

# United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

## Background

### 1979 “World Climate Conference” organized by WMO

- expressed concern that continued expansion of man’s activities on earth may cause “significant extended regional and even global changes of climate”.

### 1988 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established by UNEP, WMO

- tasked to assess scientific information on the subject

### 1988 UN General Assembly Resolution 43/53

- urged protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind.

### 1990 – IPCC First Assessment Report

### 1990 – Second World Climate Conference

- called for the creation of a global treaty.

### UN General Assembly Resolution 45/212

- formally launched negotiations on a convention on climate change, to be conducted by an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)

### 1991 – INC meets

### 1992 – INC adopts text of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Rio Convention

### 1994 – UNFCCC enters into force

## Principles in the Rio Declaration covered by the UNFCCC include:

- The change in the Earth’s climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind (Principle 1)
- States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (Principle 2)
- Responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner with a view to avoiding adverse impacts on the latter, taking into full account the legitimate priority needs of developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty (Principles 3, 4 and 5)
- Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects (Principle 15)
- Common but differentiated responsibilities (Principle 7)



**United Nations**  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change



## Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)

**UNFCCC** regulates all GHGs not addressed by Montreal Protocol (except HFCs – see Kigali Amendment further along)

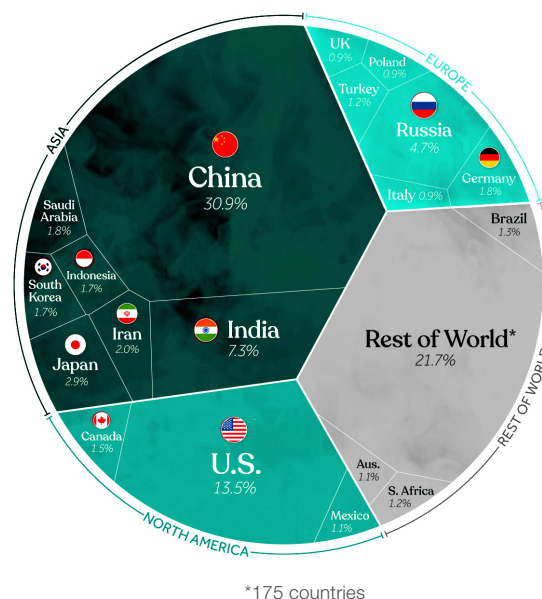
**Kyoto Protocol** regulates 7 major groups of GHGs:

- **CO<sub>2</sub>** – e.g. from combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas), agriculture land use, deforestation
- **CH<sub>4</sub>** – methane
- **N<sub>2</sub>O** – nitrous oxide
- **PFCs** – perfluorocarbons
- **HFCs** – hydrofluorocarbons
- **SF<sub>6</sub>** – sulphur hexafluoride
- **NF<sub>3</sub>** – nitrogen trifluoride

**Paris Agreement** – follows the UNFCCC

## Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (2021)

% of total global emissions 2021. Source: Global Carbon Atlas



## Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

- Established by WMO and UNEP in 1988
- Assesses scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation - provides an assessment of the state of knowledge on climate change
- Prepares Special Reports and Technical Papers on topics where independent scientific information and advice is needed
- Supports the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change through work on methodologies for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories
- Does not conduct new research, monitor climate-related data or recommend policies; instead synthesizes new and existing information and gives 'policy relevant' information.

## IPCC Working Groups

**Working Group I:** assesses the scientific aspects of the climate system and climate change.

**Working Group II:** assesses the vulnerability of socio-economic and natural systems to climate change, negative and positive consequences of climate change, and options for adapting to it.

**Working Group III:** assesses options for limiting greenhouse gas emissions and otherwise mitigating climate change.

## IPCC Assessment Reports

### First Assessment Report – 1990

- played a role in formation of the International Negotiating Committee by UNGA that led to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

### Second Assessment Report – 1995

- stabilisation of the concentration of carbon dioxide at its present level could only be achieved through an immediate reduction in its emissions of 50-70% and further reductions thereafter'
- report led to the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol



### Third Assessment Report – 2001

- most of the warming over the last 50 years attributable to human activities.
- predicted a rise of 1.4–5.8 °C over next 100 years, in global mean surface temperature
- GHGs need to be reduced ‘to a very small fraction of current emissions’

### Fourth Assessment Report – 2007

- 90% chance global warming linked to human activity
- mitigation targets (25-40% by 2020 and 80-90% by 2050)

### Fifth Assessment Report – 2014

- identifies a GHG emissions budget of 840Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>, and we’ve used up over half of that (531Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>)
- four emissions scenarios – with projections of 4C+ by 2100 in some
- greater rates and magnitude of climate change increase the likelihood of exceeding adaptation limits

### Sixth Assessment Report – 2022

- global GHG emissions must peak before 2025 in 1.5 degrees C-aligned pathways
- GHGs in all sectors must be halved by 2030 to remain 1.5 degrees C-aligned
- adaptation measures can effectively build resilience, but more finance is needed to scale solutions
- some climate impacts are already so severe they cannot be adapted to, leading to losses and damages

