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# COP26: the international climate change conference, Glasgow, UK



## Summary

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## Summary

In November 2021 the UK and Italy will jointly host the 26th [Conference of the Parties](#) (COP26). This is the international [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) conference on climate change held every year and attended by signatory countries and other parties, 196 in total. The UK will host the COP events. The pre-COP Summit and other preparatory events such as a youth event will be held in Italy. The UK and Italian governments [have committed](#) to putting climate and nature at the heart of the multilateral agenda in 2021, including through the G7, G20 and COP26 Presidencies.

According to the UK Government, COP26 will be the largest summit the UK has ever hosted, with over 30,000 delegates, including world leaders, experts, campaigners and government officials. Further details can be found on the [UKCOP26 website](#). Alok Sharma is President Designate for COP26 having stepped down from his BEIS Ministerial role in January 2020, to work on COP26 full time.

Alok Sharma set out the four UK key goals for COP26 in a speech in March 2020:

1. All countries to submit more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), committing to further cuts in carbon emissions by 2030.
2. All countries to commit to reach net zero emissions as soon as possible
3. Developed countries to honour their commitments, including meeting the 2020 US\$100bn dollar a year goal for climate finance
4. Seeking to agree a package which takes forward the Paris Agreement.

He also provided an [update on progress on all the goals](#) to Parliament in a written statement on COP26 on 18 March 2021.

A range of [bilateral and multilateral meetings](#) and [high level events](#) will have taken place throughout 2020 and 2021 in advance of the COP26 meeting.

[Alok Sharma wrote a letter](#) to all parties on 22 September 2021 in which he set out the remaining discussion that would take place in advance of COP26. The letter also set out the “emerging elements of the COP26 negotiated outcome”.

In advance of the COP26, developed countries that have not fully set out the Nationally Determined Contributions [are being urged to do so](#). Developing countries are also calling for [commitments on climate finance](#) to be met going forward to 2025.

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# 1

## Background

In November 2021 the UK and Italy will jointly host the 26th [Conference of the Parties](#) (COP26). This is the international [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) conference on climate change held every year and attended by signatory countries and other parties, 196 in total. The UK will host the COP events. The pre-COP Summit and other preparatory events such as a youth event will be held in Italy.

The UNFCCC was adopted during the 1992 Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It entered into force in 1994 and has been ratified by 196 States (including both the EU and the UK) which constitute the “Parties” to the Convention. The objective of the Treaty, set out in article 2 of the Convention, is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

### 1.1

## Paris Agreement and 1.5°C target

In December 2015, agreement was reached at COP21 in Paris to keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016 and 191 Parties have ratified the agreement.<sup>1</sup>

There have been a number of developments since 2015, including the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on [Global Warming of 1.5°C](#) above pre-industrial levels and related greenhouse gas emissions pathways in 2018.<sup>2</sup> The IPCC noted that limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible but would require rapid and far-reaching transitions across multiple sectors.

In response to this a number of countries, including China and the US have set a [net zero emission target](#). The [UK set a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050](#) in 2019. A full list of countries which have set out legally binding or policy commitments on net zero, and by which date are available on the [Energy and Climate Information Unit \(an independent advisory body\) net zero tracker](#).

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<sup>1</sup> [UNFCCC, Paris Agreement – status of ratification \[accessed 24 March 2020\]](#)

In addition to achieving net zero by a certain date, the trajectory emissions take, including when they peak, will also impact future climate impacts. An August 2021 [article in The Conversation](#) highlights the fact that in order for the 1.5°C to be met, GHG emissions must peak well in advance of 2050.

The COP26 meeting was originally going to be held five years after the Paris Agreement was agreed, in 2020. This was when the Paris Agreement came into effect and was also the year when Parties to the [Paris Agreement](#) were expected to put forward enhanced or updated [Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (NDC) as part of the so-called “ratchet” mechanism. NDCs set out each Party’s efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. See section 2.2 below for further details on NDCs.

Further information on the Paris Agreement and the IPCC Special Report is available in the Library Briefing on the [Climate change conference \(COP24\), Katowice, Poland](#).

The Commons Library climate change explainers provide further information on [the scientific basics of climate change](#), [UK and global emission trends](#) and the [history of global climate change negotiations](#).

## 1.2

## IPCC Sixth Assessment Report published

The main function of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is to publish [scientific assessments of the global state of climate change](#) every 7 years. Its first report was published in 1990.

