

CONFERENCE OF PARTIES – 26

All eyes were on Glasgow when the world leaders travelled to Scotland for the summit. The event was expected to bring in between 20,000 and 25,000 attendees alongside global politicians and state leaders. The goal of COP26 was to address the climate crisis, following up on the last event of this kind since 2019. This comes just a few months after the UN's IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Report which labelled global warming as a "code red for humanity". COP26 was therefore being regarded as a landmark event by attendees from around the world.



The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** established an international environmental treaty to combat dangerous human interference with the climate system, in part by stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. It was signed by 154 states at

the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. The Conference of Parties (COP) is the apex decision-making body of the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC). COP members have been meeting every year since the year 1995. As of 2019, the number of member countries in the UNFCCC has reached 197. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements.

Background

A key task for the COP is to review the national communications and emission inventories submitted by Parties. Based on this information, the COP assesses the effects of the measures taken by Parties and the progress made in achieving the ultimate objective of the Convention. The first COP meeting was held in Berlin, Germany in March, 1995. Just as the COP Presidency rotates among the five recognized UN regions - that is, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others – there is a tendency for the venue of the COP to also shift among these groups. The 3rd conference of parties (COP3) was held in Kyoto and then after Kyoto protocol was adopted being one of the better-known agreements. At COP21 in Paris the “Paris Agreement” was reached and has been widely proclaimed as a historic deal and one that will inevitably lead to decarbonisation. The implementation of the Paris Agreement will be at the centre of negotiations for COP22 in Marrakech. The 25th Conference of Parties (COP 25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Madrid is the longest in history which ended in deadlock and disappointment over most of the contentious issues.

Conference Timeline:

1. 1995: COP 1, Berlin, Germany
2. 1996: COP 2, Geneva, Switzerland
3. 1997: COP 3, Kyoto, Japan
4. 1998: COP 4, Buenos Aires, Argentina
5. 1999: COP 5, Bonn, Germany
6. 2000: COP 6, The Hague, Netherlands
7. 2001: COP 6, Bonn, Germany
8. 2001: COP 7, Marrakech, Morocco
9. 2002: COP 8, New Delhi, India
10. 2003: COP 9, Milan, Italy
11. 2004: COP 10, Buenos Aires, Argentina
12. 2005: COP 11/CMP 1, Montreal, Canada
13. 2006: COP 12/CMP 2, Nairobi, Kenya
14. 2007: COP 13/CMP 3, Bali, Indonesia
15. 2008: COP 14/CMP 4, Poznań, Poland
16. 2009: COP 15/CMP 5, Copenhagen, Denmark

17. 2010: COP 16/CMP 6, Cancún, Mexico
18. 2011: COP 17/CMP 7, Durban, South Africa
19. 2012: COP 18/CMP 8, Doha, Qatar
20. 2013: COP 19/CMP 9, Warsaw, Poland
21. 2014: COP 20/CMP 10, Lima, Peru
22. 2015: COP 21/CMP 11, Paris, France
23. 2016: COP 22/CMP 12/CMA 1, Marrakech, Morocco
24. 2017: COP 23/CMP 13/CMA 1–2, Bonn, Germany
25. 2018: COP 24/CMP 14/CMA 1–3, Katowice, Poland
26. 2019: SB50, Bonn, Germany
27. 2019: COP 25/CMP 15/CMA 2, Madrid, Spain
28. 2021: COP 26/CMP 16/CMA 3, Glasgow, United Kingdom
29. 2022: COP 27, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt
30. 2023: COP 28, United Arab Emirates
31. 2024: COP 29, Odessa, Ukraine

*The Conference of the Parties (COP),

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and

*The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA).

