

COP26

IEMA Media Briefing

Introducing this year's UK-hosted
international Climate Conference

May 2021



The climate crisis is a clear and present danger to life on Earth

2021 holds the promise of being the year the world takes a significant step towards ensuring that global warming doesn't significantly exceed 1.5°C. The consequences are clear and dire for life on Earth. Pushing the temperature rise to 2°C would see not only almost all coral reefs lost and the Arctic Ocean ice-free during the summer months but widespread economic and social disruption on a scale never seen before.

2020 was one of the two hottest years so far, occurring in the warmest decade on record. The warmest six years have all occurred since 2015. The 10 most expensive climate-related weather disasters in 2020 cost more than \$145bn in uninsured losses and disrupted the lives of millions.

The thermometer is heading up – already.

To meet the climate crisis head-on requires a 45% cut in carbon emissions by 2030 if the goal of limiting the rise in global temperature is to be met.

Already the average global temperature has hit 1.2°C above 1850 – 1900 levels.

This is the context for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) to be held in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November 2021, hosted jointly by the UK and Italy.

The UK Government, wider institutions, businesses and civil society stakeholders, including IEMA, are working to inspire and help mobilise climate action ahead of COP26.

Accelerating action is the role of COP26 – but what is it?

Remember the Rio Earth Summit in 1992? Back then the world agreed to act on climate change and the UN Framework Convention on Environment and Development (UNFCCC) was launched and now has 197 countries signed up. Since then 25 Conferences have been held – some have been more successful than others. COP21 in Paris took a significant step forward setting up the Paris Agreement.

What is the Paris Agreement and why is it important?

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, for the first time, a binding agreement brings all nations into the common cause of ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. It is designed to help ratchet up collective climate ambition, commitments and action.

It entered into force on 4 November 2016 aiming to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. It focuses on three key areas:

- **Mitigation** – cutting the CO₂ emissions
- **Adaptation** - recognising that we must deal with the consequences of the climate crisis now
- **Finance** - making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low carbon, climate resilient development



All of this is underpinned by the need for transparency and the importance of a just transition; recognising that climate change actions and impacts must be directly linked to equitable access to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

So How does the Paris Agreement work?

The Paris Agreement is the sum of its parts – each country has a duty to produce a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) – these should show how economic and social transformations, based on the best science, will deliver effective climate action.

As an example, the UK has submitted an NDC with a target to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

Alongside reducing GHG emissions, the NDCs include actions to build resilience and adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures.

While NDCs are mandatory what they contain is at the discretion of national Governments. The Paris Agreement invites countries to set out how they will achieve their goals through a Long-term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) which should set out their plans and development priorities.

Finance for the challenge ahead

The Paris Agreement reaffirms the principle that developed countries should take the lead in providing financial assistance to countries that are less endowed and more vulnerable.

Climate finance is needed both for mitigation, because large-scale investments are required significantly to reduce emissions, and for adaptation. Substantial financial resources are needed to adapt to the adverse effects of historic emissions and reduce the impacts of a changing climate, especially in the global south.

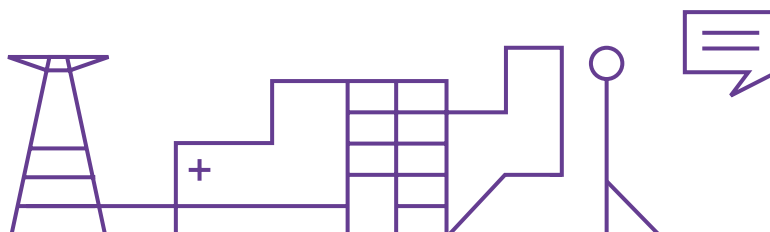
The Office for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimate the rate donor countries are delivering is slowing and is creating a significant finance gap.

Transparency

Transparency is key to the future development of more ambitious plans to tackle climate change. The establishment of an Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) by 2024 will enable countries to report on actions taken and progress made on mitigation, adaptation and support provided and received. This will contribute to a global stocktake in assessing overall progress to meeting long-term climate goals.

The role of Technology

The Paris Agreement envisages fully realising the development and transfer of technology both for improving resilience to climate change (adaptation) and reducing GHG emissions (mitigation). It has established a framework to guide a Technology Mechanism as a means of accelerating work in this area.



