



United Nations
Climate Change



NDC Global Outlook Report 2019

The Heat is On

Taking Stock of Global Climate Ambition



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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in nearly 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

On climate change, UNDP has the largest portfolio in the UN system and works with over 140 countries around the world.

UN Climate Change

With 197 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement. The main aim of the Paris Agreement is to keep a global average temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The UNFCCC is also the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The ultimate objective of all agreements under the UNFCCC is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system, in a time frame which allows ecosystems to adapt naturally and enables sustainable development.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

C	Celsius
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IEA	International Energy Agency
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LTS	Long-term strategy
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Climate Change
V20	Vulnerable Twenty Group of Ministers of Finance (of the Climate Vulnerable Forum)

Foreword

When the gavel sounded on 12 December 2015, ending the talks that ushered in the adoption of the Paris Agreement, people throughout the world rejoiced at the news that governments had finally come up with a solid plan to tackle climate change. The Agreement was a multilateral success, perhaps one of the greatest of the modern era.

Amid the celebrations, however, was the realization that the hard work had only just begun. While the Agreement provided a blueprint to address the climate change crisis, it was clear that the road to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°Celsius (C) or below would require unprecedented efforts by both governments and businesses throughout the world.

The good news is that momentum has been building since the adoption of the Paris Agreement. Since then, more and more key actors are aligning their plans, policies and projections with the Agreement.

At the same time, the impacts of climate change have been growing; often with terrifying results, ranging from wildfires, droughts, flooding, and hurricanes to sea-level rise, ocean acidification to the melting of the permafrost.

The Paris Agreement also spurred scientific research, giving us far greater clarity

on the magnitude of the threats that we face. This includes a landmark 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with an unequivocal message: a path exists to 1.5°C, but the window for achieving it is declining rapidly. Furthermore, we must reduce global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The bottom line is that while momentum exists, we need much more climate ambition. There is simply no time to waste. Climate change is fast outpacing us and needs an urgent response by all segments of society.

Boosting Nationally Determined Contributions — or NDCs — by each nation is a key part of that work. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Climate Change (UNFCCC) have been working together since 2014 to support countries in developing these NDCs, beginning with the launch of a regional NDC dialogue series that just completed its 22nd event having engaged over 2,200 participants from over 150 developing countries. The report that follows, leveraging those relationships and history, is the most detailed review yet of momentum since the Paris Agreement and is designed to both inspire and inform the UN Climate Action Summit in New York on 23 September.

The task ahead is daunting - the last four years were the warmest on record and GHGs from human activities are still rising. **The choices we make on ambition in 2020, at the first five-year milestone of the Paris Agreement, will profoundly affect us and the planet we leave to future generations.** This report clearly demonstrates that the majority of countries are committed to combatting climate change and making progress – even in the most challenging of development contexts.

We have watched truly *transformational* ideas evolve in the Climate Summit's preparatory working groups and are hearing of country intentions to make bold statements on ambition at the Summit itself. We therefore choose to be optimistic that leaders and corporations will respond to the needs of our planet and, especially, the youth of today.

The race against climate change is one we can and must win. We encourage you to use the information in this report both as an indication of current trends and as incentive for encouraging significantly greater climate action by all segments of society. UNDP and UNFCCC stand ready to use our extensive and long-standing climate action expertise, combined with our global, regional and country presence to make this happen.



Ms. Patricia Espinosa
Executive Secretary
UN Climate Change



Mr. Achim Steiner
Administrator
UN Development Programme

Overall, this report finds many reasons for optimism, but much work remains. It's clear that *business as usual* simply isn't good enough anymore. We must do more – much more – in areas related to mitigation, adaptation, and the finance to support all of this work. And we must do it quickly.

Executive summary

The Paris Agreement faces its first major test in 2020 against the backdrop of a worrying growth in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions since the adoption of the landmark agreement in 2015. Promising signs of ambition are emerging from all corners of the globe, but far more is needed to limit emissions and adapt to the worsening impacts of climate change.

Most governments are currently prioritizing one of two complementary approaches for addressing climate change in the lead-up to 2020. This is according to a joint analysis by UNDP and UNFCCC which took the world's pulse on ambition and provides the most comprehensive review to date of intentions for 2020. Some are revising climate plans previously submitted under the Paris Agreement that stretch until 2025 or 2030, while others are preparing longer-term strategies to decarbonize their economies.

Developing nations are currently the front-runners in preparations to revise plans for combatting the climate crisis over the next decade by 2020. At least 112 nations, representing 53 percent of global GHG emissions, have signaled this intent. Most global growth – in terms of population, economies and urbanisation – will take place in developing nations in coming decades, making it vital for policy makers to define cleaner pathways to limit GHGs.