ISSUES

1. Climate Fair Shares

Most of the issues arising at the UN climate summit centres around questions of equity, historic responsibility, and capability to act questions that are at the heart of climate justice. Long term tensions between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change focus on these questions. Climate justice is key to unlocking the global co-operation that is essential in achieving the Paris Agreement target of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5°C. International civil society organisations have come together as the Civil Society Review to publish a series of reports assessing global climate action under the Paris Agreement through a ‘Fair Shares’ lens. The ‘Fair Shares’ analysis is rooted in the science of remaining carbon budgets and the principles of equity under the UNFCCC. It shows that rich historical polluters are not doing anywhere near their Fair Share of climate action, in terms of emissions reductions and climate finance, while many global south countries are committed to undertaking their Fair Share or more of action.

For example, the 2015 Civil Society Equity Review found that Russia's pledge was a zero contribution of its fair share, Japan's was a 10th, the USA's was a fifth and the EU's was just over one fifth of its fair share; meanwhile China, India, Indonesia, Kenya and the Marshall Islands' pledges all meet or exceed their fair share.

2. Climate Ambition

The Paris Agreement is a global treaty under the UNFCCC adopted in 2015. It aims to keep the global average temperature increase well below 2°C warming compared to pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5°C. We are already experiencing devastating impacts at only 1°C warming. A 2018 special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear that increases of more than 1.5°C would be catastrophic. Yet countries' pledges to reduce their emissions under the Paris Agreement currently fall far short of the 1.5°C or even the 2°C target. The Glasgow summit an important opportunity to put pressure on big and historical polluters, including the UK, EU and US, to do their fair share and increase their climate targets.

3. Climate Finance

A decade ago, at the Copenhagen climate talks (COP15), rich countries pledged to pay \$100 billion a year in climate finance to global South countries (developing countries in the talks) by 2020. That figure does not represent anything like the true carbon debt that rich countries owe for bringing the climate to the verge of breakdown, yet only a fraction of that finance is now on the table. This money is essential to enable developing countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and mitigate their own emissions while also developing their economies to bring their people out of poverty in a way that does not harm the environment.

4. Carbon Markets

The key issue up for negotiation at COP26 is rules for carbon markets. The rules were supposed to be agreed 3 years ago in Katowice, and again in Madrid, but negotiations broke down, meaning that the issue is now pushed to Glasgow. Carbon markets allow polluters to continue emitting greenhouse gases, for a price, either through trading or offsetting. There is no evidence that existing carbon market mechanisms have reduced emissions. Even if theoretically they could, with the carbon budget for keeping temperatures below 1.5°C running out in an estimated 5-7 years time, there is no time left to trade or offset emissions all polluters have to reduce their emissions to zero as quickly as possible. Carbon markets strengthen the power of

big, unaccountable corporations, and the dodgy offsetting schemes they rely on are linked to human rights abuses and environmental harm.

OUTCOMES:

1. Nationally Determined Contributions

By the end of COP26, 151 countries had submitted new climate plans (known as nationally determined contributions, or NDCs) to slash their emissions by 2030. To keep the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C within reach, we need to cut global emissions in half by the end of this decade. In contrast, the United Nations calculates that these plans, as they stand, put the world on track for 2.5 degrees C of warming by the end of the century. That is better than the 4 degrees C trajectory the world was on before the Paris Agreement was struck, but still extremely dangerous. If you take into account countries' commitments to reach net-zero emissions by around mid-century, analysis shows temperature rise could be kept to around 1.8 or 1.9 degrees C. But some major emitters' 2030 targets are so weak (particularly those from Australia, China, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and Russia) that they don't offer credible pathways to achieve their net-zero targets. This indicates a major "credibility gap" between the 2.5 degrees C-aligned 2030 targets and nations' net-zero targets. To fix this problem, these countries' must strengthen their 2030 emissions reduction targets to at least align with their net-zero commitments. This is where the COP26 agreement comes in.

