



UN Climate Action Summit 2019

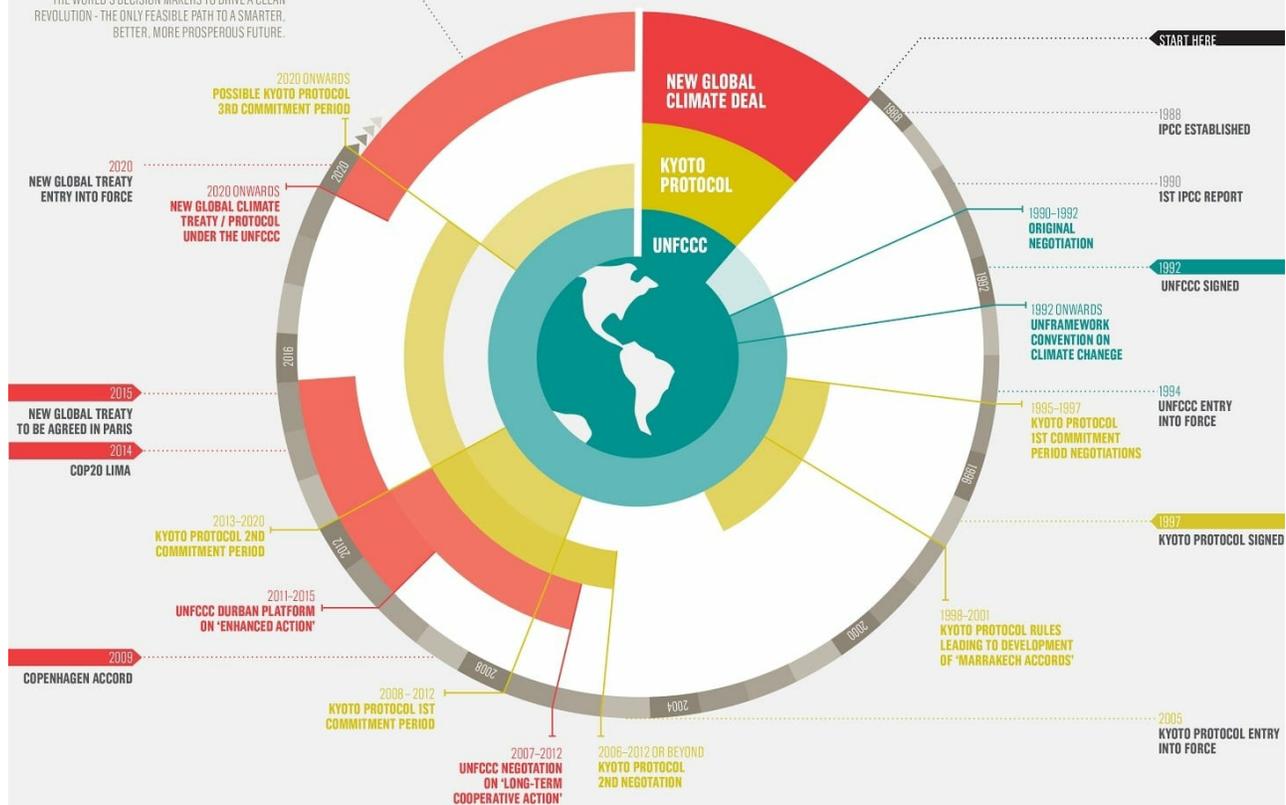
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Recently, **the UN Secretary-General called all the member states at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019 held in New York, US.** The summit expects members states to lay realistic plans to enhance their contributions to climate change mitigation.

The Paris climate deal provides a framework to stop climate disruption and reverse its impact. However, the voluntary nature of Paris climate deal makes it difficult to achieve its target of 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.

