campaign team did not select Israel for a number of reasons, including low expectations of its potential for emission reductions due to its low GHG emissions relative to total GHG emissions. However, IGG later added Israel to the list of target countries because of its advanced technology sector and related opportunities for climate cooperation, and the eagerness of the embassy in Tel Aviv to focus on promoting climate ambitions in Israel.<sup>xciv xcvi</sup>

The CD team considered Israel a 'yellow' country, i.e. neither progressive nor reluctant in its climate ambitions.<sup>xcvi</sup> The strategy for the climate diplomacy campaign (formulated in The Hague) was to convince Israel to increase its climate ambitions in its NDC by setting a 40% renewable energy target for 2030 and committing to a net-zero GHG emissions target for 2050. The approach was to:

- emphasise economic opportunities in renewable energy
- explore the potential of cooperation on topics such as coastal protection, desalination plants, circular economy and green hydrogen.

The Israeli government's focus on economic growth, combined with the country's other characteristics, helps explain why economic incentives, such as cooperation with the private sector, might help promote climate action and raise climate ambitions.

<sup>69</sup> In the QCA, two combinations of diplomacy channels appeared to be the most promising: supporting youth organisations or NGOs and the involvement of the Dutch private sector or knowledge institutes, contributing to outcome; and supporting youth organisations or NGOs and government-to-government diplomacy, contributing to impact.

The embassy in Tel Aviv works with a list of priority topics in its annual plans,<sup>xvii</sup> including innovation cooperation, sustainable investment and trade. From 2019, ‘climate’ was added to this list. It was embraced as a positive theme due to its relatively ‘apolitical nature’ and the opportunities it offered for Israeli-Dutch cooperation. In 2020, the objective of the climate diplomacy campaign to influence governments’ climate ambitions appeared in the annual plan, as well as the ambition to join forces with Israel to tackle climate and sustainability challenges in third countries. In 2021, the embassy added a focus on Green Recovery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, within its ‘climate’ priority theme.

#### *Inter-ministerial cooperation*

The embassy in Tel Aviv mainstreamed climate across all sections of the embassy, working on a range of topics. On the mitigation side, they focused on renewable energy and waste management, while on the climate adaptation side they focused on water management. The Dutch Water Envoy and the embassy’s focal point for water also worked with the NGO EcoPeace on the proposed Green Blue Deal (2020)<sup>xviii</sup> to promote trilateral cooperation to address climate and water challenges between Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

#### 4.2.3. Israeli policies

As mentioned above, Israel has no constitution and relatively few policies that allow for a laissez-faire economy. In the area of climate, many policies are still being developed and not yet fully implemented.<sup>xcix</sup> This implementation gap is compounded by the fact that the government has changed four times in the last four years. Respondents suggested that this has been an obstacle to achieving changes in policy and/or implementation. After elections and during the formation of a new Knesset, no new policies are adopted or approved. Also, changes in government meant changes in policy focus, resulting in new priorities and various levels of climate ambition. This level of ambition was highest when the previous, 36th government,<sup>c</sup> was in office, from June 2021 to December 2022. They were very active and ambitious on climate, resulting in a more ambitious NDC and the adoption and development of certain climate policies.

Israel submitted its first indicative NDC in September 2015, which set per capita GHG emission reduction targets. In its updated NDC of 2021, Israel’s emission reduction target is an absolute target, with a 27% reduction by 2030 and an 85% reduction by 2050. However, the baseline year was 2015. The sectoral targets for this NDC were determined in Decision 171, adopted by the Knesset in the run-up to COP26. In this decision the government recognises the desirability of a net-zero emissions target by 2050, and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett committed to this target in the run-up to COP26,<sup>ci</sup> but it was not formally included in the updated NDC.<sup>cii</sup>

The government set up a multi-stakeholder process in 2019-2020, involving the private sector, knowledge institutions and civil society, to draft its National Action Plan on Climate Change 2022-2026.<sup>ciii</sup> Also, in 2021 it published a National Waste Strategy.<sup>civ, 70</sup> Furthermore, in 2022, a climate bill passed its first reading in the Knesset, but due to a change in the government, the bill will have to be re-approved by the newly instated Knesset in 2023<sup>cv</sup>.

#### 4.2.4. Case: promoting (green) hydrogen through a strengthened public-private network

Based in part on the QCA results, Israel was selected as a case study. The research team identified a pathway where the Netherlands promoted green hydrogen through the Dutch and Israeli private sector and Dutch experts, where many respondents explicitly claimed to have achieved some kind of outcome and higher-level impact.<sup>71cvi</sup> IOB examined a causal mechanism where the Dutch embassy, through the organisation of regular events on (green) hydrogen and renewable energy, brought together various actors from the Israeli and Dutch knowledge institutions, industry and government. This eventually led

<sup>70</sup> Waste is still a big problem in Israel. Over 80% of all waste goes to landfills and of the 20% that is recycled, not all is recycled in the right way. This is a big cause of methane emissions and thus their reduction is an important aspect of Israel’s climate ambitions.

<sup>71</sup> While hydrogen is a clean energy source, the way it is produced determines how clean and what ‘colour’ it is. Green hydrogen is produced using renewable energy, which is the most expensive form and only makes up a small percentage of the total. Blue hydrogen is produced from natural gas (methane), but also has CO<sub>2</sub> as a by-product, which is captured and stored (CCS). Grey hydrogen is produced from natural gas, but without CCS, and is currently the most common form.



to a strengthened network of actors with better access to decision-makers and a potential influence on the policies being developed. While this study focuses on the period from 2018 up to the COP 26 (in late 2021), this chain of events started in 2020 and developments are still ongoing, which is also reflected in this case study.

Initial information for this case on green hydrogen came from preliminary interviews in preparation for the survey and from interviews with embassy staff and contacts in The Hague. In Figure 13 below, the pathway and process identified in this case is highlighted and indicated by a large dotted arrow.

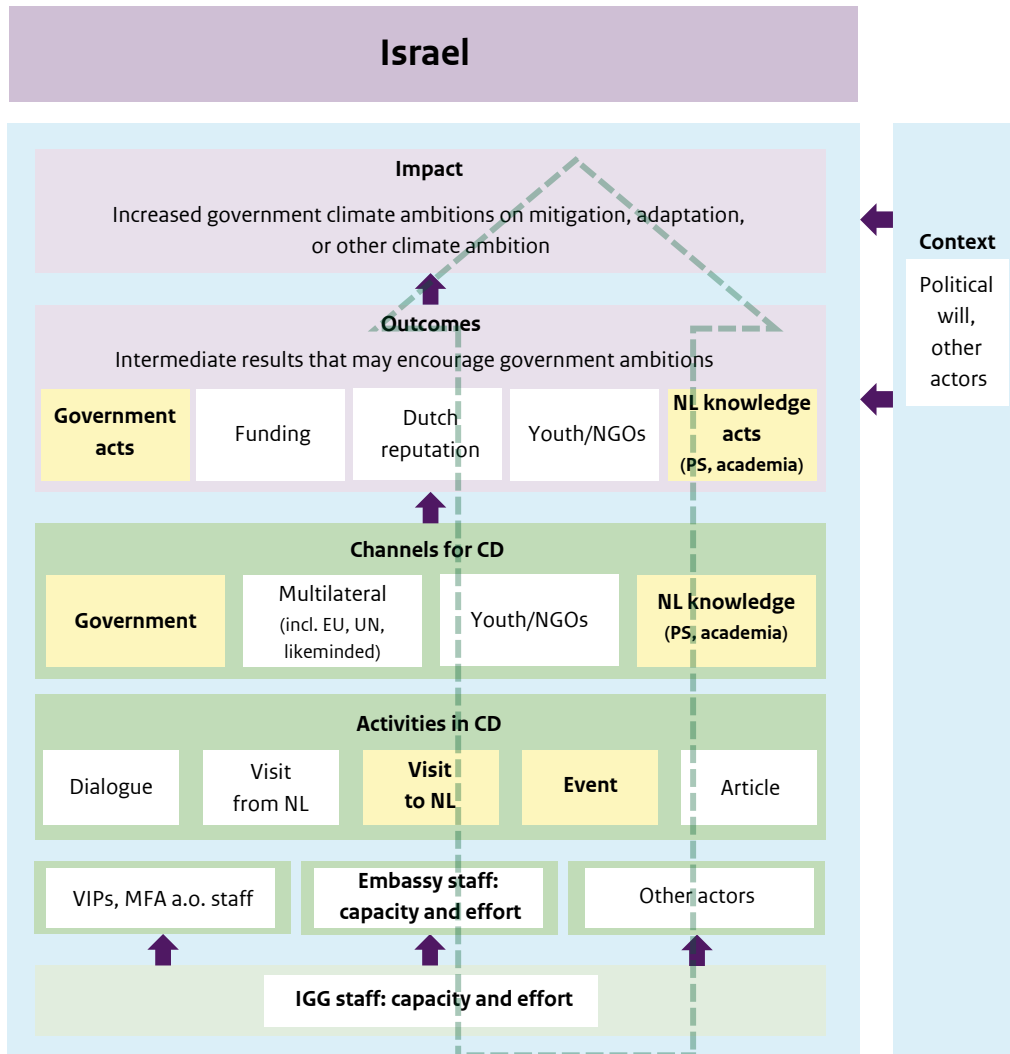


Figure 13: The impact pathway found in Israel in the model for QCA.

