

# Conference of the Parties (COP) since Paris Agreement (COP21)

May 17, 2019

## Manifest pedagogy

In Prelims tackling Climate Change related questions has been slightly getting difficult over years. Very minute facts related to Conference of Parties are being asked. Keeping this in mind the above article has been written.

## In news

COP 25 to be held in Chile

## Placing it in the syllabus

Environment: conservation

## Static dimensions

- COP21 Paris/ Paris Agreement
- COP22 Marrakesh
- COP 23 Bonn

## Current dimensions

- COP 24 Katowice-2018

## Content

### Conference of Parties(COP 21), Paris Agreement

Parties to the UNFCCC reached a landmark agreement at COP 21 in Paris on 12 December 2015 to combat climate change and

speed up and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future.

The Paris Agreement builds on the Convention and brings all nations into a common cause – for the first time – to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries in doing so. As such, it charts a new course in the global climate effort.

### **Aims of the agreement**

- The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Additionally, the agreement aims to increase the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change, and at making finance flows consistent with a low GHG emissions and climate-resilient pathway.

To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate mobilization and provision of financial resources, a new technology framework and enhanced capacity-building is to be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. The Agreement also provides for an enhanced transparency framework for action and support.

### **Nationally Determined Contributions**

The agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. This includes requirements that all Parties report regularly on their emissions and on their implementation efforts. There will also be a global stocktake every 5 years to assess the

collective progress towards achieving the purpose of the agreement and to inform further individual actions by Parties.

The Paris Agreement opened for signature on 22 April 2016 – Earth Day – at UN Headquarters in New York. It entered into force on 4 November 2016, 30 days after the so-called “double threshold” (ratification by 55 countries that account for at least 55% of global emissions) had been met. Since then, more countries have ratified and continue to ratify the Agreement, reaching a total of 125 Parties in early 2017.

The Paris Agreement, adopted through Decision 1/CP.21, addresses crucial areas necessary to combat climate change.

**Some of the key aspects of the Agreement are set out below:**

- **Long-term temperature goal** (Art. 2) – The Paris Agreement, in seeking to **strengthen the global response to climate change**, reaffirms the goal of **limiting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius**, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.
- **Global peaking and ‘climate neutrality’** (Art. 4) – To achieve this temperature goal, Parties aim to **reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)** as soon as possible, recognizing peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of GHGs in the second half of the century.
- **Mitigation** (Art. 4) – The Paris Agreement establishes **binding commitments by all Parties to prepare, communicate and maintain a nationally determined contribution (NDC)** and to pursue domestic measures to achieve them. It also prescribes that Parties shall communicate their NDCs every 5 years and provide information necessary for clarity and transparency. To set a firm foundation for higher ambition, each successive NDC will represent a progression beyond the

previous one and reflect the highest possible ambition. Developed countries should continue to take the lead by undertaking absolute economy-wide reduction targets, while developing countries should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts, and are encouraged to move toward economy-wide targets over time in the light of different national circumstances.

- **Sinks and reservoirs** (Art.5) –The Paris Agreement also **encourages Parties to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of GHGs** as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1(d) of the Convention, **including forests**.
- **Voluntary cooperation/Market- and non-market-based approaches** (Art. 6) – The Paris Agreement recognizes the possibility of voluntary cooperation among Parties to allow for higher ambition and sets out principles – including **environmental integrity, transparency and robust accounting – for any cooperation** that involves internationally transferal of mitigation outcomes. **It establishes a mechanism to contribute to the mitigation of GHG emissions and support sustainable development**, and defines a framework for non-market approaches to sustainable development.
- **Adaptation** (Art. 7) – The Paris Agreement establishes a global goal on **adaptation – of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change** in the context of the temperature goal of the Agreement. It aims to significantly strengthen national adaptation efforts, including through support and international cooperation. It recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all. All Parties should engage in adaptation, including by formulating and implementing National Adaptation Plans, and should submit and periodically update an adaptation communication describing their priorities, needs, plans and actions. The adaptation efforts of developing countries should be recognized

