



ABCs *OF*

CLIMATE COPS



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# INTRODUCTION TO CLIMATE COPs

The **UN Conference of the Parties (COP)** is an annual gathering established in 1992 where nations, bound by the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, convene to strategize on global climate challenges and **address climate change**. The first meeting was held in 1995 in Berlin, Germany.

The **Presidency of COP shifts** between the five recognized UN regions: Asia, Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and Western Europe and Others. Each region can host the COP, although nations must pursue host candidacy individually. If no party offers to host the session, it is held in Bonn - the location of the UNFCCC Secretariat.

The COP hosts **high-ranking representatives** of each government in formal negotiations, while also hosting various side-meetings, workshops, and lobbying actions. For instance, COP30 will be:

- the 7th Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 7),
- the 20th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 20).



# HOW DO COPs WORK?

The COP is the **highest decision-making body** and enables countries to **assess progress, negotiate agreements**, and set climate targets.

During the **Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015)**, Parties aimed to **limit global warming to well below 2°C**.

COPs currently focus on **implementing the Paris Agreement** and ratifying the agreed-upon mechanisms.

Each COP is embedded in a **wider social and political context**. COP30's cross-cutting themes are industry, energy, transport transitions; forests, oceans, biodiversity; agrifood system transformations; city, water, infrastructure resilience; human and social development; unlocking enablers and accelerators e.g finance, tech, capacity building.



# WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN COPs?

Between COPs, countries focus on **implementing** their climate commitments, **reporting** their progress, and **building capacity**.

This includes engaging in **pre-COP negotiations** to refine their climate strategies, update commitments, and address outstanding issues.

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (**SBSTA**) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (**SBI**) meet in parallel twice a year: once at COP and once in Bonn around May/June negotiating over **key points for the COP agenda**.

The **UNFCCC website** offers more information on the organisational aspects of COPs [1].

# WHAT IS THE END RESULTS?

The final result of a COP is the **formal adoption** of climate change **agreements and commitments**.

Significant agreements include:

- **The Paris Agreement (COP 21, 2015)** which sets out a global framework for climate action, and
- **The Glasgow Climate Pact (COP 26, 2021)** which encourages countries to accelerate their efforts to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Not every COP results in a **notable outcome**, such as COP 17, which took place in Durban in 2011, and COP 19 in Warsaw in 2013. These COPs were characterised by tensions between negotiating parties.

Results can vary dramatically at COP, given that success depends on the **political and socioeconomic climate**. Moreover, strategies within COP change over time.

- The **Kyoto Protocol** represents a **top-down** approach, which obliges countries deemed responsible for accelerating climate change to drastically cut their emissions.
- Conversely, the **Paris Agreement** fosters international cooperation with a **bottom-up** approach, encouraging every nation to contribute to climate action.

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## ANNUAL GREENHOUSE GAS INDEX (AGGI)

The Annual Greenhouse Gas Index (AGGI) tracks the **increasing amount of heat** being added to the atmosphere by human-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

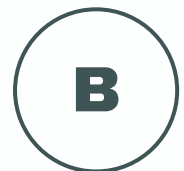
- Based on measurements of GHGs in the atmosphere from sites around the world, the AGGI contains data from 1979.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 'the total direct heating influence in a given year is compared to conditions in 1990—the year that Kyoto Protocol Parties agreed to use it as a benchmark for their efforts to reduce emissions.' [2]

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE AGGI

## BLUE ZONE

According to the COP29 website, 'The Blue Zone is a UNFCCC managed site, open to accredited party and observer delegates'.

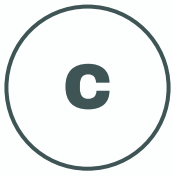


This year, the Blue Zone is located in the Parque da Cidade, Belém.

- **Formal negotiations** are held in the Blue Zone.
- It also accommodates the **Leaders' Summit**, the country **pavilions, presidency events**, and hundreds of **side events** including panel discussions, round tables, and cultural events.' [3]

### THE BLUE ZONE AT COP30

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## CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP)

The COP is an annual meeting of the **UNFCCC parties' delegates**. The delegates review the convention's **implementation** and make the necessary plans to ensure

Today, there are **198** Parties to the Convention, which evaluate the **impacts of measures** introduced to limit climate change. [4]

### COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT COP

## CONFERENCE OF YOUTH (COY)

COY is an annual meeting held the week before COP by the youth constituency of the UNFCCC to prepare the **youth delegations** for COP, to build youth **networks**, and to provide **capacity-building**. It is organised by youth and for youth around the world. [5]