After the research team inquired about all possible channels at an early stage, the ‘youth’ channel could be ruled out. In reality most of the people interviewed reported that the embassy had worked relatively little with youth climate activists, that no or few outcomes had been presented, or that they themselves did not know much about these activities.<sup>72</sup>

### Background

Israel has been working to develop a climate policy and has adopted a number of official plans and policies, as mentioned above. Importantly, the government often relies on its private sector, which has a reputation for innovation, not only in the technology sector but also in renewable energy and other

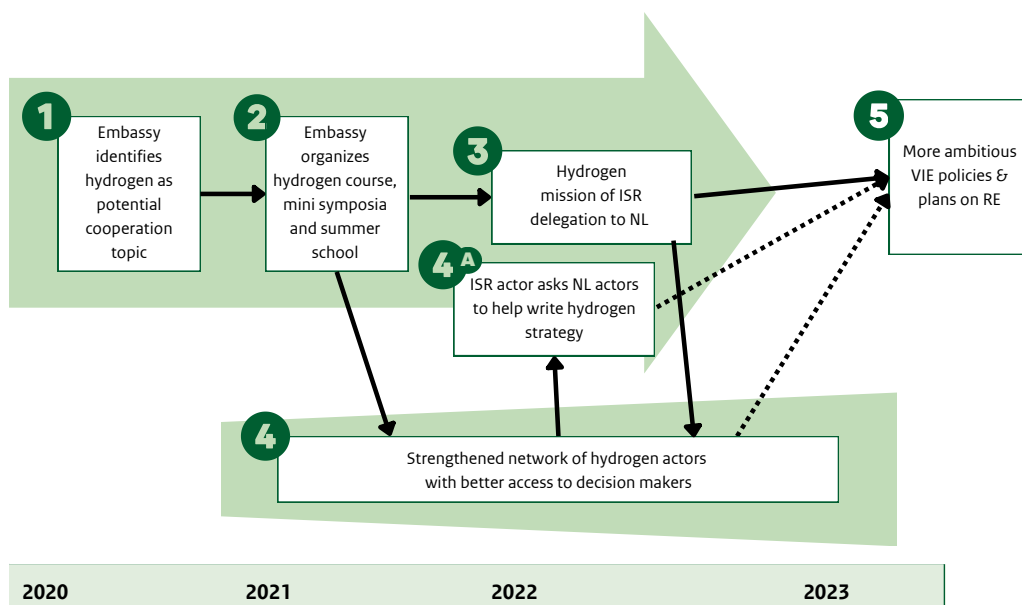
<sup>72</sup> Through interviews and our survey, we generally found that supporting youth activists helped them to participate in events and climate discussions, giving them a bigger voice. However, we found no higher-level impact of this kind of support. At the same time, this is understandable, as impact at the policy level is a long-term process and the youth do not have real power or access to decision-making yet.

climate-related niches, and Israeli government representatives have explained that their climate policies are partly based on expected innovations.<sup>cvi</sup> As mentioned above, the strategy of the climate diplomacy campaign in Israel has also focused on the private innovation sector. The embassy has an innovation attaché with the explicit task of identifying opportunities for sustainable cooperation. In 2016, the embassy/innovation attaché founded the Israeli Dutch Innovation Centre (IDIC), which is connected to the Netherlands Innovation Network.<sup>73,74</sup> IDIC organises activities to support the implementation of the Dutch Knowledge and Innovation Agenda and helps stakeholders to engage in sustainable innovation partnerships. In addition, the different departments within the embassy (e.g. ambassador, public diplomacy, economic department, focal point water and climate) work well together to promote climate action.<sup>cvi</sup> A handful of interviewees mentioned that climate and sustainable cooperation is a positive and less sensitive topic to work on in the Israeli context, which helps to explain the embassy’s enthusiasm for this topic.<sup>cix</sup>

*Impact pathway, Figure 14*

Figure 14 shows the steps taken by the Netherlands to promote green hydrogen through cooperation with Dutch knowledge institutions and the private sector, as well as Israeli actors, indicating a possible causal mechanism.

1. The Dutch embassy and the Israeli Dutch Innovation Centre identified green hydrogen as a potential topic for cooperation to promote renewable energy, which led to step 2.
2. The embassy co-organised a series of courses, mini-symposia and finally a summer school on green hydrogen with participants from industry, academia and government for knowledge sharing and network building, which led to step 3 and 4.
3. The embassy organised a hydrogen mission to the Netherlands for Israeli key stakeholders from the network of hydrogen experts and stakeholders built up through the series of hydrogen events, leading to step 4.
4. As a result of the events and the hydrogen mission, the network of hydrogen stakeholders grew stronger. As government representatives were part of this group, experts gained access to decision-makers and potential influence on policy grew. This led to steps 4a and step 5.
  - a. Israeli stakeholders from the private sector reached out in the established network to Dutch stakeholders to help determine a hydrogen strategy to present to the Israeli government. This potentially influenced step 5.
5. The Israeli government is working on several policies, including a hydrogen policy. This policy was influenced by the Netherlands, in part by the events it organised. No new policies (hydrogen or renewable energy) have been published yet, but they are expected in 2023 or 2024.



**Figure 14:** Process tracing mechanism Israel.

<sup>73</sup> The Netherlands Innovation Network is the network of innovation attachés, funded by The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy and hosted by RVO.

<sup>74</sup> <https://idic.org.il/>.

### *The steps and mechanisms*

The Dutch embassy in Tel Aviv worked on several projects and organised events through IDIC to promote renewable energy and explore the potential for cooperation between the Netherlands and Israel. In addition to (green) hydrogen, the embassy also explored what role the Dutch knowledge/private sector could play in the development and scaling up of solar and wind energy, and in water management (on the adaptation side).<sup>cx</sup>

#### *Step 1: Identifying (green) hydrogen as a potential topic for sustainable cooperation*

In early 2020, a session on the energy transition was held at an IDIC board meeting, where a strong interest was expressed to cooperate and share knowledge with the Netherlands on the energy transition by the Israeli private sector.<sup>cxii</sup> In the first half of 2020, the Dutch embassy specified this potential for knowledge sharing and cooperation by identifying the gaps on hydrogen in terms of policy and knowledge between the Israeli government and relevant actors in the private sector. At the time, there were already a few actors who had been working on hydrogen for many years (e.g. H2PRO), but overall the industry was not as developed as it was in the Netherlands.<sup>cxii, 75</sup>

At the same time, the Dutch government published its hydrogen strategy in early 2020, emphasising the importance of zero-carbon hydrogen and the key role of upscaling, cost reduction and innovation in realising the full potential of hydrogen to achieve its climate ambitions.<sup>cxiii</sup> Part of this strategy was to promote opportunities for Dutch companies in the hydrogen supply chain, and to link the potential in other countries and regions. For the Middle East in particular, the strategy points out a high potential for renewable energy production from solar and wind power, which can lead to (green) hydrogen as an export product.

#### *Step 2: Courses, knowledge sharing and networking events*

In September 2020, the embassy co-organised a two-day online course on (green) hydrogen with experts from the Dutch private sector and knowledge institutions. The scope of this course was very broad, aiming in the first place to share knowledge and develop R&D and business cooperation on (green) hydrogen. The course was open to anyone interested in the network of the embassy, IDIC and other co-organisers, resulting in a broad group of participants, ranging from representatives of the Israeli government to academics and the private sector.<sup>cxiv</sup>

After this first basic course, the embassy organised a series of online mini-symposia from February 2021 to June 2021. These mini-symposia covered a wider range of renewable energy topics, but three were specifically dedicated to hydrogen (e.g. Clean Hydrogen Production, Solar Energy and Electrolysers), which elaborated on the production, transport, storage and use of green hydrogen.<sup>cxv</sup> The specific topics of these symposia were based on the interests of the participants of the hydrogen course and other mini-symposia. During the course of the events, a core group of people from industry, academia and government was reported to have formed, sometimes also as presenters or co-organisers.<sup>cxvi</sup>

Subsequently, in August 2021, the embassy co-organised a three-day (virtual) summer school on Hydrogen Valleys – Knowledge to knowledge exchange for potential collaboration between the Netherlands and Israel. Experts explained the role that hydrogen valleys can play, and key speakers from the hydrogen valley in the Northern Netherlands shared their experiences.<sup>cxvii</sup>

#### *Step 3: Hydrogen mission to the Netherlands*

In May 2022, a group of Israeli representatives from government, private sector and academia (people from the core group, so-called 'influentials') visited the Netherlands.<sup>cxviii</sup> This four-day mission was a follow-up to the series of mini-symposia, organised to bring together the core stakeholders in real life and to introduce Israeli stakeholders to the technology and infrastructure used in the hydrogen valley in the north of the Netherlands (HEAVENN). In addition to the various companies that are part of the supply chain of HEAVENN, the delegation also visited the municipality of Groningen to learn about the importance of local support to hydrogen projects and various ports (e.g. the Port of Rotterdam). On several occasions the Israeli delegation was able to present their own work and developments in their country, including during networking events.

<sup>75</sup> H2PRO is an Israeli start-up founded in 2019 by leading hydrogen experts from Technion University. They have invented a revolutionary method for producing green hydrogen. In 2021, they won Shell's New Energy Challenge.

**Step 4a:**

Around the same time, in the first quarter of 2022, stakeholders from the Israeli industry contacted their Dutch counterparts to assist in the development of a hydrogen strategy to be presented to the government. The private sector saw the lack of strategy and policy as an obstacle to scaling up their work and hydrogen innovations, and therefore wanted to encourage the government by drafting a hydrogen strategy and presenting it to the relevant decision-makers. As the Netherlands already had a policy and a hydrogen strategy at that point, and the Dutch hydrogen experts had shared their ideas and experiences, the Israeli private sector stakeholders reached out to Dutch counterparts in the network established through the hydrogen events to advise on such a hydrogen strategy.<sup>cxix</sup> However, due to a timing issue, this cooperation did not occur.

**Step 4: Strengthened network of hydrogen stakeholders**

The formation of the core group of hydrogen stakeholders in Israel, but also the connection with the Dutch hydrogen network, had started in early 2021 and is still ongoing. As the events brought together stakeholders from industry and academia with government representatives and decision-makers, the access that the former had to the latter – and thus their influence – grew. The regularity and continuity of these events, which brought together this group of stakeholders, created this strengthened network and enabled better access to each other. People who were part of this group suggested that knowing that the next event was coming up soon, with regular meetings, made it easy to rely on the possibility of reconnecting between stakeholders and continuing to build a relationship over the past three years. The combination of actors from the ‘triple helix’ made for a fruitful network to further develop the hydrogen industry and potentially set up a hydrogen valley.<sup>76</sup>

**Step 5: Future hydrogen policies and strategy**

In October 2022, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte visited Israel, continuing the bilateral dialogue with members of the government and other candidates for the upcoming elections. Climate, water and energy were on the agenda. The Israeli Minister of Energy expressed an interest in following up on the visit by Israeli experts and stakeholders on hydrogen to the Netherlands (in May 2022), with private sector cooperation and joint R&D activities to further develop the Israeli hydrogen sector.<sup>cx</sup>

While the hydrogen strategy that the private sector wanted to initiate has not been finalised yet, the government is also working on a hydrogen policy, which they expect to publish in 2023.<sup>cxii</sup> The Netherlands and its policies and strategy have had considerable influence here. Several of the interviewees explained that Israel often looks to the Netherlands for policy development because the countries share some similarities (densely populated, small countries); and Israel is interested in seeing how the Netherlands sets its ambitions and what policies are implemented to achieve them.<sup>cxii</sup> In the case of hydrogen, the events organised helped to highlight its potential, but also its (dis)advantages: presenting (green) hydrogen as an economically viable, renewable source of energy, showing policymakers that there is an economic interest in supporting its development, but also sharing the challenges that still exist. In the ongoing bilateral dialogue and events that the embassy participates in and co-finances, they continue to highlight green hydrogen as a potentially important aspect of the transition to clean energy.<sup>cxiii</sup>

**Conclusions**

The Netherlands identified a niche in which the Dutch private and knowledge sectors have significant expertise to share, which could be promoted in climate diplomacy, and which could also lead to potential cooperation and economic benefits for both Israel and the Netherlands. Given the context, the strategy of focusing on innovation and potential cooperation with economic incentives worked well. By organising regular events in the period 2020–2022, the embassy managed to establish and strengthen a network of influential and relevant stakeholders (from the ‘triple helix’) from both countries. The access that this network provides to decision-makers and policymakers in both countries can potentially result in a hydrogen policy with an emphasis on clean hydrogen.