The first report of its Sixth Assessment, [Climate Change 2021: the physical science basis](#), was published in August 2021. This covers the most up-to-date understanding of climate change science.<sup>3</sup> An IPCC post on the publication stated that changes in climate are being seen in every region and across whole climate systems. It warned that climate change was “[widespread, rapid and intensifying](#)” and unprecedented:

Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion—such as continued sea level rise—are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years.<sup>4</sup>

It also highlighted that significant action could limit impacts and stabilise temperatures:

However, strong and sustained reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate

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<sup>3</sup> [IPCC Post, Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying – IPCC, 9 August 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> [IPCC Post, Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying – IPCC, 9 August 2021](#)



change. While benefits for air quality would come quickly, it could take 20-30 years to see global temperatures stabilize.<sup>5</sup>

Two further reports are expected in the next few months. The second report is on [impacts, adaptation and vulnerability](#) to climate change. The third report is on [mitigation of climate change](#). Mitigation are measures to reduce the emissions and levels in the atmosphere of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

## 1.3

## Previous Climate Change COPs

COP25 was held in Madrid, Spain under the Presidency of Chile in December 2019. Its key aim was to finalise the “rulebook” of the Paris Agreement by agreeing rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation. However, the talks did not reach consensus or achieve many of the outcomes that were hoped for, instead pushing decisions into COP26 in the UK. UN secretary general António Guterres said he was “disappointed” with the results of COP25 and that “the international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the climate crisis.”<sup>6</sup>

More information on COP25 is available in the [Library Briefing Paper on the Chile Madrid climate change conference: COP25](#).

For details of previous conferences please see the following Library Briefings:

- [Climate change conference \(COP24\), Katowice, Poland](#)
- [Paris Agreement and Marrakech Climate change conference](#)
- [Paris Climate change conference](#)

Briefings on earlier conferences are also available on the [Commons Library Website](#).

## 1.4

## COP26

The UK Prime Minister officially launched COP26 on 4 February 2020.<sup>7</sup> The conference was scheduled to be held in Glasgow and Milan from 9-20 November 2020. However, on 1 April 2020, the UNFCCC, the UK Government and the Italian Government announced that COP26 had been postponed due to Covid-19. The [Government press release](#) stated:

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<sup>5</sup> [IPCC Post, Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying – IPCC, 9 August 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> [CarbonBrief, COP25: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Madrid, 15 December 2019](#)

<sup>7</sup> [PQ 20511 \[on climate change convention\] 2 March 2020](#)

Rescheduling will ensure all parties can focus on the issues to be discussed at this vital conference and allow more time for the necessary preparations to take place. We will continue to work with all involved to increase climate ambition, build resilience and lower emissions.<sup>8</sup>

New dates of 1 to 12 November 2021 were announced jointly by the UK and Italian Government on 28 May 2020.

According to the UK Government, COP26 will be the largest summit the UK has ever hosted, with over 30,000 delegates, including world leaders, experts, campaigners and government officials. Further details can be found on the [UKCOP26 website](#).

The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), an independent advisory body, has produced a helpful infographic on [COP26: What it is, who attends and why it matters](#).

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<sup>8</sup> [BEIS, COP26 Postponement, 1 April 2020](#).



## 2

## UK Presidency of COP26

The UK and Italy will jointly host and hold the Presidency of COP26. The priorities for both countries were set out in [joint statement](#) in May 2021:

During this year of the UK-Italy COP Presidency, we stand together on the need to build back better following the devastating impact of COVID-19.

The UK and Italy are committed to putting climate and nature at the heart of the multilateral agenda in 2021, including through the G7, G20 and COP26 Presidencies. Through our Presidencies, we will work closely to achieve progress on the most vital issues of our age and encourage countries to take concrete actions towards our shared climate goals.

We are pleased that all G7 countries have now committed to net zero by 2050 at the latest, providing a vital step forward towards reducing global emissions. We now urge all countries to do their part and to take the steps needed to keep the 1.5-degree Celsius temperature limit within reach, including through setting ambitious nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies to cut emissions and reach net zero.<sup>9</sup>

The Prime Minister appointed Alok Sharma as the COP26 President designate, alongside his position as Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), in February 2020.<sup>10</sup> The position had previously been held by former energy and clean growth Minister, Claire O'Neill.<sup>11</sup> On 8 January 2021, Alok Sharma stepped down from his ministerial role and was appointed [full-time President designate](#).