Building capacity

There is emphasis on climate change-related capacity-building for developing countries and requests all developed countries to enhance their support. Examples include, but are not limited to, supported training programmes and to share further information on progress as it becomes available.

What does IEMA want to see Glasgow's COP26 achieve?

IEMA has over 16,500 professional members, working to address critical sustainability challenges and supported by an active Climate Change and Energy network. With our members, we developed our Climate Change Position Statement and in 2019 we declared a Climate and Environmental Emergency.

IEMA has demonstrated that individual professionals offer a unique and effective constituency for driving such change within companies, projects, developments and across communities.

IEMA wants to see real progress at COP26, across all three dimensions of the Paris Agreement (mitigation, adaptation and finance) from all parties, with aggregated national commitments that accelerate action on tackling the climate emergency. Real progress is also needed on more technical rules and remaining elements of the Paris Agreement. IEMA will judge progress at COP26 against outcomes that enable:

- Building climate leadership at all levels
- Establishing policy frameworks and strategic approaches that build certainty and give confidence for organisation to invest in their transition.

- Embed climate change as a mainstream business issue
- Build increasing transparency into reporting and disclosure of climate change performance.

Our policy positions help to frame IEMA's objectives for COP26 and these are set out in the table.

Prospects for COP26

The evidence-base has strengthened and there is growing consensus on the need for urgent action that can lead to rapid transitions this decade.

COP26 has the potential to herald a new age of international climate action and collaboration. Extensive changes are needed, with initiatives embracing new carbon markets, flows of finance, technical and collaborative innovations and investments in capacity building and professional skills.

The ultimate objective of all the agreements under the UNFCCC is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with our climate system, in a timescale which allows people and ecosystems to adapt naturally and forms the foundation of true sustainable development.

UK Government has identified five themes for the Glasgow summit on Energy Transition, Clean Road Transport, Adaptation and Resilience, Nature and Finance.

In a prelude to COP26, the 2020 Climate Ambition summit, adaptation and resilience were moved to centre stage with 20 countries indicating



new or forthcoming commitments to protect people and nature from climate impacts.

A new global campaign - the Race to Resilience - was launched, setting a goal of safeguarding 4 billion people vulnerable to climate risks by 2030. 12 leaders highlighted existing plans to increase the use of nature-based solutions to combat climate change and the summit highlighted the need for more integrated solutions to confront both the climate and the biodiversity crises.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created some uncertainty around COP26 with calls for a deliberately smaller conference, streamlined to critical decision-making. Already delayed from 2020, progress and visible commitments are needed at significant scale and at pace and this is COP26's challenge. Campaigns such as 'Race to Zero' and 'Race to Resilience' aim to embolden global leaders towards strong commitments. The changing politics in the USA is significant as, since rejoining the Paris Agreement framework, President Biden's administration has brought together 40 world leaders to accelerate commitments ahead of COP26.

In April, Alok Sharma MP the COP President Designate, set out some key expectations for the negotiations at COP26, and the UK's plans for accelerating progress over the coming 7 months¹.

Host Nation's Progress - The UK's NDC, Adaptation Communication and transition advice

The UK has set out its new NDC including commitments to reducing economy-wide GHG emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. It also includes information on how this target

was developed and is quantified. Under the Paris Agreement this is known as 'information to facilitate clarity, transparency, and understanding' (ICTU).

In May 2019, the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) published its Net-Zero report, stating that 'the net-zero GHG target for 2050 will deliver on the commitment the UK made by signing the Paris Agreement'. However, the CCC also stated this is only possible if clear, stable and well-designed policies to reduce emissions further are introduced across the economy without delay.

In December 2020, the CCC published its advice on the UK's sixth carbon budget (2033- 2037). The recommended pathway requires a 78% reduction in UK territorial emissions between 1990 and 2035. In effect, bringing forward the UK's previous 80% target by nearly 15 years.

As well as the NDC, the UK has published an Adaptation Communication and a Biennial Finance Communication. These are complementary to the NDC and are also required under the Paris Agreement.