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF COYS

## DECARBONISATION PATHWAYS

Decarbonisation pathways are **roadmaps of transformational processes** that deliver long-lasting and permanent **emissions reductions**. According to The Climate Group, they 'start with a government's **long-term** greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal and then works backwards to identify the **technologies, infrastructure and investments** required to achieve it.' [6]



### PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK

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E

## EMISSIONS

In the context of climate change, emissions are the act of **releasing greenhouse gases (GHGs)** into the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide and methane, and it is possible to measure the amount of emissions attributed to different products or activities. [1]

[ARTICLE ON EMISSIONS](#)

## (CLIMATE) FINANCE

Climate finance involves **directly funding or financially investing** in processes that tackle climate change.

F

The UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance defines climate finance as 'finance that aims at **reducing emissions**, enhancing **sinks** of greenhouse gases, **reducing vulnerability** of, and maintaining and increasing the **resilience** of human and ecological systems to negative climate change impacts.' [8]

[BUSINESS AND FINANCE](#)

[INTRO TO CLIMATE FINANCE](#)

## FOSSIL FUELS

Fossil Fuels are a classification of hydrocarbons which are of biological origin and can be used as a **source of energy**, such as coal, natural gas, and crude oil. Upon combustion, these fuels create **greenhouse gas emissions**, the **primary cause** of climate change. [9]

[FOSSIL FUELS PRODUCTION](#)

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## GREEN ZONE

The Green Zone is a hub open to **civil society** organised by the COP host country with NGOs, businesses, youth, academics, and other communities coming together to showcase their commitment to climate action and a more sustainable future.

The Green Zone is open to delegates and guests of the Blue Zone, Public and Private Sector, NGOs, and the General Public, located in the Parque da Cidade this year. [10]

### COP30 GREEN ZONE

## HOST COUNTRY

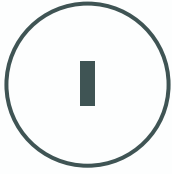
The host country is the nation in which the COP of the year is held. This year, the host country is **Brazil**.

According to the United Nations, 'the host country of the COP normally rotates among the **five United Nations regional groups** (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin American and the Caribbean, and Western European and Others), with regional group members determining which country from their region will make an offer to host the conference.' [11]



### HOST COUNTRY AND PRESIDENCY

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## INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC)

The IPCC assesses **science related to climate change** and advances scientific **knowledge** and **transparency** about climate change caused by human activities. Through their research, they can determine the **state of knowledge** on climate change. [12]

Whilst regularly publishing reports tailored to the needs of different target groups, i.e. politicians or scientists, this international body of experts only **recommends** policy and doesn't create policy. [13]

IPCC

## (CLIMATE) JUSTICE

Climate Justice recognises that climate change **disproportionately** affects **marginalised groups** and strives for justice through **equitable climate policies**, such as including young people among those most vulnerable to climate change. Climate Justice lays the foundation for a sustainable future through **intersectionality**.



WHAT IS CLIMATE JUSTICE?

CLIMATE JUSTICE



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## KYOTO PROTOCOL

Adopted at the third COP in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol sets **binding** targets for **developed countries** to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels. [14]

By setting specific emission reduction targets to nations with historically high emissions, often referred to as **Annex I** parties, the international community tried to hold those accountable who were deemed **most responsible** for climate change.

The **United States never ratified the Protocol** and Canada withdrew at a later stage. Other countries (e.g., Russia) also did not take on new targets in the second commitment period.

[KYOTO PROTOCOL](#)

## LOSS AND DAMAGE (L&D)

The UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Implementation relies on the following L&D working definition, “the actual and/or potential **manifestation of impacts** associated with climate change in **developing countries** that negatively affect human and natural systems.” [15] Examples of these impacts include rising sea levels, extreme heat waves, ocean acidification, and species extinction. [15]

During COP27, a **L&D Fund** was decided to provide **financial assistance** to nations most affected by and vulnerable to the effects of climate change.



[SUBSIDIARY BODIES](#)

[QUESTIONS ABOUT L&D](#)

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M

## MITIGATION

In a climate science context, the IPCC describes mitigation as “**human intervention** to reduce the **sources** or enhance the **sinks** of **greenhouse gases**.” [16]

In contrast to adaptation, mitigation **reduces or prevents greenhouse gas emissions**. This can include cleantech, renewable energy, retrofitted equipment, and changes in consumption behaviour.

PARIS AGREEMENT & MITIGATION

## NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCS)

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the climate actions of individual countries under the Paris Agreement.

