



UNFCCC

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Recently, 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Katowice, Poland.

Origin

- The UNFCCC, signed in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit, the Rio Summit or the Rio Conference
- The UNFCCC entered into force on March 21, 1994, and has been ratified by 197 countries.

The WMO and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, to assess the magnitude and timing of changes, estimate their impacts, present strategies for how to respond and to provide an authoritative source of up-to-date interdisciplinary knowledge on climate change.

Objective

- According to Article 2, the Convention's ultimate objective is "to achieve, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".
- This objective is qualified in that it "should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner".

Institutional Arrangements

- **The Conference of the Parties (COP)**

Article 7.2 defines the COP as the “supreme body” of the Convention, as it is its highest decision-making authority. The climate change process revolves around the annual sessions of the COP.

- **COP President and Bureau**

- The office of the COP President normally rotates among the five United Nations regional groups. The President is usually the environment minister of his or her home country. S/he is elected by acclamation immediately after the opening of a COP session. Their role is to facilitate the work of the COP and promote agreements among Parties.
- The work of the COP and each subsidiary body is guided by an elected Bureau. To ensure continuity, it serves not only during sessions, but between sessions as well.

- **Subsidiary Bodies (SBs)**

- The Convention establishes **two permanent subsidiary bodies (SBs)**, namely the **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)**, by Article 9, and the **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)**, by Article 10. These bodies advise the COP.
- The SBSTA’s task is to provide the COP “with timely advice on scientific and technological matters relating to the Convention”.
- The SBI’s task is to assist the COP “in the assessment and review of the effective implementation of the Convention”

- **The Secretariat**

The secretariat, also known as the Climate Change Secretariat, services the COP, the SBs, the Bureau and other bodies established by the COP.

- **Other Bodies**

- Other bodies have been set up by the COP to undertake specific tasks. These bodies report back to the COP when they complete their work
- COP 1 established two ad hoc groups to conduct negotiations on specific issues.
- COP 11 established the “Dialogue” to exchange experiences and analyse strategic approaches for long-term cooperative action to address climate change.

Timeline of Important Events

1979	First World Climate Conference (WCC)
1988	IPCC established

1990	In November IPCC and second WCC call for global treaty on climate change and in December UN General Assembly Negotiations on a Framework Convention Begin.
1992	The text of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is adopted at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
1994	UNFCCC enters into force
1995	COP 1 (Berlin, Germany)
1996	August The UNFCCC secretariat relocates from Geneva to its current home in Bonn(Germany), paving the way for the city to become an international sustainability hub and home to 18 UN organizations.
1997	COP 3 (Kyoto, Japan) Kyoto Protocol adopted- The Protocol legally binds developed countries to emission reduction targets.
1998	Buenos Aires Plan of Action
2001	COP 6-2(second part of 6th COP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COP 6-2 took place from 16 to 27 July 2001 in Bonn, Germany. • A major breakthrough is achieved at the second part of the sixth Conference of the Parties meeting in Bonn, with governments reaching a broad political agreement on the operational rulebook for the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.
2001	COP 7 (Marrakesh, Morocco) Resulted in the Marrakesh Accords, setting the stage for ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This formalized the agreement on operational rules for International Emissions Trading, the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation along with a compliance regime and accounting procedures.
2002	COP 8 (New Delhi, India) Delhi Declaration. The Delhi Declaration focuses on the development needs of the poorest countries and the need for technology transfer for mitigating climate change.
2005	(February 16) Entry of Kyoto Protocol into force with the Russian Federation ratification to the Kyoto Protocol, sealing its entry into force.

2005	COP11/CMP1 (December)	The first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP 1) takes place in Montreal.
2006	In January the Clean Development Mechanism, a key mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol, opens for business.	The CDM is one of the Flexible Mechanisms defined in the Kyoto Protocol that provides for emissions reduction projects which generate Certified Emission Reduction units (CERs) which may be traded in emissions trading schemes.
2007	COP13	Parties agreed on the Bali Road Map and Bali action plan, which charted the way towards a post-2012 outcome. The Plan has five main categories: shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing.
2008	COP 14, Poznan (Poland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launch of the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol and • The Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer.
2009	COP15 (Copenhagen)	Copenhagen Accord drafted. Developed countries pledge up to USD 30 billion in fast-start finance for the period 2010-2012.
2010	COP 16 (Cancun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resulted in the Cancun Agreements, a comprehensive package by governments to assist developing nations in dealing with climate change. • The Green Climate Fund, the Technology Mechanism and the Cancun Adaptation Framework are established.
2011	COP 17 (Durban)	Governments commit to a new universal climate change agreement by 2015 for the period beyond 2020.(Resulted in the Paris Agreement of 2015)

