

Briefing

Introduction to Paris and climate justice

This is an introduction to the key information, choices and challenges ahead of Paris.

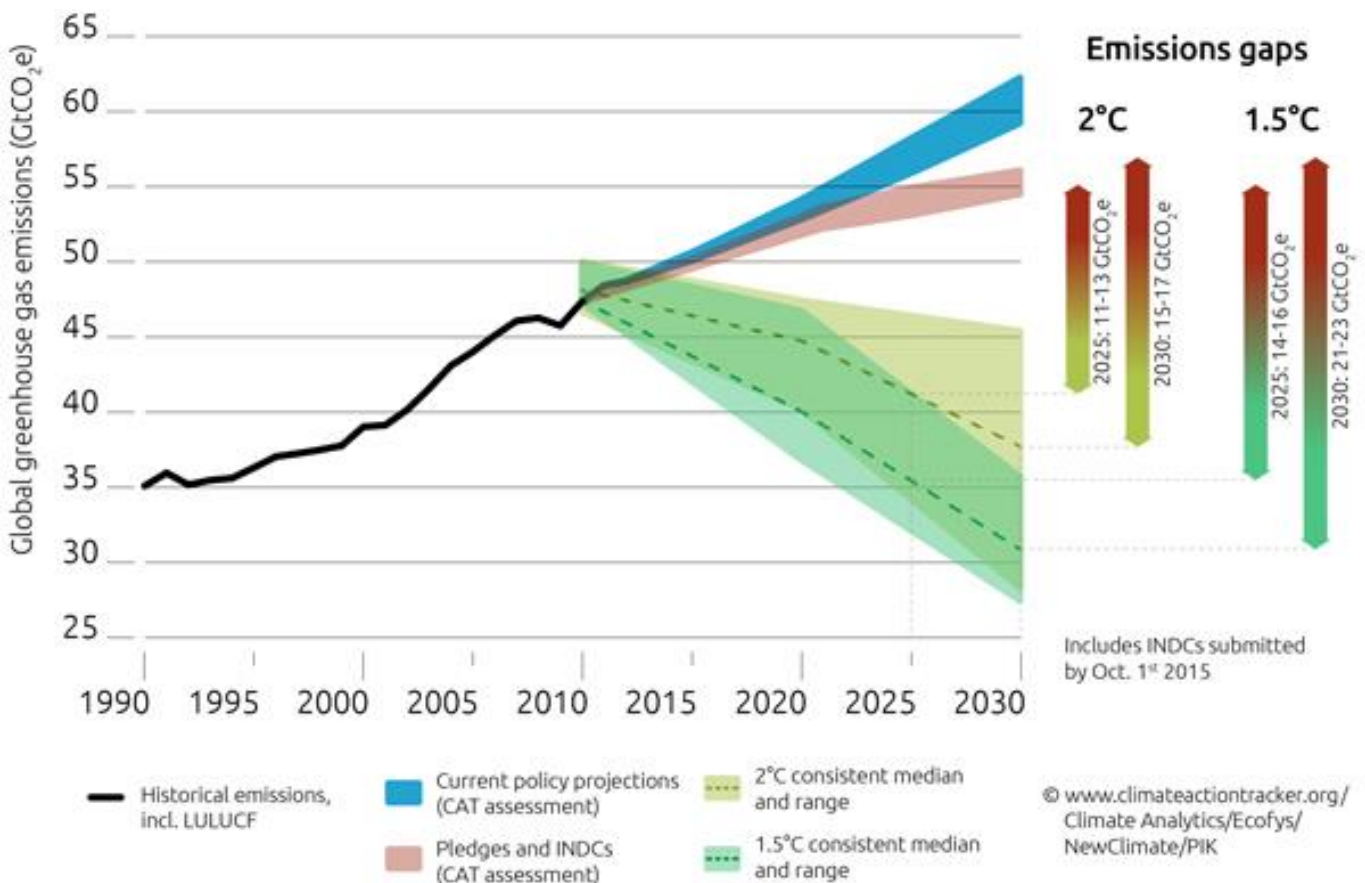
1. The scale of the climate change problem

The UK Met Office says that 2015 will be the first year where global temperatures are over 1 degree warmer than pre-industrial levelsⁱ.