More industrialized nations, meanwhile, are among the 53 countries currently working on Long-Term Strategies (LTS) to submit by the end of 2020 that describe the phasing out of GHGs from their economies by the second half of the century. These strategies include mapping out radical shifts away from fossil fuels to cleaner energies such as solar and wind

power – one step considered essential for delivering on the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Perhaps tellingly, more than 90 developing nations are also at various stages of preparing National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), which highlight climate risks and promote resilient development by identifying adaptation strategies and investments that are critical for safeguarding climate-vulnerable sectors and communities. Thirteen countries have already formally submitted NAPs.

Climate action plans known as “Nationally Determined Contributions” (NDCs) are the backbone of the Paris Agreement. Almost all parties - 184 out of 197 - have already submitted their first plans, which typically set goals to curb GHG emissions by 2025 or 2030 and may also include measures to make economies and populations more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

A key principle in the Paris Agreement is that nations will toughen their NDCs every five years to ratchet up the fight against global warming. A first opportunity to do so will be in 2020.

Of the 112 nations revising their climate plans, 75 are leading by example. Almost all of them are developing nations, including many of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They wish to “enhance” the ambition of their current plans – either by curbing GHG emissions, or making their societies more resilient to the worsening impacts of climate change, or both. Collectively, they represent 37 percent of global GHG emissions.

The remaining 37 nations, representing 16 percent of global GHG emissions, intend to “update” their existing plans with

new data, information and/or assumptions. Through this process, however, opportunities for bolder action might emerge – for example, renewable energy technology costs have fallen dramatically since 2015 and may now offer an opportunity for ambition.

And there is ample opportunity for other countries to step up ambition in the weeks and months ahead because only 14 nations have indicated they do not intend to revise their current plans. It is also recognized that some nations had already set themselves very ambitious goals in 2015 and therefore may find it harder to do so again. Also, many developing nations want to do more but need finance to match their ambitions.

Significantly, the final outcome from 71 countries representing 21 percent of global GHG emissions – including most developed nations – is unclear. Forty-one of these countries are still deciding how they intend to approach their NDC revisions and 10 did not provide any information on their intentions. The remaining 20 countries intend to submit revised NDCs but are still seeking the means to do so. At a Group of 20 (G20) summit in Japan in June 2019, leaders agreed that “by 2020 we aim to communicate, update or maintain our NDCs, taking into account that further global efforts are needed.” This is important because the 2015 Paris Agreement says developed countries should “continue to take the lead with economy-wide, absolute emission reduction targets.”

While climate action has accelerated since Paris, it still falls far short of an unprecedented transformation needed to limit impacts of climate change. Already at record highs, GHG emissions are set to keep rising in the coming decade on

The ladder of 2020 ambition

Source: UNDP, UNFCCC

75 nations plan to "enhance" their mitigation and/or adaptation efforts

Nations represent
37% of global
GHG emissions



75

37 nations plan to "update" NDCs with new information



Nations represent
16% of global
GHG emissions

37

71

For 71 nations, it is unclear how or whether the NDCs will be revised



Nations represent
21% of global
GHG emissions

14

14 nations have no plans to revise NDCs



Nations represent
26% of global
GHG emissions

current trends. So far, temperatures are already up about 1.0°C from pre-industrial times and the last four years were the warmest on record – including July 2019, which was the hottest month of all. And there are ever starker signs of harm caused by climate change. Coral reefs are dying, Arctic sea ice is shrinking, and sea levels are rising, while droughts, floods, and hurricanes grow more severe.

The Climate Action Summit in New York City on 23 September, championed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, therefore provides a key opportunity for nations to announce bold new plans to address climate change through mitigation and adaptation and build on the

gathering momentum. Guterres wants governments to halt the rise in emissions by 2020, and to come to the Summit with pledges consistent with reducing global GHG emissions by 45 percent by 2030 and then to net zero by 2050 to get on track for the 1.5°C Paris goal. He is urging countries to halt subsidies for fossil fuels, to build no coal-fired power plants after 2020, and to put a price on carbon emissions.

The existing NDCs set the world on track for a rise in emissions of about 10.7 percent above 2016 levels by 2030, according to UNFCCC analysis. That is starkly at odds with the UN Secretary-General's call for deep cuts. Among further worrying trends, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said that global energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions grew 1.7 percent in 2018 from 2017, the highest rate of growth since 2013. The IEA also

found that renewable energies around the world only added as much net capacity in 2018 as they did in 2017, an unexpected stalling after two decades of growth.

The most critical factor limiting raised ambition in developing countries is access to or availability of finance, according to the joint UNDP/UNFCCC analysis. Political will and engaged citizens are also key. Global climate-related finance flows increased by 17 percent in the period 2015-2016, compared to 2013-2014, reaching \$681 billion in 2016. That is still well short of the needs for a cleaner and more sustainable future. And many developing nations say their NDCs are conditional on finance.

The Paris Agreement also invited countries, again by 2020, to describe long-term plans to increase resilience and achieve net-zero GHG emissions from their economies in coming decades. So far, 12 nations have shared the LTS formally with the UNFCCC, including major

“ I want to hear about how we are going to stop the increase in emissions by 2020, and dramatically reduce emissions to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century.



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