- **Loss and damage** (Art. 8) – The Paris Agreement recognizes the importance of averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, and the role of sustainable development in reducing the risk of loss and damage. Parties are to enhance understanding, action and support, including through the **Warsaw International Mechanism**, on a cooperative and facilitative basis with respect to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.
- **Finance, technology and capacity-building support** (Art. 9, 10 and 11) – The Paris Agreement reaffirms the obligations of developed countries to support the efforts of developing country Parties to build clean, climate-resilient futures, while for the first time encouraging voluntary contributions by other Parties. Provision of resources should also aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation. In addition to reporting on finance already provided, developed country Parties commit to submit indicative information on future support every two years, including projected levels of public finance. The agreement also provides that the **Financial Mechanism of the Convention, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF)**, shall serve the Agreement. International cooperation on climate-safe technology development and transfer and building capacity in the developing world are also strengthened: a technology framework is established under the Agreement and capacity-building activities will be strengthened through, inter alia, enhanced support for capacity building actions in developing country Parties and appropriate institutional arrangements. Climate change education, training as well as public awareness, participation and access to information (Art 12) is also to be enhanced under the Agreement.
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- **Transparency** (Art. 13), **implementation and compliance** (Art. 15) – The Paris Agreement relies on a robust transparency and accounting system to provide clarity on action and support by Parties, with flexibility for their differing capabilities of Parties. In addition to reporting information on mitigation, adaptation and support, the **Agreement requires that the information submitted by each Party undergoes international technical expert review.** The Agreement also includes a mechanism that will facilitate implementation and promote compliance in a non-adversarial and non-punitive manner, and will report annually to the CMA.
- **Global Stocktake** (Art. 14) – A “global stocktake”, **to take place in 2023 and every 5 years thereafter, will assess collective progress toward achieving the purpose of the Agreement** in a comprehensive and facilitative manner. It will be based on the best available science and its long-term global goal. Its outcome will inform Parties in updating and enhancing their actions and support and enhancing international cooperation on climate action.
- It also sets out a **number of measures to enhance action prior to 2020**, including strengthening the technical examination process, enhancement of provision of urgent finance, technology and support and measures to strengthen high-level engagement. For 2018 a facilitative dialogue is envisaged to take stock of collective progress towards the long-term emission reduction goal of Art 4. The decision **also welcomes the efforts of all non-Party stakeholders to address and respond to climate change**, including those of civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities. These stakeholders are invited to scale up their efforts and showcase them via the **Non-State Actor Zone for Climate**

**Action platform** (<https://climateaction.unfccc.int>).

- **Parties also recognized the need to strengthen the knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples**, as well as the important role of providing incentives through tools such as domestic policies and carbon pricing.

## **Conference of the Parties( COP22) Marrakesh**

The twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22), the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 12), and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 1) were held in Bab Ighli, Marrakech, Morocco from 7-18 November 2016.

In the long evolutionary arc of the U.N. climate effort, Marrakech was an important transitional moment, pivoting from the years of negotiation that produced the Paris Agreement to a new phase focused on implementation. Even apart from the new uncertainties injected by the U.S. election, it was clear in Marrakech that the transition is a challenging one, as perennial issues resurfaced in new guises. Chief among them is the nature of differentiation between developed and developing countries, with some developing nations pressing the kinds of bifurcated approaches that developed countries believed the Paris Agreement had laid to rest.

