

October 2015

The European Council and the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris 2015 (COP 21)

In its March 2015 [Conclusions](#), the European Council supported joint EU action ahead of the UN Paris Climate Change Conference. In particular, EU Leaders supported both commitments by individual states towards intended climate actions, known as "intended nationally determined contributions" (INDC), and coordinated EU-level action within the context of climate diplomacy. The objective of the Paris Climate Change Conference, to be held from 30 November to 11 December 2015, is to reach a comprehensive universal agreement with a view to keeping global warming below a threshold of 2 °C. It also aims to stimulate the transition towards low-carbon economies, whilst taking into account evolving global economic and geopolitical realities. The Paris Agreement would be implemented from 2020 onwards within the context of the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC).

Context: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. The [Kyoto Protocol](#) (adopted in 1997 and implemented in 2005) places more rigorous targets on developed countries than developing ones under the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. In 2009, the Conference of Parties, COP 15, aimed to reach a post-Kyoto agreement in Copenhagen that would engage both developed and developing countries. It was [unsuccessful](#), resulting in a [non-binding document](#). In 2011, the Durban COP 17 resolved to negotiate a new agreement in 2015. One of the [major issues to overcome](#) in Paris will be the division between industrialised and developing nations. Sustainable adaptation to climate change and fair division of the mitigation targets [are at the heart of the negotiations](#) at the next negotiating session to be held on the 19-23 October 2015 in Bonn. The legal aspect of the agreement and the extent to which it is binding, in addition to the possible global review process, [also play a central role](#). Other pivotal topics include both the operability of global carbon markets and [international climate finance](#).

Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC)

The Parties to the Convention have been asked to publicly declare in advance the level of commitment to mitigation and any respective policy actions that they intend to take under a new global agreement. This takes the form of [intended nationally determined contributions](#) (INDC).

The EU is committed to a binding target of reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 % by 2030, compared with 1990 levels, to be fulfilled jointly by the Member States. The INDCs of the EU and its Member States are based on [the 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework agreed by the European Council in October 2014](#) and is included in the European Commission's communication on the Paris Protocol. The EU's INDCs were approved by the Environment Council, submitted to the UNFCCC and [endorsed by the European Council in March 2015](#). The European Council has reserved the possibility of returning to the 2030 targets after the Paris Climate Change Conference. A European Council meeting is scheduled for 17-18 December, in the week following the UN Climate Change Conference.

EU leaders have repeatedly urged all Parties to the Convention to submit their contributions. As of 1 October 2015, which was the UN deadline for governments to submit their INDCs, 147 Parties to the Convention,

including the EU and its Member States, had registered their [commitments to the UNFCCC](#). This represents about 87% of global emissions. According to an [analysis](#), the full implementation of these INDCs would be insufficient to limit global warming below 2 °C. More INDCs have been submitted since 1 October and many more countries are expected to present their commitments before the Paris Conference.

Climate Diplomacy ahead of COP 21

Preparations are in full swing for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris this December. The EU has focused on raising climate change as a strategic priority within political dialogue, supporting low-emission development through EU development cooperation and linking climate change to its potential long-term consequences, which includes security challenges. This strategy is based upon the Commission communication on the Paris Protocol and the Climate Diplomacy Action Plan, which guides the EU in building alliances with international partners within the context of the upcoming Paris Conference.

The European Council has supported action taken under the Climate Diplomacy Action Plan, developed jointly by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission, and endorsed by the [Foreign Affairs Council](#) in January 2015. In July 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council held a discussion on climate diplomacy forming an inherent part of foreign policy. It approved [conclusions on climate diplomacy](#) and endorsed the [EU Energy Diplomacy Action Plan](#), which supports action in this field relating to the external dimension of the Energy Union.

Climate issues were high on the agenda of the UN General Assembly of 15-28 September 2015. World Leaders highlighted the existence of a unique political momentum towards reaching a global climate deal in Paris. Climate issues were also dealt with in the G7 meeting held on 7-8 June 2015. In the [Leaders' Declaration](#), the G7 countries affirmed their determination to adopt at the Paris Climate Change Conference a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40-70 % by 2050, compared with 2010 levels. They stressed that this challenge can only be overcome by developing a global response. In terms of climate finance, the leaders pledged to continue efforts to mobilise financing from private and public sources within the context of action on climate mitigation. They also reiterated their ambition to make the Green Climate Fund – a key element in the financial structure of supporting developing countries – operational by the end of the year. The commitments of the G7 countries are a strong signal of movement towards low-carbon economies, but alone they are not sufficient to meet the 2 °C target. At the G20 meeting of 15-16 November 2015, EU leaders will continue to try to persuade other Parties to join this endeavour.

EU Position for the Paris Climate Change Conference

The [Commission communication on the Paris Protocol](#) presents the EU's vision for the global climate policy after 2020. According to both the Commission and the [Luxembourg Presidency](#) of the Council, the EU is aiming for the adoption of an ambitious, legally binding agreement with universal participation and a strong transparency and accountability framework. This was again underlined by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in his [State of the Union speech](#) on 9 September 2015 before Parliament. The [Environmental Council of 18 September 2015 adopted conclusions](#) setting out the EU position for the international climate change negotiations at the Paris Conference. According to the conclusions, the global greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by at least 50 per cent by 2050, as compared to 1990 levels. It also proposes that the Paris Agreement would contain a mechanism to provide scrutiny and updates on the commitment of the parties at five-year intervals. The goal of reaching an ambitious, global and legally binding agreement was supported by the European Parliament in the resolution ["Towards a new international climate agreement in Paris" \(2015/2112\(INI\)\)](#), adopted on 14 October 2015. Parliament emphasised the role of climate finance and supported a regular revision of the INDCs. Moreover, it called for the EU and its Member States to set up more ambitious targets in line with its [resolution of 5 February 2014 on the 2030 framework for climate and energy policies \(2013/2135\(INI\)\)](#).

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