This is already causing sea levels to rise and leading to more extreme weather events such as floods and drought, and will negatively affect food production and water stress. Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines in 2014, killing 6,300 people. One of the contributing factors to the Syrian refugee crisis has been the punishing 5 year drought in rural Syria between 2006 and 2010. Scientists say that climate change is making drought in Syria twice as likelyⁱⁱ.

The bad news is that we are locked into some further global temperature rise, which will worsen extreme weather and also increase the risks of irreversible, catastrophic impacts such as Amazon die-back, or melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets.

The good news is that the amount of warming we get in future is to a large degree still in our hands. We can still keep warming to 1.5 degrees, the goal of many developing countries, which are worst hit already by climate change.



We can still keep within 2 degrees, the goal of the EU, G8 and the UNFCCC Copenhagen Accord. But we are currently on track for around 3 degrees, even if all current pledges by nations are met. There is a huge “emissions gap” between current pledges and keeping below 2 or 1.5 degrees warming (see graph above).

2. The speed of action needed

Global emissions need to peak and decline before 2020 to keep below 1.5 degrees or to have a good chance of keeping under 2 degrees.

The UK Met Office say “*Should emissions peak in 2016, to limit warming to 2 °C with a 50% probability will require emissions reductions of approximately 4% per year. But should emissions peak later in 2020, to achieve the same temperature target will require a faster rate of emissions reductions of almost 6% per year.*”

The longer we leave decarbonisation, the steeper the rate of emissions cuts needed and the more expensive it becomes.

3. Developed countries should take a lead in combatting climate change

Article 3 of the UNFCCC is clear that on climate action:

“The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof.”

This not just an ethical issue, it is pragmatic politics: action on climate requires all countries to act, this is more likely to happen if responsibility is seen to be fair to all. Richer countries have more historic responsibility for the climate problem and more capability to do something about it.

There are many different methodologies to calculate a fair contribution for all countries in cutting carbon domestically and paying for emissions reduction and climate adaptation internationally, which reflect the UNFCCC differentiated responsibility principle to differing degrees. One method which covers a wide range of the UNFCCC principles is a new [Fair shares](#) report, backed by the International TUC, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, WWF International, Action Aid International, Christian Aid and others. It argues that developed countries need to make major increases in the level of emissions cuts they will make, and in the financial support they will give to developing countries to help them take a clean development path.

In the UK, the Government’s climate advisor reported in October that the EU’s INDC was not a fair contribution to tackling climate change.

Other actors’ actions are also crucial, and can help spur Governments into stronger action.

Cities around the globe are organising to take extremely ambitious action to decarbonise between now and 2020 - to bridge the gap until nation states get their act together. The C40 is the leading city organisationⁱⁱⁱ. The C40 has set out a vision and plans for city level action globally to cut carbon before 2020^{iv}.

4. The Paris climate talks

i) Action before 2020

The Paris climate talks are about increasing existing levels of action (pre 2020) as well as what action nation states will take after 2020. Rich developed countries should agree to cut domestic emissions by at least 50% by 2020.

Action *before* 2020 is crucial because emissions need to decline before then (see above).

ii) Action after 2020

The Paris talks will also agree a *process* for nation states agreeing how they will work together to cut carbon after 2020 - to replace the existing Kyoto Protocol. Paris will not agree legally binding targets for how much carbon will be cut.

Countries have instead made voluntary individual pledges to cut carbon – “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions” (INDCs). These do not add up to even meet the 2 degree goal – commitments will need to be ratcheted up to meet the requirements of climate science and fairness Paris will therefore need to agree a “ratchet mechanism” to do this that also assesses the finance requirements for poorer countries.

iii) Action pledged so far

Around 90% of countries have now declared their INDCs. The total action, if delivered, sets the world on course for around 3 degrees warming^v.