2012	COP18/CMP8 (Doha)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol is adopted. • COP18 also launched a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

2013	COP19/CMP9 (Warsaw)
	<p>Key decisions adopted include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Further advancing the Green Climate Fund and Long-Term Finance, ◦ The Warsaw Framework for REDD Plus and the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

2015	COP 21 (Paris)
	<p>Paris Agreement adopted. It aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ To keep global temperatures "well below" 2.0C (3.6F) above pre-industrial times and "endeavor to limit" them even more, to 1.5C ◦ Rich countries should help poorer nations by providing "climate finance" to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy. ◦ The agreement requires rich nations to maintain a \$100bn a year funding pledge beyond 2020.

2016	COP22 (Marrakech)
	<p>A crucial outcome of the Marrakech climate conference was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ To move forward on writing the rule book of the Paris Agreement. ◦ Launched the Marrakech Partnership for Climate Action.

2017	COP23, Bonn (Germany)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries continued to negotiate the finer details of how the agreement will work from 2020 onwards. • First set of negotiations since the US, under the presidency of Donald Trump, announced its intention earlier this year to withdraw from the Paris deal. • It was the first COP to be hosted by a small-island developing state with Fiji taking up the presidency, even though it was being held in Bonn.

2018	COP 24, Katowice (Poland)
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Shortcomings

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- **Non-inclusive:** Most scientists agree the most dangerous environmental air pollutants today are microscopic particulates that come from car engines and combustion-based power plants, but these pollutants are largely ignored by the Kyoto Protocol.
 - **Slow progress:** It took a long time for COP to bring Russia to agree into participating in the Kyoto Protocol. (until 2005)
 - UNFCCC failed to persuade USA to ratify the Kyoto protocol thereby keeping one of the largest emitter of greenhouse gases away from commitments.
 - **Unsustainable targets:** The world reached at almost 1degree Celsius warming post industrialization and the Paris contributions are not enough to maintain 2 degree Celsius levels.
 - **Unsatisfactory Response:** Many countries argued for a tougher target of 1.5C - including leaders of low-lying countries that face unsustainable sea levels rises in a warming world.
 - **Financial Constraints:** The agreement requires rich nations to maintain a \$100bn a year funding pledge beyond 2020, which is not enough as highlighted by several pacific island countries.
 - **Non-binding agreement:** The US withdrawal from the 2015 Paris climate agreement, citing, that the deal punished" the US and would cost millions of American jobs", has created new barriers and more pressure on rest of the nations in achieving the targets of Paris agreement.

As part of the US withdrawal, USA has stopped the payment of the extra \$2bn that had been promised in to the Green Climate Fund.
 - **No enforcement mechanism:** Under the Paris agreement, each country determines, plans, and reports its own efforts to mitigate global warming. The only penalty for non-compliance is a so-called "name and shame" — or "name and encourage" — system whereby countries that fall out of compliance are called out and encouraged to improve.

Achievements

- Kyoto protocol only required wealthy nations to cut emissions, which was a bone of contention; however this anomaly was corrected with the signing of Paris agreement in 2015.
- UNFCCC initiatives helped create Public awareness regarding climate change, which is much higher today than in the late 90s.
- Although climate science in the late 90s was certainly strong enough—to negotiate an international treaty, it is hard to deny that the scientific understanding of the climate crisis has improved considerably over the past two decades in which UNFCCC played a significant role.

- UNFCCC has enabled planning and implementation of concrete adaptation activities under the National Adaptations Programme of Action (NAPAs) and the Nairobi work programme.
- UNFCCC helped create innovative ideas in mitigating climate change like the Clean Development mechanism (CDM) under which developing country's projects that reduce emissions earn credits that can be sold to countries or companies with a commitment to reduce emissions.
- Since the establishment of UNFCCC national governments have encouraged and increased cooperation on the development and transfer of technology.
- UNFCCC efforts support the developing countries in combating climate change by providing a platform for finance, technology transfers, discussions, global partnerships, etc.