



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Paris Climate Change Conference

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## Summary

In December 2015 representatives of 196 countries met to attempt to reach an agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of limiting a global temperature increase to below 2°C. This [Conference of the Parties \(COP 21\)](#) in Paris is successful would be the first time that, from 2020, both developed and developing countries would commit to tackling greenhouse gas emissions.

### Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

Countries published [Intended Nationally Determined Contributions](#) for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, or INDCs, ahead of the Paris conference. This is a bottom up approach, with the aim that aggregated contributions will add up to a 2°C limit on global temperature increases. However, the UNFCCC [analysis](#) of these showed that the pledges as made if implemented, would reduce expected warming of 4-5°C to around 2.7°C. In response there were calls from various negotiating groups, including the EU and the UK, for any agreement at Paris to include provisions for five yearly reviews of pledges. Developed countries also called for clear rules and transparency on emission reporting to ensure targets are met.

### Climate Finance

Issues that were of particular concern to developing countries included how developed countries plan to meet their pledge of [\\$100 billion](#) climate finance (from public and private sources) a year by 2020. There was also the issue of compensation for [‘loss and damage’](#) to the poorest countries, such as small island states, that have contributed little to climate change and where there is no option for adaptation.

### Other Developments

Away from the negotiations China and the US, the two greatest emitters, issued a [joint commitment](#) to reducing emissions in November 2015. There were also increasing calls from across the board for a meaningful agreement to be reached, including from religious leaders. There was also [increased global investment](#) in renewables and away from coal. And for the first time the [International Energy Agency](#) provisional figures for 2014 showed there was global economic growth of 3% without any associated growth in emissions from energy use.

### Paris Agreement

[Agreement](#) was reached in [Paris](#) on 12 December 2015 on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol that will apply to all countries, and come into force by 2020. There was widespread relief that this had been achieved, whilst also recognising that it is a first step towards limiting anthropogenic climate change to safe levels.

An unexpected outcome of the conference was the ambition of the emissions goal of keeping temperatures “well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels”. The agreement also set an aim for emissions to peak “as soon as possible” and for emissions from human activity and absorption by carbon sinks to balance sometime in the second half of the century. Agreement was also reached on five-yearly reviews of NDCs, extending the \$100bn per year climate finance to 2025; details of a reporting system for all countries and a mention of the concept of loss and damage.

Further details of the ongoing ratification process aimed at bringing the Agreement into force by the end of 2016 can be found in the Library Paper on [Ratifying the Paris Climate Agreement](#)

# 1. Background

In December 2105 representatives of 196 countries met to attempt to reach an agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the aim of limiting a global temperature increase to below 2°C. If t Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in Paris is successful it would be the first time that, from 2020, both developed and developing countries will commit to tackling greenhouse gas emissions.

World leaders visibly failed to reach a satisfactory agreement on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol at the Copenhagen COP in 2009. The lessons learned from this failure resulted in a great deal of preparatory work in advance of the 2015 Paris COP. The last two conferences, in Lima and Warsaw, very much focused on necessary steps for ensuring agreement is reached in Paris.

The IPCC 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Synthesis [Report \(2014\) concluded:](#)

- Warming of the climate is unequivocal
- Human influence on the climate system is clear.
- Increased greenhouse gas concentrations have led to uptake of energy by the global climate system.
- Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system
- Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions

The IPPC estimated that having a likely or 66% chance of limiting global temperature increases to 2°C would require total emissions from human sources to be limited to 1000Gt CO<sub>2</sub> from 2011. In 2013 global emissions were 39.3Gt CO<sub>2</sub>. This means that this 1000Gt budget would be used up in 21 years (by 2036) if emissions continue at current levels.

The landscape has changed significantly since Copenhagen. The US and China, the world's two biggest emitters, made a joint commitment to reduce their emissions in 2015. Away from the negotiations, there are already signs that efforts to reduce emissions were having an effect. Coal use in China might have peaked. There was increased evidence that renewables, such as wind and solar, may be economically competitive in many parts of the world by around 2020. Energy storage, including battery technology, is also seeing progress.