Dutch representatives claimed to have *influenced hydrogen policy and enabled knowledge sharing* between the two countries. While other stakeholders in both countries confirmed this, no concrete results or impacts could be verified so far. However, it is very likely that the efforts of the Dutch embassy helped to pave

<sup>76</sup> The triple helix refers to cooperation or partnerships with stakeholders from government, industry and knowledge institutions.

the way for green hydrogen as a step towards a more ambitious climate and energy policy. The hydrogen policy is still being elaborated and no formal document has been published. One obstacle in this process is the recent change of government.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In addition, according to our interviewees, the government is finding it difficult to decide whether it wants to focus on green or blue hydrogen. Israeli-Dutch cooperation in this field has not yet been announced either, although informal collaboration between experts is ongoing. Furthermore, the Netherlands continues to reiterate the importance of climate and the role of green hydrogen and other innovative technologies through bilateral dialogue.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The possibility of establishing a hydrogen valley is being explored. However, it is difficult to find a location and the Israeli hydrogen industry has not yet been able to scale up production and other aspects of the value chain. For a hydrogen valley to be worthwhile, you need to have an industry, but having a hydrogen valley could also drive the scale-up of hydrogen start-ups, further developing the industry, as an expert explained to us, creating a vicious circle.

These obstacles influence the strategic decision of Israeli policymakers whether to be part of the hydrogen industry and network. They do not want to develop an ambitious policy because they do not expect to be setting the tone in the field of hydrogen: being part of the community is enough for them.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Once the hydrogen policy is published, IOB may be better placed to draw some conclusions about the influence and the results of the efforts of the Dutch climate diplomacy campaign in Israel.

It is important to note that interviewees from different sectors in both countries remarked that the publication of a policy does not always mean that the policy is actually implemented: there is an *implementation gap*. As a result, stakeholders have often focused on working with private sector partners, and many start-ups are also often looking at opportunities abroad, where scale-up opportunities are greater and more realistic. Respondents were cynical about policy leading to implementation and thus to change, believing rather that impact can be achieved through the private sector.

#### *Evidence for the conclusions*

The evidence for the embassy's role in establishing and strengthening a hydrogen network and mobilising the relevant actors is strong. Several stakeholders in the network, from different sectors, referred to this in interviews, and evidence of this can also be found in the documentation of events.

The evidence for the Dutch influence in paving the way for more ambitious policy development is moderate. While interviewees from both the Dutch government and the Israeli government have confirmed the influence of the Netherlands, the policy has not yet been finalised and published. The private sector in Israel, which is strong and innovative, is playing a significant role in the R&D of clean hydrogen, but it needs the support of the government to implement its plans.

#### 4.2.5. Conclusions and lessons learned in Israel

In summary, this final section considers which aspects that appear to be effective in the Israeli context might also be effective in other contexts as well. The Netherlands helped to put hydrogen on the agenda. Interviewees also suggested that the Netherlands contributed to the adoption of clean hydrogen as a factor in a (forthcoming) more ambitious climate policy, and, more concretely, it influenced the hydrogen policy that is being developed. The embassy did this by successfully mobilising, convening and connecting stakeholders from industry, academia and government. However, the context in Israel – a relatively young, start-up nation – offers more potential for achieving sustainable change through the private sector. The Dutch strategy was to focus on a niche – green hydrogen – which was climate-relevant and interesting for the private sector, combined with good bilateral relations and a broad network. This led to several promising outcomes. In other countries, focusing on a niche, making the business case and working with the private sector when the government is reluctant or unable, or where there is an implementation gap, could also be effective.

Key success factors in this case were (1) the proactive embassy staff with an understanding of the local context and relevant expertise, (2) the regularity of the events that were organised, and (3) good diplomatic and bilateral relations, which ensured participation of government stakeholders, high-level follow-up and continued interest in ongoing events.<sup>xxxvii</sup>





# 5

## Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusions

In this chapter, we present conclusions and answer the evaluation questions as set out in the Terms of Reference. We will also present seven recommendations for policymakers and diplomats, largely based on our country cases. The overarching research question, which we will answer throughout this chapter, is 'To what extent did the country specific Dutch climate diplomacy campaign achieve its objectives?'

### 5.1.1. What was the Dutch policy for climate diplomacy and how has it evolved over time?

Dutch climate diplomacy became more important after the Paris Agreement, and especially after 2018. The policy notes by the two subsequent Ministers for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of 2018 and 2022 prioritise climate policy and finance.<sup>cxviii</sup>

In late 2018, the new Dutch cabinet intensified its climate diplomacy, at the request of the UN Secretary-General and with a view to securing ambitious new commitments at COP26. The government launched a temporary lobbying campaign to raise the ambitions of non-EU countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and to promote long-term strategies in all countries. The focus was on promoting climate mitigation targets, while adaptation ambitions and promoting finance for adaptation were secondary objectives.<sup>cxix</sup>

The campaign was coordinated by a small climate diplomacy team based at the MFA's Inclusive Green Growth Department. The team prioritised lobbying countries that were the biggest emitters, i.e. the G20, but the list of target countries varied between late 2018 and 2021. Initially, there was a list of 51 focus countries. In 2021, the team decided to focus on a smaller list. A maximum of 20 countries were given the utmost priority, and a group of 34, and later 36, priority countries emerged and were selected for the A list of the Climate and Energy Response Facility.<sup>cxx</sup>

In practice, climate diplomacy did not only or specifically target the NDCs of non-EU countries, but aimed to raise climate ambitions more generally, often through concrete activities by Dutch embassies. Thematically, the team decided to prioritise cooperation with the private sector and youth, as well as the goals of phasing out coal, promoting resilience and protecting forests.<sup>cxxi</sup>

In addition to the country-specific lobbying campaign, there were also 'multilateral' campaigns related to EU ambitions, UNFCCC negotiations and the Multilateral Development Banks, as well as sectoral campaigns led by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. IOB did not examine these other strands in detail, but it is safe to say that the IGG climate section played a pivotal part in coordinating them and promoting coherent policies and activities across the MFA and across various ministries.<sup>77</sup>

### 5.1.2. What capacities and resources did the climate campaign team have, and were they sufficient?

The team was very small measured against its initial assignment, but it did have the right capacities.

A small, new team at the climate cluster of the MFA's IGG Department, consisting of four policy officers and a team leader, coordinated the campaign. In total, 7.5 staff were available for the campaign at IGG, including from other sections.<sup>78</sup> Around February 2022, the climate diplomacy team was disbanded, and its members were placed in different thematic clusters within IGG, although they continued to work on climate diplomacy on a part-time basis. In addition to the core team, experts from other relevant ministries contributed to the campaign, supported by an interdepartmental task force. Furthermore, the Dutch Climate Envoy performed an important representative role, most notably at the COPs.

The climate diplomacy team and the embassies had access to the expertise and instruments of the MFA and of RVO, which they used effectively. Some limited public diplomacy funds were also available to support climate diplomacy at embassies and in The Hague. The Energy Transition Fund and its successor, the Climate and Energy Transition Facility, seem to have been important for them to fund experts, feasibility studies and pilot projects in their countries.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> In 2022, the Minister for BHOS and the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy published an interdepartmental International Climate Strategy, which was developed under the leadership of IGG: Letter to Parliament of 7 October 2022. It is available in English: [The Netherlands' Global Climate Strategy | Publication | Government.nl](#) and Dutch [Internationale Klimaatstrategie | Publicatie | Rijksoverheid.nl](#).

<sup>78</sup> This figure includes staff working part-time on the CD campaign. This figure was published in late 2018, when the campaign received its mandate from the cabinet.

<sup>79</sup> Both funds were funded by IGG/DGIS and managed by RVO. They consist of ODA-eligible and non-ODA-eligible funds. CERF was set up in 2021-2022 and includes Vietnam on its priority country or A list, and Israel on its B list. RVO set up a special team of climate experts with focal points for each listed country.

The initial mandate of the climate diplomacy campaign was too broad and ambitious. It was impossible for the climate diplomacy team to reach every non-EU country in the world, to achieve more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions in every country and/or to achieve other impacts everywhere. From 2019, the team tried to focus their efforts, but the demands for their input from MFA colleagues and high-level policymakers kept increasing. By 2021, when the team started to further narrow down their objectives and target countries, their assignment became more realistic. At the same time, the workload in the run-up to COP26 remained very heavy.

The climate diplomacy team appears to have had the skills, knowledge and access to the right networks to be effective. By mobilising other actors, particularly the embassies, the team achieved much more than it could have done on its own. In conclusion, the climate diplomacy team punched above its weight. However, this happened at the cost of a very heavy workload for the core members of the team.

### 5.1.3. Which networks and actors did the IGG team mobilise and how successful was this?

IGG, embassies and other Dutch actors were quite successful in mobilising stakeholders for climate lobbying and advocacy.

IGG mobilised *embassies* around the world by informing them about the country-specific campaign, instructing them to promote climate ambitions and report back to The Hague. IGG's climate diplomacy team provided an online climate diplomacy toolkit and alerted embassies to support resources such as experts and funds at RVO. They also asked colleagues to include climate diplomacy messages in speaking notes and to integrate climate diplomacy into annual plans and multi-annual country strategies.

