

Nationally Determined Contributions

What are NDCs?

NDCs are 'Nationally Determined Contributions' and they represent the commitments of each country to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

They were agreed to by countries during the Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris in 2015, a commitment known as 'The Paris Agreement'.

These initial commitments to decarbonize, transition to lower carbon and renewable energy, are not sufficient to keep global temperature rise below 2.0 degrees. Every five years countries are expected to review and enhance their NDCs and submit more ambitious actions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The first 5-year review is this year, 2020, and submissions are expected before the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26), now postponed to 2021.

As of February 2020, 194 states and the European Union have signed the Paris Agreement. 188 states and the EU, representing almost 97% of global greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified or acceded to the Agreement, including China, the United States (which has notified the UN of its decision to withdraw from the agreement) and India, the countries with three of the four largest greenhouse gas emissions.

How are NDCs affected by COVID-19?

COVID-19 presents practical challenges to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in its disruption to the international processes and the postponement of COP26 to 2021.

Recovery plans from the pandemic, however, offer opportunities for accelerated climate action on energy and resource efficiency, advance the transition to greener more sustainable sectors, and put in place the measures to prevent future economic impacts from climate change and future environmental health disasters such as this pandemic.

How is UNEP supporting countries to enhance their NDCs?

UNEP can support and enable countries to meet their climate commitments in various ways. UNEP helps identify and provide guidance on the economic sectors with the highest potential for resource efficiency, climate mitigation and adaptation. UNEP can provide expert guidance on how to harness climate benefits from nature-based solutions and how to use resources more efficiently to help countries transition to greener, more sustainable and resilient economies.

UNEP is also partnering with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on the "Climate Promise" initiative. This is focused on country-level engagement on climate change and climate action in the context of COVID-19, identifying advantageous opportunities to meet and enhance country's climate commitments.