The International Energy Agency provisional figures showed that in 2014, for the first time, there was global economic growth (of 3%) without any associated growth in emissions from energy use. Over the same period, the UK saw 2.8% growth and an 8.4% reduction in emissions. There was also an ongoing international fossil fuel divestment campaign, aimed at institutional investors, which gained momentum in the run up to Paris.

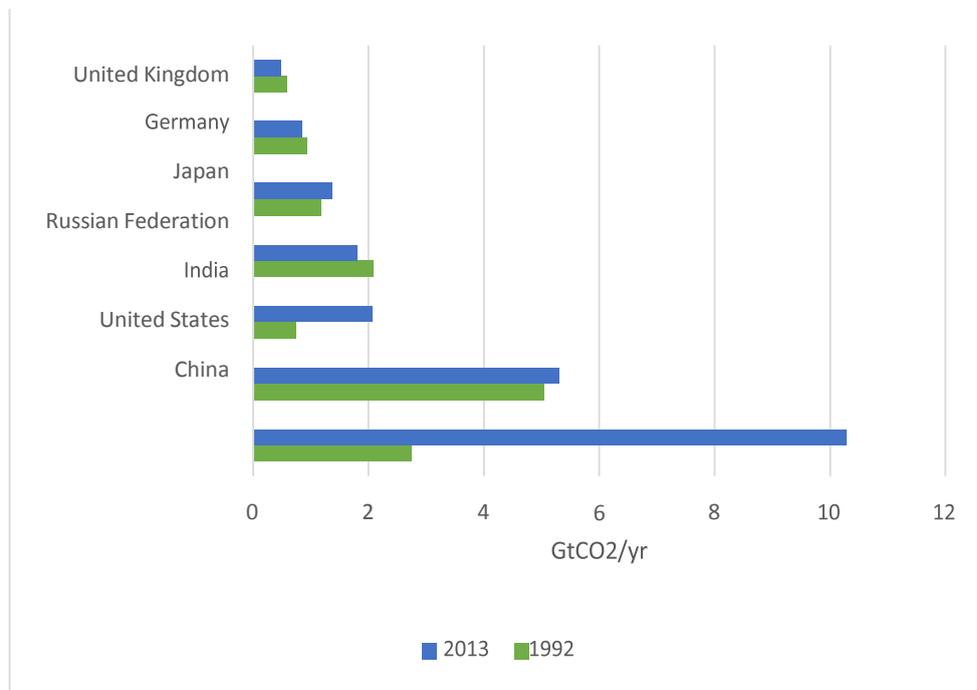
## 2. World trends in greenhouse gas emissions

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted during the 1992 Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro. It entered into force in 1994 and has been ratified by 196 States, 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.”

The following table compares the 2013 emissions of the 6 biggest emitters in 2013 (and the UK) with their 1992 emissions. It shows that the direction of travel for emissions in the most developed countries is downwards (except for the US which has seen a small more rise in annual emissions). For both India’s and China’s emissions, which are both considered developing countries, have more than doubled, reflecting the industrialisation and economic development since 1992.

### Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 1992 and 2013 for the Top 6 emitters (and the UK) in 2013



Source: [EU EDGAR database](#), House of Commons Library analysis

The EU has been at the forefront of negotiations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The EU28 countries have reduced their total annual emissions by around 10% since 1992 while their fraction of world emissions has also fallen. In 1992, the EU was responsible for 18% of the global total (22.6 GtCO<sub>2</sub>) whilst by 2013 the EU was responsible for just under 10.5% of the global total (35.3 GtCO<sub>2</sub>). In 1992, the EU28 was responsible for 4.1 GtCO<sub>2</sub> which had been reduced to 3.7 GtCO<sub>2</sub> in 2013.