The Paris Agreement was a complete document that set out the overarching goals and framework for international climate action. But setting out the details is a longer process, which the countries participating in COP 22 have decided should be completed by 2018, with a review of progress in 2017. This timeline means that few of the loose ends left by the Paris Agreement were completely tied up in Marrakech. Instead, the process was one of defining the issues at stake and outlining what kind of documents and workshops will be needed to make

sense of them by the 2018 deadline. **Following are background on the negotiations and a summary of key outcomes:**

- **Adaptation Fund-:** The Adaptation Fund, exists to serve the Kyoto Protocol (the deal struck in 1997 committing developed nations to emissions cuts up to 2020). Countries merely agreed to discuss the issue and hand in their views by 31 March 2017.
- **Facilitative Dialogue:** The organisation of the 2018 facilitative dialogue proved to be controversial. Countries agreed in Paris that they would convene in 2018 to take stock of how climate action was going so far – a discussion that is intended to inform the next round of national pledges, known as nationally determined contributions, or NDCs. In Marrakech, it was decided that the presidents of COP22 and the forthcoming COP23 would consult with countries on the organisation of this dialogue and report back on their findings in a year's time. Article 4 of the Paris Agreement deals with both the long-term net-zero emissions in the second half of the century" goal, as well as the need for NDCs to provide "clarity and transparency. A key theme of COP22 was debating how best to create a fair rulebook that all countries could share and have confidence in when assessing each other's climate pledges. The technicalities of the rulebook – baselines, methodologies, etc – will be discussed in 2018.
- **Loss and damage:** Countries also approved a five-year work plan on "loss and damage", which will start in 2017 and will see countries start to formally address topics such as slow-onset impacts of climate change, non-economic losses (for example, culture and identity) and migration. In other words, dealing with climate impacts that are beyond adaptation.
- **Mid-century strategy:** The Paris Agreement encourages countries to prepare and submit "long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies"



outlining the kinds of actions needed to achieve much deeper emission reductions. In Marrakech, Canada, Germany, Mexico, and the United States became the first countries to submit what has come to be known as mid-century strategies. A new initiative called the 2050 Pathway Platform was launched, with support from a broad array of national governments, cities, states, and companies, to help other countries develop their own mid-century strategies.

- A statement of the need for action and countries' will to act was agreed – the **Marrakech Action Proclamation** for Our Climate and Sustainable Development.
- **The Climate Vulnerable Forum**, which is an international partnership of countries highly vulnerable to a warming planet, committed to update their NDCs before 2020, prepare long-term low-emissions development strategies, and generate 100% of their energy from renewable sources as soon as possible.
- **Finance:** Heading into Marrakech, developed countries released a roadmap outlining how they foresee meeting the goal of mobilizing \$100 billion a year in public and private finance for developing countries by 2020. In Marrakech, the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance released its second biennial assessment, showing that total global FINANCE Heading into Marrakech, developed countries released a roadmap outlining how they foresee meeting the goal of mobilizing \$100 billion a year in public and private finance for developing countries by 2020. In Marrakech, the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance released its second biennial assessment, showing that total global climate finance increased 15 percent in 2013-14, reaching a high-bound estimate of \$741 billion in 2014.

**Countries and others announced a variety of new financial pledges, including:**

- \$23 million for the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), which provides technical assistance and capacity building for developing countries.
- More than \$50 million for the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency established in Paris to help developing countries build the capacity to meet new transparency requirements; and
- A doubling of World Bank climate finance for the Middle East-North Africa region to \$1.5 billion by 2020.

### **Decisions adopted by COP 22**

- Preparations for entry into force of the Paris Agreement and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
- Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts.
- Review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts
- Initiation of a process to identify the information to be provided by parties in accordance with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement.
- Enhancing climate technology development and transfer through the Technology Mechanism
- Improving the effectiveness of the Doha work programme on Article 6 of the Convention
- Implementation of global observing system for climate change

### **COP 23 Bonn, Germany, 2017**

The 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place at the headquarters of the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. It was presided over by the Government of Fiji, the UN Climate Change Conference included the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UNFCCC, the 13th session of the

Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 13) and the 47th sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 47) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 47).

### **Key outcomes and Adopted decisions**

- To provide guidance on the completion of the Paris Agreement work programme.
- To launch the Talanoa Dialogue (the Fijian name for the 2018 facilitative dialogue)
- To give prominence to pre-2020 implementation and ambition, under the 'Fiji Momentum for Implementation.
- To operationalize the local communities and indigenous peoples platform.
- To establish a gender action plan
- To decide that the Adaptation Fund shall serve the Paris Agreement subject to decisions to be taken at CMA 1-3
- To take work forward on long-term finance and
- To give guidance to the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM).

