

Committee: Environment

Issue: The urgency to improve COP21 measures to impel UN member states to act accordingly to UN guidelines.

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Introduction

During the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 196 countries ratified the adoption of The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), recognising the existence of global warming caused by human activity and taking the responsibility of fighting against this phenomenon on industrialised countries.

The COP (Conference of Parties), the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC, meets every year to make decisions that will make the objectives set in the fight against climate change achievable.

On December 12th 2015 the Paris Agreement, also known as COP21, was adopted. In the Agreement, which became active shortly after, on November 6th 2016, all countries agreed to work on limiting the global temperature rise to 2°C overall and 1,5 °C by the end of the century, in accordance with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). To achieve this, the Paris Agreement states that all countries have to review their contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions every five years. Each new contribution set out on a national level should include a progression compared with the precedent. The States are also required to increase their efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The question of:

Countries' duties:

In response to the climate challenge, the agreement recognises that countries have different responsibilities, depending on their respective capabilities and different national circumstances. This distinction takes into account the level of development and the specific needs of countries that might be particularly vulnerable. Beyond making financial commitments, industrialized countries will also need to facilitate technology transfers, and more generally, must adapt to a low-carbon economy. In addition, a system for tracking national commitments exists, and it keeps track of everyone's efforts.

Two types of action are essential to meet the 1.5°C goal. First, the world has to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not to zero, but to a point where there is a balance between emissions and sequestration. This means, secondly, that countries have to ramp up options to sequester greenhouse gas emissions. The higher the rate of sequestration, the residual greenhouse gas emissions are permissible.

The Paris Agreement puts emphasis on processes rather than on defined mitigation goals. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement does not formulate country-specific emissions targets. Instead, the Paris Agreement depends on voluntary mitigation contributions and a series of processes that seek to ensure collective and individual progress in meeting the initial and progressively more ambitious mitigation contributions.

The Paris Agreement establishes the main framework for cooperative action on climate change beyond 2020 and will replace the Kyoto Protocol. The Agreement is a treaty as a matter of

international law, which means that ratifying countries will be bound to one another by its terms when it comes into effect. The Decision accompanying the Paris Agreement has a number of complementary functions: it provides the framework under which the Paris Agreement is adopted; it contains guidance on pre-2020 climate action; it regulates and organizes action that needs to be taken before the Paris Agreement enters into force but is relevant for the implementation of the Agreement; and it contains detail and guidance on how to develop and formulate NDCs. Each Party must communicate at a minimum an NDC every five years, and every new NDC will have to be a progression. Developed countries should adopt economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets immediately, and developing countries should aim for this over time. The Paris Agreement and the COP Decisions provide procedural rules for the preparation of NDCs. Each Country shall provide information for clarity and transparency.

Status:

Unfortunately, few countries are making efforts to meet their goals. The Climate Action Tracker, a project run by three climate-research organizations, monitored the actions taken by 32 of the countries that signed the Paris Agreement, and which altogether account 80% of the world's gas emissions. [The following chart](#) will show you the situation of the 32 countries taken into consideration:



2019 Climate Summit:

The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere, and are having real consequences on people's lives, our economy and our planet. The Paris Agreement was a historic turning point, which reunited leaders from all around the world, and was an essential step to address climate change. However, the sum of the plans designed by all the countries is not enough to achieve the target, and it is critical for everyone to strengthen their strategies and raise their ambition. For this reason, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres has asked leaders to propose at the Climate Summit on 23 September 2019 actions that will reduce emissions, strengthen climate resilience, and mobilize political will for an ambitious and meaningful agreement in Paris in December 2015. The Summit

will come exactly one year before countries will have to enhance their national climate pledges under the Paris Agreement.

To ensure the maximal exploitation of transformative actions in the real economy, in order to make them as impactful as possible, the Secretary-General has prioritized the following action portfolios, which are recognized as having high potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions and increased global action on adaptation and resilience.