Countries have to date pledged just \$10.2 billion in contributions to a Green Climate Fund pot of money to pay for clean development in poorer countries and for them to adapt to climate change^{vi}. Rich countries agreed to mobilise \$100 billion a year by 2020, although that is a fraction of the finance needed.

In September, the UK Government pledged to double its current funding to around £1.8bn a year by 2020 but it has been criticised for not pledging its fair share, and for diverting money from other development projects^{vii}.

EU and UK weak pledges

The EU commitment to cut carbon as part of the Paris talks is far short of the level of action needed. Professor Kevin Anderson, Deputy Director of the Tyndall Centre, has set out why the ambitious is too low^{viii}.

The UK has not set its own INDC but has said its action is part of the EU’s INDC, of at least 40% cuts on 1990 levels by 2030. This commits us to even less ambition than we have already committed to – a 50% cut on 1990 levels by 2025. No weighting of effort has been agreed within the EU INDC. Both the UK and the EU pledges should increase to at least 80% cuts on 1990 levels by 2030^{ix}.

5. Commitments world leaders should make in Paris

Action the UK Government should take ahead of Paris

- i) Make a more ambitious national pledge to cut carbon – the UK's fair share of action to keep below 1.5 degrees of warming would be an at least 80% emissions cut by 2030.
- ii) Increase commitments to fund the Green Climate Fund between now and 2020 – with increased spending starting this year, not back-loaded to 2020, and funding in the form of donations not loans.
- iii) Set out a revised UK carbon plan with policies to achieve UK Climate Change Act commitments and any new stretch commitment that better reflects our country's fair share of action including:
 - Set a date for the phase out of UK coal-power by 2023 at the latest
 - Announce a ban on exploration for new fossil fuels – including fracking and unconventional gas extraction
 - End all public funding for fossil fuels
 - Public support for renewable energy until it becomes cost competitive and continue to incentivise installation including through solar feed in tariffs
 - Make energy efficiency a major infrastructure investment priority, and insulate 4 million homes to efficiency standard C by 2020.

Commitments world leaders should make at Paris

- A goal of keeping global temperatures below 1.5 degrees warming.
- Immediately ratcheting up the total scale of action to put the world on track to under 1.5 degrees warming, with a fair share of action from both richer and poorer countries.
- Boost Green Climate Fund commitments and work to deliver a clear roadmap in order to provide certainty for developing countries. This needs a global goal of \$70 billion in 2016 and \$85 billion in 2018, and equal funding for mitigation and adaptation.
- Introduce a Loss and Damage mechanism to support and compensate developing countries hit by the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided.
- End all state subsidy for fossil fuels, and commit to a global phase out of all fossil fuels by 2050, with richer countries decarbonising much sooner.

6. What will happen in Paris

Before Paris

At the climate talks in Bonn (October 2015), the US and Algerian diplomats charged with producing a draft negotiation text for Paris, did such a bad job that the draft text was rejected by 132 poorer developing countries as 'unbalanced' and 'not reflecting their issues'. A new 51 page was produced that includes all the different views but many diplomats feel that the document is now too complicated to be agreed in Paris.

The French government who act as the hosts of the Paris talks, have been holding discussions with various countries at a pre-COP Ministerial in Paris as well as one to one meetings with key countries.

Week 1

World leaders will assemble in Paris on Monday 30th November. It is likely they will begin to discuss the broad outlines of what should be in the Paris agreement. Including what elements will be the subject of legal agreements,

the balance between pre2020 action and post 2020 action as well as what issues will need further discussion after Paris.

John Kerry - the US Secretary of State has indicated that he will remain in Paris for the duration of the whole two weeks of talks. The US will be keen that the Paris talks will not require them to take on legal obligations to reduce their pollution because the Republican majority in their domestic legislature have already indicated they would refuse to approve such cuts.

Civil society groups such as Friends of the Earth will be lobbying political leaders to ensure that the agreement meets the minimum requirements of the climate science but that it is also fair and helps the poorest people who are already facing the impacts of climate change. They will also be pushing for leaders to focus on the critical issue of pre-2020 action and not delay action. They will provide help to some of the poorest countries with expert technical analysis and advocacy support.