In addition to the country-specific campaign, IGG put considerable effort into mobilising *other parts of the MFA*, including the Directorate-General for Political Affairs (DGPZ) and the Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations (DGBEB). In addition, they mobilised colleagues in other parts of the government, notably the ministries participating in the interdepartmental task force (EZK, I&W, LNV and Finance), as well as RVO. The climate diplomacy team regularly engaged with the relevant colleagues, promoting climate messaging during high-level visits and multilateral meetings, and promoting the greening of all aid and trade instruments. The IGG climate section claims to have gained considerable ground here; and IOB found evidence, in particular, of mainstreaming climate in trade policy, for instance in various letters to parliament from 2019 to 2022.<sup>80</sup>

IOB briefly looked beyond the MFA to the other strands of the climate diplomacy campaign and inter-ministerial cooperation. The climate diplomacy team coordinated efforts and promoted information exchange and coherent messaging, for instance through biweekly meetings of the interdepartmental task force. However, there were indications that often it was not so much a concerted effort as a combination of parallel efforts by different ministries: with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy (EZK) focusing on the UNFCCC negotiations, MFA/DGIS on development cooperation (renewable energy and adaptation), the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management on water and adaptation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality focusing on agriculture (and trade). On a positive note, IGG took the initiative to develop an international climate strategy, which was formally adopted in 2022. This strategy reflects IGG's efforts to make Dutch international climate policy more coherent and strategic.

Subsequently, many Dutch embassies mobilised Dutch companies and experts to work on climate action, particularly in the areas of renewable energy (mitigation) and water (adaptation). Part of this was a continuation of existing work and economic diplomacy, but most embassies also devoted extra time and effort to climate diplomacy as part of the campaign. They also achieved results through practical forms of cooperation, especially by facilitating technical expertise. Thus, climate diplomacy often went hand in hand with economic diplomacy, trade promotion, economic cooperation and sometimes development cooperation.

Some 16 Dutch embassies also supported youth organisations, with a view to empowering them and

<sup>80</sup> For instance, letters to parliament on climate policy, climate diplomacy, the Dutch position at COP UNFCCC and reports on those COP meetings, as well as a letters on (the greening of) trade instruments.

linking them up to a global group, the We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership. Several embassies also supported NGOs, although more through development cooperation than as a new climate diplomacy activity.

#### 5.1.4 What strategies were implemented, and what was their quality?

Although there were no official strategies, both the global campaign and the country-specific campaigns studied used effective strategies along the way, mobilising the relevant stakeholders and selecting priority topics.

For the *global campaign*, the climate diplomacy team started by informing and mobilising a large number of Dutch stakeholders and all embassies, as explained above. As other directorates in the MFA and other ministries were sensitised, they continuously asked IGG for input, such as speaking notes, for high-level visits and meetings. The climate diplomacy toolkit helped to spread consistent and timely messages. Many people involved became advocates for climate action.<sup>cxxxii</sup> ‘Everyone is a climate diplomat,’ the former Dutch Climate Envoy often said.<sup>cxxxiii</sup>

To guide their work, the climate diplomacy team drafted several strategies and Theories of Change, although these were never formally adopted. As mentioned above, initially the ambitions targeted (too) many sectors, themes and countries. After a year or so, the climate diplomacy team began to focus its efforts further. This was wise, but it was also forced to do so because of the ever-increasing workload as embassies and other departments were mobilised and constantly requested their input.

The climate diplomacy team also demonstrated effective communication skills, producing consistent and timely messages, and enabling embassies to use similar messaging through, among other things, the climate diplomacy toolkit.<sup>81</sup> In terms of cooperation, IGG always worked closely together with like-minded organisations and countries.

For the *embassies’ campaigns*, the interdepartmental task force worked with the embassies to identify priority topics per key target country, but most embassies developed their own strategies. IGG focal points for target countries suggested additions to the embassies’ annual plans and multi-annual strategies to promote higher climate ambitions. In the plans and strategies of the embassies in Hanoi and Tel Aviv, IOB found significant references to climate diplomacy and climate-related activities.

The strategies used in Vietnam and Israel were well-chosen, targeted, flexible and tailored to the context. In both cases, working with the government was not easy, and although the embassies had long-standing relationships with government representatives, the Dutch embassies often chose to work with other actors – particularly the private sector and academic experts, but also the EU, both in Hanoi and in Brussels.

Most embassies worked through several channels, as the survey showed: bilateral, multilateral, youth organisations and NGOs, knowledge institutes and/or the private sector. This approach seems to have been deliberate, exploring opportunities to work with the right stakeholders for each topic.<sup>cxxxiv</sup>

The CD team supported the We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership and the participation by a dozen or so youth representatives from the Global South in the COPs to give youth a stronger voice. A dozen embassies also supported young climate activists to set up a network and/or participate in national discussions, meeting policymakers from their countries.

<sup>81</sup> Regular messages through the diplomatic message system also kept embassies updated, i.e. the formal diplomatic messaging system.

#### 5.1.5. How effective was the campaign in the target countries? Did it bring about change?

The IGG climate diplomacy team has been quite successful in *mainstreaming* climate change throughout the work of the MFA and, to some extent, other parts of government. It has been able to integrate climate change into the plans and policies of Dutch officials, as well as into the bilateral and multilateral meetings of many Dutch representatives, putting climate considerations on the agenda. The global campaign also helped embassies to mobilise stakeholders in their countries.

The study focused on the climate lobbying activities of the *embassies*. The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) showed that embassies in 18 countries used potentially successful pathways to achieve outcomes and/or impacts. In the cases of Vietnam and Israel, the research team was able to identify some concrete effects of Dutch activities: they mobilised stakeholders and helped set the agenda on energy-related topics. It is difficult to draw firm and general conclusions about country-specific campaigns as they were all very different and driven by individual embassies. The most successful ones used a combination of several channels, as shown by the survey and QCA. The interviews, survey and QCA also suggested that the most effective campaigns were those by embassies that put in considerable effort and combined various and ongoing activities on priority topics over a number of years: consistently beating the drum.

It is not possible to conclude what the effect of Dutch climate diplomacy was on meaningful change at the level of ambitions of the target countries. While several (updated) Nationally Determined Contributions contain much more ambitious targets than before, this cannot be attributed to any single actor. It is likely that Dutch embassies contributed to more ambitious government commitments through their climate diplomacy, but they always operated in the context of the EU and the broader international community, who worked towards the same objectives.

#### *Campaigns in Vietnam and Israel*

In the country cases of Vietnam and Israel, where the Dutch embassies were consistently active in climate advocacy, there is evidence that consistent efforts to put climate-related ambitions on the agenda were effective.

In Vietnam, the Netherlands was part of a group of like-minded countries that strongly promoted renewable energy, especially wind power, contributing to more ambitious targets in the performance indicators for EU budget support. The research team notes that working with multiple partners such as (1) the EU, the World Bank, the UN ('multilaterally'), as well as (2) the private sector and academic experts appears to have worked well.

In Israel, the Dutch embassy helped put hydrogen on the agenda of experts, companies and officials and facilitated the creation of a network that included policymakers. Working with the private sector and academic experts seems to have generated some higher-level results in Israel, whereas we had no evidence that working with (3) youth activists and NGOs there led to a higher-level impact (noting that this channel was not our main topic of interest).

Beyond agenda setting, it is plausible that the Dutch embassies in Hanoi and Tel Aviv contributed to policymaking on specific topics, such as regulations for clean energy.

In some cases, Dutch climate diplomacy and activities contributed to results beyond agenda setting, namely to new targets and regulations. More often, however, concrete results were limited to pilot projects and the exchange of knowledge and expertise between Dutch and local companies and experts (including government officers), which in turn informed and helped policymakers working on the energy transition. Such practical forms of cooperation on a topic of common interest have the added advantage of bringing a positive note to the bilateral dialogue, which can be difficult on other topics, as in the case of Israel. Also, this kind of cooperation can lead to practical results on the ground, where there is no established policy yet, and inspire follow-up action.



*Results in renewable energy in Vietnam and Israel*

The research team found results mainly in renewable energy and in specific sectors such as hydrogen and off-grid solar and wind energy.

In the case of Vietnam, the Dutch embassy lobbied for more ambitious performance indicators on renewable energy for EU budget support to encourage the country to develop policies and regulations for cleaner energy, with a view to phasing out coal power. In fact, Vietnam’s renewable energy sector – solar and wind power – has grown tremendously over the past five years, due to factors such as new favourable government regulations and practices and spurred on by international pressure.

In the case of Israel, the Dutch embassy helped put hydrogen on the agenda by organising a course, mini-symposia and a visit to the Netherlands. The Netherlands helped pave the way for higher government ambitions. Again, the context was favourable, with green hydrogen gradually being recognised as a very promising future source of energy, including by the government.

Note that these cases represent best practices, selected (among the countries analysed in our QCA with valid impact pathways) as those with the most potentially successful pathways. They were among the most active embassies.

Finally, it should be noted that the timing of the climate campaign was favourable and the tide had been turning for some time, as the EU had become much more ambitious; the Green Deal was presented in late 2019; the new US administration was more ambitious; and climate disasters and protests by activists had become much more visible in recent few years. The international community stepped up the pressure on major emitting countries in the run-up to COP26, wanting ambitious agreements on climate action, in particular higher emission reduction targets. The Netherlands worked with the EU and like-minded partners in this context. Where it succeeded, it was often as part of a group. In other words, the Dutch climate campaign went with the flow, in a group of like-minded actors, both nationally and internationally.

Concluding on the five questions above, the Dutch climate campaign did contribute to higher climate ambitions, albeit in close collaboration with like-minded partners and experts, and in a favourable context. Effects of the country-specific vary from country to country, but the cases of Vietnam and Israel have shown that embassies were able to achieve concrete results by putting specific topics on the agenda. International pressure and favourable economic prospects in the renewable energy sector were conducive to these results.

**5.1.6. What were the success factors of the climate diplomacy campaign?**

Working consistently with various like-minded actors and mobilising them has been effective.

Cooperation with the Dutch private sector and experts has been particularly valuable.

The lessons learned are as follows, starting with five success factors from the country-specific campaigns.