- Finance: mobilizing public and private sources of finance to drive decarbonization of all priority sectors and advance resilience;
- Energy Transition: accelerating the shift away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, as well as making significant gains in energy efficiency;
- Industry Transition: transforming industries such as Oil and Gas, Steel, Cement, Chemicals and Information Technology;
- Nature-Based Solutions: Reducing emissions, increasing sink capacity and enhancing resilience within and across forestry, agriculture, oceans and food systems, including through biodiversity conservation, leveraging supply chains and technology;
- Cities and Local Action: Advancing mitigation and resilience at urban and local levels, with a focus on new commitments on low-emission buildings, mass transport and urban infrastructure; and resilience for the urban poor;
- Resilience and Adaptation: advancing global efforts to address and manage the impacts and risks of climate change, particularly in those communities and nations most vulnerable.

Key Nations:

U.S.A. :

The Trump Administration will not enforce regulations to limit highly potent HFC emissions. The administration will also allow methane leaks from oil and gas production to continue for long before they are found and fixed.

However, indicators in renewable energy and electric vehicles continue to show progress toward decarbonisation and projected energy-related CO₂ emissions in 2030 are 3–7% lower than what was projected in 2017. Coal plant retirements doubled and emissions per unit of electricity decreased in the first half of 2018 compared to the first half of 2017 (CAT analysis based on EIA). In July, electric vehicle sales broke the 2% mark of all new vehicle sales nationwide, with front runner San Jose, California topping 13% in 2017. These encouraging trends will need to accelerate substantially to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Recent analysis suggests that recorded and quantified non-state and subnational targets, if fully implemented, could come within striking distance of the US Paris Agreement commitment, resulting in emissions that are 17–24% below 2005 levels in 2025. 22 states, 550 cities, and 900 companies with operations in the US have made climate commitments, and all 50 states have some type of policy that could bring about emissions reductions.

EU:

Developments during 2018 in the European Union's climate and energy policy are steps in the right direction towards re-establishing the EU's position as a global leader on climate action. While the level of currently implemented climate action is not yet compatible with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit, the CAT estimates that the more ambitious renewable energy and energy efficiency targets adopted in June 2018 would result in emissions reduction of 47.5%-49.7% below 1990 levels (the European Commission has referred to about 45%). The European Parliament has called for increasing the EU's NDC emissions 2030 reduction goal to 55% below 1990 levels.

In November 2018, the European Commission presented its proposed 2050 climate strategy. The document contains eight different scenarios, with the Commission clearly stating its preference for two scenarios which reach net zero emissions by mid-century. This is a step in the right direction and Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden support this goal. The goal of emissions neutrality by 2050 has also been suggested by different stakeholders, including the European Parliament, along with some of the largest EU cities, and adopted independently by Sweden and Denmark, with the Netherlands adopting a 95% reduction target and Germany an “extensive greenhouse gas neutrality” goal.

Despite the political discussion about more ambitious renewable energy, energy efficiency and emissions reduction goals, the EU’s emissions began increasing again in 2017, driven by lignite and natural gas-based electricity generation and the industrial sector.

Ten EU member states representing 26% of the EU’s installed coal capacity have already committed to closing their power plants by 2030 at the latest, and others, including Germany, are debating coal phase-out dates. In addition to the phase out of coal in the power sector in Europe needed by 2030, natural gas use will need to be constrained to within Paris Agreement compatible level. However, European institutions and some EU member states are increasing their support for the development of natural gas infrastructure that will likely increase EU dependency on energy imports, risk creating stranded assets and jeopardise meeting Paris Agreement goals.

China:

With current policies, CO₂ emissions in China may level off in the next few years, but total greenhouse gas emissions are projected to rise until at least 2030. Despite the return to increasing emissions in 2017, China’s top climate official, Xie Zhenhua, has announced that China met its 2020 carbon intensity target in 2017, three years ahead of schedule. CAT analysis based on official Chinese GDP data confirms this. If China maintains this intensity level (or lowers it) over the next three years, it will achieve the intensity element of its 2020 pledge. Under current policies, China is also likely to achieve its 2020 target to limit fossil fuels, but neither of these targets is compatible with limiting global temperature increase to 1.5°C.