### IPCC Special Reports

- The Regional Impacts of Climate Change: An Assessment of Vulnerability, March 1997
- Aviation and the Global Atmosphere, March 1999
- Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry, March 2000
- Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage, March 2005
- Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation, April 2011
- Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation, March 2012
- Global Warming of 1.5°C, October 2018
- Climate Change and Land, August 2019
- The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, September 2019

### Key Climate Change Treaties

#### 1992: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

197 Parties to the Convention = Conference of the Parties (COP); entered into force in 1994

#### 1997: Kyoto Protocol

192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol = Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP); entered into force in 2005

#### 2015: Paris Agreement

191 Parties to the Paris Agreement = Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA); entered into force in 2016



## UNFCCC – 1992

### Convention's ultimate objective:

Stabilisation 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.

### Key principles:

- Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)
- Equity – Specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries
- Precaution and prevention – Timely action on climate change under conditions of scientific uncertainty
- Sustainable development

## Kyoto Protocol – 1997

### Objective:

- Commit developed country Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Set binding emission reduction targets at the international level
- Developed countries defined as those listed in UNFCCC Annexes I and II

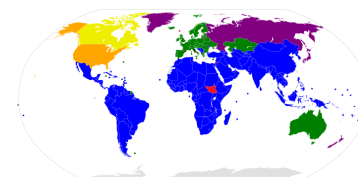
### First commitment period (2008–2012):

- Greenhouse gas emissions reductions by an average of 5% below 1990 levels
- USA did not ratify

### Second commitment period (2013-2020):

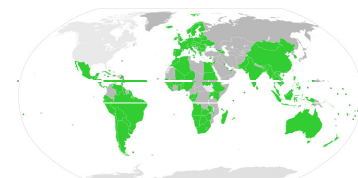
- Doha Amendment – negotiated in 2012, entered into force in 2020
- Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Canada did not take new targets

### Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC



- Annex B parties with binding targets in the second period
- Annex B parties with binding targets in the first period but not the second
- Non-Annex B parties without binding targets
- Annex B parties with binding targets in the first period but which withdrew from the Protocol
- Signatories to the Protocol that have not ratified
- Other UN member states and observers that are not party to the Protocol

### Doha Amendment 2012–2020



- States that ratified
- Kyoto protocol parties that did not ratify
- Non-parties to the Kyoto Protocol

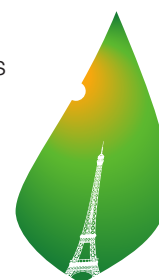
## Paris Agreement – 2015

### Goals:

- Holding global average temperature increase to  $<2^{\circ}\text{C}$ , aiming for  $1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Increasing the ability to adapt and foster low-carbon, climate-resilient development
- Making finance flows consistent with low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways

### Key principles:

- Universal – all Parties to undertake ambitious efforts
- Implementation to reflect equity and CBDR-RC
- Bottom-up action – Nationally determined contributions (NDCs)
- Built-in ambition mechanism – all Parties efforts to progress over time
- Comprehensive, balanced
- Legally binding



**PARIS2015**  
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE  
COP21•CMP11



## Ratifying the UNFCCC and its Protocol and Agreement: reservations and declarations

Reservations upon ratification or accession to the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are not provided for – however, under international law, a country ratifying or acceding to a treaty may make a declaration where they express their understanding of some matter or the interpretation of a particular provision.

Unlike reservations, declarations merely clarify the country's position and do not modify the legal effect of a treaty. Usually, declarations are made at the time of ratification or signature.

## Review: from the UNFCCC to Paris in a nutshell

**1992** – UNFCCC adopted (entered into force in 1994)

**1995** – First meeting of the UNFCCC COP and agreement to negotiate the Kyoto Protocol

**1997** – the Kyoto Protocol adopted, establishing an international legal framework for emissions reduction targets for developed countries during the period 2008-2012 for developed countries (with a second period agreed in 2012 ending in 2020)

**2005** – the Kyoto Protocol enters into force, eight years after adoption

**2007** – Bali Action Plan set out a two-year process for arriving at an outcome that addressed political concerns around the Kyoto Protocol