1. A combination of several channels can work. IOB initially focused on bilateral, government-to-government lobbying, expecting this to be the key channel for climate diplomacy. Indeed, a good and long-standing relationship between the embassy staff and the host government seems to be important for achieving results. However, it turned out that bilateral diplomacy was not the only or even the most important channel. In fact, the interviews, the survey and the qualitative comparative analysis showed that the most successful embassies seem to have used a combination of different channels: the bilateral channel, the multilateral channel (the EU, the World Bank), as well as the Dutch private sector and knowledge institutes. Such an approach allows embassies to select the most appropriate channels for each topic and occasion.

In addition, the most successful embassies combined this multi-channel approach with a mix of different activities: a mix of visits to and from the Netherlands, high-level bilateral messaging, public diplomacy (articles) and events. Furthermore, these embassies were always beating the drum, supported by IGG and various other representatives from The Hague. The number and variety of initiatives taken by the four embassies interviewed and the 44 respondents to the survey are large, and they seem to have been tailored to the occasion.

2. In this context, IOB has seen that a concerted effort by like-minded stakeholders can be effective. Such efforts often involve the EU, multilateral organisations and like-minded countries (in this report, we have grouped them together as ‘the multilateral channel’). In successful cases – such as climate mitigation and renewable energy – countries, international organisations and the private sector worked together to promote a specific topic or sector. Concerted global efforts on specific topics, as well as declarations by like-minded coalitions, have been quite successful, for instance the coalitions around phasing out coal and promoting adaptation (although IOB did not study these in detail).
3. By working in partnership with and through Dutch and local companies, as well as technical experts, the MFA can achieve practical results that lay the groundwork for further climate action and policymaking. For instance, expert missions supported by RVO, with DGIS/IGG funding, helped to develop the case for pilot projects and map opportunities in certain renewable energy sectors. In this context, the embassies and RVO chose to work in certain niche sectors where the Netherlands has added value, such as hydrogen and off-grid electricity. In Israel and Vietnam, the embassies convened several stakeholders and provided incentives on specific topics. The Energy Transition Fund and its successor the Climate and Energy Response Facility have been useful instruments in this context.
4. Economic opportunities. Private sector investment and/or the likelihood of commercial success are drivers for government action. Economic incentives help to convince governments to raise their ambitions and adopt new regulations and policies. They help persuade governments to regulate and facilitate investments in renewable energy (solar panels, solar and wind parks, off-grid and offshore electricity), for example; climate action leads to higher climate ambitions. In Vietnam and Israel, the economic prospects and the business case for renewable energy and hydrogen were indeed considered crucial factors. In some cases, such investments can even lead to implementation beyond or outside of legislation, for instance by enabling direct, off-grid power purchase and access when regulations are not in place yet.
5. Finally, sufficient capacity for climate diplomacy at the embassies seems to have contributed to the results. The embassies that emerged from the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) with possible valid impact pathways, which were likely to be the most successful, allocated more capacity on average than the group of embassies that did not emerge from the QCA: at least half a staff member.<sup>82, cxxxv</sup> Furthermore, the embassies that highlighted best practices had staff who took a keen interest in and proactively promoted climate change action. At least the best practice cases of Vietnam and Israel are said to have had proactive and ambitious ambassadors and/or deputy ambassadors, as well as diplomatic staff assigned as focal points for (water and) climate change. The latter was also true of two other embassies that conducted ‘best practice’ climate diplomacy campaigns: those in South Korea and South Africa.

This proactive approach included identifying opportunities, such as meetings and visits where Dutch ministers could convey climate messages. Successful embassies used every opportunity to lobby and consistently beat the drum on priority issues.

Possible issues for the climate diplomacy campaign that IOB came across include the following.

1. Ambition versus capacity. The climate diplomacy campaign had such an ambitious and broad mandate (improving climate ambitions and NDCs in non-EU countries, both mitigation and adaptation) that the workload for the team in The Hague was potentially infinite. In addition, the IGG climate section had to coordinate and incentivise all Dutch actors to increase climate ambitions and actions. The core IGG team was very small, and at times felt overwhelmed as the demand for their input from colleagues at other parts of the MFA started to grow and grow.
2. Coherence. Several interviewees raised the issue of policy coherence. Some suggested that the Dutch government was not a credible advocate, preaching climate ambition to others, while the Netherlands has its own large carbon footprint and the government continues to promote the Dutch fossil fuel-based industry.<sup>cxxxvi</sup> Economic diplomacy has been a top priority for embassies for decades, whereas climate diplomacy is a more recent assignment. Diplomats help promote business opportunities

<sup>82</sup> See the chapter on the survey with Figures 3 and 4 showing the number of staff working on climate. Recently, in 2022, it was decided to further increase this capacity: 15 new staff were to be added to 15 embassies for the combined tracks of the new BHOS policy as well as climate/sustainable development.

for Dutch companies, many of which are in the fossil fuel or petrochemical industries. Embassies, consulates, and other Dutch missions did not immediately stop supporting gas and oil exploration projects, for example. Related export credit support for fossil fuel investments continued until 2022.<sup>83</sup> <sup>cxvii</sup> This support to fossil fuel-related companies runs counter to Dutch diplomatic efforts to phase out fossil fuels.

On a positive note, Dutch trade missions have recently focused more on sustainable development and a green economy.<sup>84</sup> <sup>cxviii</sup> For instance, the Netherlands played a key role in the EU Green Exhibition and Forum in Vietnam and related visits with a trade mission in November 2022.<sup>cxix</sup>

## 5.2. Recommendations

Our first two recommendations are based on challenges that the climate diplomacy team encountered in coordinating the country-specific campaign. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth are based on good practices from the climate diplomacy campaign. The seventh recommendation reflects on the institutional arrangements for climate diplomacy.

1. a. The mandate for a diplomacy campaign should be clear, focused and realistic. The climate diplomacy campaign's mandate was too ambitious and too broad for the small climate diplomacy team to implement on its own. It would be wise to tailor the mandate to priority policy objectives from the outset. And to set realistic goals such as agenda setting, rather than policy change. Clear guidance and continued attention from senior management could help to frame and streamline the team's work.
  - b. In addition, the capacity of the unit responsible for a campaign should of course be commensurate with its mandate, with sufficient staff assigned to the task, who have the necessary expertise and access to the relevant networks.<sup>85</sup> Alternatively, if it is decided to employ a small, separate campaign team, its mandate should be more modest, precise and limited.
2. Develop a clear Theory of Change before deciding on the strategy and tactics. Let embassies take the lead in developing their own intervention logic ('theory of action') and encourage them to do so. Let senior stakeholders, such as directors-general or ministers, decide on this and make it public.
  - Ensure that everyone involved, across the DGs and ministries, knows their objectives, roles and responsibilities within their mandate and ToC.
  - Make senior management responsible for the diplomacy campaign, providing guidance and monitoring its implementation, while giving individual embassies room to manoeuvre.
3. Specify the strategy for each target country and/or topic.
  - Focus on a limited number of target countries, sectors and interventions for each country.
  - Identify the stakeholders you want to mobilise for each country and topic.
  - The embassies should take the lead in this exercise.
4. Be flexible, keep an eye out for opportunities. A ToC and a strategy could be adapted as needed, so that you are ready to act when the opportunity arises. In fact, the climate diplomacy campaign, including the embassies, allowed for such flexibility (even when capacity was limited) and took advantage of opportunities around different target countries and international meetings.
5. Continue to beat the drum and promote your reputation where it is warranted. The Netherlands is known for its continuous messaging on certain topics, including the importance of climate adaptation, for instance in the water sector. It has developed great expertise on certain topics and countries, and has partnered with others to achieve its ambitions. This helps the Netherlands to be seen as a reliable, go-to partner, which in turn helps to promote Dutch interests.

<sup>83</sup> The government officially stopped providing export credit support for fossil related investments on 1 January 2023. This was a result of inter alia the COP26 commitment of the Export Finance for Future (E3F) to end direct support to the fossil energy sector, which the Netherlands signed up to. Source, among others: letter to parliament of 17 December 2021 about COP26.

<sup>84</sup> The BHOS policy note (2022) also stipulates that trade missions will focus on the transition to sustainable development (as well as the digital transition).

<sup>85</sup> The climate diplomacy team at IGG did have the expertise and access to the relevant networks, but their number appears to have been insufficient in relation to the mandate.

6. Offer concrete benefits, such as technical expertise or help with access to finance, to complement your advocacy. Dutch messaging went hand-in-hand with concrete projects and initiatives, such as the Climate Adaptation Summit and cooperation on water and adaptation, or seminars and visits on hydrogen (in the case of Israel). This helps to build and enhance the Dutch reputation, increasing the country's credibility and opportunities for cooperation to the benefit of all parties. In addition, economic incentives and the prospect of commercial viability will encourage buy-in from (government) stakeholders and an enabling policy environment.<sup>cx1</sup>

To conclude, we offer two recommendations on issues that warrant further reflection. First, a few words on mainstreaming versus targeted lobbying. One possible challenge for Dutch climate diplomacy is that the special team ceased to exist as a separate unit in early 2022, when its work was integrated into the IGG department. Although officers continue to work on climate diplomacy, their full-time role in supporting and monitoring climate diplomacy decreased. As studies on gender mainstreaming have shown, mainstreaming carries the risk of 'away-streaming', and it may be wise to maintain targeted, tailored activities to promote policy priorities.<sup>cxii</sup>

7. Consider reviving a targeted diplomacy campaign when there is renewed momentum for a policy priority. In the case of climate targets, for instance, opportunities will arise when important COPs take place and when updated Nationally Determined Contributions are submitted every five years.

Secondly and finally, we offer a recommendation to address the issue of coherence and credibility, which came up in a few interviews and the reference group for this study.

8. Put your money where your mouth is. Diplomacy campaigns could benefit from concrete policies and the actual implementation of ambitions on the part of the Dutch cabinet. In other words, Dutch representatives would be more credible if Dutch (national) practices and policies matched the objectives of their (climate) lobbying in other countries.



