The Paris Agreement represents a milestone in climate diplomacy, as, for the first time, a binding agreement unites all countries in taking ambitious action to address climate change and deal with its effects.

Adopted by 196 Parties at COP21 in Paris in December 2015 and entered into force on November 2016, the goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.

In this lesson, we will explore:

- The objectives, key aspects and main provisions of the Paris Agreement; and
- The purpose, mechanism and reporting elements of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
Introduction

Let's begin our journey by watching a short introductory video (check online lesson)

The Paris Agreement

The **Paris Agreement** (PA) is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which has been ratified, accepted, approved or acceded by 191 countries and the European Union.

**Key Aims of the Paris Agreement**

- Keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Increasing the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.
- Making finance flows consistent with the Paris climate goals.
- Providing an enhanced transparency framework for action and support.
The Health Agenda in the Paris Agreement

So, where does the health agenda figure in the Paris Agreement? Let’s find out in the next segment.

The Preamble to the Paris Agreement sets the framework in which it has to be implemented, including clear mention of the right to health.
"Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity."

In the next segment, we will find out how the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) mechanism of the Paris Agreement ensures that individual countries carry out appropriate action to address climate change.

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Countries use NDCs to communicate their national plans and targets in responding to climate change.

The Nationally Determined Contributions (introduced in Article 3) are one of the main mechanisms of the Paris Agreement.

They are the national plans that countries have to submit to communicate actions that they will take to reduce their GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures in order to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

These plans can include information on the work being done in the areas of mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation. Commitments can be unconditional as well as conditional (i.e. dependent or not on the realization of specific conditions such as financial support).
In order to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and reach zero net emissions globally during the second half of the century, NDCs should be submitted regularly and should represent a progression of climate ambition.

**Ratchet Mechanism**

The "ratchet mechanism" aims to steadily increase ambition over time, ensuring that the world reaches net zero emissions during the second half of the century and keeps temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius (CarbonBrief).

In parallel, [Global Stocktakes](#), also to be held every 5 years, will assess progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

What type of information should countries include in their NDCs? We will find out in the next segment.
Key Elements in the NDCs

Countries should include specific information in their NDCs when reporting on the steps they are taking or intend to take on climate change. This should include mitigation measures to reduce GHG emissions and can also include adaptation measures to build resilience to the impacts of rising temperatures.

Mitigation

When reporting on mitigation measures, NDCs should include, among other things:

- Reference point;
- Periods for implementation;
- Scope and coverage;
- Planning processes;
- Assumptions and methodological approaches (including estimating and accounting for greenhouse gas emissions and removals); and
- Considerations of fairness.

Adaptation

When reporting on adaptation, NDCs are more flexible. They can cover:
So far, there has been no agreement on "common timeframes" for submitting NDCs (Article 4.10). The implementation of this decision has been postponed to 2030. Until such an agreement is reached, countries are encouraged to update their NDC by 2020 and to follow the guidelines defined (the so-called "Paris Rulebook", which will be presented in lesson 4).

In the next segment, we will discuss if the current measures to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions are sufficient to prevent dangerous levels of climate change.

**NDCs to Close the Climate Ambition Gap**

**CLIMATE AMBITION GAP** refers to the gap between the trends in GHG emissions we observe and the one we should be following in order to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement.
So, do you think the world is on track to close the emission gap? Watch a video in the online lesson to find out.

Based on current estimates (UNEP 2020), countries need to increase the ambition of their NDC three times to reach the well below 2°C goal and more than five times to meet the 1.5°C goal.

The process of revising the NDCs and increasing the climate ambition is crucial to be able to close the emissions gap.

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Countries have been invited to:

1. Revise and enhance their NDCs (Article 3) by 2020
2. Regularly update their NDCs throughout the long-term implementation of the Paris Agreement.

In the next segment, we will discuss key provisions of the Paris Agreement that provide a framework for climate action.
Key Provisions of the Paris Agreement

How Does the Paris Agreement Work?

Successful implementation of the Paris Agreement demands a transformation of our economies and societies, building on the most recent and accurate scientific data available. The Agreement provides for 5-year cycles of increasingly ambitious action undertaken by countries to combat climate change.

Let's explore some key provisions within the framework of the Paris Agreement.
Mitigation (Article 4)

Mitigation strategies are actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or remove them from the atmosphere.

