



# Research Report

## Environment Commission

### AGENDA ITEM

Maximizing fulfilment of UN climate agreements by  
member-states

Chairing Panel

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*Environment Commission - Maximizing fulfilment UN Climate Agreements by member states*

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## Introduction

The topic of “Climate change emerged as a media issue in the late 1970s” (Corfee Morlot, Maslin, and Burgess 2760) and as well “environmentalism had grown to be one of the largest social movements in history” (Coglianese 102). It received mass media representation which divided the views of many members of the public towards it. There have been many reasons behind mass media being alerted towards climate change. For instance, in the history of the USA, there were many droughts with senate testimonies on this plaguing issue and a catastrophic extinction of species (McCright and E. 500).

## Definitions of Key Terms

### **Climate Change:**

Global Warming or Climate change have been used in the same meaning to define the warming of our earth’s average temperature. Many Scientists have been saying “Humans have been modifying the environment through processes associated with industrialization, population growth and urbanization. One of the most important results of these activities have been increased emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) primarily due to fossil fuel burning as well as deforestation “(Berliner 430), which plays a crucial role in making this climate change debate more controversial.

### **Paris Agreement:**

The Paris Agreement builds upon the Convention and – for the first time – brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort.

The Paris Agreement’s central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity building framework will be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. The Agreement also provides for enhanced transparency of action and support through a more robust transparency framework

### **Mitigation:**



The Convention requires all Parties, taking into account their responsibilities and capabilities, to formulate and implement programmes containing measures to mitigate climate change. Mitigation actions could be economy-wide, cover several or single sectors, such as energy supply and demand, transport, buildings, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management. There is a number of mitigation options, which Parties may use taken into account their national circumstances, availability of technology and financial resources, mitigation potential and the policy implementation issues.

Mitigation policies and measures used by developed country Parties mostly focused on the large emitting sectors, such as energy and transport. Strengthening of climate change policy portfolios resulted in policies and measures in some key areas being substantially strengthened, through more stringent requirements, wider coverage and increased investment.

### **Adaption.**

Adaptation refers to adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. It refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.

## General Overview

The governments of more than 190 nations will gather in Paris to discuss a possible new global agreement on climate change, aimed at reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and thus avoiding the threat of dangerous climate change.

Current commitments on greenhouse gas emissions run out in 2020, so at Paris, governments are expected to produce an agreement on what happens for the decade after that at least, and potentially beyond.

Scientists have warned that if greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, we will pass the threshold beyond which global warming becomes catastrophic and irreversible. That threshold is estimated as a temperature rise of 2C above pre-industrial levels, and on current emissions trajectories, we are heading for a rise of about 5C. That may not sound like much, but the temperature difference between today's world and the last ice age was about 5C, so seemingly small changes in temperature can mean big differences for the Earth.

They have: global negotiations on climate change have been carrying on for more than 20 years. The history of climate change goes back much further: in the 19th century, physicists theorised about the role of greenhouse gases, chiefly carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere, and several suggested that the warming effect would increase alongside the levels of these gases in the atmosphere. But this was all theoretical.

Only in the past few decades have scientists begun the measurements necessary to establish a relationship between current carbon levels and temperatures, and the science conducted



since then has consistently pointed in one direction: that rising greenhouse gas emissions, arising from our use of fossil fuels and our industries, lead to higher temperatures.

Global temperatures have been on a clear upward path. There was a spike in 1998, after which temperatures were lower – but still warmer than previous decades – that led some climate sceptics to claim that the world was cooling.

During the period since 1998, global temperatures have risen at a slower pace than they did in the previous 30 years. That, too, has been seized upon by sceptics as evidence that global warming has “paused”. But it is important to note that temperatures have not fallen, or stalled – they have continued to rise. Given the variations that characterise our weather systems, a period in which the rate of warming slowed is not unexpected.

For the past two years, the rate of warming seems to have accelerated again, but little can be construed from that. In 1992, governments met in Rio de Janeiro and forged the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That agreement, still in force, bound governments to take action to avoid dangerous climate change, but did not specify what actions. Over the following five years, governments wrangled over what each should do, and what should be the role of developed countries versus poorer nations.

Those years of argument produced, in 1997, the Kyoto protocol. That pact required worldwide cuts in emissions of about 5%, compared with 1990 levels, by 2012, and each developed country was allotted a target on emissions reductions. But developing countries, including China, South Korea, Mexico and other rapidly emerging economies, were given no targets and allowed to increase their emissions at will.

Al Gore, then US vice-president, signed up to the protocol, but it was quickly apparent that it would never be ratified by the US Congress. Legally, the protocol could not come into force until countries representing 55% of global emissions had ratified it. With the US – then the world’s biggest emitter – on the outside, that was not going to happen.

So for most of the following decade, the Kyoto protocol remained in abeyance and global climate change negotiations ground to a near-halt. But in late 2004, Russia decided to pass the treaty – unexpectedly, and as part of a move to have its application for World Trade Organization membership accepted by the European Union. That made up the weight needed, and the protocol finally came into force.