Fringe events: There are a huge variety of events taking place at the COP venue itself and across Paris including events organised by City Mayors, by the Trade Union movement as well as business leaders.

Week 2

Energy Ministers negotiations continue over the two weeks on a near continuous basis, often late into the night. It is likely that Ministers will begin to arrive towards the end of the second week to negotiate outstanding political issues or impasses in the discussions.

Declaration? The Climate talks are scheduled to end on Friday 11th December, however the talks tend to run over into the weekend, as governments try and reach an agreement. Expect late nights and high drama as deals are made behind the scenes.

12 December: Civil society groups, activists and people from all across Europe are planning to converge on Paris in a powerful expression of people power. Following the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and the decision by the French government to impose a 3 month of State of Emergency, it is still unclear if authorities will allow any public gatherings during the Paris climate talks.

7. Political approaches to Paris

The Paris climate talks are important because they are focusing global attention on climate change. However even if they went superbly well they could not save the world from runaway climate change because:

- a) There is not enough focus on increasing our efforts to cut pollution in the critical pre-2020 period. Most focus has been on the post-2020 period- and even there the current scale of action is way too low.
- b) Often the climate talks end up agreeing a further process not an outcome

The Copenhagen climate talks were damaging not just because they did not set the world on track to averting runaway climate change, but they also significantly dented public confidence in the ability of politicians to come together to solve climate change. It is vital that Paris is not seen as an end point for action on climate change.

Paris must be a moment to:

i) Build confidence in emissions reduction and climate finance with the aim of strengthening ambition over time.

Building confidence in the process means there is political space for genuinely important steps like the UK commitment to phase out coal from electricity by 2025.

ii) Expose the lack of ambition of world leaders and build pressure domestically and internationally to hold their feet to the fire.

Humanity does need to be more aware of the scale of the threat, and have the opportunity to solve it.

As many commentators have pointed out – the barriers to tackling climate change are not economic or technological – they are political. We can still stop dangerous climate change, and people and business are increasingly demanding more action from our political leaders to do just that. Paris won't save the world, but it can be a turning point along the way - where we look back and say "2015 was the year we started to turn things around".

9. Further information

- 10 minute introductory video by Kevin Anderson on climate science^x.
- Read Kevin Anderson, Tyndall Centre, blog^{xi}
- Follow Friends of the Earth senior climate campaigner Asad Rehman on Twitter for updates: [@chilledasad100](https://twitter.com/chilledasad100)
- Friends of the Earth website: Paris^{xii}
- Ted Talk: if Mayors Ruled the World^{xiii}.
- Liz Hutchins, Friends of the earth Senior Political Campaigner: liz.hutchins@foe.co.uk 07957145996

Friends of the Earth England Wales and Northern Ireland Ltd.

ⁱ <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/news/release/archive/2015/one-degree>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/02/global-warming-worsened-syria-drought-study>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.c40.org/about>

^{iv} http://issuu.com/c40cities/docs/the_decisions_we_make_today_will_sh

^v <http://www.carbonbrief.org/un-report-climate-pledges-fall-short-of-cheapest-route-to-2c-limit>

^{vi} <http://www.greenclimate.fund/the-fund/behind-the-fund>

^{vii} <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/28/uks-6bn-climate-finance-pledge-is-welcome-but-not-its-fair-share>

^{viii} <http://kevinanderson.info/blog/open-letter-to-the-eu-commission-president-about-the-unscientific-framing-of-its-2030-decarbonisation-target/>

^{ix} <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/uks-fair-share-emissions-cuts-76425.pdf>

^x <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPbarwbiloE>

^{xi} <http://kevinanderson.info/blog/category/quick-comment/>

^{xii} <http://www.foe.co.uk/page/paris-climate-change-talks-un-cop-21>

^{xiii} https://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_barber_why_mayors_should_rule_the_world?language=en