Article 4 includes the following provisions:

- Global peaking of GHG emissions as soon as possible (no concrete date).
- Achieving emissions neutrality in the second half of the century (also known as zero-net emissions).
- Developed countries will lead with economy-wide emissions reduction, while developing countries will strengthen their mitigation efforts over time, depending on national circumstances.
- Markets can be used as a tool to reach emission reduction goals.

Adaptation (Article 7)
Adaptation is the process of adjustment of human and natural systems to actual or expected climate change.

**Article 7 includes the following provision:**

- Developing adaptive capacity, enhancing resilience, reducing vulnerability to climate impacts.
- Parties should strengthen their cooperation on adaptation actions, taking into account the [Cancun Adaptation Framework](#).

**Adaptation (Article 7.5)**

![Image of people adapting](image)

**Article 7.5 states the following:**

"Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate."

**Loss and Damage (Article 8)**

Loss and damage are linked to the adverse effects of climate change in developing countries.
Article 8 includes the following provisions:

- Adverting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage due to extreme weather events or slow onset events.
- COP Decision agreed that loss and damage (L&D) does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation.
- Parties and UN agencies are encouraged to cooperate and provide support (for example, through early warning systems, insurances, financial support, etc.).

Finance (Article 9)

Climate finance comprises all sources of financing (from international to local, from public to private) that support action to respond to climate change.
Article 9 includes the following provisions:

- Developed countries provide financial resources to assist developing countries.
- Balancing mitigation and adaptation.
- Setting-up a floor of $100 Billion in 2020 from public and private sources.
- Establishing a new financial target before 2025.
- Developed countries will have to communicate their financial support every 2 years through biannual financial reports, with indicative quantitative and qualitative information.

Transparency (Article 13)

Transparency refers to the efforts to provide information on emission reductions, climate actions undertaken, and support offered or received with the aim to build trust and accountability among countries under the UN climate change regime.

The transparency framework is designed as a comprehensive set of communication guidelines. It allows countries to be "flexible" for “those developing country parties that need it in the light of their capacities”.

Therefore, this flexibility is self-determined. It covers seven types of information that Parties will have to communicate biannually, including:

- Emissions reporting
- Progress towards meeting climate pledges
- Adaptation
- Climate impacts
- Climate finance provided or received
Global Stocktake (Article 14)

The Global Stocktake is the process of taking stock, every 5 years, of the state of implementation of the Paris Agreement and of assessing the global progress realized towards reaching the Agreement goals.

The Global Stocktake will consist of three main parts:

- Information collection
- Technical assessment
- Consideration of outputs

The Stocktake will be informed by equity and the best available science. The thematic areas will include mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation and support. Discussion can also comprise issues related to response measures and loss and damage.

This concludes our lesson on the Paris Agreement. In the next segment, we will recap the key points covered in the lesson.
Recap

➢ What is the Paris Agreement?

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties on 12 December 2015 at COP 21 in Paris and entered into force on 4 November 2016.

The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius (and preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius) compared to pre-industrial levels.

➢ How Does the Paris Agreement Work?

The Paris Agreement provides for 5-year cycles of increasingly ambitious action undertaken by countries to address climate change.

By 2020, countries submit their plans for climate action in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement, including mitigation and adaptation efforts. These plans are known as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

➢ What are the Key Aspects of the Paris Agreement?

The Paris Agreement addresses crucial areas necessary to fight climate change. Some of the key aspects of the Agreement are as follows:

- Mitigation (Article 4)
- Adaptation (Article 7)
- Loss and damage (Article 8)
- Finance (Article 9)
- Transparency (Article 13)
- Global Stocktake (Article 14)
1. NDCs are one of the key mechanisms of the Paris Agreement. What is the full form of NDC?

   a. National Data Center
   b. Nationally Determined Contribution
   c. Natural Disaster Compensation
   d. National Development Council

2. Which of the following statements related to the Paris Agreement are true?

   a. The Preamble of the Paris Agreements includes clear mention of the right to health.
   b. The Paris Agreement provides a framework to clean up the atmosphere of greenhouse gases, ozone-depleting substances, and persistent organic pollutants.
   c. A Global Stocktake will take place every 10 years to assess progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.
   d. Article 7 of the Paris Agreement includes the provision for global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
3. **Fill in the blank.**

   The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below _________ degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.

*Answers:*

1. *b*
2. *a*
3. *Two*
Useful Resources

- Paris Agreement
- Nationally Determined Contributions
- Global Stocktake