2. Long Term Strategies

The Glasgow decision calls on countries to "revisit and strengthen" their 2030 targets by the end of 2022 to align them with the Paris Agreement's temperature goals. It also asks all countries that have not yet done so to submit long-term strategies to 2050, aiming for a just transition to net-zero emissions around mid-century. Together, stronger NDCs and long-term strategies should help align the net-zero and 2030 targets, as well as ramping up ambition. Elsewhere, the COP26 decision says that countries "resolve to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C," which gives this lower temperature threshold even greater emphasis than in the Paris Agreement. In addition, the pact asks nations to consider further actions to curb potent non-CO2 gases, such as methane, and includes language emphasizing the need to "phase down unabated coal" and "phase-out fossil fuel subsidies." This marked the first-time negotiators have explicitly referenced shifting away from coal and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies in COP decision text.

3. Impact of Climate Change

And lastly, this COP finally recognized the importance of nature for both reducing emissions and building resilience to the impacts of climate change, both in the formal text and through a raft of initiatives announced on the sidelines. So, in the end, diplomats managed to keep hopes of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C alive, but just barely. Once we see major emitters' new climate targets by the end of 2022, we will have a much better idea of whether we will be able to avoid breaching that temperature threshold — and if we do breach it, by how much. In 2009, rich nations committed to mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020 and through 2025 to support climate efforts in developing countries. In the Glasgow Climate Pact, it was noted “with deep regret” that developed countries failed to meet that goal in 2020 (recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates show that total climate finance reached \$79.6 billion in 2019). The COP26 outcome made it clear that these countries are still on the hook to fulfil this goal as soon as possible, and stipulates that those countries must report on their progress. Countries also agreed to a robust process to develop a new, larger climate finance goal to go into effect after 2025. They identified a wide range of options to ensure an inclusive and robust technical process to develop this new goal, and established an Ad Hoc Work Programme to convene technical experts and ministers to flesh out the details. The post-2025 climate finance goal is expected to be set by 2024. Developed countries also agreed to at least double funding for adaptation by 2025, which would amount to at least \$40 billion. This is a significant milestone to address the persisting imbalance between funding for mitigation and adaptation efforts; adaptation finance currently amounts to only a quarter of total climate finance, while needs to adapt to the increasing impacts of the climate crisis continue to grow.

4. Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund reached unprecedented levels of contributions, with new pledges for \$356 million that represent almost three times its mobilization target for 2022. The Least Developed Countries Fund, which supports climate change adaptation in the world's least developed countries, also received a record \$413 million in new contributions. Although more money is needed to help developing countries increase their resilience to the effects of climate change, this progress was warmly welcomed by developing countries in Glasgow. These countries also came to Glasgow hoping to create a clear plan to develop guidance on the collective assessment of progress toward the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), a key component of the Paris Agreement that aims to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate impacts.

COP26 adopted the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme for the GGA. This will take place between 2022 and 2024 — to help improve assessment of progress toward the adaptation goal and enable its implementation — through regular workshops and work on methodologies to assess progress. COP26 also took steps to help developing countries access good quality finance options.

For example, encouraging multilateral institutions to further consider the links between climate vulnerabilities and the need for concessional financial resources for developing countries — such as securing grants rather than loans to avoid increasing their debt burden. In 2009, rich nations committed to mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020 and through 2025 to support climate efforts in developing countries. In the Glasgow Climate Pact, it was noted “with deep regret” that developed countries failed to meet that goal in 2020 (recent OECD estimates show that total climate finance reached \$79.6 billion in 2019).

LEADERS WHO DID NOT ATTEND COP 26

China's leader Xi Jinping announced he would not be attending the conference in person and instead delivered a written address as the organizers did not provide an opportunity for a video address. With greenhouse gas emissions by China being the world's largest, Reuters said this made it less likely the conference would result in a significant climate deal. However, a Chinese delegation led by climate change envoy Xie Zhenhua did attend. The 2021 global energy crisis intensified pressures on China ahead of the summit. The Prime Ministers or heads of state of South Africa, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, Malaysia and Vatican City also did not attend the meeting. Russian President Vladimir Putin said his non-attendance was due to concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi did not attend; a formal request had been made by Struan Stevenson and Iranian exiles of the National Council of Resistance of Iran to the Scotland police, to arrest Raisi for crimes against humanity if he attended based on the legal concept of universal jurisdiction. Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman also did not attend the summit. Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, who faced international condemnation over rising deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, also decided not to attend the summit personally. Myanmar and Afghanistan were entirely absent; both countries had their UN-recognized governments ousted militarily in 2021. Six exiled Afghan climate experts had their applications rejected by the UNFCCC. Additionally, the island nation of Kiribati did not send participants, while fellow island nations Vanuatu and Samoa registered but did not send a delegation.