## 2.1 Per capita emissions

Considering total national emissions alone does not provide the whole picture as countries with the larger populations are likely to have higher emissions. Another way, and many argue a more equitable way, to think about the relative contributions to global emissions, is on a per capita basis. In 2013, for example, the Chinese per capita CO<sub>2</sub> level of 7.4 tonnes exceeded the mean EU28 level of 7.3 tonnes, but remained still under half the US level of 16.6 tonnes. India's per capita emissions were still very low, 1.7 tonnes, despite also being one of the major global emitters.<sup>1</sup>

### CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2013 (MtCO<sub>2</sub>) and CO<sub>2</sub>/capita emissions, 1990–2013 (tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per person)

Country	Emissions 2013 ( MtCO <sub>2</sub> )	Per Capita emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> /capita)					Change 1990-2013	
		1990	2000	2010	2012	2013	tCO <sub>2</sub> /capita	%
<b>Annex 1</b>	5,300	19.6	20.6	17.6	16.3	16.6	-3.1	-16%
USA								
European Union	3,740	9.2	8.4	7.8	7.5	7.3	-1.8	-20%
Germany	840	12.7	10.4	9.9	10	10.2	-2.5	-20%
United Kingdom	480	10.3	9.2	8.2	7.8	7.5	-2.8	-27%
Italy	390	7.5	8.1	6.9	6.8	6.4	-1.1	-15%
France	370	6.9	6.9	6.2	5.7	5.7	-1.2	-17%
Poland	320	8.2	7.5	8.7	8.4	8.5	0.3	4%
Spain	250	5.9	7.6	6.1	5.9	5.3	-0.6	-10%
Netherlands	160	10.8	10.9	10.7	9.8	9.7	-1.2	-11%
Russian Federation	1,800	16.5	11.3	11.9	12.7	12.6	-3.8	-23%
Japan	1,360	9.5	10.2	9.7	10.8	10.7	1.2	13%
Canada	550	16.2	17.9	16.2	15.7	15.7	-0.5	-3%
Australia	390	16	18.5	19.4	17.6	16.9	0.9	5%
Ukraine	300	14.9	7.2	6.6	6.8	6.7	-8.2	-55%
<b>Non-Annex I</b>	10,330	2.1	2.8	6.4	7.2	7.4	5.3	246%
China								
India	2,070	0.8	1	1.5	1.6	1.7	0.9	118%
South Korea	630	5.9	9.8	12.2	12.6	12.7	6.8	116%
Indonesia	510	1.5	2	2.2	2.4	2.6	1.1	75%
Saudi Arabia	490	0.9	1.4	1.9	1.9	2	1.1	120%
Brazil	480	10.2	12.9	15.6	16.9	16.6	6.4	63%
Mexico	470	3.6	3.6	3.9	4	3.9	0.3	7%
Iran	410	3.6	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.3	1.6	45%
South Africa	330	7.3	6.9	6.4	6.3	6.2	-1.1	-15%
Taiwan	270	6.2	10.5	11.9	11.5	11.6	5.5	88%
Thailand	260	1.6	2.8	3.6	4	3.9	2.3	144%

Source: [Trends in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; 2014 Report](#), House of Commons Library analysis

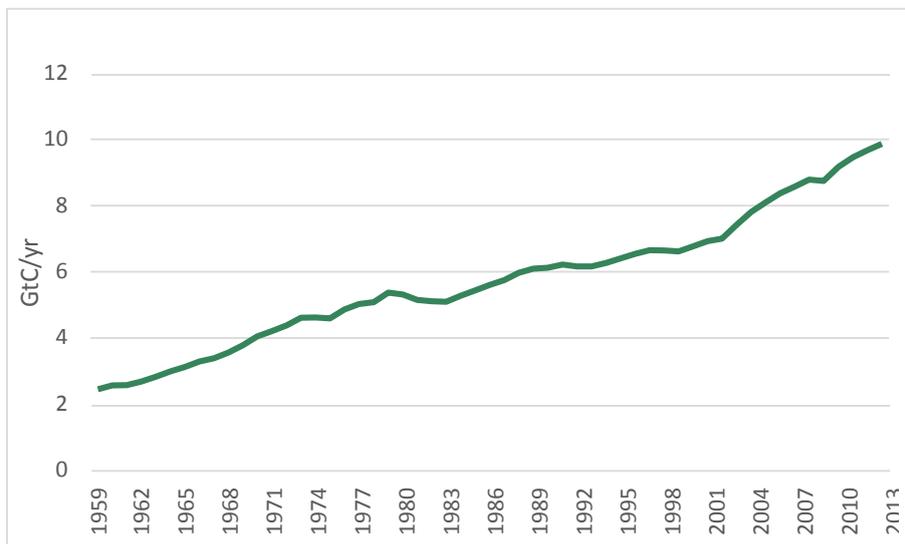
<sup>1</sup> Olivier JGJ, Janssens-Maenhout G, Muntean M and Peters JAHW (2014), [Trends in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; 2014 Report](#), The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency; Ispra: European Commission, Joint Research Centre.