**The COP adopted a decision on the 'Fiji Momentum for Implementation' that:** sets the stage for negotiations in 2018 in a transparent, inclusive and cost-effective manner; contains the design of the 2018 facilitative dialogue; and outlines the importance of pre-2020 implementation and action. In the decision, the COP agrees to accelerate completion of the Paris Agreement work programme by COP 24, and recognizes that this may require an additional negotiating session between SB 48 (April-May 2018) and COP 24. The COP welcomes the design of the 2018 **facilitative dialogue, or Talanoa Dialogue**, and agrees to launch the Dialogue beginning in January 2018.

**The COP also adopted a decision on long-term finance, which:**

- Requests developed countries to prepare their next round of updated biennial submissions on strategies and approaches for scaling up climate finance for 2018-2020.
- Requests the Secretariat to explore ways and means to assist developing countries in assessing their needs and priorities.
- Requests the Secretariat to organize a 2018 in-session workshop and prepare a summary report for consideration by COP 24; and
- Invites the COP Presidency, in organizing the 2018 high-level ministerial dialogue, to consider focusing on the topic of access to climate finance.

**Adaptation Fund:** Countries discussed the Adaptation Fund in relation to its role serving the Paris Agreement on climate change. In its decision, the CMP decides that:

- The Adaptation Fund shall serve the Paris Agreement subject to and consistent with decisions to be taken at CMA 1-3 in December 2018.
- It will consider whether the Adaptation Fund shall serve the Paris Agreement exclusively following a CMA recommendation to CMP 15 in November 2019 and
- Notes the APA's progress in undertaking preparatory work to address governance and institutional arrangements, safeguards and operating modalities for the Adaptation Fund to serve the Paris Agreement.

**Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM):** Regarding the WIM, the COP agreed to, *inter alia*, request the Secretariat to organize, in conjunction with SB 48, an expert dialogue on loss and damage, and encourage Parties to disseminate, promote and utilize WIM products, including by establishing a loss and damage contact point through UNFCCC national focal points.

**Gender action plan:** On gender, the COP agreed to, *inter alia*: adopt a gender action plan; request the Secretariat to prepare

for November 2019, a synthesis report on implementation of the gender action plan; and review implementation of the action plan at COP 25.

**Health Initiative for the Vulnerable:** The World Health Organisation, in collaboration with the UNFCCC and the Fijian COP23 Presidency launched a special initiative to protect people living in Small Island Developing States from the health impacts of climate change. Its goal by 2030 is to triple the levels of international financial support to climate and health in Small Island Developing States.

**Ocean Pathway Partnership and Powering Past Coal Alliance:** Two important initiatives were launched at COP23: the Ocean Pathway Partnership, which highlights the critical relationship between the ocean and climate and promotes action for a healthy ocean; and the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a coalition that aims at accelerating the phase-out of coal in a “sustainable and economically inclusive way”.

**On Agriculture:** the COP requested the SBSTA and SBI to jointly address issues related to agriculture, including through workshops and expert meetings, and consider the vulnerabilities of agriculture to climate change and approaches to addressing food security.

**The local communities and indigenous peoples platform:** In a decision applauded by many, the local communities and indigenous peoples platform was operationalized, following discussions regarding how much decision-making power to concede to non-Party stakeholders. **The COP specifies shared chairmanship by state and indigenous peoples’ representatives,** similar to the Working Group on Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices, or Article 8(j), under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s (CBD). **The COP decision also notes the platform’s aim of:**

- Strengthening the knowledge, technologies, practices,

and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing climate change.

- Enhancing engagement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the UNFCCC process and
- Facilitating the integration of diverse knowledge systems, practices and innovations in designing and implementing policies.

