

IIGCC COP26 Briefing

This document provides a background briefing for IIGCC members on the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, set to take place in Glasgow on 1st November – 12th November 2021. This briefing sets out the political context, what the negotiations will cover, the UK COP26 Presidency's campaigns and major upcoming policy milestones ahead of COP26. For detail regarding IIGCC's deliverables for COP26, please see [here](#).

1. Background

1.1 Political context

The outlook on climate ambition has improved over the last 6 months, with many major economies announcing strengthened climate targets. With COP26 fast approaching, the UK Presidency should use this new momentum to catalyse the best possible outcomes in the lead-up to and during the climate negotiations.

At the recent Leaders Summit on Climate in April 2021, the following countries announced updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):

- **The U.S.** announced its updated NDC ([here](#)), setting a target of a 50-52% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, from 2005 levels. Whilst an improvement on the previous 2030 target, some analysis suggests the target should be at least a 57-63% reduction in GHG emissions, to ensure the U.S is contributing a 'fair share' to emission reductions globally¹.
- **Japan** announced its updated NDC ([here](#)), setting a target of a 46% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, from 2013 levels.
- **Canada** announced a strengthened NDC ([here](#)) setting a target of a 40-45% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, from 2005 levels.

In addition, **South Korea** announced a commitment to stop financing coal overseas and **Brazil** announced a commitment to a 2050 net zero target.

This builds on updated NDCs put forward in 2020, in particular the **UK's** updated NDC of least a 68% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 from 1990 levels², and the **EU's** updated NDC of at least a 55% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 from 1990 levels³ (see updated NDC [here](#)). Another significant commitment put forward in 2020 was **China's** pledge to become carbon neutral before 2060. If successful, this effort alone would remove around 0.2C to 0.3 degrees Celsius from global warming projections, making China's pledge the world's single largest climate commitment to date.⁴

Expectations are now rising for other major emitters to put forward strengthened NDCs ahead of COP26— particularly Australia, China, and India. There will be several opportunities to encourage raised

¹ <https://climateactiontracker.org/press/us-2030-target-should-be-at-least-57-63-percentage/>

² More detail on the UK's NDC can be found here in IIGCC's member briefing here: <https://www.iigcc.org/download/uk-ndc-briefing/?wpdmdl=4161&refresh=608b11471d5ff1619726663>

³ More detail on the EU's NDC can be found in IIGCC's member briefing here: <https://www.iigcc.org/download/iigcc-member-briefing-on-the-eu-ndc/?wpdmdl=4299&refresh=608b1147185c61619726663>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/05/china-plan-net-zero-emissions-2060-clean-technology>

ambition over the coming months, with the new U.S. administration bring additional impetus to global climate diplomatic efforts.

1.2 The role of NDCs

Under the Paris Agreement, countries must submit updated NDCs ahead of COP26. NDCs set out each country's domestic commitment to reduce GHG emissions, essential for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The status of NDCs submitted by governments to the UNFCCC so far can be tracked here in the [UNFCCC NDC registry](#). Various analyses are available online that analyse climate ambition in the NDCs, including the [Climate Action Tracker](#) and [WRI's NDC Tracker](#).

[UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2020](#) published in December 2020 states that NDCs remain "seriously inadequate" to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and would lead to a temperature increase of at least 3°C by the end of the century. The report states that countries must collectively increase their NDC ambition threefold to get on track to a 2 degrees Celsius goal and more than fivefold to get on track to the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal.

The UNFCCC's initial [NDC Synthesis Report](#), published in February 2021, presents similar conclusions. As an early indication of whether the process of updating NDCs is providing sufficient ambition, this report assesses the 48 new or updated NDCs submitted as of 31 December 2020; these NDCs represent around 30% of global GHG emissions. Although the majority of the NDCs increase ambition, total emissions would still be 2% higher in 2025 compared to 1990 levels, and 0.7% lower in 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The report indicates that nations need to redouble climate efforts in order to achieve the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise by 2 degrees Celsius – ideally 1.5 degrees Celsius – by the end of the century⁵.