Taken together these detail UK action across the mitigation, adaptation, and finance pillars of the Paris Agreement. Related important UK policy developments include the UK Prime Minister announcing a Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution. The UK Government has published an energy white paper which further builds on the Prime Minister's announcement. It considers the transformation of the UK energy system, promoting high-skilled jobs and clean, resilient economic growth as the UK transitions to net-zero emissions by 2050. The forthcoming publication of the CCC's third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Evidence Report will outline the risks and opportunities from climate change and progress being made on adaptation.

¹ <https://unfccc.int/news/un-climate-change-negotiations-and-making-effective-progress-at-the-june-session>



IEMA Climate Change Policy Positions	Outcomes sought at COP26
<p>Climate leadership at all levels. IEMA has outlined the importance of leadership and 'professional urgency', imperative to help change the direction of our economies and to move society away from business as usual (which could lead us towards warming of 4°C or greater).</p> <p>We encourage and acknowledge individuals, businesses, organisations and governments in showing climate leadership. IEMA will make its own contribution and work with professionals on this critical challenge.</p>	<p>Both in the build-up to and at COP26, we wish to see ambitious and tangible commitments. Parties to the Paris agreement should all submit credible NDCs and adopt timelines, with shorter-term interim targets. These will need cumulatively to align to well below 2°C of warming and preferably to 1.5°C.</p> <p>COP26 must include the voices of a broader range of stakeholders (including at-risk communities) both within and outside of the negotiation process.</p> <p>There should be significant progress on the Paris international commitments for climate finance.</p>
<p>Policy frameworks and strategic approaches need to support certainty and give confidence for organisations to invest and transition. Policy confidence is important for practitioners who are working to transform organisations. This is needed at national and international level and across a range of well-known organisational drivers (regulation, fiscal measures, trading schemes, guidance, standards, procurement and supply chains, etc).</p>	<p>Remaining elements of the Paris rulebook need to achieve progress.</p> <p>In particular, there has been slow progress on the highly technical set of rules for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which broadly aims to set the governance of international carbon markets and non-market cooperation between countries. Progress is required at COP26. There should also be consideration of how to support international carbon pricing and markets in the potential absence of an Article 6 agreement.</p>



IEMA Climate Change Policy Positions	Outcomes sought at COP26
<p>Recognition, integration and embedding of Climate Change as a mainstream 'business' issue.</p> <p>Approaches are required to embed climate action and energy reduction into mainstream business and across the value chain. There is increased focus on business realities such as: reducing energy costs and carbon, complying with climate legislation, increasing resilience, building reputation, adding value and meeting contractual and stakeholder expectations. IEMA will work to secure action on these drivers and to build consensus on the business case for transformation.</p>	<p>COP26 needs to showcase the deep integration of net-zero transitions into mainstream business practice. For non-state actors (businesses, NGOs and others) COP26 provides an opportunity for sharing effective practice on what works.</p> <p>IEMA will contribute to this leading-edge knowledge exchange, collaborating with our members and partners.</p> <p>COP26 itself should be run as a low-carbon (and carbon neutral) summit, following a hierarchy approach to eliminate, reduce, substitute and then compensate any residual GHG emissions.</p>
<p>Reporting and disclosure with increasing transparency on climate change performance.</p> <p>Reporting and disclosure have a unique role to play in building Board level commitment and embedding climate change into mainstream business. Lifecycle thinking is important to help ensure the true impact and full costs of climate change are reflected across decision-making.</p>	<p>COP26 should be a platform for transparency. All Governments' commitments should be convincingly presented without ambiguity. Commitments that extend beyond 'requirements' will be especially welcome, for example addressing indirect emissions and consumption emissions from imports.</p> <p>There should also be an increased accessibility to the COP through digital/remote participation.</p>



Further Information

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About IEMA

IEMA is the professional body for everyone working in environment and sustainability. We're committed to supporting, encouraging and improving the confidence and performance, profile and recognition of all these professionals. We do this by providing resources and tools, research and knowledge sharing along with high quality formal training and qualifications to meet the real world needs of members from their first steps on the career ladder, right to the very top.

We believe that together we can change perceptions and attitudes about the relevance and vital importance of sustainability as a progressive force for good. Together we're transforming the world to sustainability.

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