**The COP also recommends that** processes under the platform consider the interests and views of local communities and indigenous peoples; decides on the convening of a multi-stakeholder workshop on implementing the functions of the platform; decides that the workshop will be co-moderated by the SBSTA Chair and a representative of local communities and indigenous peoples' organizations; and requests SBSTA 48 to further operationalize the platform, including through the establishment of a facilitative working group, which will not be a negotiating body.

### **About Talanoa dialogue**

Countries agreed two years ago in Paris that there should be a one-off moment in 2018 to “take stock” of how climate action was progressing. This information will be used to inform the next round of NDCs, due in 2020.

This way of recognising “enhanced ambition” – a term heard a lot at COPs – was seen as an important precursor of the Paris Agreement’s longer-term “ratchet mechanism”, which aims to increase ambition on a five-year incremental cycle.

Originally called the “facilitative dialogue”, the name of this one-off process in 2018 was changed to “Talanoa dialogue” this year under the Fijian COP presidency. This was to reflect a traditional approach to discussions used in Fiji for an “inclusive, participatory and transparent” process.

The final “approach” of the Talanoa dialogue was included as a four-page Annex to the main COP23 outcome decision.

It will be structured around three questions – “Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?” – but also includes new details, such as a decision to accept inputs from non-party stakeholders as well as parties, a decision to set up an online platform to receive inputs, and a new emphasis on efforts being made in the pre-2020 period.

## **COP24: Katowice, Poland-2018**

The 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change– COP 24–took place in Katowice, Poland from 2-14 December 2018. Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also met during this conference. The Katowice Conference marked the third anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which was agreed to in 2015.

### **Key outcomes**

- **Implementing Paris Agreement:** It took long and difficult negotiations to reach agreement on the agreed ‘Katowice Climate Package’ but in the end, countries agreed on a set of guidelines for **implementing the landmark 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement which will come into effect in 2020**. Katowice was a major step forward for operationalizing the Paris Agreement.
- **Paris rulebook agreed:** At the heart of talks in Poland was the Paris “rulebook”, which was mandated in 2015 to be finalised by the end of COP24. This is the detailed **“operating manual”** needed for the Paris Agreement to enter force in 2020.

**The rulebook covers a multitude of questions, such as** how countries should report their greenhouse gas emissions or contributions to climate finance, as well as what rules should apply to voluntary market mechanisms, such as carbon trading.

- Two common threads ran through each area of these areas. First, whether to agree a single set of rules for all countries – with flexibility for those that need it – or

to maintain the current divide between rules for rich and poor. This is referred to as “**differentiation**”, or sometimes “bifurcation”.

- The second thread was the provision of **climate finance to help developing nations adapt to the impacts of global warming**, mitigate their emissions and participate fully in the Paris process.
- In Katowice, countries stressed “the urgency of enhanced ambition in order to ensure the highest possible mitigation and adaptation efforts by all Parties.”
- The Katowice package includes guidelines that will operationalize the **transparency framework**.
- It sets out how countries will provide information about their Nationally Determined Contributions—the plans developed by each country that describes their domestic climate actions. This information includes mitigation and adaptation measures as well as details of financial support for climate action in developing countries.
- The package also includes **guidelines** that relate to:
  - The process for establishing new targets on finance from 2025 onwards to follow-on from the current target of mobilizing US \$100 billion per year from 2020 to support developing countries
  - How to conduct the Global Stocktake of the effectiveness of climate action in 2023
  - How to assess progress on the development and transfer of technology
- The participating members **refused to agree** to “welcome” the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on 1.5°C. The countries such as the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait refused to “welcome” the IPCC report.
- The parties to the conference agreed to record the pledges as per the existing interim portal in a **public registry**. Although many attempts have been made to get it deleted, the public registry will continue to include a search function.



- Members also agreed that a **“common time frame”** from 2031 should be covered by future pledges. The number of years will be decided later on for the timeframe.
- Many difficult issues were unable to reach an agreement and were postponed for resolution to next year. This includes issues such as ways to increase existing emission reduction commitments, different ways to provide financial assistance to poor nations, wording that prevents double counting, and whether member nations are doing enough to reduce their respective emissions.