A [Written Statement](#) from 18 March 2021 on providing an update on COP26 summarised what the role entails. It set out the work in the run up to the Conference, including working with participants on increasing commitments in advance of COP26:

The COP President-Designate is responsible within the UK for delivering the COP26 summit in Glasgow. Ahead of the summit I am engaging with the UNFCCC Secretariat and the current COP President as they prepare the provisional negotiations agenda. I am working to increase ambition internationally, developing effective international

<sup>9</sup> [Cabinet Office, Joint statement from COP26 President Alok Sharma and Italian Ecological Transition Minister Roberto Cingolani, 11 May 2021](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Gov.uk press release, Alok Sharma appointed COP26 President, 13 February 2020](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Gov.uk press release, An update on the Presidency of UK COP26, 31 January 2020](#)

relationships with countries, institutions, businesses and stakeholders to achieve the necessary commitments in advance of and at COP. I am regularly engaging with the members of the UNFCCC to understand their positions and work with them to reach consensus on the negotiations. I will continue my close engagement with a large number of civil society actors as we seek to deliver an inclusive COP.<sup>12</sup>

The statement went on to summarise what the role of the COP President will be during the conference, which will include leading the formal negotiations:

With the will of all Parties, I will formally become COP President during the opening ceremony of the Glasgow Summit. At the summit, I will participate as COP President, under the authority of the COP and its 197 parties. I will lead the formal negotiations, preside over meetings and will facilitate proceedings in accordance with the COP's draft Rules of Procedure. I will have oversight of the overall package of outcomes and will work closely with UNFCCC members to secure consensus. As COP President I will also lead the COP Bureau, which is an 11-member body that assists the President and supports the work of COP, for the duration of my term until COP27 in late 2022.<sup>13</sup>

The role of host and president are [seen as critical](#) in the run up to COP events in bringing together parties in advance of the meeting, and ensuring progress is made during conferences. The ECIU explained how UK actions would be important in advance of the conference, both nationally and internationally:

The UK has an opportunity to take a number of international actions – on diplomacy, trade and investments -- which could increase the likelihood of a successful outcome at COP26. Thoughtful UK decisions can strengthen other countries' ability to deliver climate action; but short-sighted decisions can undermine international action and hinder countries' achievement, for example, of their own NDCs. Scrutiny of the UK actions in the run up to COP26 will be intense, with many complex and sometimes conflicting agendas potentially challenging the diplomatic effort.<sup>14</sup>

The Government has set out [details of domestic action](#) to date, including its commitment to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 as part of meeting the [sixth carbon budget and achieving net-zero by 2050](#). This also included a commitment to publishing a cross-departmental Net Zero Strategy before COP26.

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<sup>12</sup> [Written Statement, COP26 Update, 18 March 2021](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Written Statement, COP26 Update, 18 March 2021](#)

<sup>14</sup> [ECIU, UK diplomacy and influence ahead of COP26 \[website visited 9 March 2020\]](#)

## 2.1

## COP26 Priorities

UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa set out the [four keys to success for COP26](#) from the perspective of the UN in a speech on 3 February 2021, as summarised by the LSE:

The four elements that will constitute a successful outcome of the UN Climate Conference COP26 are that:

1. Promises made to developing countries are kept, especially the pledge by developed nations to mobilize \$100 billion in climate finance annually by 2020.
2. Governments wrap up outstanding items and negotiations to fully implement the Paris Agreement.
3. Countries lower emissions and raise climate ambition, not only with regard to emission reductions, but also increasing ambition in adapting and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.
4. No voice or solution is left behind, through re-engaging with observers and Non-Party Stakeholders in a unity of purpose.

Ms. Espinosa said she is encouraged by the growing momentum for climate action among both governments and non-State actors<sup>15</sup>.

Alok Sharm, as President designate, also set out four key goals in March 2020 for the UK at COP26:

- All countries to submit more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions, committing to further cuts in carbon emissions by 2030.
- All countries to commit to reach net zero emissions as soon as possible
- Developed countries to honour their commitments, including meeting the 100-billion-dollar goal for climate finance
- Seeking to agree a package which takes forward the Paris Agreement.<sup>16</sup>

Mr Sharma also highlighted the following areas as needing particular action in the run up to the conference:

- Adaptation and resilience to climate change.
- Nature
- Energy transition
- Accelerating the move towards zero carbon road transport

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<sup>15</sup> [UNFCCC, Patricia Espinosa Outlines the Four Keys to Success at COP26, 3 February 2021](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Gov.uk speech, COP26 President Alok Sharma's briefing to UN member states, published 8 March 2020](#)

- Unleashing finance to support the goals of the Paris Agreement

This was followed in June 2020 by a speech setting out the five themes that would be the focus of the UK's preparatory work: clean energy; clean transport; nature-based solutions; adaptation and finance <sup>17</sup>

The Government has set out [more detail on the goals](#) and what needs to be achieved at the conference on the UK COP 26 website. On delivering net zero by 2050 through NDCs it sets out that countries will need to “accelerate the phaseout of coal, encourage investment in renewables, curtail deforestation and speed up the switch to electric vehicles”.<sup>18</sup> It also calls for efforts to protect communities and nature from the already inevitable climate change impacts that are expected by:

- Protecting and restoring ecosystems
- Building defences, putting warning systems in place and making infrastructure and agriculture more resilient to avoid loss of homes, livelihoods and lives.

