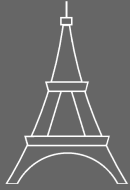


HOW DOES THE PARIS AGREEMENT WORK?



The Paris Agreement, adopted on 12 December 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), marks a significant shift in global climate governance. Combining 'bottom-up' national target-setting with 'top-down' transparency and accountability mechanisms it aims to spur Parties into committing to ever more ambitious climate commitments. However, many details and provisions are yet to be elaborated and much work remains to be done to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the Agreement.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE AGREEMENT

MITIGATION

Parties agreed to keep global temperature rises "well below" 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to keep rises to no more than 1.5°C. They recognised that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must peak as soon as possible, and subsequently be driven down to achieve net-zero emissions in the second half of the century.

ADAPTATION

Alongside the mitigation goal, the Agreement includes a long-term goal "of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change". All Parties are expected to undertake and report on national adaptation planning activities.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

The Agreement is the first international climate treaty to recognise the importance of "averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage". However, the possibility of liability and compensation is explicitly ruled out.

NATIONAL TARGET-SETTING

Unlike the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement does not set negotiated, binding emission targets for developed countries. Instead, all countries – developed and developing – formulate their own national climate pledges, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). By 2020, countries will deliver new NDCs and subsequently update these every five years.

GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

The current NDCs are not yet ambitious enough to keep global warming below 2°C. In order to scale up ambition, states will come together every five years to take stock of their progress towards the long-term goal and 'ratchet up' their climate action. An initial review ("Facilitative Dialogue") will take place in 2018, with the first comprehensive Global Stocktake scheduled for 2023.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Because the NDCs are very diverse in ambition and format, a robust transparency system is vital. Under the Agreement, Parties are required to submit biannual progress reports which will be subject to technical expert reviews and a multilateral peer review process. While all countries have reporting obligations, the requirements are more flexible for developing countries.

DIFFERENTIATION AND FINANCE

The Agreement introduces a more nuanced approach to differentiation while reiterating the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". Developed countries must continue to take the lead in reducing GHG emissions and mobilise finance to help developing countries tackle climate change. Developed countries have pledged to provide USD 100 billion of climate finance a year by 2020.