Russian Federation:

Despite its high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (confirmed by a recent report from the Environment Ministry), Russia has made little progress in climate action implementation—indeed, the government is delaying the adoption of ambitious climate targets and policies, which has led to the Russian Federation being the only big emitter that has not yet ratified the Paris Agreement. Their national strategy may delay ratification until at least 2019.

Key events

The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements.

The COP meets every year unless the Parties decide otherwise. The first COP meeting was held in Berlin, Germany in March 1995. The COP meets in Bonn, the seat of the Secretariat unless a Party offers to host the session. Just as the COP Presidency rotates among the five recognized UN regions -

that is, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe and Others – there is a tendency for the venue of the COP to also shift among these groups.

Latest COPs:

Katowice, Poland (COP24); Bonn, Germany (COP23); Marrakech, Morocco (COP22); Paris, France (COP21).

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which commits its Parties by setting internationally binding emission reduction targets. Recognizing that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity, the Protocol places a heavier burden on developed nations under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities."

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005. The detailed rules for the implementation of the Protocol were adopted at COP 7 in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2001, and are referred to as the "Marrakesh Accords." Its first commitment period started in 2008 and ended in 2012.

Bali Road Map

The Bali Road Map was adopted at the 13th Conference of the Parties and the 3rd Meeting of the Parties in December 2007 in Bali. The Road Map is a set of forward-looking decisions that represent the work that needs to be done under various negotiating "tracks" that is essential to reaching a secure climate future.

The Bali Road Map includes the Bali Action Plan, which charts the course for a new negotiating process designed to tackle climate change. The Bali Action Plan is a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012, in order to reach an agreed outcome and adopt a decision.

The Cancun Agreements

The Cancun Agreements were a set of significant decisions by the international community to address the long-term challenge of climate change collectively and comprehensively over time, and to take concrete action immediately to speed up the global response to it. The agreements reached on December 11 in Cancun, Mexico, at the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference, represented key steps forward in capturing plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to help developing nations protect themselves from climate impacts and build their own sustainable futures.

The Doha Climate Gateway

At the 2012 UN Climate Change Conference in Doha, Qatar, governments consolidated the gains of the last three years of international climate change negotiations and opened a gateway to necessary greater ambition and action on all levels.

The Durban Conference

The UN Climate Change Conference in Durban was a turning point in the climate change negotiations. In Durban, governments clearly recognized the need to draw up the blueprint for a fresh universal, legal agreement to deal with climate change beyond 2020, where all will play their part to

the best of their ability and all will be able to reap the benefits of success together. All governments committed in Durban to a comprehensive plan that would come closer over time to delivering the ultimate objective of the Climate Change Convention: to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent our dangerous interference with the climate system and at the same time will preserve the right to sustainable development.

The Warsaw Conference

At the UN Climate Change Conference in Warsaw, governments took further essential decisions to stay on track towards securing a universal climate change agreement in 2015.

Governments agreed to communicate their respective contributions towards the universal agreement well in advance of the meeting in Paris in 2015. Further, the required monitoring, reporting and verification arrangements for domestic action have been finalized for implementation, thereby providing a solid foundation for the 2015 agreement. Further progress was also made in helping countries, especially the poorest, adapt to the impacts of climate change and build their own sustainable, clean energy futures.

VI) What can be done in order to impel UN member states to act according to UN guidelines?

All UN member states should develop strategies in order to change the policy of nations refusing to follow UN indications.

Many means can be used ranging from moral suasion to outright coercion.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coercive_diplomacy

Useful links

The United Nations and the citizens of each country have the duty to help in the solving process and have the moral obligation to protect the environment we live in. Much depends on the ability we have to find new ways and paths to inhabit the planet. Our future and the future of the ones who still did not have birth depends on the strength through which we will be able to fight environmental threats in every form they assume. In the following section, you will find indications to further readings to deepen your knowledge on this vast topic.

- UN official site: <http://www.un.org/>
- UN environment official site: <https://www.unenvironment.org/>
- SDG number 13: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change-2/>
- SDG Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kR-YRC5D-QY>
- Framework convention on climate change: http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php
- 2050 - A Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z24Dd1Tcz1Y>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

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