# Annexes



# Annex A

## Abbreviations

<b>BHOS</b>	Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
<b>CAS</b>	Climate Adaptation Summit
<b>CCS</b>	Carbon capture and storage
<b>CD</b>	Climate diplomacy
<b>CERF</b>	Climate and Energy Response Facility
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
<b>COP26</b>	26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DCI</b>	Development Cooperation Instrument
<b>DGBEB</b>	Directorate General for Foreign Economic Relations
<b>DGIS</b>	Directorate General or Director-General for International Cooperation
<b>DGPZ</b>	Directorate-General for Political Affairs
<b>DIE</b>	Integration of Europe Department, i.e. the EU department
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>ETF</b>	Energy Transition Facility
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EZK</b>	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy
<b>FMO</b>	Dutch entrepreneurial development bank
<b>FTE</b>	Full-time equivalent
<b>G20</b>	The Group of 20 (countries)
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas(es)
<b>GHGE</b>	Greenhouse gas emissions
<b>GIZ</b>	German Institute for International Cooperation
<b>Govt</b>	government
<b>I&amp;W</b>	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
<b>IDIC</b>	Israeli Dutch Innovation Centre
<b>IGG</b>	Inclusive Green Growth Department
<b>IGG/KL</b>	The Climate team of the Inclusive Green Growth Department
<b>INDC</b>	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>IOB</b>	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
<b>JETP</b>	Just Energy Transition Partnership
<b>kWh</b>	Kilowatt hours
<b>LNV</b>	(Ministry of) Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality
<b>MACS</b>	Multi-Annual Country Strategy
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally determined contribution
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NL</b>	The Netherlands (or: Dutch)
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PDP8</b>	The eighth Power Development Plan of Vietnam
<b>PS</b>	Private sector
<b>QCA</b>	Qualitative comparative analysis
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and development
<b>RE</b>	Renewable energy
<b>RVO</b>	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
<b>SUIN</b>	Sufficient but Unnecessary part of a condition that in itself is Insufficient but Necessary
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates

<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>VNO-NCW</b>	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers
<b>VWS</b>	(Ministry of) Health, Welfare and Sport
<b>WAT-GP</b>	We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership

# Annex B

## Detailed description of the methodology and results of the QCA

### *Detailed methodology*

Based on the survey responses, we aggregated and analysed qualitative data from 44 embassies. In this annex, we explain the method, model and analyses used, and present the results in more detail than in Chapter 3.2.

### *Objectives*

The main objective of this qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) was to find a relationship between Dutch climate diplomacy and results, in particular increased government climate ambitions, as reported by embassy staff in their answers to a survey, using sets of answers from 44 countries. Although we did not expect firm claims about causality, i.e. Dutch embassies causing outcomes and impacts, we hoped to find a pattern that would indicate the effectiveness of their efforts.

A second objective was to select two countries that seemed promising for a more detailed evaluation of climate diplomacy, using a light form of process tracing. QCA can identify which countries show the combinations of diplomatic activity and context that seem to have contributed to results.

### *Method*

QCA is particularly suitable for analysing a dataset of between 12 and 50 cases: too small for thorough quantitative statistical analysis, but large enough to find a pattern of effectiveness across cases that goes beyond the results of individual case studies.

### *Aggregating many variables into a few conditions*

In our case, with data from 44 countries, we could only use a maximum of seven variables (conditions) to explain a result (outcome or impact).<sup>86</sup> Therefore, we aggregated the large number of variables, i.e. answers from the survey questionnaire, into fewer variables for the QCA analysis. We gave more weight to variables that we considered more important for the aggregate variable. After a first aggregation, we still had too many indicators to include in one analysis. Therefore, we conducted a second aggregation: five individual activities were aggregated into one variable 'set of activities'. Four outcome indicators were aggregated into an 'outcome.' All aggregated variables used in the QCA are presented in the model below.

### *Binary variables*

The QCA uses data in binary form: 0 or 1. For instance, if the survey yielded nuanced results regarding an embassy's efforts (considering the number of staff – FTEs – involved in climate diplomacy, the support received from the ministry in The Hague, and the various climate themes that they worked on), we first converted this qualitative information into a continuous variable, between 0 and 1. We then used a threshold value, below which all values were set at 0 and above which all values were set at 1. This resulted in two more or less equal groups of countries: countries making above-average efforts received a 1, and countries making below-average efforts received a 0.

### *Conceptual model*

The model used for this analysis follows a strategy for climate diplomacy, reconstructed by IOB, on how such diplomacy would lead to results (Figure B.15 below). We based this model on IGG's ToC,<sup>cxlii</sup> the Terms of Reference<sup>cxliii</sup> for this study and our preliminary findings.

<sup>86</sup> There were 47 sets of answers to the survey from embassies, 44 of which were complete and concerned individual countries.

Climate diplomacy consists of:

- Efforts: (1) embassy staff capacity and (2) time spent on climate diplomacy activities.
- Activities, which we grouped into five types of activities:
  - Policy dialogue
  - Visits from the Netherlands, e.g. by the Climate Envoy or Prime Minister
  - Visits to the Netherlands, e.g. by politicians or scientists
  - Events, e.g. inviting various stakeholders on a climate-related topic
  - Article, e.g. published in a newspaper.
- Channels used, which we grouped as follows:
  - Government-to-government, or bilateral diplomacy
  - Multilateral: e.g. working through the EU<sup>87</sup> or the World Bank
  - Youth organisations and NGOs working on climate, supported by the Netherlands
  - Dutch knowledge: expertise from the Dutch private sector or knowledge institutes.

Results consist of outcomes and impacts:

- Outcomes are intermediate results, grouped as follows:
  - The government of the target country was influenced to do something
  - Youth organisations or NGOs were influenced to do something
  - The Dutch private sector or knowledge institutes were influenced to do something
  - Funding for climate action was secured
  - The Netherlands’ reputation was enhanced.
- Impacts reflect the end result sought by the climate diplomacy campaign: increased government ambitions on climate mitigation, adaptation or other climate ambitions.

Finally, the impact of climate diplomacy is also determined by the following:

- Context: the political will and other actors in the country that lobby the government, independently of Dutch diplomacy.

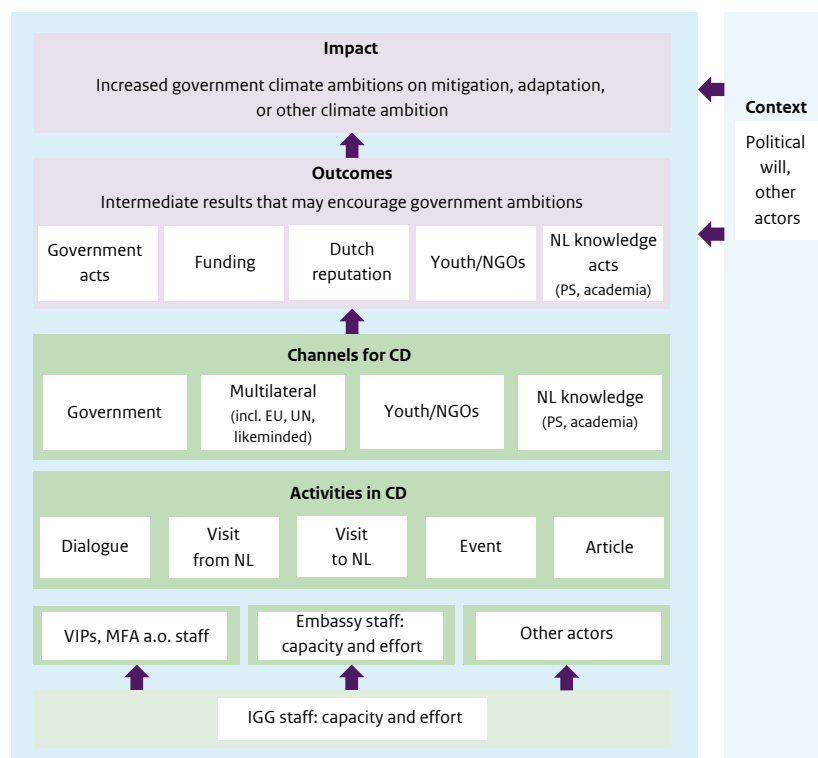


Figure 15 (former Figure 10 of section 3.2): Model for climate diplomacy effects, used in the QCA analyses.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> The EU is a supranational entity, but for the sake of convenience in this study, it is grouped together with multilateral organisations and like-minded alliances.

<sup>88</sup> This figure focuses on country-specific climate diplomacy and was developed for this section of the QCA. For instance, context plays a part throughout the campaign, but in the qualitative comparative analysis, it was only considered in an analysis that included outcomes and impacts (and not at the level of activities or channels).

### Analyses

Our main question is which combination of climate diplomacy efforts, activities and channels, and context explains the occurrence of outcome and impact. Only one result variable can be analysed at a time: outcome or impact. Because we can only use a maximum of seven conditions to explain the occurrence of one result, we analysed activities and channels separately and in detail. When we included four individual channels in a QCA analysis, we included only one aggregate variable for activities: 'total activities'. We conducted a fifth analysis to validate the relationship between outcome (in disaggregated factors) and impact.

The five analyses conducted were as follows:

1. Outcome, explained by combinations of effort, four channels: government, multilateral, youth/NGO, and Dutch knowledge; total activities, and context.<sup>89</sup>
2. Impact, explained by combinations of effort, four channels: government, multilateral, youth/NGOs, Dutch knowledge; total activities, and context.
3. Outcome, explained by combinations of effort, five types of activities: dialogue, visit from the Netherlands, visit to the Netherlands, news article, event; and context.
4. Impact, explained by combinations of effort, five types of activities: dialogue, visit from the Netherlands, visit to the Netherlands, news article, event; and context.
5. Impact, explained by combinations of five outcome components: government acts, youth acts, Dutch knowledge acts, funding, reputation; and context.

### Different QCA models

The research team tested a number of different types of QCA models: 'parsimonious solution' emerged as the most suitable for this study.

1. The first model tested the necessity of individual conditions on the occurrence of the outcome. No necessary conditions were identified for the occurrence (or for the non-occurrence) of the outcome.
2. The second model tested pairs of conditions as 'SUIN conditions' ('sufficient but unnecessary part of a factor that is insufficient but necessary for an outcome'). We found two pairs of conditions, of which at least one (within each pair) could determine the outcome: (1) government or context, and (2) multilateral or context. However, the results were non-conclusive: SUIN conditions were not considered necessary for the occurrence or non-occurrence of an outcome.
3. The third model tested the sufficiency for the occurrence of the outcome, using the Enhanced Standard Analysis. Results were non-conclusive.
4. The fourth model tested the conservative solution (descriptive, only observed cases). The conservative solution yielded too many paths (QCA1 15 solutions, high model ambiguity), which is not ideal as QCA strives for parsimony.
5. The fifth model uses the parsimonious solution (short solution, inclusion of unobserved cases, logical remainders). The advantage over the previous analysis is that fewer solutions are found (low model ambiguity). In QCA 1, there were two solutions, both of which could be analysed in detail. In QCA 1, we analysed the first solution in more detail. This solution had a number of paths, combinations of the presence or absence of conditions that explain the occurrence or non-occurrence of an outcome.
6. The sixth model looked for an intermediate solution (between the conservative and the parsimonious, including assumptions about the role of the conditions, including logical remainders as easy counterfactuals). These intermediate solutions have low model ambiguity (good).