Developed countries pledged at the [2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference pledge](#) to mobilise at least US\$100bn a year in climate finance for developing countries (from public and private sources), by 2020. The UK has called on developed countries to make good on this commitment (see section 2.2 below for further details on progress), and stated that:

International financial institutions must play their part and we need work towards unleashing the trillions in private and public sector finance required to secure global net zero.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the COP26 conference “must finalise the Paris rulebook” and accelerate collaboration between governments, business and civil society. The [Paris rulebook](#) refers to implementation guidelines for NDCs, which have proved difficult to agree and have not yet been finalised.<sup>20</sup>

## Priorities for the negotiations

As part of its presidency role the UK Government has engaged with other countries on their priorities for agreement at COP26. It has set out the most commonly raised issues, which include the following:

- Enabling ambition through [carbon markets](#)
- Rules for the [transparent reporting](#) of action and support

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<sup>17</sup> [UNFCCC, COP Presidencies Speak at Launch of Race to Zero Campaign, 5 June 2020](#)

<sup>18</sup> [UKCop26.org, What do we need to achieve at COP26? \[website visited 19 July 2021\]](#)

<sup>19</sup> [UKCop26.org, What do we need to achieve at COP26? \[website visited 19 July 2021\]](#)

<sup>20</sup> [UKCop26.org, What do we need to achieve at COP26? \[website visited 19 July 2021\]](#)

- Common timeframes for emission reduction commitments
- Enabling enhanced [adaptation action](#)
- Averting, minimising and addressing [loss and damage](#)
- Means of implementation, including the initiation of deliberations on a new goal for [global climate finance](#) after 2025
- Responding to the latest science and the ambition of current emission reduction targets
- Promoting fair, inclusive climate action.<sup>21</sup>

Further detail on the above issues were provided in a [letter to all parties of the UNFCCC](#) from Alok Sharma on 12 April 2021 in advance of the June 2021 annual pre-COP meeting that takes place, usually in Bonn but this year held virtually.

## Preparatory work

Historically, reaching agreement at climate change COPs has required a significant amount of work before the conferences begin to reach a degree of consensus amongst all parties on the proposed text for any agreement.

The [UNFCC Road to Glasgow website](#) sets out the range of meetings that have been taking place, for the most part remotely, to work on the various topics. There are also monthly multilateral informal consultations by the COP25 Presidency and the COP26 incoming Presidency, at ministerial, country delegation and technical levels. [Summaries of each of these meetings](#) are available on the UNFCC website.

Alok Sharma set out the work he was involved with as part of this process in a [debate on COP26](#) in the House of Commons on 10 March 2021:

I, of course, am now working full time on COP26. I have personally engaged with Ministers in more than 50 Governments, including recently with India's Prime Minister Modi, US special envoy John Kerry, who was here on Monday for discussions with us, and China's special envoy for climate change, Minister Xie Zhenhua.

Of course, we will work with like-minded colleagues around the world to deliver at Glasgow. I speak regularly with negotiating group chairs and chief negotiators, the United Nations, development banks, civil society groups and business. In recent weeks, I have also made a number of international visits, where I have always felt well

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<sup>21</sup> [UKCOP26, Negotiations \[website visited 21 July 2021\]](#)

supported by the UK Government network. All in all, we are well resourced for COP.<sup>22</sup>

Alok Sharma also gave [evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee](#) on 11 March 2021, where he provided further detail on work to agree a Paris rulebook:

The issue, as you have quite rightly identified, is what we are doing—apart from asking for these commitments on mitigation and adaptation and so on—to close off the elements of the Paris rulebook. We are talking about negotiations across 197 countries. We have a negotiating team, which is working day and night on this issue. From a time zone perspective, they are literally working day and night on this issue. I have a regular dialogue with the chairs of the negotiating groups that are part of the UNFCCC process. We are looking to make headway through the various mandates we have been given. One issue we have is that we are not able to meet in person in the same way that would have been possible previously. We are looking to see how those discussions move forward in a virtual or hybrid setting. There is this idea that, somehow, we are sitting on our hands and that the process of discussing the issues is not happening. It most certainly is.<sup>23</sup>

Details of the [various meetings and bilateral discussions](#) being held by the Alok Sharma are available on the COP26 pages. These include, for example, recent bilateral discussions during visits to Austria, Barbados, Turkey and Russia, and plans to visit Slovenia and Italy in advance of the G20 Climate and Energy Minister's meeting. In addition, there are a [series of international meetings and events](#) that have taken place over the last year and that are due take place in advance of the meeting in Glasgow and feed into the discussions there.

A [Presidency Programme for COP26](#) setting out the programme for November was published on 7 July 2021 and is available on the UKCOP26 website.

