



State of Israel

**The State Comptroller  
and Ombudsman of Israel**

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**Special Audit Report**

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**National Climate Action  
by the Government of Israel**

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Summaries of Report Chapters



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“Look at God's work - for who can straighten what He has twisted?” (Ecclesiastes 7:13)

- When the Holy One created the first human being, He took him and led him around all the trees of the Garden of Eden. He said to him: “Look at My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are! All that I have created, I have created it for you. Be mindful that you do not corrupt and destroy My world, for if you corrupt it, there is no one to repair it after you.”

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah, ch. 7

The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.

Declaration of the United Nations  
Conference on the Human Environment,  
Stockholm 16 June 1972





## Foreword

This special audit report on the National Climate Action by the Government of Israel, was submitted to the Knesset and presented to the public in preparation for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), scheduled to meet in early November 2021 – at a time when many countries are making pivotal policy decisions that will influence the way we will manage this global crisis, which is expected to continue in the coming decades.

This audit report is unique in several respects. **First**, the state audit chose to address an issue that is currently developing. This decision was based on a future-oriented approach and the desire to give decision-makers a comprehensive document that will support them in preparing for and managing this multidimensional issue. **Second**, the report includes analysis of risks in different fields – including financial, physical, and geopolitical. The findings indicate the need to integrate them into the national risk strategy and take them into account when addressing strategic issues under the government's responsibility. **Third**, the report addresses several levels of this issue: the inter-ministerial level, which includes dozens of government ministries and public entities; the sectorial level – public, private, and civil society; the economic level, including sectors such as energy and transportation; and the international level. These levels are interconnected; taken together, they present a comprehensive assessment of the issue. **Fourth**, based on the understanding that the State Comptroller tracks core issues, the concluding chapter of this report includes an analysis of organizational and functional gaps. Addressing these gaps can contribute to improving government actions in managing the climate issue.

Over the past few decades, scientific studies have led the world to the understanding that continued emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs) at current levels will lead to increasing concentrations in the atmosphere, and thus to significant climate change, and, that as result, a cross-borders and cross-sectors crisis is evolving and is expected to cause deterioration in the global economy, health, and ecology. To prevent the realization of this scenario, comprehensive global action is required to reduce GHG emissions through the transition to a net carbon neutral economy.

Effective management of mitigation and adaptation to climate change effects necessitates a perceptual shift and requires an understanding that climate change is not only an environmental issue – it has become a systemic crisis that threatens many areas of life. Therefore, it is relevant to the entire range of government activity. Various countries have declared a state of climate emergency, and they have begun to take actions on the national and local level. They do so based on the understanding that climate change is a significant component of the risk map, and not just an environmental issue with limited effects, and that national adaptation to climate change is a central component of a national strategy for strengthening public resilience and systemic readiness for multi-risk crises.



In the understanding that the government must take initial steps based on existing knowledge, the State Comptroller conducted a comprehensive examination of government resolutions and actions promoted by the government of Israel over the past several years, in several main areas: mitigation of GHGs emissions; multi-sectorial adaptation to climate change risks; macroeconomic and financial risks caused by climate change; and Israel's governance structure for addressing these issues. The audit report also includes an international layer, which contains comparative reviews of actions taken in other countries, presentation of content from international professional organizations on the report topics, analysis of global trends, actions and recommendations of countries and international organizations, risk analysis, and scientific reports. Throughout the audit process, the auditors met with many experts and researchers, key staff actors, and field actors in dozens of public entities, many government ministries and subordinate bodies, industry representatives and other stakeholders.

The audit revealed many findings that indicate that the State of Israel has yet to make the necessary perceptual shift. Only a minority of public entities exhibited actions for improving adaptation to climate change. Israel is one of the few countries in the world that does not act based on a national adaptation plan that is budgeted and approved, although it is in a "hotspot" (high-risk area), and thus even more exposed to climate change risks. Further, climate change is not part of the national threat map. Not all the required mechanisms for reducing GHG emissions have been implemented. In addition, disagreements among government ministries have delayed Israel's ability to meet its obligations and targets for GHG emissions reduction and the transition to renewable energy, and are expected to cause further delays. Israel has not yet internalized the risks posed by climate change to the economy and financial system. Finally, in the field of climate innovation, Israel is at the bottom of the list of countries reviewed.

