

International Climate Negotiations

Issues at stake in view of the COP25 UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid

The [original full study](#)¹ provides an overview of the international framework to address climate change, the stakeholders involved, the status of the negotiations and recent developments that may affect the negotiations. From 2 to 13 December 2019, the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place in Madrid. Under the presidency of Chile, which had originally planned to host the conference, delegates will continue to negotiate the rules for international cooperation in climate change mitigation and discuss issues such as adaptation and support to developing countries.

Background

The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994. Its objective is to stabilise the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The Kyoto Protocol, which requires a limited number of developed country Parties to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions up to 2020, was adopted under the Convention in 1997.

In order to address climate change more broadly, the Paris Agreement was negotiated and adopted in 2015. This agreement, which entered into force in 2016, requires climate change mitigation and adaptation actions from all Parties in the time period after 2020. The goals of the Paris Agreement are to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above preindustrial levels, to pursue efforts to limit this increase to 1.5°C, to increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. Under the Paris Agreement, Parties regularly communicate their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as part of the global response to climate change; the ambition of these contributions has to increase over time. The Paris Agreement also provides for a global stocktake which assesses the collective progress of all Parties towards achieving the goals of the agreement.



Representatives from 197 Parties participate in the climate change negotiations under the UNFCCC. They organise themselves in groups of countries with similar interests such as the Umbrella Group representing a number of developed countries or the group of G-77 and China representing the majority of developing countries. The European Union (EU) and each of its Member States are Parties to the Convention. Positions are coordinated between the Union and its Member States.

Besides the Parties to the Convention, observers play a prominent role in the process. Non-governmental organisations, including environmental, research, youth and business organisations, as well as local and regional governments organise events and call for more ambitious

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action during the climate change conferences. Observers also include organisations under the United Nations system such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and other international organisations.

Throughout 2019, the topic of climate change continued to generate attention, be it through civil society movements or at events at the United Nations level such as the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit where the urgency to address climate change was distinctly pronounced. As it is becoming clearer that climate change mitigation will require a profound transformation of the world's economies, there are more calls for a just transition that takes into account the needs of workers and communities that are affected by this transition.

Main issues at stake at the Climate Change Conference in Madrid

In the previous climate change conference in Katowice in December 2018, the rules for the implementation of the Paris Agreement were largely defined. These include the information that Parties shall provide when communicating their NDCs, guidance for accounting for NDCs, guidelines for reporting on mitigation, adaptation and support to developing countries, and rules for the global stocktake.

However, agreement on some aspects is still pending, such as common timeframes for NDCs or detailed provisions for the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation actions and support. Most importantly, Parties still have to agree on the rules for voluntary cooperation between Parties, including the use of international carbon market mechanisms. The views of the Parties on how to operationalise such mechanisms still differ. This is particularly true regarding the question of how to avoid double counting of emission reductions, how to deal with different time frames and scopes of NDC targets, and how to manage a transition from the mechanisms currently in place under the Kyoto Protocol.

Besides the negotiations under the Paris Agreement, Parties will continue to address a number of topics under the Convention at COP25, including adaptation, loss and damage, technology development and transfer and capacity building. Parties will also discuss cross-cutting issues such as the role of local communities and indigenous peoples, gender and climate change, issues related to agriculture or research and systematic observation.

The COP will serve as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and to the Paris Agreement (CMA). In addition, work on implementation and technical issues will continue under the Convention's Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

Current NDCs are highly insufficient to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C or well below 2°C. The Parties to the Paris Agreement are required to communicate new or updated NDCs in 2020. Many Parties also intend to communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies. These strategies, together with the NDCs, will be in the spotlight at the COP26 in November 2020, which will most likely take place in Glasgow. Besides the negotiations on further technical details, the future climate change conferences will focus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and on enhancing ambition in the global response to climate change.



¹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/642344/IPOL_STU\(2019\)642344_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/642344/IPOL_STU(2019)642344_EN.pdf)

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