



The Hague International Model United Nations

Forum: Environment Commission 1 - Conference of the Parties on Climate Change

Issue: Actions required to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement

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Introduction

The Paris Agreement, which was adopted in 2015, is an international treaty that aims to combat climate change and protect the planet for future generations. Its aim is to limit global temperature rise to less than a 2°C increase compared to pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to keep the increase to 1.5°C because this is considered the safest point where the Earth can avoid severe global impacts.¹

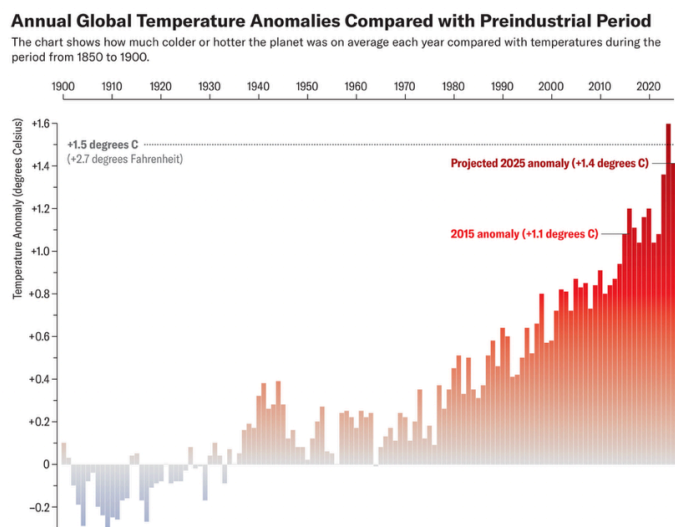


Figure 1: this graph shows how much colder or hotter the planet was on average each year compared with temperatures during the period from 1850 to 1900.¹⁹

Keeping warming close to 1.5°C reduces the intensity of extreme weather events like storms, droughts, and heatwaves. It also gives natural environments such as coral reefs, forests, and polar regions a better chance of survival. This agreement also helps protect food supplies, reduce water shortages and limit the displacement of communities in vulnerable areas. Through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), The Paris Agreement encourages each country to develop their own strategic plans reducing carbon emissions.²

To achieve these goals, NDCs require countries to make changes on how they produce energy, like switching to renewable energy such as sun and wind energy. Others

focus on protecting forests, since deforestation increases carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, or on improving farming methods to lower emissions while maintaining food production. Each country constructs their NDCs depending on national circumstances.²

Definition of Key Terms

Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement is an international treaty established in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which aims to address climate change and protect the planet for generations to come. 195 countries have joined The Paris Agreement. These countries are legally required to submit reports regarding progress on the agreement.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are plans to outline how each country will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change to protect their people and the environment. Every country that joins The Paris Agreement is required to have an NDC. These plans are first submitted when a country joins the agreement and are updated every five years to show progress.

Climate change

Long term changes in temperature, weather patterns, and the Earth's climate caused by human activities or natural processes

Greenhouse gases (GHGs)

Greenhouse gases are gases in the Earth's atmosphere which trap heat from the sun which keep the planet warm enough to support life. An excess of GHGs trap too much heat, leading to climate change, which can cause extreme weather, rising sea levels, droughts, floods, and damage to ecosystems.

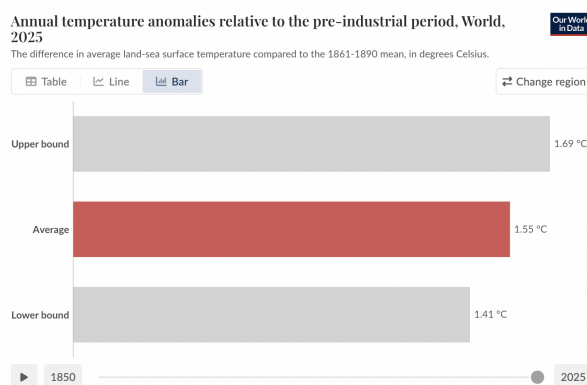
Pre-industrial levels

Pre-industrial levels refer to the period before large-scale industrial activity began, usually around the late 1700s to mid-1800s, when factories, machines, and widespread use of coal had not yet started.

Background Information

The global challenge behind The Paris Agreement

The need for strong actions to achieve The Paris Agreement roots from decades of increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and worsening climate change/ climate impacts. Before this agreement was introduced, global temperatures had already risen by more than 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, according to the IPCC.³ Global warming has accelerated, and has begun melting polar regions, intensifying heat, and contributing to more climate related disasters. The Paris Agreement was created in response to mounting evidence showing that surpassing 1.5°C of warming would dramatically increase the risk of irreversible damage to ecosystems, economies, and human life.⁴ The Agreement therefore



represents the world's attempt to fundamentally reshape global climate action, requiring all countries, both developed and developing, to contribute toward long-term emission reductions.⁵

figure 2: The difference in average land-sea surface temperature compared to the 1861-1890 mean, in degrees Celsius.²⁰

Origins of the issue

Insufficient action towards preventing further climate change began long before the Paris Agreement was signed. After the UNFCCC was established in 1992, countries agreed that global greenhouse gas emissions were rising very rapidly, but their commitments and efforts remained limited.⁶ Even though several early efforts, such as the Kyoto Protocol, attempted to reduce emissions, these initiatives were only applied to certain regions and did not generate the global cooperation needed to reduce emissions on a global scale.⁷ By the mid-2010s, data from climate scientists revealed that without a coordinated worldwide effort, global warming would likely reach 3°C or higher by the end of the century, far beyond safe

limits.⁸ These findings pushed governments to negotiate a more inclusive and universal agreement.

