



# Care for Our Common Home

## What Happened at COP26?

### Introduction

(Excerpts from [COP26: The Negotiations Explained, United Nations, November, 2021](#))

**What is a COP?** COP26 is the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference. For nearly three decades the UN has been bringing together almost every country for global climate summits – called COPs – which stands for ‘Conference of the Parties’. In that time climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority. This year saw the 26th annual summit – giving it the name COP26. The conference took place in Glasgow from 31 October-13 November 2021.

### Why was COP26 the “most important COP since Paris”?

Back in 2015, at COP21, for the first time ever, every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees and aim for 1.5 (Celsius) degrees, to adapt to the impacts of a changing climate and to make money available to deliver on these aims. The Paris Agreement was born. The commitment to aim for 1.5 degrees is important because every fraction of a degree of warming will result in many more lives lost and livelihoods damaged. The Paris Agreement requires that every 5 years countries must set out increasingly ambitious climate action. This meant that, by 2020, countries needed to submit or update their plans for reducing emissions, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). This made the run up to this year’s summit in Glasgow (due to take place in 2020, but delayed by a year due to the pandemic) a critical moment in the world’s mission to keep the hope of limiting global temperature rises to 1.5 alive.

### COP26 Significant Outcomes

**Nearly 200 countries participated and ratified their agreement in the Glasgow Climate Pact.**

**COP26 made some necessary progress, but not nearly enough to keep global temperature rise contained to 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial era temperature to avert the most catastrophic consequences of global warming.** Human activities have caused around 1.1 degrees Celsius of warming to date. When pledges (NDCs) to reduce carbon emissions from all countries are added up, we will still reach a global temperature rise of 2.5 degrees by the end of the century, with an increase of .2 degrees Celsius per decade expected. However, the impacts of climate change are already being experienced around the globe in the form of extreme weather, drought, fire, flooding, and rising coastal water levels. It is expected that Barbados and other small island countries will not be able to survive an increase of 2 degrees.

**Countries understand the urgency of addressing climate change and that they must work together to do so.** However, they have not been able to put political and economic interests sufficiently aside to collaborate to the full extent necessary.

**Countries agreed on the importance of the best available science for effective climate action and policymaking.** The Glasgow Climate Pact recognizes the enormous importance of the reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world’s foremost authority on the science of climate change.

**“Keep 1.5 alive”** Countries remained committed to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, recognizing accelerated action is critical in the next decade. This will require reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net-zero by mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases.

**Countries will meet in Egypt for COP27 in 2022 and will be expected to revisit and strengthen their NDP targets.** One of the key achievements of COP26 is speeding up the timeline for climate action. Countries are asked to come back in a year with more ambitious plans for cutting emissions, whereas the Paris Agreement had only required this to be done every five years.

**Countries agreed to accelerate efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power and fossil fuel subsidies, recognizing the need for support towards a just transition.** In a last-minute change, China and India pushed to change “phase-out” to “phase-down”, disappointing many. “Support towards a just transition” refers to the need to help workers in polluting industries move to new careers.

**Climate mitigation and adaptation financing for developing nations has not been provided by developed nations to the level targeted by the Paris Agreement.** Developed countries were urged to at least double their 2019 funding levels to developing countries by 2025.

**Countries were not able to agree on how to address climate loss and damage.** At COP26, representatives of hard-hit areas pushed for compensation for harms they can now directly link to wealthy countries’ emissions, but rich countries don’t want to be held liable. The issue remains unresolved.

**Countries reached an agreement on the previously unresolved Article 6 of the Paris Agreement Rulebook which will govern international carbon markets** and ensure emissions reductions are not double counted among countries. The agreement will enable the growth of voluntary carbon markets where companies buy carbon credits to help meet their net zero goals.

**In addition to the Glasgow Climate Pact, many countries made commitments to slash methane, end deforestation, and direct private investments toward net-zero targets. Examples include:**

- Twenty-five countries and public finance institutions, including the United States, committed to end funding for overseas fossil fuel projects by the end of 2022.
- The United States, European Union, and United Kingdom pledged \$8.5 billion over the next three to five years to spur a shift from coal in South Africa, which generates roughly 77% of its energy from coal.
- More than 100 nations committed to cutting emissions of methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, by 30% by 2030.
- The United States and China announced an agreement to take joint “enhanced climate actions” and raise ambition this decade.
- More than 100 countries that are home to 85% of the world’s forests, including the United States, China, Brazil and Russia, pledged to end deforestation by 2030.
- A coalition of 450 banks, insurers, and private financial institutions will direct the combined \$130 trillion in assets they control toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

**Pope Francis and 40 other leaders of various faiths signed and delivered a joint appeal for urgent climate action to COP26 delegates.** The framed pages of their appeal hung on display on a wall between the two halls where delegates and heads of states met. [Read the joint statement here.](#)

**Pope Francis has asked all Catholics to take action to address climate change by participating in the Vatican’s [Laudato Si' Action Platform.](#)**