



What are United Nations Climate Change Conferences?

United Nations climate change conferences have grown exponentially in size over the past two decades—from small working sessions into the largest annual conferences currently held under the auspices of the United Nations—and are now among the largest international meetings in the world. The intergovernmental negotiations have likewise become increasingly complex and involve an ever-increasing number of officials from governments all over the world, at all levels, as well as huge numbers of representatives from civil society and the global news media.

These conferences are the foremost global forums for multilateral discussion of climate change matters, and have an incredibly busy schedule. The conferences, which rotate annually among the five United Nations regional groups, serve as the formal meetings of the [Conference of the Parties \(COP\)](#), the [Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol \(CMP\)](#) and the [Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement \(the CMA\)](#).

They also include sessions of the subsidiary bodies (the [SBSTA](#) and the [SBI](#)) and any ad hoc negotiating groups. The UNFCCC secretariat supports all institutions involved in the negotiations, as well as the [Bureau of the COP/CMP/CMA](#), which is the executive body that advises the President of the conference.

Meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP/CMP/CMA):

The Conference of the Parties – meeting as COP, CMP and CMA – serves two main purposes:

1. To review the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, respectively; and
2. To adopt decisions to further develop and implement these three instruments.

The latter can include establishment of any subsidiary bodies that are deemed necessary. Parties may also negotiate and adopt new legal instruments, like the Paris Agreement adopted by the COP in 2015 or the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol adopted by the CMP in 2012.

The conduct of the meetings follows certain rules (the so-called UNFCCC [draft rules of procedure](#) that are being applied by the COP, CMP, CMA and their subsidiary bodies). The brokering of agreed outcomes within the collective decision-making framework of the COP/CMP/CMA, however, is often a highly complex exercise which involves negotiation and compromise.

The conduct of the meetings and brokering of agreements within the collective decision-making framework of the COP therefore involves negotiation and compromise.