The parsimonious solutions (of the fifth model) yielded the best results for this study, with low model ambiguity. The results of these parsimonious solution analyses are presented below.

### Results of the five analyses

The five QCA analyses did not find any individual condition that – by itself – could explain the occurrence of a result. However, the QCA analyses did find *combinations of conditions* that explained the occurrence of an outcome or impact. Each analysis identified a number of pathways. Each pathway is a combination of conditions that contribute, positively or negatively, to outcome or impact.

From the 35 pathways found in the 5 analyses, we selected only the 6 most relevant ones: (1) those

<sup>89</sup> 'Activities set' (or activity type) means the aggregated variable, including several activities. 'Dutch knowledge' includes the private sector, and expertise from academic and other institutes.



that were statistically more convincing (with relatively high unique coverage) and (2) those that made sense; thus, we excluded ‘negative contributions’ of climate diplomacy to the outcome or impact.<sup>90</sup> A summary of the selected relevant pathways from the first four analyses is presented below (in Table 1). In this table, each column presents the results of one pathway and one analysis. For example, in the first column, pathway 1, the black bullets indicate that the outcome is positively affected by a combination of the ‘Youth and NGOs’ and ‘Dutch knowledge from knowledge institutes and the private sector’ channels.

**Annex B, Figure 16.** Summary of the most relevant pathways of the four QCA analyses explaining outcome and impact

	Channels → outcome		Channels → impact			Type → outcome	
	Pathway 1	Pathway 4	Pathway 10	Pathway 11	Pathway 14	Pathway 22	Pathway 26
Effort					•		
Ch government		•	•	•	•		
Ch Multilateral		•	•	•	•		
Ch Youth / NGO	•			•	•		
Ch Dutch knowledge /PS	•						
Total Activities		•					
Type dialogue						•	•
Type visit from NL						•	•
Type visit to NL						•	•
Type article						•	
Type event*							
Context							

\* Event was excluded as type of activity from the analyses because it resulted in model ambiguity.

Ch = channel; PS = private sector; NL = the Netherlands.

Note that there was some model ambiguity here and the statistical significance was weak, so we should not draw firm conclusions about causality from these results. Nevertheless, we can see in the results a number of combinations of effort, climate diplomacy channels and activities, and context that appear to contribute to outcome and impact.

### Effort

We see that the factor effort – how much staff an embassy dedicated to climate diplomacy – was only necessary in pathway 14, combined with the ‘Multilateral’ and ‘Youth/NGOs’ channels. From the results of the analyses, we would conclude that effort does not seem to play an important role. However, we noticed that the embassies in countries that confirm effective climate diplomacy (Figure 17 below) put in an above-average amount of effort. We expect the effort to overlap with the channels and types of activities – in other words, to be already included.

### Channels

Looking at the channels, several combinations including at least two channels seemed to contribute to an effect.

- The combination of government and multilateral channels seemed to contribute to the outcome when combined with total activities (pathway 4), and to the impact (pathway 10).
- The combination of ‘Youth organisations/NGOs’ and ‘Dutch knowledge institutes and the private sector’ seemed to contribute to the outcome (pathway 1). However, for impact, the ‘Youth/NGOs’ channel needed to be combined with either the government channel (pathway 11), or with the multilateral channel and sufficient effort (pathway 14).

<sup>90</sup> Unique coverage: the proportion of cases (countries) where the outcome is solely explained by an individual solution, and not also by other solutions.

### *Types of activities*

Looking at the types of activities, we see that a combination of dialogue, visits from the Netherlands, and visits to the Netherlands, and an article in the media seemed to contribute to the outcome (pathway 22). For impact, only the first three of these activities seemed to be necessary.

### *Context*

Context does not appear among the conditions that explain outcome or impact. However, of the 18 countries that confirm an effective diplomacy pathway,<sup>91</sup> there are relatively more countries with a favourable context (5), and fewer countries with an unfavourable context (3), compared to the total of 44 countries in our survey (see Figure 17 below).<sup>92</sup> Thus, as expected, effective diplomacy is likely to be found in countries with a more favourable context.

### *From outcome to impact*

The fifth analysis validated the relationship between outcome (other than Dutch embassy and MFA staff are doing something) and impact (the host government increases climate ambitions). We disaggregated the outcome into five outcomes, of which a combination of two outcomes was required to generate an impact:

1. Governments participated in a high-level climate event or dialogue with a group of like-minded countries; and
2. Dutch companies or knowledge institutes were involved in climate-related projects or hired by the host country.

This relationship between these two outcomes and impact was found in 11 countries, three of which had high unique coverage: Indonesia, Israel, and the United Kingdom.

### *Countries where these combinations of channels and activities seem to have worked*

For each QCA analysis, we list the countries where positive effects of diplomacy efforts were found. We summarised these findings in Figure 17. We added some data from the survey in the last two columns: 'Effort,' indicating the channels that received above-average attention, and 'Results', indicating whether respondents mention outcomes or impacts in that country.

As an example, we follow Vietnam in Figure 17. In Vietnam, the combination of the 'Government' and 'Multilateral' channels explains the outcome (pathway 4) and the impact (pathway 10). Moreover, the combination of four activities – dialogue, visit from the Netherlands, visit to the Netherlands and an article – seems to result in an outcome (pathway 22), while the combination of the first three activities seems to result in impact (pathway 26). In addition, the raw survey data show that there was above-average effort spent on the 'Multilateral' and 'Dutch knowledge institutes and private sector' channels, and that outcomes and impacts were above average.

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<sup>91</sup> In fact, more 18 countries show an effective diplomacy path, but only 18 countries have 'unique coverage', with no other QCA explanation than the found diplomacy path.

<sup>92</sup> IGG classified the political will of these 44 targeted countries as 'high' (green, 10 countries), 'neutral' or 'average' (yellow, 25 countries), and 'low' (red, 9 countries).

**Annex B, Figure 17. Countries that confirm\* the relevant pathways of the QCA analyses, with information about effort and results as presented in the survey**

QCA analyses results								Raw survey data	
Analysis	Channels → outcome		Channel → impact			Type outcome	Type impact	Effort	Results
Path	P1	P4	P10	P11	P14	P22	P26	(survey)	(survey)
Channels / Activities	Y+D	G+M	G+M	G+Y	M+Y	D, VF, VT, A	D, VF, VT	Channels	Outcome / Impact
1. Argentina <sup>-</sup>	•								O
2. Australia <sup>-</sup>							•	M, D	O, I
3. Canada <sup>0</sup>							•		O, I
4. Costa Rica <sup>+</sup>	•							Y, D	O
5. DRC <sup>0</sup>					•			M, Y, D	I
6. Egypt <sup>-</sup>	•								I
7. Indonesia <sup>0</sup>						•	•	G, M, Y, D	O, I
8. Israel <sup>0</sup>	•			•		•	•	G, Y, D	I
9. Japan <sup>0</sup>		•	•					G, M, D	
10. Jordan <sup>+</sup>							•		O, I
11. Kazakhstan <sup>0</sup>	•			•				D	I
12. New Zealand <sup>+</sup>						•	•	G, M, Y, D	O
13. Singapore <sup>0</sup>						•	•	G, M, D	O, I
14. Thailand <sup>0</sup>	•							D	O
15. UAE <sup>0</sup>	•			•		•	•	G, D	I
16. United Kingdom <sup>+</sup>							•	G	O
17. United States <sup>+</sup>							•	G, D	I
18. Vietnam <sup>0</sup>		•	•			•	•	M, D	O, I

\* Only countries with unique coverage are included.

Channels: G: government, M: multilateral, Y: youth, D: Dutch knowledge

Activities: D: dialogue, VF: visit from NL; VT: visit to NL, A: article.

Context: political willingness to increase climate ambitions: high: +, average/neutral: 0, low - (IGG classification)

#### Selection of country cases for process tracing

We wanted to select two countries that emerged from different QCA analyses and different pathways (different combinations of conditions) as countries that would confirm the model of how climate diplomacy contributed to outcomes and impacts. In these countries, we are more likely to find an effect of climate diplomacy in a more detailed case study. We prefer to select two countries where different combinations of diplomacy channels seem to have been effective, in order to cover a larger variety of diplomacy efforts. Israel, Vietnam and UAE emerged in four analyses and four pathways. In addition, analysis no. 5 also identified Israel as a positive example to validate the relationship between outcomes and impacts. We chose Israel and Vietnam to have two different countries in terms of the diplomacy channels used.

- In Israel, we found two combinations of channels:
  - ‘Youth’ and ‘Dutch knowledge’, contributing to outcome
  - ‘Government’ and ‘Youth’, contributing to impact
- In Vietnam, we found a different combination of channels:
  - ‘Government’ and ‘Multilateral’, contributing to outcome and impact.

Moreover, in both countries a combination of several types of activities contributed to both outcome and impact. These two countries are our case studies for a more detailed evaluation through a form of ‘process tracing’, presented in Chapter 4.

# Annex C

## Countries where embassies participated in the survey

This list shows the countries where Dutch embassies participated in the survey, with a full set of responses that could be used for analysis.

1. Algeria
2. Argentina
3. Australia
4. Bangladesh
5. Brazil
6. Canada
7. China
8. Colombia
9. Costa Rica
10. Cote d'Ivoire
11. Democratic Republic of Congo
12. Egypt
13. Ethiopia
14. Ghana
15. India
16. Indonesia
17. Iran
18. Israel
19. Japan
20. Jordan
21. Kazakhstan
22. Libya
23. Malaysia
24. Mexico
25. Morocco
26. Mozambique
27. New Zealand
28. Nigeria
29. Palestinian Territories
30. Philippines
31. Qatar
32. Russia
33. Senegal
34. Singapore
35. Saudi Arabia
36. South Africa
37. South Korea
38. Suriname
39. Thailand
40. United Arab Emirates
41. Uganda
42. United Kingdom
43. United States
44. Vietnam

# Annex D

## Reconstructed climate diplomacy strategy

This annex explains Figure 2, presented in Chapter 2, in more detail: the reconstructed strategy of Dutch climate diplomacy.