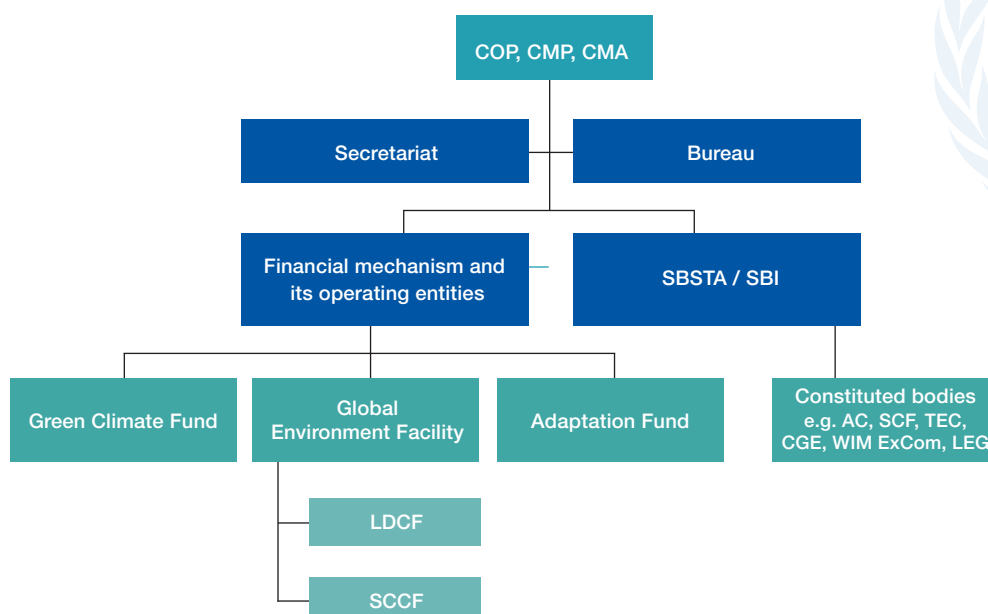
**2009** – the Copenhagen Accord, called for voluntary emissions reduction targets for all Parties and endorsed a cap of 2°C on the average global temperature increase. The UNFCCC COP officially “took note” of the Accord

**2010** – the Cancun Agreements acknowledged within the UNFCCC framework the objective of keeping the average global temperature rise below 2°C

**2011** – the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action mandated the creation of a new agreement (post-Kyoto Protocol) that would be “applicable to all” with a four-year negotiation window

**2015** – the Paris Agreement mandates “all Parties” to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C

## Institutional arrangements of the UNFCCC





## UNFCCC Negotiating Groups

- **Group of 77 and China (G77)** – 134 members, mainly developing countries
- **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** – 46 countries categorized as 'least developed' according to UN criteria
- **Small Island Developing States (SIDS) negotiate as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** – 39 members
- **Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN)** – 54 countries
- **The Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC)** – Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru
- **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs)** – ~25 members
- **European Union (EU)** – 27 members
- **Umbrella Group** – Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, USA
- **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** – Mexico, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Republic of Korea, Switzerland

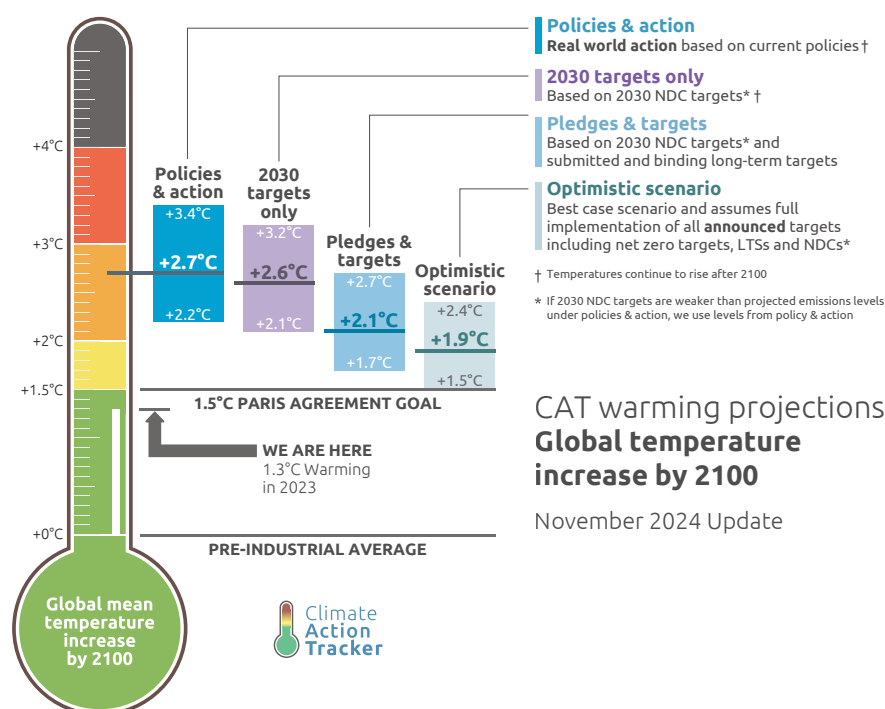
## Rules of procedure

The rules of procedure of the UNFCCC apply to any session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention convened in accordance with Article 7 of the Convention (these rules also apply to the subsidiary bodies, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement).

### Topics covered in the rules of procedure include:

- Place and dates of sessions (Rules 3–5)
- Observers (Rules 6–8)
- Agenda (Rules 9–16)
- Officers (Rules 22–26)
- Conduct of business (Rules 30–40)
- Voting (Rules 41–53)
  - Voting provisions could not be agreed; therefore, all decisions are to be made by consensus.

## Progress made against the Paris Agreement 1.5°C temperature goal



CAT warming projections  
**Global temperature increase by 2100**

November 2024 Update