Each country outlines the actions it will take to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions** and **enhance resilience** to rising temperatures and submit them by 2020 and every **five** years thereafter. [17]

N

WHAT IS IN AN NDC?

NDCS

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## OCEANS

The Ocean is a **vast carbon sink** and vital oxygen source for the planet. Tourism and fisheries are economically significant human activities that are interrelated with ocean systems. However, the Ocean is facing a multitude of challenges due to climate change and pollution, most notably **ocean acidification, rising tides and temperatures, plastic pollution, and eutrophication**. [18-21]

[OCEAN & CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

[OCEAN AT COP30](#)

## PARIS AGREEMENT

The Paris Agreement is a **legally binding international treaty** designed to address climate change adaptation, mitigation, and financial aspects within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

It aims to limit global warming to **well below 2°C**, ideally **1.5°C**, compared to pre-industrial levels. [22]

[PARIS AGREEMENT](#)

## PRE-COP

Pre-COP is a **preparatory meeting** held before the Conference of Parties (COP) under the UNFCCC to discuss key political aspects of climate negotiations. [23]

[PRE-COP](#)



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## QUAGMIRE OF CLIMATE CHANGE DIPLOMACY

Similar to a wicked problem, a quagmire refers to a **complex problem** that has **no apparent solution** and that attempts to solve it will have **(un)intended repercussions**.

Applied to the context of climate change, this expression also describes the **multiple socioeconomic factors influencing negotiations**, which include the parties' **political ambitions**, diverse definitions of **property**, and ranging understandings of the concept of **responsibility**. [24]

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Renewable Energy refers to energy sources that are **sustainable** and do not deplete natural resources. [25]



### WHAT IS RENEWABLE ENERGY?

## REDD+

REDD+, or “**reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries**”, is an international framework aimed to protect forests as part of the Paris Agreement. There are **results-based payments** through REDD+ for emission reductions. [26]

### WHAT IS REDD+?

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## SCIENCE-BASED TARGETS

Science-Based Targets are goals based on **scientific research** to reduce emissions and avoid the **worst effects** of climate change. In addition, they **warn corporate players** of their **limited timeframe** to act.

[SCIENCE-BASED TARGETS](#)

## SHARED SOCIOECONOMIC PATHWAYS (SSPs)

Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) are modelled scenarios describing **different global socioeconomic development paths**, with each linked to a specific development approach. [27]

Climate change analysts use SSPs with demographics, urbanisation, GDP, and other factors to make **forecasts** that inform the public, including decision-makers, about climate change scenarios. [28]

[IPCC'S SIXTH ASSESSMENT REPORT: NO 'CLIMATE POLICY' SCENARIOS](#)

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are **17 goals** established by the United Nations to improve the **planet and people's well-being** by **2030**. [29]

Encompassing 169 specific targets, advertised during 3680 events, and discussed in 1347 publications, the SDGs are at the core of the UN's efforts towards **sustainable development** in the biosphere.

[THE UN SDGS](#)

[UN SDGS](#)

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T

## TIPPING POINT

In terms of climate change, a tipping point is a **critical** moment in the climate system where a **small change** can lead to significant and often **irreversible consequences**, such as rapid temperature increases, ecosystem disruptions, or altered weather patterns. [30]

**NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE TIPPING POINTS**

## UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)

U

The UNFCCC is an **international treaty** that seeks to address climate change by **limiting global temperature increases** and addressing its impacts. [31]

On 12 June 1992, **154** nations signed the UNFCCC. It drives **international action** in the fight of climate change, including the COPs and SBs.

**UNFCCC**

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T

## WATER CRISIS

The Water Crisis, exacerbated by climate change, involves global **scarcity, contamination,** and **unequal access to clean water,** impacting communities, ecosystems, and economies worldwide. **Sustainable water management** and **international cooperation** will be discussed in the upcoming COP. [33]

The Water Crisis is the focus of **SDG 6.** In 2010, the UN declared that access to clean water and sanitation is a **human right.**

WATER CRISIS

## YOUNGO

YOUNGO is comprised of youth-led organisations and individuals under the age of 35, representing the **official youth constituency** of the UNFCCC and contributing to **multilateral decision-making processes** related to climate change. [33]

Y

YOUNGO

Z

## (NET-) ZERO

Net-Zero signifies a state in which **emissions** from a specific activity are entirely offset by **measures that remove greenhouse gases** from the atmosphere. [34]

WHAT'S NET-ZERO?

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