



United
Nations
Association
of Australia



THE PARIS AGREEMENT FACT SHEET

“ We have entered a new era of global cooperation on one of the most complex issues ever to confront humanity. For the first time, every country in the world has pledged to curb emissions, strengthen resilience and join in common cause to take common climate action.”

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

> WHAT WAS COP21?

On the 12th of December, 2015 in Paris, the 21st session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties, or COP 21, came to a conclusion and was crowned the world's most successful climate change conference. This conference was a milestone achievement in the pursuit of strengthening global mitigation efforts against the exponentially growing threat of climate change and collectively working towards a more sustainable future. COP21 hosted the largest number of participants, the largest number of heads of state, a wide range of non-state actors and witnessed remarkable cooperation and diplomacy amongst governments. Its result, the Paris Agreement document, is unprecedentedly ambitious and promising reflecting the world's commitment on the need to achieve a low carbon future that is resilient and as safe as possible for all people.

The Paris Agreement's primary goals are built on a long-term, holistic approach that stress the importance of both lowering emissions and adaption to climate change, and for the first time, have included all nations into a common cause based on their historic, current and future responsibilities. It recognises the economic realities between countries and works to ensure that no country gets left behind.

> WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT?

The agreement defined two long-term global emission goals:

- 1) to have emissions peaking as soon as possible, whilst recognising that this will take longer for developing countries to achieve, and;
- 2) the goal of net greenhouse gas neutrality within the second half of this century.

These measures are to ensure that the global average temperature rise this century compared to preindustrial times is below the 2 degrees Celsius mark that climate scientists have concluded to be a crucial tipping point, beyond which the effects of climate change are set to be widespread, devastating and irreversible. The agreement further seeks to aspirationally raise efforts to cap the increase at 1.5 Celsius to protect island states threatened by rising sea levels, and reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

The Paris Agreement also introduces the compulsory submission of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by nation states, alongside a complementary system of global stocktake, to outline and measure future objectives in relation to the agreement, predominately in their emissions reductions efforts. These NDCs are to be updated every five years with each NDC representing a progression in ambition. The NDCs are to follow and build off the momentum of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) which were submitted prior to the summit by an impressive 188 countries, a tremendous and optimistic achievement. Furthermore, every two years, all countries, excluding 'small island' and 'least developed countries', must also present their emissions

inventories as well as the information necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving their NDCs.

Additionally, the Paris Agreement also stipulates that:

- Developed countries have pledged to construct a clear roadmap to climate finance of US\$100 billion per year by 2020, with enhancement in mind from 2025.
- Developed countries will support and finance the mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries, with other countries also being encouraged to support voluntarily.
- Governments acknowledge the importance of addressing the 'loss and damage' associated with climate change, and the need for cooperation and enhanced understanding, action and support, such as in the examples of risk insurance, emergency preparedness, and early warning systems.
- Countries will report to each other and the international community on their progress in implementing targets, and progress will be tracked through a vigorous transparency and accountability system.



UN Photo/ Mark Garten
Closing Ceremony of COP21, Paris

> SO WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Paris Agreement enters into force in 2016 upon the defined threshold being met of "55 countries accounting for at least 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions" having ratified the agreement. Countries that have ratified the agreement are bound to their commitments towards financial aid for the sustainability and adaptation efforts of developing countries, the global transition to clean energy, and a continual increase in emission reductions ambitions. These goals efforts must be reflected in domestic policies. As only elements of the agreement are legally binding, however, countries like Australia need to continually demonstrate initiative, resolve and leadership in following through with their commitments and encourage the international community to follow suit and as we work towards a more globally sustainable future.



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