SIDELINES OF COP 26

China and the US have agreed to boost climate co-operation over the next decade, in a surprise announcement at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. The world's two biggest CO2 emitters pledged to act in a joint declaration. It says both sides will "recall their firm commitment to work together" to achieve the 1.5C temperature goal set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement. They called for stepped-up efforts to close the "significant gap" that remains to achieve that target. The two sides intend to establish a "Working Group on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s," which will meet regularly to address the climate crisis and advance the multilateral process, focusing on enhancing concrete actions in this decade. This may include, inter alia, continued policy and technical exchanges, identification of programs and projects in areas of mutual interest, meetings of governmental and non-governmental experts, facilitating participation by local governments, enterprises, think tanks, academics, and other experts, exchanging updates on their respective national efforts, considering the need for additional efforts, and reviewing the implementation of the Joint Statement and this Joint Declaration.

The India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) signed a memorandum of understanding at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, agreeing to collaborate and support countries in the implementation of ambitious national climate action in line with global efforts. The United States joined the International Solar Alliance, becoming the 101st member of the India-led initiative that seeks to make solar energy accessible and affordable to all. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the development as "wonderful news". "This will further strengthen the alliance in our shared quest for harnessing solar energy for a sustainable planet," he said in a tweet.

INDIA: COP 26

India called the COP26 summit a "success", saying it put across the concerns and ideas of the developing world quite "succinctly and unequivocally" in front of the world community. Union



environment minister Bhupender Yadav, head of the Indian delegation at the Glasgow conference, said that the world needs to awaken to the reality that the current climate crisis has been precipitated by unsustainable lifestyles and wasteful consumption patterns in the developed

countries. “The summit proved to be a success from India’s standpoint because we articulated and put across the concerns and ideas of the developing world quite succinctly and unequivocally. India presented the way for a constructive debate and equitable and just solutions at the forum.” The agreement has won applause for keeping alive the hope of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, but many of the delegations said they wished they had come away with more. “If it’s a good negotiation, all the parties are uncomfortable,” US climate envoy John Kerry said in the final meeting to approve the Glasgow Climate Pact. “And this has been, I think, a good negotiation.” The agreement aims to limit global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The deal, however, is very weak on several fronts, including climate finance and loss and damage. India wanted a change in a paragraph in the draft text related to “phase out” of coal and fossil fuels to reflect the imperatives of fossil fuel subsidies for the poor in India. India asked the text to be reworded to: “Call upon parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems, including by rapidly scaling up deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts to phase down unabated coal power and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing support to poorest and the most vulnerable, in line with national circumstances, and recognising the need for support towards a just transition.” India has promised to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070 missing a key goal of the COP26 summit for countries to commit to reach that target by 2050. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the pledge, the first time India has set a net zero target, at the Glasgow summit. Net zero, or becoming carbon neutral, means not adding to the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. India has named its price in high-stakes climate talks: if the rich countries want it to cut planet-warming emissions, they need to come up with \$1 trillion of public cash by the end of the decade. The demand comes after India’s surprise announcement at the opening of COP26 negotiations in Glasgow, Scotland, that it would set an ambitious new goal to reach net-zero emissions by 2070. In his speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that rich countries should provide as much as \$1 trillion in climate finance. Indian officials clarified their demands. They want \$1 trillion in funds just for India by 2030 ten times more than the unmet \$100 billion a year for all poor countries sought under previous deals. Over a decade, that would mean advanced economies have to give India the same amount of funds they have promised for all poor countries.

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