## 2.2

## Progress to date

In a [written statement](#) from 18 March 2021 Alok Sharma provided a summary of progress in the efforts to reach agreement on the four goals he set out for the Conference:

***Reducing emissions:*** countries representing around 65% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and around 70% of the world's economy have now committed to reaching net zero emissions or carbon neutrality. When the UK took the role of incoming COP Presidency in December 2019,

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<sup>22</sup> [HC Deb 10 March 2021 c932](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Environmental Audit Committee, Oral evidence: Preparation for COP26, HC 222, 11 March 2021](#)

coverage was just 20% of global emissions and 26% of world GDP. On 12th December, over 90 countries, businesses, sectors, cities, including 75 world leaders, attended the [Climate Ambition Summit](#), co-hosted with the UN and France in partnership with Italy and Chile. At the summit 45 leaders highlighted plans for new and more ambitious NDCs (covering 71 countries including all EU member states) and 24 countries announced new commitments, strategies or plans to reach net zero or carbon neutrality. The Summit delivered real steps forward - for example Colombia committed to an impressive 51% emissions reduction target; and Pakistan announced a moratorium on new coal plants.

***On helping protect communities and natural habitats from the impact of climate change:*** at the CAS, 20 countries put forward plans for protecting their economies and communities from the impact of climate change. On 25 January we launched the [Adaptation Action Coalition](#) to bring together countries to identify the solutions, technologies and resources needed to protect people and nature as the planet warms. Action on nature is at the heart of our COP Presidency. At the UN General Assembly in September 2020 the Prime Minister signed the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#) committing leaders to take ten urgent actions to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030. The UK played a key role in pioneering and negotiating the Pledge, and which now has over 80 countries signed up. On 2 February 2021 we launched the [Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade \(FACT\) Dialogue](#), which will bring together key countries exporting agricultural products and the countries consuming these products to agree global principles and a roadmap of actions to make global supply chains process greener and more sustainable, tackling one of the primary drivers of nature loss.

***On increasing climate finance:*** there is an urgent need to get more finance flowing to support swift climate action. Developed countries must meet and surpass the \$100bn of climate finance commitment, matching UK ambition to double UK ICF to at least £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025. Private finance is also key. So far we have seen major asset owners, representing over \$5 trillion, and asset managers, representing over \$9 trillion, commit to net zero targets by 2050. Climate-related Financial Disclosures are increasing and jurisdictions in Brazil, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Switzerland are taking action to make disclosure mandatory, complementing the UK's announcement for a pathway to mandatory disclosure across the economy by 2025.

***On making progress on the outstanding elements of the Paris Rulebook, and accelerating delivery of the Paris Goals:*** we have been convening UNFCCC members in discussions to lay the groundwork for the negotiations, and we will be hosting, alongside Chile, a series of monthly multilateral consultations. More broadly, we have built partnerships to increase international collaboration on



key issues, establishing the [Energy Transition Council](#) and [Zero Emissions Vehicles Transition Council](#), as well as working through existing coalitions: the [Powering Past Coal Alliance](#) has grown to 114 members covering 20% of OECD coal power capacity.<sup>24</sup>

Since then, a [Climate and Development Ministerial](#) was held on 31 March 2021. This covered access to finance, together with the quantity, quality and composition of any finance; the response to climate impacts; and the impact of Covid-19 on finance and debt sustainability. There is also an agreed [Climate and Development Ministerial pathway](#) setting out future discussions.

An annual (intersessional) meeting of the UNFCCC normally takes place in Bonn in June, halfway between two COPs. This year it took place between 31 May and 17 June, as a virtual meeting on an informal basis. The [UNFCCC summarised](#) the issues covered during the meeting:

Issues discussed in preparation for COP26 included making agriculture more sustainable, how best to take stock of progress of climate actions, fulfilling pre-2020 commitments, support to developing countries, and building resilience and adapting to the effects of climate change.

There are still diverging views on finalizing the details of how the Paris Agreement's carbon market and non-market mechanisms will work. While diverging views also remain on finalizing the details that will allow all countries to communicate their climate actions transparently under the Paris Agreement, progress was made on the tools needed to bring the transparency arrangements to life.

Other crunch issues that need to be resolved at COP26 include delivering the pledge to mobilize 100 billion dollars annually to support developing countries, raising ambition on emission reductions, adaptation and finance while ensuring that no voice remains unheard and no proposal unattended.<sup>25</sup>

However, specialist website CarbonBrief produced a [summary of the meeting](#) concluding that “discussions were marred by technical difficulties and made little progress on most of the key issues, with an unmet \$100bn pledge on climate finance looming over the talks”.<sup>26</sup>

A [COP Ministerial meeting](#) took place at the end of July with an agenda covering five topics: scaling up adaptation; keeping 1.5°C alive; loss and damage; finalising the Paris Rulebook; and mobilising finance.<sup>27</sup> A [summary of the meeting](#) was published and provides a good overview of the range of views on what commitments should be made at COP26.

