Emissions Gap Report 2025: Chapter 1 – Introduction

Authors: John Christensen (CONCITO, Denmark), Anne Olhoff (UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre, Denmark)

Note to reviewers: *This is an early draft. It will be updated to include stronger messaging and reference to main report findings based on the final draft chapters of the report with the final assessment of the new NDCs.*

1.1. Looking ten years back and ten ahead

This sixteenth *Emissions Gap Report* coincides with two major milestones: the ten-year anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement, and the submission of new nationally determined contributions (NDCs) with mitigation targets and measures for 2035 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as specified in the Paris Agreement and as part of its five-year ambition-raising cycle. It is therefore timely to reflect on progress made over the past decade, and to examine what needs to happen in the coming decade, considering the globally insufficient ambition of the new NDCs, the lack of stringent global emissions reductions to date, and the implications of this as assessed by the latest science.

While much has happened in the past decade, more needs to happen in the next for the Paris Agreement temperature goal to remain achievable. As this report shows, the new NDCs – if fully implemented – are projected to lower global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2035 by X-Y per cent compared with emissions based on policies currently in place, whereas a reduction of Q-Z percent is required to get on track to achieving the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. The new NDC scenario, holds the increase in global warming to X.Y°C during this century with 66 per cent likelihood.

While this signifies the continued collective failure to respond adequately to the climate change crisis and COP decisions, it cannot be interpreted as a failure of multilateralism. As this report shows, new policies put in place over the past decade have lowered global temperature projections by Y°C. Similarly, since the adoption of the Paris Agreement global temperature projections based on ambition in the NDCs have gone down from 3.0-3.5°C in 2015 (central estimates, 66 per cent likelihood, UNEP 2015), i.e. around X°C. In 2015, none of the large emitters of GHG emissions had pledged to achieve net-zero emissions. Now, approximately 82 per cent of global GHG emissions are covered by net-zero emissions targets. These are just a few examples – explored further in chapter 5 of this report – of achievements that demonstrate progress largely brought about by the multilateral process.

In the current challenging geopolitical context, multilateralism will likely be even more important to sustain and accelerate climate action. Economic and social considerations will continue to drive such action. With the landmark achievements in renewable energy costs, investment and deployment, and in electrification of transport and other key sectors, combined with the compounding evidence of the social, economic and environmental benefits of a decarbonized, climate-resilient future, accelerating climate action seems not only possible, but unavoidable.

Every year since 2010, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has published the Emissions Gap Report as an independent science-based assessment to inform international

negotiations under the UNFCCC about the gap between pledged GHG emission reductions and the reductions needed to align with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, the implications of this gap and opportunities to bridge it. It is an assessment report, based on a synthesis of the latest scientific literature, models, and data analysis and interpretation, including those published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

1.2. Structure of this report

This report is organized into five chapters including this introduction. Chapter 2 provides an update on trends in global greenhouse gas emissions, with a particular focus on major sectors and emitters. With this foundation, chapter 3 provides an in-depth assessment of the characteristics and targets of the new NDCs globally and for the G20 member states. This includes an investigation of the extent to which countries have integrated the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake into their new NDCs. Furthermore, chapter 3 assesses the new NDCs against global mitigation milestones and compares them with the previous NDC targets and current policy trajectories. As in previous years, chapter 3 also includes an update on progress towards net-zero and long-term low-emission development strategies. The findings from the assessment of the new NDCs are then synthesized in chapter 4, which updates the emissions gaps in 2030, 2035 and mid-century along with global warming projections under current policy, NDC and net-zero pledge scenarios. This chapter furthermore explores the implications of delayed mitigation action for the scenarios from the IPCC database that are consistent with achieving the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, including the feasibility of 1.5°C scenarios. It lays the foundation for further development of the gap scenarios for future Emissions Gap Reports.

While the sobering conclusion of this year's report remains that both ambition and action is critically insufficient to get on track to achieving the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, the final chapter of the report (chapter 5) summarises the progress that has indeed been made since the adoption of the Paris Agreement. It also showcases examples of climate action to inspire countries and other actors to reduce emissions faster and further than implied by national and global NDC ambition and action, and how this can be driven by and aligned with key social, economic and environmental priorities.

As in previous years, this Emissions Gap Report has been prepared by an international team of leading experts. This year, XX leading scientists from YY expert institutions across ZZ countries have been engaged in producing the report. The assessment process has been overseen by an international steering committee, and it has been transparent and participatory. Geographical diversity and gender balance has been considered to the extent possible. All chapters have undergone external review, and the assessment methodology and preliminary findings were made available to the governments of the countries specifically mentioned in the report, to provide them with the opportunity to comment on the findings.

References

Block, K., Li, M., Gärtner, J. et al. Geopolitical conflict impedes climate change mitigation. *npj Clim. Action 4, 33* (2025). https://doi.org/10.1038/s44168-025-00224-7

Paris Agreement (2015), entered into force on 4 November 2016. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

UNEP (2015). The Emissions Gap Report 2015. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32070/EGR15.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y