Background of Climate Change Negotiations

UNDERSTANDING THE UNFCCC NEGOTIATIONS A TIMELINE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



THE 'FRAMEWORK' FOR INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION, UNFCCC

UNFCCC SIGNED - 1992
The original UN climate treaty. Established the basic framework and principles for international climate change action. Developed countries committed to take the lead with developing countries agreeing to take action with financial and technological support as they developed. No legally emission targets agreed for any countries.

NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND COMMITMENT PERIODS OF THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

KYOTO PROTOCOL SIGNED - 1997
Requires industrialized countries to make a collective binding emission cut of 5% below 1990 levels by 2012. Introduced innovative new instruments, including the Clean Development Mechanism. US never ratified. First commitment period (2008-12) covered 50% of 1990 global emissions. Second commitment period coverage down to ~15% as Canada, Japan, Russia and New Zealand join US in opting-out and developing country emissions grow.

NEGOTIATING PROCESSES UNDER THE UNFCCC FOR A NEW GLOBAL CLIMATE DEAL TO COMPLEMENT OR REPLACE THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

COPENHAGEN ACCORD - 2009
Lima must build on the momentum generated by key climate events of 2014 e.g. Ban Ki-moon's Climate Summit in September and China-US announcement in November about limiting emissions. In particular, it must reach agreement on: the elements of a draft negotiating text for new global climate deal; the form and structure of countries' targets and measures for the new deal; and how to enhance ambition in the pre-2020 period. Without these, reaching an ambitious deal at COP21 in Paris next December will be put at risk.

NEW GLOBAL TREATY TO BE AGREED - 2015
Process to agree new treaty covering all countries was established at COP17 Durban in 2011. Governments have to disclose their targets and measures in March, and then conclude negotiations in Paris in December 2015, with treaty in force from 2020. The goal is a global climate agreement covering all countries that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level that will keep the expected rise in Earth's mean surface temperature below 2°C in order to avoid the worst climate change impacts.

Rising Environmental Concerns

- Global emissions are reaching record levels and show no sign of peaking.
 - According to IAEA, due to higher energy demand in 2018, global energy-related CO2 emissions rose 1.7% to a historic high of 33.1 gigaton of CO2.
 - It was the highest rate of growth since 2013, and 70% higher than the average increase since 2010.
- The last four years were the four hottest on record, and winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990.

- Sea levels are rising.
 - Sea level continues to rise at a rate of about one-eighth of an inch per year.
 - In 2014, global sea level was 2.6 inches above the 1993 average—the highest annual average in the satellite record (1993-present).
- Life-threatening impact of climate change on health, through air pollution, heatwaves and risks to food security.
- The UN estimates that the world would need to increase its efforts **between three- and five-fold** to achieve Paris climate deal target.

Highlights of the Summit

The Secretary-General has prioritized the **six action areas**, which are recognized as having high potential to curb greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and are also critical to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

- **Energy Transition**
 - **Energy efficiency offers a potential 40% of the emission reductions**, yet only a few countries make specific commitments to improve energy efficiency in their climate plans.
 - Therefore at the summit, a new **Three Percent Club** was launched.
 - It includes governments and international organizations, that are committed to a **3% annual global increase in energy efficiency** across their economies and businesses.
 - India is a member of Three Percent Club.
 - India also pledged that it will increase renewable energy capacity to **beyond 175 GW by 2022**.
- **Nature-Based Solutions**
 - The summit sought to adopt new initiatives, developed by the **Nature-Based Solutions Coalition** (co-led by China and New Zealand).
 - It includes efforts to conserve and restore marine and terrestrial ecosystems, promote regenerative agriculture and the greening of supply chains, and advance innovative financing mechanisms to scale-up nature-based solutions.
 - It also highlighted the importance of valuing nature in governance, decision-making and finance.

- **Cities and Local Action**

- Cities are key to securing our climate future and successfully implementing national climate plans.
- Cities consume more than two-thirds of the world's energy and are the places where the effects of the climate emergency are already severely felt, particularly amongst the most vulnerable populations.
- Advancing mitigation and resilience at urban and local levels, can be achieved by new commitments on low-emission buildings, mass transport and urban infrastructure and resilience for the urban poor.