The US, under George W Bush, remained firmly outside Kyoto, so although the UN negotiations carried on year after year, the US negotiators were often in different rooms from the rest of the world. It was clear a new approach was needed that could bring the US in, and encourage the major developing economies – especially China, now the world’s biggest emitter – to take on limits to their emissions.

What followed was, agreed at Bali in 2007 after much drama, an action plan that set the world on the course to a new agreement that would take over from Kyoto.



It did take a long time. But getting agreement from 196 countries was never going to be easy. The next act of this long-running drama fully demonstrated that: the Copenhagen conference of 2009.

We know already what the biggest emitters have committed to. The EU will cut its emissions by 40%, compared with 1990 levels, by 2030. The US will cut its emissions by 26% to 28%, compared with 2005 levels, by 2025. China will agree that its emissions will peak by 2030.

Nations responsible for more than 90% of global emissions have now come up with their targets – known in the UN jargon as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDCs . These include all of the major developed and developing countries, though their contributions vary: in the case of developed countries, actual cuts in emissions, for developing countries, a range of targets including limits on emissions compared to “business as usual”, and pledges to increase low-carbon energy or preserve forests.

Poorer countries want the rich world to provide them with financial help that will enable them to invest in clean technology to cut their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt their infrastructure to the likely damage from climate change.

This is a hugely contentious issue. At Copenhagen, where the finance part of the deal was only sorted out at the very last minute, rich countries agreed to supply \$30bn (\$20bn) of “fast-start” financial assistance to the poor nations, and they said that by 2020, financial flows of at least \$100bn a year would be provided.

As a cornerstone of any Paris agreement, poor countries want assurances that this pledge will be met. That has now been given, in several forms: the OECD issued a report in October showing that two thirds of the finance required are already being supplied, and a report by the World Resources Institute showed that the remainder can be made up by increased finance from the World Bank and other development banks, and from the private sector. The World Bank and several governments have already committed to upping their financial assistance, meaning that a clear path towards the 2020 target can now be discerned.

There is more, however. Poor nations also want a similar provision in place beyond 2020, but there is strong disagreement over how this should be done. Some want all the money to come from rich country governments, but those governments are adamant that they will not provide such funding solely from the public purse. They want international development banks, such as the World Bank, to play a role, and they want most of the funding to come from the private sector.

An agreement on this is still possible, but it will be one of the main obstacles to a Paris deal.

The key question now is over security. With the French capital under recent attack and reports of fresh assaults averted by the armed forces, the atmosphere in Paris will be unlike any city that has hosted major international talks before. Security will be paramount - the French police and army will be on the streets, and the venue will be patrolled by uniformed



UN guards - but the atrocities of 13 November will hang heavily on all delegates. This may mean that when world leaders attend private meetings, terrorism is discussed before climate change. But it may also mean that delegates are under more pressure than ever to come up with a deal, given the tragic circumstances surrounding them.

If nations can meet and agree on equitable goals on the climate, in these circumstances, it will be a triumph for international cooperation, for our wellbeing and security, and for faith in the future, in the face of forces who wish to destroy all three.

## Major Parties Involved

### **UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)**

The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994. Today, it has a near-universal membership. The 197 countries that have ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

### **IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change):**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC assessments provide a scientific basis for governments at all levels to develop climate-related policies, and they underlie negotiations at the UN Climate Conference – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The assessments are policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive: they may present projections of future climate change based on different scenarios and the risks that climate change poses and discuss the implications of response options, but they do not tell policymakers what actions to take.

### **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent



implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

Our mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

## Timeline of Key events

1987: MONTREAL — Governments adopt a treaty pledging to restrict emissions of chemicals damaging the ozone layer. While it doesn't deal with climate change specifically, the Montreal Protocol becomes a model for how to rein in man-made emissions through international agreements.

1988: NEW YORK — The U.N. General Assembly endorses the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It is set up the same year by two U.N. agencies, the World Meteorological Organization and the U.N. Environmental Program, to assess the existing knowledge about climate change.

1992: RIO DE JANEIRO — World leaders gathering for the first Earth Summit sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the first international treaty aimed at limiting greenhouse gas emissions. However, it sets no binding emissions targets.

1997: KYOTO, Japan — The Kyoto Protocol is adopted, setting binding emissions targets for wealthy countries. The United States doesn't join the treaty because it doesn't include big developing countries such as China and India. The U.S. also says the treaty would harm its economy.

2004: MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin signs a bill confirming Russia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. The move means countries representing more than 55 percent of global emissions support the treaty, a condition for it to take effect

2009: COPENHAGEN, Denmark — The first attempt to craft a global emissions treaty to replace Kyoto, which is set to expire in 2012, falls apart amid disputes between rich and poor countries over who should do what. Acrimonious negotiations end with a voluntary deal inviting countries to present nonbinding emissions targets for 2020.