## 2.2 A global carbon budget

Total anthropogenic GHG emissions continued to increase from 1970 to 2010 with larger absolute decadal increases toward the end of this period. For the year 2013, fossil fuel emissions were 9.9 Gigatonnes of carbon (GtC), a 2.3% increase over 2012.

However, global atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration in 2013 increased by only 5.4 GtC to 395 ppm, as the rest was absorbed by the oceans (2.9 GtC) or the land (2.5 GtC).<sup>2</sup>

### Global annual fossil fuel emissions (GtC/yr), 1959-2013



Source: Boden, TA, Marland, G and Andres, RJ 2013. Global, Regional, and National Fossil-Fuel CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, Oak Ridge, Tenn., USA doi 10.3334/CDIAC/00001\_V2013

<sup>2</sup> Met Office, [“The Global Carbon Budget 2014”](#), 3 March 2015

### 3. Progress since Lima Conference

The Library Note on the [Lima Climate Change Conference](#) provides information on the run up to the Lima Conference in 2014, including details of the American-Chinese announcement. Following these there were several preparatory UNFCCC meetings aiming, amongst other things, at agreeing a draft text that could realistically result in an agreement in Paris in December.

[Meetings](#) took place in Geneva in February, and in Bonn in June, September and October. The meeting in Geneva resulted in an 86-page [draft text](#), which included many proposed options and variations, and a lot of duplication. This was generally seen as good progress at the time.

However the meeting in Bonn in June resulted in little reduction in length so at that meeting it was agreed the co-chairs could work on the draft and present a shorter version at a later date. When a preliminary draft was published in July, the 83-page text had been divided into parts of the agreement that would be legally binding as soon as agreed, parts that would evolve as draft decisions and the areas that still needed to be decided. There were also some concerns that the UN diplomatic process was failing to keep pace with the political process, which resulted in commitments from the [G7 meeting](#) in June, which agreed to aim for close to 70% emissions reductions by 2050, and the informal Ministerial meeting that took place Paris in July.

The conference in September closed with [an agreement](#) that the Co-Chairs should take the draft text away again and return to the further meeting in Bonn in October with some clear options for negotiation:

“At this session, countries have crystalized their positions and have requested the Co-Chairs to produce a concise basis for negotiations with clear options for the next negotiating session in October. This means that we will arrive in Paris on time without too much turbulence-- not before, not later,” said Mr Djoghlaif, Co-Chair of the ADP, the negotiating body tasked with reaching the agreement that must put the world on a path to stay beneath a 2 degree Celsius temperature rise.

“What Parties are looking for now is a better basis from which to negotiate. This week, we achieved an enormous amount of clarity as to where we are going which makes this possible and allows us to speed up,” said Co-Chair Daniel Reifsnyder.

Mr Djoghlaif said they will deliver the basis for the negotiations of the Paris climate package the first week of October, well in advance of the next ADP meeting in Bonn, Germany from 19-23 October.

The overall view of the outcome, [best covered by Carbon Brief](#), was mildly optimistic despite very limited reduction in the length of the proposed text. The view was that a lot of countries’ and groupings’ perspectives have been made clearer and there is a willingness to reach compromises across different groups.

### 3.1 October 2015 Bonn meeting

The last meeting before the Paris conference was held in Bonn from 19 to 23 of October. The meeting began with the presentation of the new proposed text re-edited by the co-chairs. The reaction to the reduced [20 page text](#) was negative, with developing countries particularly concerned at the amount of text removed. The result of this was a large number of proposals being reinserted, in what was viewed a potentially regressive step. The [final text](#) for Paris expanded to 51 pages. The International Institute on Sustainable Development (iisd) [summarised](#) the process as follows:

The ADP Co-Chairs were expected to relieve parties of the painful prospect of crafting an agreement from the sizeable text remaining on the table. However, when parties returned to Bonn six weeks later for ADP 2-11, they were in a considerably less hopeful frame of mind, following release of a Co-Chairs' text that many found unbalanced and unacceptable as a basis for further negotiations.