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<sup>24</sup> [Written Statement: COP26 Update, 18 March 2021](#)

<sup>25</sup> [UNFCCC: Progress Made as May-June UN Climate Change Session Closes, 17 June 2021](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Carbon Brief, UN Climate Talks: Key outcomes from the June 2021 virtual conference, 18 June 2021](#)

<sup>27</sup> Cabinet Office, [July Ministerial Chair's Summary](#), 5 August 2021

## Nationally Determined Contributions

The Paris Agreement requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive (every five years) nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve.<sup>28</sup> NDCs set out each Party's efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Further information is available on the [UNFCCC pages on nationally determined contributions](#).

NDCs were first submitted by Parties in 2015. To date 190 of 196 parties to the Convention, including the EU Member States, have submitted their [first NDCs](#). Parties were expected to put forward enhanced or updated NDCs in 2020.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) published an initial [NDC Synthesis Report](#) on Friday 26 February 2021. The report provides an overview of the 48 new or updated NDCs representing 75 Parties, submitted by 31 December 2020. A final version of the report is expected to be published before COP26.

The report concluded that the sum of NDC submitted would mean that by 2030 global greenhouse gas emissions would be 0.7 per cent lower than in 1990, 0.5 per cent lower than in 2010 and 2.1 per cent lower than in 2017. However, it noted this was not anything near enough to achieve the long-term target of net zero emissions by 2050:

[...] to be consistent with global emission pathways with no or limited overshoot of the 1.5 °C goal, global net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions need to decline by about 45 per cent from the 2010 level by 2030, reaching net zero around 2050. For limiting global warming to below 2 °C, CO emissions need to decrease by about 25 per cent from the 2010 level by 2030 and reach net zero around 2070. Deep reductions are required for nonCO<sub>2</sub> emissions as well.

Thus, the estimated reductions referred to in paragraphs [...] above fall far short of what is required, demonstrating the need for Parties to further strengthen their mitigation commitments under the Paris Agreement.<sup>29</sup>

CarbonBrief produced an analysis of [which countries met the UN's 2020 deadline to raise 'climate ambition'](#), examining NDCs of the 45 "parties" (44 countries, plus the EU's 27 member states viewed as one bloc) that met this deadline. It noted that although some parties such as the UK and EU, have increased ambitions, many others restated existing ambitions and, in some cases, ambitions were decreased.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Article 4, para 2

<sup>29</sup> [UNFCCC, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, 26 February 2021](#)

<sup>30</sup> [CarbonBrief, Which countries met the UN's 2020 deadline to raise 'climate ambition', 8 January 2021](#)

## UK NDC

The UK is a party to the UNFCCC and has ratified the Paris Agreement separately to the EU. However, until 2020 the EU had an overall NDC on behalf of its Member States, including the UK, acting jointly to deliver an overarching commitment. The UK Government confirmed in February 2020 plans to bring “forward its own, increased NDC well ahead of COP26” following the UK’s departure from the EU.<sup>31</sup>

The UK’s independent adviser on climate change, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) published its [advice to Government](#) on setting NDC’s on 3 December 2020. Its key recommendations included setting a target for reducing UK territorial emissions by at least 68% by 2030. However, the CCC cautioned this would not be enough and called for a policy package and a Net Zero strategy for the UK:

The NDC is more than just a number. It should be accompanied by wider climate commitments, including the development of a policy package and Net Zero Strategy to deliver against the UK goal, clear commitments to reduce international aviation and shipping emissions, and greater support for climate finance, particularly for developing countries. It is also imperative that the NDC is accompanied by strengthened climate change adaptation plans – with new commitments – for the UK to show its leadership on emissions reduction and adaptation.<sup>32</sup>

The [Government followed this by announcing](#) on 4 December 2020 that it had increased the UK ambition in its NDC of cutting emissions from 53% to 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Details were set out in a Written Statement on 7 December:

On Friday 4 December the Prime Minister announced the UK’s new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. This commits the UK to a new ambitious target to reduce the UK’s emissions by at least 68% by the end of the decade, compared to 1990 levels.

This is a step forward in our ambition to tackle climate change over the next ten years as we accelerate towards meeting our legally-binding commitment to reach net zero by 2050. Just as the UK led the way as the first major economy to legislate for net zero, our NDC raises the bar for global climate ambition by committing the UK to the highest level of emissions reductions by 2030 of any major economy, compared to 1990 levels. The level of the UK’s NDC is consistent with advice from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC). It is a significant step up from the level of the UK’s previous target as a contributor to the EU’s NDC, which was

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<sup>31</sup> [PQ 12820 \[on climate change\] 14 February 2020](#)

<sup>32</sup> [CCC, Advice on the UK’s 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\), 3 December 2020](#)

equivalent to around a 53% UK reduction over the same time period.<sup>33</sup>

Full details of the UK's NDC can be found in its [official submission to the UNFCCC](#).