Why stronger efforts are still required

stronger efforts are still required under The Paris Agreement because climate change is occurring faster and more intensely than anticipated. If countries continue on their current paths without reducing emissions, global temperatures could rise well above the 1.5 – 2°C target, and in turn lead to intensified long term impacts like sea levels rising, and the loss of biodiversity.⁹ These changes would disrupt food and water systems, damage infrastructure, and increase health risks, particularly in vulnerable communities.¹⁰ Without accelerated action, the goals of the Paris Agreement cannot be met, and the world will face far greater social, economic, and environmental challenges in the coming decades.¹¹

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the main international body that coordinates global action on climate change. It acts as a foundation for countries to come together, discuss, negotiate, agree on climate goals, monitor progress, and more. The UNFCCC is the coordinating body that enables the Paris Agreement to function and ensures countries work together effectively.

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) plays an important role in supporting the Paris Agreement. It provides countries with scientific research, data, and technical guidance. This information shows how much greenhouse gases each country produces and explains the specific effects of climate change on the environment and atmosphere. UNEP also tracks progress, showing which countries are on track in meeting their goals, and which need to do more.

The United States (US)

The United States is also an important party involved in The Paris Agreement as it is one of the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters. The US was one of the key negotiators of The Paris Agreement in 2015 and promised to take action to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and contribute to global efforts against climate change. The U.S. briefly withdrew from the Agreement in 2020 but later rejoined in 2021 and reaffirmed its commitment. Unfortunately, the US plans on withdrawing from The Paris Agreement once again in early 2026 due to political and economic reasons.¹²

China

China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. China has signed The Paris Agreement and has committed to reducing carbon emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy instead. The nation has invested in solar wind, and water energy to support global efforts to limit global warming. They also actively participate in international climate negotiations and provide financial and technical support to developing countries to help achieve the goals of The Paris Agreement.

Timeline of Events

Date	Event
December 11th, 1997	The Kyoto Protocol was adopted, creating the first legally binding emission-reduction targets for developed countries and laying the groundwork for future climate change agreements. ¹³
December 7th-18th, 2009	Countries met in Copenhagen to agree that global warming must be kept under 2°C which then became the foundation for the Paris Agreement. ¹⁴
June 1st, 2014	The UNFCCC released the first draft outlining possible elements of a new global agreement, allowing negotiations to formally begin on the structure and goals of the Paris Agreement. ¹⁵
December 1st-11th, 2014	At COP20 in Lima, countries agreed on the information needed for their (NDCs),

shaping how climate plans would be submitted under the future Paris Agreement.¹⁶

December 12th, 2015

The Paris Agreement was adopted, officially committing countries to limit global warming to well below 2°C and to pursue efforts to keep the temperature increase as close as possible to 1.5°C.¹⁷

November 4th, 2016

After enough countries approved it, The Paris Agreement gained legal force and entered its implementation stage.¹⁸

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/77/276 (2023)

This resolution requested for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to provide an advisory opinion on the legal obligations of countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the climate. Its purpose is to clarify the legal duties of countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions and avoid environmental damage and aiding the implementation of The Paris Agreement. By providing a clear interpretation of international law, the advisory opinion guides nations on what actions they are expected to take to protect the environment

COP28/UNFCCC: Draft Decision on the Global Transition from Fossil Fuels in a Just and Equitable Manner

At COP28, a key resolution under the UNFCCC was adopted calling for a global transition away from fossil fuel usage. This decision was agreed on collectively by all member nations, but Norway was one of the countries that strongly advocated for including this commitment during negotiations. This resolution is significant because it is the first time nearly all countries formally acknowledged the need to reduce fossil fuel use as a part of meeting the Paris Agreement goals.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening NDCs

A possible solution for achieving the goals of The Paris Agreement is for countries to strengthen their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This means setting clear and possibly more ambitious emission-reduction targets and constantly updating them. Stronger NDCs help guide countries towards meaningful climate action and ensure consistent progress towards limiting global warming. This also encourages countries to take greater responsibility for their own climate strategies and ensures that global efforts remain aligned with the long term goals of The Paris Agreement.

Transitioning to renewable energy

Another solution is shifting away from using fossil fuels and increasing the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. This transition reduces greenhouse gas emissions which are a leading cause of carbon emissions and thus global warming. This can be done carefully by gradually transitioning to renewable energy, planning infrastructure in stages, and ensuring materials like zinc used in batteries are sourced responsibly to avoid environmental damage. By investing in our resources in sustainable causes like clean technologies and efficient, and reliable, energy countries can ensure that their development supports both people and the planet. This approach helps nations stay aligned with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

Enhancing forest conservation and reforestation

Improving forest conservation and reforestation efforts is another key solution. Forests absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, so protecting existing forests and planting new trees can significantly reduce greenhouse gas levels. Countries can implement stricter laws against deforestation, support sustainable forestry practices, and invest in large scale reforestation projects. These actions not only help combat climate change but also preserve biodiversity, protect soil and water resources, and support communities that depend on forests for survival.

Endnotes

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Appendix or Appendices

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