Given the continued opportunity for countries to report updated or new NDCs during 2021, the second edition of the NDC Synthesis report (expected before COP26) is likely to provide a more comprehensive insight into global progress for achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. However, whilst NDCs are important for indicating country ambitions on climate change, these commitments to cut emissions also need to be reflected in domestic policies.

2. The negotiations

2.1 Priority topics for negotiation at COP26

Unlike COP21 in Paris, COP26 does not have a large set of texts to negotiate. However, there are a number of sticking points carried over from COP25 in Madrid that need to be finalised⁶.

The UK COP26 Presidency has set out the below priority topics for negotiation at COP26:

- **'Paris Rulebook'** – including Article 6, as well as common timeframes and formats for countries' reporting to support full implementation of the Paris Agreement
- **Adaptation** – including demonstrating tangible progress towards the Paris Agreement's adaption goals and facilitating a significant increase in adaptation finance

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-commitments-not-on-track-to-meet-paris-agreement-goals-as-ndc-synthesis-report-is-published>

⁶ <https://www.iigcc.org/resource/member-update-outcomes-of-cop25/>

- **Loss and damage** – including activities to address loss and damage associated with the impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable
- **Finance** – including delivering on the US\$100 billion per year by 2020 mobilisation goal, and starting talks on the post-2025 goal
- **Mitigation** – including responding to any gaps in the collective ambition represented by NDCs submitted by COP26
- **Inclusive action** – including an improved Marrakesh Partnership to enhance collaboration between governments and non-state actors.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement allows for nations who are under-achieving against their NDC targets to utilise over-achievement by other countries to meet their climate commitments. A well-designed Article 6 has the potential to contribute to the Paris Agreement’s goals at a lower global cost. It can also provide incentives for private sector investment in various countries and help some countries leapfrog their technological development. However, this can only occur if the market is credible, reliable and has integrity. Depending on how these adequately these issues are resolved, Article 6 has the potential to either undermine or support the achievement of the Paris Agreement⁷.

Official negotiations take place over first two weeks of November, with the first week expected to be focused on technical negotiations by government officials. During the second week, the focus turns to high level Ministerial and Heads of State meetings to discuss the most challenging issues and make the final negotiated decisions.

2.2 Role of UNFCCC intersessionals

Formal negotiations normally take place months ahead of the annual conference of the parties (COP) summits, and are taken forward by subsidiary bodies. These talks are important for ensuring countries have taken key decisions ahead of time to reduce the amount of issues left to be resolved in the two weeks of the COP.

Due to the constraints the pandemic has placed on governments for meeting in person, the UN Secretary General has highlighted that preparatory negotiations for COP26 will take place virtually for the first time. Developing countries have expressed concerns that they will find it hard to participate in the formal negotiations online due to technical issues⁸.

The 2021 session of the subsidiary bodies will take place virtually from 31 May – 17 June in Bonn and has been extended by one week to allow for adequate coordination time, and to account for the challenges and constraints of remote participation. The three week meeting will seek to advance the extensive work that needs to be addressed in preparation for COP26. Discussions during the meeting in June will be informal; decisions will only be adopted at the next formal meeting in person⁹.

⁷ For more info, see commentary here: <https://www.wri.org/insights/what-you-need-know-about-article-6-paris-agreement>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/08/un-chief-urges-leaders-start-cop26-climate-negotiations-online-covid>

⁹ <https://unfccc.int/news/cop-bureau-agrees-to-hold-virtual-meeting>

3. The road to COP26

3.1 COP26 Presidency campaigns

In addition to the formal negotiations, COP26 is expected to establish a number of new initiatives for delivering climate action. For example, the UK helped set up the Powering Past Coal Alliance¹⁰ at COP24, which seeks to increase countries pledging ambition to eliminate coal power nationally and initiated the High Ambition Coalition.