In the lead up to the conference there were [calls from some developing countries](#) for the G20 countries, [meeting in Italy on 12 October](#), to strengthen their targets on cutting greenhouse gas emissions and provisions on climate finance<sup>34</sup>.

In advance of the G20 meeting, Alok Sharma also called for China, India and Saudi Arabia, together with Australia, to strengthen their NDCs. [He stated](#) it was incumbent on them to deliver enhanced and more ambitious climate targets before COP26.<sup>35</sup>

## Climate Finance

In 2009, at the [fifteenth conference of the parties \(COP15\)](#) of the UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen climate finance funding of \$100 billion a year by 2020 was agreed.

[Climate finance](#) would be delivered by [Annex I countries](#) of the UNFCCC agreement [non-Annex I countries](#). The finance is to fund [climate change mitigation](#), which are measures to reduce greenhouse emissions, and adaptation to climate change. Funding can come from [public and private sources](#) and be provided in different forms. The \$100bn commitments were [reiterated at COP 16 in Cancun in 2010](#), and at [COP21 in Paris in 2015](#), where it was agreed to extend the commitment to provide \$100bn every year to 2025.

Final figures will not be available until 2022 but it is generally accepted that [the 2020 goal has not been fully met](#). This, together with [what form climate finance takes \(loans or grants\)](#), is a key area of contention for developing countries in the run up to COP26.

The variety of the sources of this funding have made it [difficult to monitor progress](#), but [a review](#) commissioned by the UN concluded in December 2020 that target will be missed. An article in [Nature Climate Change](#) expressed the view that “if this failure is confirmed, it will likely lead to [a] further erosion of trust between developed and developing countries”.<sup>36</sup>

Ensuring the \$100bn pledge is met going forward is one of [the four goals of the UK's COP26 presidency](#). Alok Sharma, has said that although [\\$100bn is](#)

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<sup>33</sup> [Written Statement, The UK's new Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\), 7 December 2020](#)

<sup>34</sup> [The Observer, Give us action on climate not just words, say developing nations ahead of Cop26, 9 October 2021](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Financial Times, UK COP chief challenges G20 climate laggards over failure to improve, 11 October 2021 \[subscription required\]](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Nature Climate Change, Rebooting a failed promise of climate finance, 18 February 2021](#)

[just a fraction of the investment needed to tackle the climate crisis](#), delivering it is a matter of maintaining trust.

In 2019, The [UK increased its commitment to £11.6bn](#) in the next four years. In recent months [the US](#), [Germany](#) and [Canada](#) have also increased their pledges. Recent reports are that [total pledges are currently \\$10bn short of the target](#), but that countries such as Sweden, Norway and Spain are expected to increase their contributions.

### Private finance

The former Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, was appointed as the Finance Adviser to the Prime Minister for COP26 and UN Special Envoy for Climate Action and Finance on 16 January 2020.<sup>37</sup>

Further details of work in this area in the run up to COP26 are set out in [Building a private finance system for net zero: Priorities for private finance for COP26](#) published by Mark Carney in November 2020. In addition, the [Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero](#) was launched in April 2021, chaired by Mark Carney with the aim of accelerating the transition to net-zero:

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), chaired by Mark Carney, UN Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance, brings together over 160 firms (together responsible for assets in excess of \$70 trillion<sup>1</sup>) from the leading net zero initiatives across the financial system to accelerate the transition to net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

All GFANZ member alliances must be accredited by the [UN Race to Zero campaign](#). They must use science-based guidelines to reach net zero emissions, cover all emission scopes, include 2030 interim target setting, and commit to transparent reporting and accounting in line with the UN Race to Zero criteria.

43 banks from 23 countries (with assets of \$28.5 trillion) form the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA) today - which joins GFANZ - with its members committing to align operational and attributable emissions from their portfolios with pathways to net-zero by 2050 or sooner.<sup>38</sup>

More recently Alok Sharma gave a speech on 11 July 2021 at the Venice [G20 Climate Conference](#), organised by the Italian finance ministry and central bank. The speech focused on the [role of Multilateral Development Banks](#) (MDBs) in delivering climate finance, including scaling up private finance:

I urge MDBs and private financial firms to increase their collaboration, and scale-up blended finance initiatives and technical

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<sup>37</sup> [Bank of England, Mark Carney appointed by Prime Minister as finance adviser for COP26, 16 January 2020 \[accessed 23 March 2020\]](#)

<sup>38</sup> [UNFCCC, New Financial Alliance for Net Zero Emissions Launches, 21 April 2021](#)

assistance, and to improve the conditions for investment within countries, and build pipelines of high-quality, bankable projects.