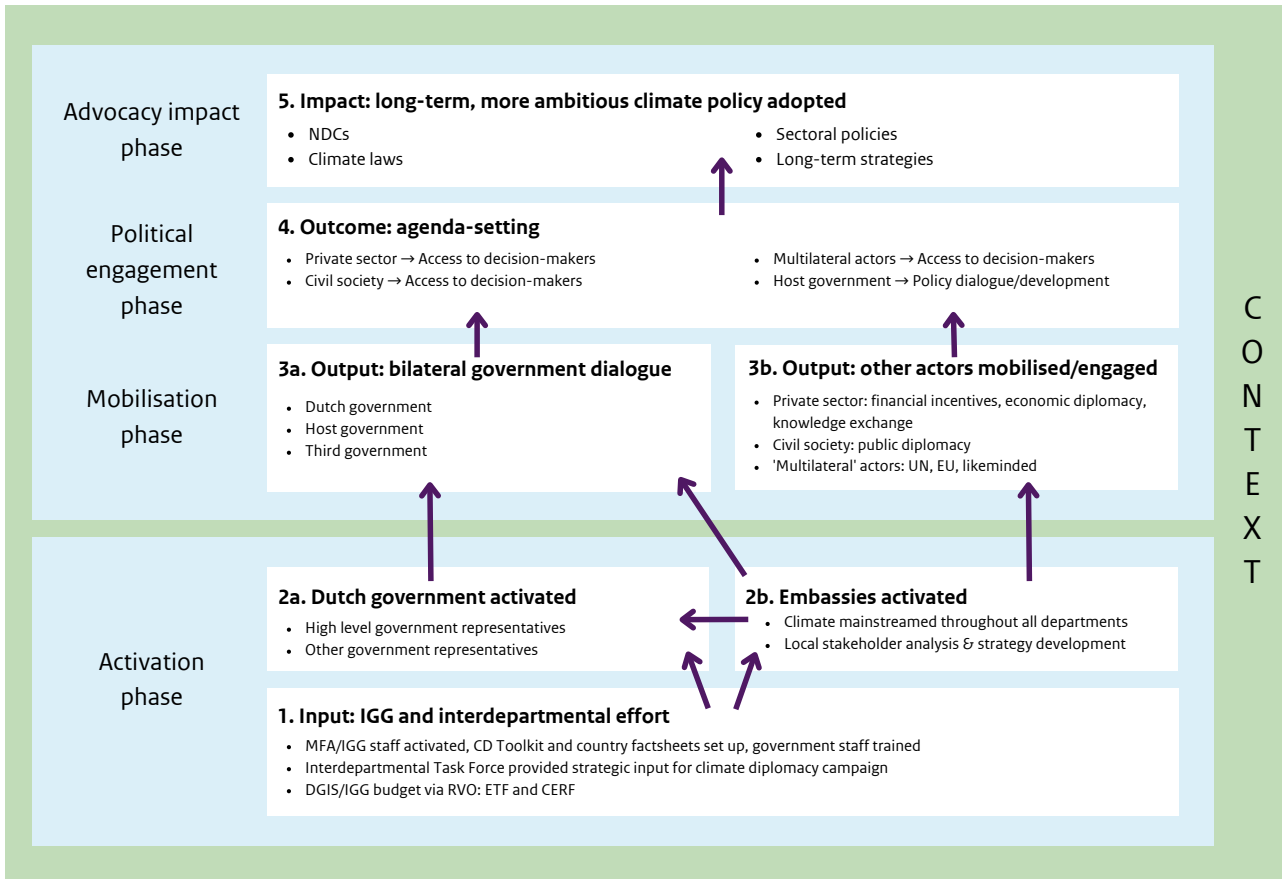


Figure 18 (former Figure 2 from section 2.2): Reconstructed climate diplomacy strategy of country-specific campaigns. The arrows indicate causal links.

The lower part of the figure, with a dark blue background, presents the mobilisation phase. It reflects activities carried out internally, involving Dutch government actors. The top part, with a lighter blue background, reflects activities involving external actors, such as the government of the target country and (local) non-governmental actors.

Boxes 2a and 3a represent direct climate diplomacy carried out through government-to-government (i.e. bilateral) activities. Boxes 2b and 3b reflect indirect forms of climate diplomacy that involve other actors and instruments to achieve impact, such as private sector engagement or public diplomacy tools.

The following is a step-by-step explanation of the reconstructed strategy.

### 1. Input: Dutch government efforts

- Most of the input for this climate diplomacy campaign came from the IGG climate diplomacy (CD) team within the MFA. They put in a lot of effort into integrating (mainstream) climate into the work of other colleagues in the MFA and other ministries. The team set up an international campaign, identifying international multilateral actors and networks to work with. They also set up a country-specific, or bilateral, campaign – the focus of this study and this strategy – for which they identified



target countries. Other ministries were involved in determining the strategies for each country and theme via the interdepartmental task force, which was led by IGG. EZK coordinates the Dutch input into the UNFCCC negotiations.

- To support climate and energy diplomacy, IGG set up the Energy Transition Facility and later the Climate and Energy response Facility at RVO. These funds had budgets that could be used by embassies to support activities and research to promote the transition to clean energy and private sector engagement.

#### *2a. The Dutch government is activated*

- The IGG climate diplomacy (CD) team promoted climate as a topic throughout the MFA and other ministries by training and informing staff and emphasising the importance of climate throughout their work.
- In cooperation with embassies, the team developed country-specific factsheets with information on the local and political situation, highlighting opportunities and challenges, to be used by Dutch representatives in bilateral dialogues.
- Embassies actively promoted climate action and put climate-related topics on the agenda of bilateral dialogues.

#### *2b. Embassies activated*

- Embassies adopted climate as a cross-cutting or priority theme in their annual plans and strategic multi-annual plans and were assisted by IGG to develop strategies for country-specific CD campaigns. Key objectives were mainstreaming climate throughout embassy sections and integrating climate diplomacy with economic and public diplomacy.
- Embassy staff used their knowledge of the local context to identify relevant networks and stakeholders for the country-specific CD campaigns. Embassy staff employed by other ministries, such as innovation attachés (funded by EZK), played a key role in identifying opportunities for cooperation.

#### *3a. Output: bilateral government dialogue*

- Dutch government actors, such as high-level representatives (VIPs) and embassy staff, engaged in bilateral dialogue with the host government of the target country.
- Dutch government representatives sometimes engaged in dialogue with the host country to jointly lobby third countries in order to raise third countries' climate ambitions.
- Embassies facilitated visits by government officials to the Netherlands and visits by Dutch government officials to their host country.

#### *3b. Output: other actors mobilised/engaged*

Embassies organised events to engage other actors, such as private sector actors, academic experts and consultants, other experts, civil society and multilateral actors, including from the UN and the World Bank, as well as the EU.<sup>93</sup> Embassies also invited host government officials to these events and sometimes involved them in organising them. In addition, embassies facilitated knowledge exchange with Dutch experts and sometimes provided financial incentives, such as funding from the ETF or CERF budget, for projects and cooperation, especially in renewable energy. Embassies coordinated with the EU and like-minded partners to influence the climate ambitions of governments through dialogue – and sometimes to promote access to international climate finance.

#### *4. Outcome: agenda setting*

Dutch representatives conducted bilateral activities and activities in collaboration with others (Boxes 3a and 3b). Private sector, civil society and multilateral actors gained (better) access to decision-makers and were able to influence agenda setting at the government level. The host government engaged in a policy dialogue with the Netherlands (and the EU and like-minded countries), organised with a view to raising their climate ambitions.

#### *5. Impact: (long-term) ambitious climate policies adopted*

Governments adopted new, more ambitious climate policies in the form of updated NDCs (submitted at COP26 or later), and sometimes climate legislation and sectoral policies, to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Some governments adopted long-term climate strategies.

<sup>93</sup> The EU is a supranational entity, but for the sake of this study, we have grouped like-minded actors together under the heading of multilateral: UN entities, the EU and coalitions of like-minded countries.

### Context

The context changes regularly, influences the various stages of a diplomacy campaign and is also influenced by the activities that are carried out. In steps 1, 2a and 2b, the international context, including the UNFCCC, and the country context, such as its GHG emissions, influenced the strategy developed by IGG and the embassies, and therefore also influenced the speaking notes and the agenda of the campaign and bilateral dialogues. The local context also influenced the strategy and output per country, such as decisions on which stakeholders and networks to engage. At the same time, the networks and stakeholders may change and their importance may vary, depending on the activities that are carried out. Step 4 is also influenced by the context, but it also informs the context, because when something is on the agenda, decisions can be made at a strategic level: to put extra emphasis on a topic to push for more ambition when an opportunity arises, or to move to another topic that is not on the agenda yet. The same goes for step 5, where new policies can lead to a shift in focus at the strategic level, but also at the level of events and activities.

### The advocacy process

As explained in the TOR for this study, an advocacy process consists of several phases. These are shown on the left-hand side of the figure: activation, mobilisation and political engagement, leading up to the advocacy impact phase. While activation refers to recruiting and activating individuals, the mobilisation phase uses resources (or inputs) to facilitate and promote collective action.<sup>cxiv</sup> In the figure above, outputs occur in the mobilisation phase, where Dutch efforts facilitate the actions of others, or Dutch actors engage others in their activities. In the context of this study, any activities conducted from the output level up are considered results; and they are used to measure effectiveness. This means that IOB also considers outcomes at the political engagement phase, such as agenda setting, to be results of diplomacy. As diplomatic efforts at earlier phases have influenced these outcomes, they are also considered results – even if Dutch actors were not directly involved in this later phase themselves.

# Annex E

## Endnotes

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- x MFA, Various internal diplomatic messages, 2018-2023.
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- xviii Various interviews, letters to parliament and website [We Are Tomorrow Global Partnership - Jonge Klimaatbeweging](#), [last accessed April 2023].
- xix Various Interviews with MFA staff, 2020-2023. Also based on survey results, see Chapter 3.
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