Further information on the Copenhagen Act: All of the world's developed countries and the biggest developing countries agreed – for the first time – to limits on their greenhouse gas emissions. This was a landmark, as it meant the world's biggest emitters were united towards a single goal.



The emissions reductions agreed on were still not enough to meet scientific advice, but they were a big advance on reducing emissions compared with “business as usual”.

But what didn’t happen turned out to be the point that NGOs and many in the press seized on? What didn’t happen was a fully articulated and legally binding treaty.

It depends on your viewpoint. The Kyoto protocol was a beautifully written, watertight, fully legally binding international treaty, a sub-treaty of the similarly binding UNFCCC. But it never met its objectives, because it wasn’t ratified by the US, and not by Russia until it was too late. And none of the countries that failed to meet their commitments under Kyoto has been sanctioned.

The Copenhagen agreement, on the other hand, was not fully adopted by the UN in 2009 because of last-minute chaos at the conference, though it was ratified the following year in the form of the Cancun Agreements. For this reason, the Copenhagen agreement was derided as a failure by green groups.

But the targets agreed at Copenhagen, in the form of a document signed by world leaders, still stands

2011: DURBAN, South Africa — U.N. climate talks produce a major breakthrough as countries agree to adopt a universal agreement on climate change in 2015 that would take effect five years later and apply to all of them

2013: STOCKHOLM — The IPCC says it's "extremely likely" that human influence is the dominant reason for warming temperatures recorded since the mid-20th century.

2015: PARIS — More than 190 governments meet in the French capital to finish what's envisioned as a landmark deal to rein in greenhouse gas emissions after 2020.

4 November 2016: In accordance with article 21(1). The Agreement enters into force on the thirtieth day after the date on which at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 percent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions has deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

## The Paris Agreement

Signatories: 195. Parties: 171

The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015 at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December 2015. In accordance with its article 20, the Agreement shall be open for signature at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from



22 April 2016 until 21 April 2017 by States and regional economic integration organizations that are Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The agreement is below

- 1) *Decides* to adopt the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as “the Agreement”) as contained in the annex;
- 2) *Requests* the Secretary-General of the United Nations to be the Depository of the Agreement and to have it open for signature in New York, United States of America, from 22 April 2016 to 21 April 2017
- 3). *Invites* the Secretary-General to convene a high-level signature ceremony for the Agreement on 22 April 2016.
- 4) *Also invites* all Parties to the Convention to sign the Agreement at the ceremony to be convened by the Secretary-General, or at their earliest opportunity, and to deposit their respective instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible;
- 5) *Recognizes* that Parties to the Convention may provisionally apply all of the provisions of the Agreement pending its entry into force, and requests Parties to provide notification of any such provisional application to the Depository;
- 6) *Notes* that the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, in accordance with decision 1/CP.17, paragraph 4, has been completed;
- 7) *Decides* to establish the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement under the same arrangement, mutatis mutandis, as those concerning the election of officers to the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action;<sup>1</sup>
- 8). *Also decides* that the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement shall prepare for the entry into force of the Agreement and for the convening of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement;
- 9) *Further decides* to oversee the implementation of the work programme resulting from the relevant requests contained in this decision;
- 10) *Requests* the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement to report regularly to the Conference of the Parties on the progress of its work and to complete its work by the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement;
- 11) *Decides* that the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement shall hold its sessions starting in 2016 in conjunction with the sessions of the Convention

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<sup>1</sup> Endorsed by decision 2/CP.18, paragraph 2.



subsidiary bodies and shall prepare draft decisions to be recommended through the Conference of the Parties to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement for consideration and adoption at its first session;

The landmark 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commits all countries to keep global mean temperature increase well below 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels by the end of the century and to make efforts to limit the temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius. For the first time, all countries recognize the need to peak global greenhouse gas emissions “as soon as possible” and to fully decarbonize their economies during this century to achieve net-zero global greenhouse gas emissions. In Paris, negotiators achieved what can be reasonably be expected from a global climate agreement. Now scientists, engineers, businessmen, policymakers, politicians, and civil society must make the transformation to low-emission societies a reality.

Critically, the agreement asks all countries to prepare by 2020 low-emission development strategies that chart out how emissions will fall through to 2020. Such strategies had been proposed in the September Joint Presidential Statement by China and the United States and by over 40 heads of state convening at the United Nations. SDSN has played an instrumental role in developing and popularizing the concept of long-term pathways through the Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project (DDPP). The importance of these pathways for climate diplomacy and implementation is described here.

The Paris Agreement also emphasizes the central role of advances in low-emission technologies and their diffusion. The Low-Emission Technology Partnership initiative (LCTPI) spearheaded by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and launched with support from the SDSN aims to advance the pace of development for key technologies.



## Appendix

[http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php)

<http://unfccc.int/focus/mitigation/items/7171.php>

<http://unfccc.int/focus/adaptation/items/6999.php>

[https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&lang=en&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&lang=en&clang=en)

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