The audit report recommends examining the obstacles in the existing organizational and functional structure that affect this issue. These include decentralization of authority among many government entities, segmentation of each layer related to climate change management, and the built-in gap between the responsibility of a public entity for a certain area and its authority to act in this area. These barriers impede the prioritization of the government's public targets as well as resolution of the conflicts between them. The audit also recommends defining climate action as a core target under government responsibility (of all government ministries) and determine that climate change should be managed on a national platform that will enable decision-making based on balancing the conflicting public interests, under uncertain conditions – decisions that have the power to change the economy. This can contribute to improvement of long-term government planning through an integrative viewpoint, lead the State of Israel to a low-carbon economy, and promote the integration of climate considerations in government work. As part of this process, the audit recommends strengthening the necessary knowledge capacities in the scientific, economic, and technological fields. The government must act so that the national infrastructure and resources and public and private funding will support the State of Israel's transition to a low-



carbon economy and the promotion of adaptation actions and ensure that all necessary steps are taken to meet its obligations and targets for GHG emissions reduction.

It should be noted that during the final stages of this audit, the government made several resolutions related to climate change, and set targets and actions for implementation.

In conclusion, Israel's government faces a two-sided challenge. On the one hand, it must address questions of risk management on the national level and construct a path that will lead to a low-carbon economy, green growth, and the transition to green energy. On the other, it must achieve maximum adaptation to the risks that climate change poses to people, infrastructure, and nature. I hope that the findings of this report and its recommendations will contribute to the promotion of the issues relating to climate change and motivate the audited entities to act in this field.

**Matanyahu Englman**  
State Comptroller  
and Ombudsman

Jerusalem, October 2021



## **Table of Contents**

### National Climate Action by the State of Israel

Chapter 1	<b>Mitigation – Actions to Reduce GHG Emissions</b>	23
Chapter 2	<b>Adaptation – National Plan and Measures</b>	41
Chapter 3	<b>Review of Economic and Financial Risks of Climate Change and their Management by the State of Israel</b>	59
Chapter 4	<b>Climate Change Governance - Organizational, Functional, and Professional Structures</b>	85





## Glossary

**Adaptation** – actions and adaptation for risks related to climate change.

**Adaptation plans** – National adaptation strategy (NAS) and national action plan (NAP).

**Adaptation report** – Recommendations intended to support in implementing the targets of Government Resolution No. 4079 and to help Israel to better adapt to climate changes based on the actions of the CCAA and the subcommittees (published in April 2021).

**Annual follow-up report** – Annual report to the Israeli government of the Steering Committee for GHG Reduction on implementation of the national plan and targets for reducing GHG emissions, as determined in Government Resolution No. 542.

**Anthropogenic greenhouse gases** – Gases produced by human activity. Most of the anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions originate in burning fossil fuels for producing energy in activities such as electricity production, transportation, cooking and heating.

**BAU scenario** – Business-as-usual scenario; the emissions forecast in the BAU scenario relating to GHG emissions expected in the absence of policies or additional government action.

**CCAA team** – The CCAA; managing team who manages the integration of the national climate change adaptation plan.

**Climate Change Adaptation Administration (CCAA)** – An entity of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, comprises 35 bodies including representatives of government ministries, civil bodies, and environmental organizations. The role of this team is to manage formulation of the national climate change adaptation plan.

**Climate event** – extreme weather event, including unusual environmental events (such as haze, sandstorms, air pollution), mostly limited in extent.

**Climate Law Memorandum** – 5781-2021, published in May 2021 by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. It aims “to lead to prevention and reduction of GHG emissions and climate crisis damage in Israel... by setting targets for reducing emissions and GHGs and preparing national plans”.

**Combined cycle power plant** – Power plant that relies on storage of PV energy, alternative to peaking power plant.

**COVID-19** – Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

**Decarbonization** – Negating CO2 emissions during economic activity.



**Decision makers proposal for transition to a low-carbon economy** – Draft of a government resolution on the “Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy” which details Israel’s new national targets of GHG Emissions reduction. The Ministry of Environmental Protection has been promoting this proposal since late 2020. The draft proposal was finally accepted as Government Resolution 171.

**Defense establishment** – The Ministry of Defense and the Israel Defense Forces.

**Dual-use zone** – Area designated for the construction of installations for producing renewable energy that is being used for other purposes, such as built-up land, agricultural areas, or parking lots.

**ESG** – Environmental, Social, and Governance; considerations in the fields of environment, social welfare, and corporate governance that can be evaluated during economic or financial activity, such as through reporting on activity of companies and corporations.