- **Resilience and Adaptation**

- The **IPCC** Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C states that urgent and transformational adaptation action is needed, yet adaptation action is not keeping pace with the scale of impacts.
- Therefore, the summit sought to advance global efforts to address and manage the impacts and risks of climate change, particularly in those communities and nations most vulnerable.
- India also pledged to spend approximately \$50 billion in the next few years on the **Jal Jeevan Mission** to conserve water, harvest rainwater and develop water resources.

- **Industry Transition**

- Many countries including India formed a new **Leadership Group for Industry Transition** that seeks to decarbonize energy intensive industries.
- Energy-intensive sectors like steel, cement, aluminum, aviation and shipping are expected to be responsible for **release of 15.7 giga tonne of GHGs emission** by 2050.
- It is necessary to reduce emissions in the immediate term and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon industrial development while pursuing efforts to reach **net-zero carbon emissions by 2050**.

This target has been decided at Costa Rica summit (A pre-summit to CoP 25 of UNFCCC).

- **Finance**

- The summit sought to mobilize public and private sources of finance to drive decarbonization of all priority sectors.
- It seeks to align public and private finance with a **net zero economy** (carbon emission).

- In addition, the summit highlighted three additional key areas:
 - **Mitigation Strategy:** to generate momentum for ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term strategies to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.
 - **Youth Engagement and Public Mobilization:** to mobilize people worldwide to take action on climate change and ensure that young people are integrated and represented across all aspects of the Summit.
 - **Social and Political Drivers:** to advance commitments in areas that affect people's well-being, such as reducing air pollution, generating decent jobs, and strengthening climate adaptation strategies and protect workers and vulnerable groups.

Way Forward

- New technologies and engineering solutions are already delivering energy at a lower cost than the fossil-fuel driven economy.
 - Since, solar and onshore wind are now the cheapest sources, they can become a source of new bulk power in virtually all major economies.
 - In this regard **International Solar Alliance** is a step in the right direction.
- **Carbon trading should be reinvigorated.**
 - New carbon pricing must reflect the true cost of emissions, from climate risk to the health hazards of air pollution.
- **Costa Rica's groundbreaking role** in climate mitigation is worth emulating by the world economies.
 - More than 98% of Costa Rica's energy is renewable and forest cover stands at more than 53% after painstaking work to reverse decades of deforestation.
 - In 2017, the country ran for a record 300 days solely on renewable power.
- Governments must promote programs like **ActNow** and **FridaysForFuture** in their respective countries.

Act now campaign

- ActNow is the United Nations global call to individual action on climate change.
- The campaign is a critical part of the UN's coordinated effort to raise awareness, ambition, and action for climate change and accelerate implementation of the Paris Agreement.
- It is primarily an online and social media campaign that seeks to educate and encourage individual actions, mainly by adjusting consumption patterns.
- It highlights the impact that collective action can have at this critical moment in our planet's history. The more people act, the bigger the impact.
- ActNow harnesses advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to spur behaviour change.

FridaysForFuture

- It is a movement that began in Sweden in August 2018 by Greta Thunberg to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis.
- The hashtags **#FridaysForFuture** and **#Climatestrike** became so popular that many students and adults began to protest outside of their Parliaments and local city halls all over the world.
- **#Climatestrike** is a global event to demand an end to the age of fossil fuels & climate justice for everyone. It is a wake-up call to our generation to solve the greatest environmental challenge in human history.
- The Santiago Climate Change Conference, which will feature the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) to the **UNFCCC**, must incorporate the themes emphasised at UN Climate Action Summit 2019.
- Apart from this, COP-25 must focus on the **exchange of experiences** on possible solutions to accelerate the decarbonization and resilience of the world's economies.