Together, you can demonstrate that public finance can de-risk investment and leverage in significant private capital.

So, ahead of COP, I encourage MDBs to share plans for mobilising private finance faster, and I urge private financial institutions to work with MDBs on these plans, to help show how finance will flow in support of countries' ambitious plans for climate action.

Such steps are essential if we are to redirect the sums flowing through the global economy towards our green future, and secure the trillions of dollars required to build resilience, meet global net zero, and keep the 1.5 degree limit alive.<sup>39</sup>

## Least Developed Countries view

Finance is one of the areas of contention between developed and developing countries. Developing countries are concerned that they will be asked to commit to costly measures to address climate change, when their historic emissions are low; and that they are likely to suffer more severe impacts from climate change without the finance available to adapt to them. A meeting of the [UNFCCC grouping of Least Developed Countries](#) (LDCs) held in advance of COP22 (in July 2021) published [Delivering the Paris Agreement: a five point plan for solidarity, fairness and prosperity](#) which called for much stronger action from developed countries:

We lay out five areas in which all governments, especially those of nations that became prosperous through the untrammelled burning of fossil fuels, need to deliver on their promises before and during COP26:

**Cutting emissions:** despite welcome recent progress, the sum total of climate policies in place across the world will not keep global warming within the limits that governments agreed in Paris; an acceleration that is consistent with the 1.5 degree Celsius temperature limit is urgently needed, led by those with the biggest responsibility and capacity

**Adaptation:** with climate impacts increasing, provisions to help the most vulnerable adapt, including through increased financial support, need to be strengthened

**Loss and Damage:** the consequences of the developed world's historical failure to cut their emissions adequately are already resulting in losses and damage for the most vulnerable.

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<sup>39</sup> [Cabinet Office, Moving finance towards our clean, green, and resilient future, 11 July 2021](#)

Responsibilities have to be acknowledged and promised measures delivered

**Finance:** The promises made in Copenhagen in 2009 and again in the Paris Agreement are unequivocal, and must be delivered: at least \$100bn per year by 2020, up to 2024, with a concrete delivery plan, with at least half going to adaptation, with increased annual sums from 2025. The debt consequences of Covid-19 mean that action outside the UN climate process is also essential

**Implementation:** After several summits of stalling, governments must by COP26 finalise rules on transparency, carbon trading and common timeframes for accelerating action, in a way that safeguards development and nature.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.3 Emerging elements for the negotiations

[Alok Sharma wrote a letter](#) to all parties on 22 September 2021 in which he set out the remaining discussion that would take place in advance of COP26. The letter also set out the “emerging elements of the COP26 negotiated outcome”.

The list covered a number of areas including:

- On finance achieving the \$100bn climate finance target; and agreeing a framework for climate finance beyond 2025. In addition, reviewing and issuing guidance to multilateral agencies on funding provision.
- Addressing the gaps on NDCs, including how to strengthen NDCs for 2030, through the global stocktake of NDCs that is due to take place in 2023. In addition, agreement on a common timeframe for signatories to produce the NDCs. Work on further commitments from countries to net-zero are also highlighted.
- Continue to work to prioritise adaptation and increase the focus on loss and damage
- Further work on the Paris Rulebook and an enhanced transparency framework, to give confidence in climate commitments and allow comparisons.<sup>41</sup>

The [full list is available](#) on the UK COP26 website.

In a speech to the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2021 the [Prime Minister, Boris Johnson](#), called COP26 a turning point for humanity, which needs to “grow up” and listen to the warnings of scientists. He stated that

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<sup>40</sup> [LDCs, Delivering the Paris Agreement: a five-point plan for solidarity, fairness and prosperity July 2021](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Alok Sharma, Letter to all parties from the cop26 president designate, ahead of pre-cop, 22 September 2021](#)



countries “need to pledge collectively to achieve carbon neutrality – net zero”. He also highlighted the four areas where commitments needed to be made:

If we are to stave off these hikes in temperature we must go further and faster – we need all countries to step up and commit to very substantial reductions by 2030 – and I passionately believe that we can do it by making commitments in four areas – coal, cars, cash and trees.<sup>42</sup>

Alok Sharma also gave a speech on 30 September to the [Youth4Climate](#) conference which took place during the [Ministerial pre-COP meeting in Milan](#), in which he said that the youth delegates spoke the truth “we need to do much, much more much faster.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> [Prime Minister’s Office, PM speech at the UN General Assembly, 22 September 2021](#)

<sup>43</sup> [Alok Sharma, Home truths on climate delivered ahead of COP26, 30 September 2021](#)

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