**Framework convention** – The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN’s fundamental convention on climate change.

**GDP** – Gross domestic product.

**Government Guide to Risk Management** – A guide designed to aid decision-makers in managing public risk (published by the Prime Minister’s Office, 2018).

**Government Resolution No. 171** – Israel government resolution dated July 2021 on “The Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy.”

**Government Resolution No. 208** – Israel government resolution dated August 2021 on “The Transition to Green Energy and Correction of the Government Resolution.”

**Government Resolution No. 465** – Israel government resolution dated October 2020 on “Promoting Renewable Energy in the Electricity Sector.”

**Government Resolution No. 474** – Israel government resolution dated June 2009 on “Israel’s Adaptation to Climate Change – Adaptation and Readiness for Climate Change and GHG Emissions Reduction.”

**Government Resolution No. 542** – Israel government resolution dated September 2015 on “GHG Emissions Reduction and Improving Efficiency of Energy Consumption in the Economy”, passed following the Paris Agreement, which defined national reduction targets for 2030.

**Government Resolution No. 1403; National Plan 2016** – Israel government resolution dated April 2016 on a “National Plan for Implementing the Targets for GHG Emissions Reduction and Improving Energy Efficiency.”



**Government Resolution No. 4079** – Israel government resolution dated July 2018 on “Israel’s Preparation for Climate Change Adaptation: Recommendations to the Government for National Strategy and a National Action Plan.”

**Greenhouse gases (GHGs)** – A group of gases that prevent the radiation reflected from Earth from escaping into the atmosphere contributing to global warming and climate change. Converting them to carbon dioxide (or CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalents makes it possible to compare them and to determine their individual and total contributions to global warming.

**IMS** – Israel Meteorological Service.

**IPCC Fifth Assessment Report** – The Fifth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014).

**Low-carbon economy** – An integrated economic policy that aims to change patterns of economic activity so that it will have minimal effect on the ecological system and reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions, to prevent the effects of climate change. This policy can reduce GHG emissions to net zero carbon.

**Mitigation** – Reduction of GHG emissions.

**National targets** – National targets for GHG reduction determined by countries under the Paris Agreement (see NDCs).

**NEMA** – National Emergency Management Authority.

**New plan for improving energy efficiency 2030** – The new national plan for improving energy efficiency for 2020-2030 (published by the Ministry of Energy in November 2020).

**NGFS** – Network of Central Banks and Supervisors for Greening the Financial System.

**OECD** – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OECD climate recommendations report** – Comprehensive report on promoting climate action in Israel written by the OECD in 2020 under the title “Accelerating Climate Action in Israel.”

**RIA** – Regulatory Impact Assessment; OECD methodology, implemented in Israel.

**Roadmap for Energy Sector 2050** – Summary document on a study by the Ministry of Energy on updated emissions targets for 2050 (published for public comments in March 2021).

**Scientific study and recommendations for a national strategy** – A study coordinated by the Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Environmental Protection following Government Resolution No. 474 of 2009, which included a scientific survey of the climate change issue, actions being performed for climate change adaptation, and actions that government



ministries intend to promote. The study's conclusions were presented to the government in 2017.

**SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals; the UN's 17 goals for sustainable development, adopted in 2015.

**Six main GHGs** – General term for carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), hydrofluorocarbon (HFC), perfluorochemicals (PFC), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>).

**State Comptroller's questionnaire / the questionnaire** – questionnaire distributed by the State Comptroller's Office to 63 government ministries, and government and public bodies to obtain information on their activity and the government's activity on climate change.

**Steering Committee for GHG Reduction** – Steering and follow-up committee on the issue of GHG emissions reduction, established under Government Resolution No. 1403, under the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

**Supervisor's Letter 2009** – Letter of the Supervisor of Banks of the Bank of Israel to banking corporations regarding environmental risk (published in 2009).

**Transition process to low-carbon economy 2050 (2050 process)** – An inter-ministerial and multi-sectorial process that began in 2018 at the initiative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. It aims to formulate a vision, strategy, and long-term plan to transform Israel's economy into low to neutral emissions by 2050.

**UNFCCC** – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; UN framework treaty on climate change adopted in 1992, The Convention has near universal membership (197 Parties) and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

**Vector** – An organism that transmits diseases but does not cause them. The vector acts as a host for the pathogen.

**WHO** – World Health Organization.