The UK Presidency at COP26 has five priorities, aiming to ignite a similar level of progress through new alliances. To achieve this goal, the COP26 Presidency is focused on five campaigns outlined below:

- **Finance** – COP26 priorities for public climate finance highlight the actions required by all stakeholders to address concerns about the quantity and quality of international climate finance. Donors must provide clarity on how the goal of mobilising US\$100 billion per year will be met by developing countries. The objective for private finance is to ensure that every professional financial decision takes climate change account- across reporting (with improved climate-related disclosure), risk management (ensuring the financial sector can measure and manage climate-related risks), returns (helping investors identify the opportunities in the transition to net zero) and mobilisation (facilitating the mobilisation of private finance to developing countries). See more detail on COP26 priorities for private finance here.
- **Energy transition** - Governments, businesses and financial institutions can support this campaign by joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance. Through the COP26 Energy Transition Council, the Presidency is bringing together energy ministers, leaders of multilateral development banks, and heads of expert agencies to accelerate the transition to clean power. In addition, a COP26 Product Efficiency Call to Action is promoting higher product efficiency standards with the aim of doubling the efficiency by 2030 of key products globally such as air conditioners, refrigerators, industrial motors and lighting. For more detail, see here.
- **Clean road transport** – This campaign is calling on governments to require all new cars sold within their markets to be zero emissions by 2040 or earlier. Vehicle manufacturers can commit to making all the cars they sell zero emission by this time. Businesses that own large vehicle fleets can contribute by committing to buy only zero emission vehicles.
- **Adaptation and resilience** - The COP26 Presidency will look to encourage greater ambition, finance and tools to support practical adaptation and resilience action. The Adaptation Action Coalition will work to turn international political commitments into on-the-ground support for vulnerable communities. The Coalition will work with the UN High-Level Climate Champions’ Race To Resilience campaign to bring together governments, private sector, communities and funders to deliver action to safeguard people, nature and economies from the impacts of climate change.
- **Nature** – This campaign builds on the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit, working with all stakeholders to address the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss, mobilise financing for critical ecosystems, and kick-start a just rural transition. This includes bringing together the major producer and consumer countries of forest-risk commodities to agree collaborative actions to protect forests. Countries and organisations can signal their commitment to strong action to countering climate change and biodiversity loss by signing the Leaders Pledge for Nature. For more information, see here.

¹⁰ See more info at: <https://www.poweringpastcoal.org/>

3.2 Upcoming policy events and milestones ahead of COP26

Name of event	Date	Description
12 th Petersberg Climate Dialogue	6-7 May	The dialogue will bring together ministers from many countries to discuss climate action. See more info here .
G7 Summit (UK hosting)	11-13 June	As well as G7 countries (Canada, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, US and UK), India, Australia, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, and the Chair and Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have been invited to join parts of this year's G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting as guests. See more info here .
26 th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Rwanda	w/c 21 June	The theme for CHOGM 2021 is 'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.' Leaders will discuss how to deliver the things which were discussed at CHOGM 2018 in London on the theme 'Towards a Common Future'. See more info here .
London Climate Action Week	26 June – 4 July	The event held virtually will bring together climate professionals and communities to help solve the climate emergency. See more info here .
G20 Venice Climate Summit	11 July	One of the key meetings will include the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting.
World Economic Forum Special Annual Meeting in Singapore	17 – 20 August	The meeting follows the Forum's virtual Davos Agenda in January 2021, which brought together world leaders from government, business and society.
UN General Assembly including NYC Climate Week	14 – 30 September	NYC Climate Week takes place 20 – 26 September with a focus on fulfilling and increasing commitments made by businesses, governments, and organizations. See more here .
G20 Summit	30 – 31 October	The G20 Heads of State and Government Summit will be held in Rome, Italy. See more info here .

Contact us

For further information about COP26, please contact Emelia Holdaway at eholdaway@iigcc.org or : +44 (0) 7554 065 083