



What does the UN climate change regime do?

Climate change is inherently global in nature. The emissions of long-lived GHGs into the atmosphere from sources anywhere on the globe will affect atmospheric concentrations. As the dynamics of the climate system are globally integrated, the potential impacts of climate change can affect all parts of the globe. Human emissions of GHGs occur primarily from the production and use of energy by individuals, businesses and governments, and from [land use](#)—these are all activities that are essential for modern life and for raising the standard of living for people everywhere. The composition of the world's atmosphere is impacted by GHG emissions for countries around the world, and the effects of those changes affect everyone. Hence, there is motivation and need for collective, global action under the UNFCCC – global action that calls for decision making at many levels: international – through intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and process –, regional, national, sub-national, and local – including by local governments, individuals, communities, multinational firms and local enterprises.

Under the UN climate change regime, governments:

- Consider latest scientific information and agree on actions to be taken – collectively and/or individually – e.g. launch national strategies and measures for reducing GHGs and adapting to the expected adverse impacts of climate change, or both;
- Gather and share information on GHG emissions, national policies and best practices, and develop international guidance (e.g., modalities, guidelines, methodologies);
- Cooperate, including by mobilizing and providing finance, technology and capacity-building to developing countries, in support of the planning and implementing of mitigation measures (actions to reduce the emission of GHGs into the atmosphere) as well as adaptation measures (actions needed to respond, increase resilience and reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change).

The governments that have ratified the [UNFCCC](#)— known as Parties to the Convention—have met annually as the [Conference of the Parties](#) (the COP) since 1995 to take stock of their progress, monitor the implementation of their obligations and continue talks on how best to tackle climate change. Currently, there are 197 Parties to the Convention.

Governments have also negotiated a protocol to the Convention. The [Kyoto Protocol](#) was agreed in December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. It includes an obligation and individual legally-binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, as they are responsible for the largest share of current and historical GHG emissions. Since the Protocol's entry into force in 2005, meetings of the [Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol](#) (the CMP) have been held (in conjunction with the annual COP) to review the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

Ten years later, on 12 December 2015, governments adopted the Paris Agreement, which entered into force on 4 November 2016. The [Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement](#) (the CMA) shall keep the implementation of the Agreement under regular review. It met for the first time in conjunction with COP 22, held in Marrakesh Morocco, in November 2016.

The Convention established two permanent subsidiary bodies namely the [Subsidiary Body for Implementation](#) (SBI) and the [Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice](#) (SBSTA), to support the COP. The SBI and the SBSTA also serve the CMP and the CMA.

The many [decisions](#) taken by the COP and the CMP at their annual sessions now make up a 'rulebook' (including detailed modalities, procedures and guidelines) for the effective implementation of the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol. Through these decisions, the COP and CMP also established a number of institutional arrangements and specialised bodies, often referred to as 'constituted bodies', to support Parties, such as the [Adaptation Committee](#), the [Standing Committee on Finance](#), the [Technology Executive Committee](#) - and many others. An overview of all Convention and Kyoto Protocol bodies can be found [here](#).

In addition, since 2016, Parties are developing the rulebook for the Paris Agreement through the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement ([APA](#)), the SBSTA and the SBI, with the involvement of various of the constituted bodies and overseen by the COP.

Thus a complex architecture for global climate governance has been developed under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol and is currently developing under the Paris Agreement.

Under this architecture, Parties agree to further actions as they develop national programmes, plans and measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts, as well as on support for such actions. The Convention also obliges Parties to share technology, provide financial support and to cooperate in other ways to reduce GHG emissions, especially from energy, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and waste management, which together produce nearly all GHG emissions attributable to human activities.

The obligations and rules under the UN climate change regime also calls on each Party to [report](#) on its national efforts to combat climate change and to develop [GHG inventories](#) that list its national sources (such as factories and transport) and its sinks (forests and other natural ecosystems that absorb GHGs from the atmosphere).