This session was supposed to intensify the pace of text-based negotiations so that the agreement will be ready for the Paris Climate Change Conference in five-weeks' time. By the end of the week, however, it was clear that parties had not managed to intensify the pace. If anything, they had slowed it down.

Dissatisfied with the ADP Co-Chairs' text, parties engaged in a text re-compilation exercise, followed by a painstaking process of streamlining and clustering. Many of the compromises reached at the June and August-September sessions of the ADP disappeared, as parties returned to positions expressed in Geneva in February 2015.

The iisd also included a [detailed analysis](#) of the negotiation positions of different countries at the last session together with more detail about the conclusions. The [UNFCCC](#) was more positive in its summary of the outcome:

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres said that the draft text includes additional options that reflect the concerns of all countries. "We now have a Party-owned text that is balanced and complete. The challenge for governments is to bring it down to a much more concise and coherent form for adoption in Paris."

French Climate Change Ambassador Laurence Tubiana said: "We have a manageable text for further work in Paris. While much work remains, the text is a good basis for negotiations and negotiations need to start from the first day of the conference."

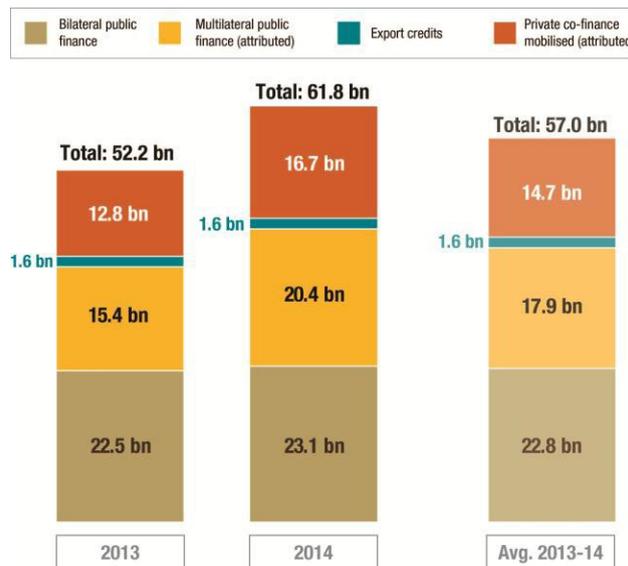
Both Ms. Figueres and Ms. Tubiana agreed that the political process between now and the beginning of the Paris Summit will be central to the success of the meeting

## 3.2 Climate finance

Flows of climate finance from developed to developing countries were one of the potential sticking points at the Paris conference.

Firstly, details of how developed countries will meet the commitment to provide \$100 billion of climate finance (from public and private sources) a year, by 2020, to developing countries to support mitigation and adaptation measures. In October 2015 the [OECD](#) published a report setting out a preliminary analysis of how much climate finance has been provided to developing countries to date. This found that climate finance had reached \$52 billion in 2013 and \$62 billion in 2014:

Mobilised climate finance in 2013 and 2014, by funding source (USD billions)



Source: OECD analysis. (Climate Finance in 2013-14 and the USD 100 billion goal)

The report also identified issues that needed to be addressed which included:

- improving the understanding of climate finance relate in particular to transparency and accountability, as well as to working towards common definitions, methodologies and reporting approaches

## Loss and Damage

There was also the issue of compensation for '[loss and damage](#)' to the poorest countries, which have contributed least to climate change and where there is limited options for adaptation. Developing countries were very keen to ensure the concept was agreed at the Conference. They voiced serious concerns when the [draft text](#) presented at the last meeting in Bonn included a single paragraph on loss and damage. The [final draft text](#) included two options, an expanded section or no reference to loss and damage. Developed countries were concerned about the implications, including financial, for them if it was included in the agreement.

## 4. Intended National Designated Contributions

Paris was also the first time that individual countries aimed to set their own commitments using a bottom up approach, based on Intended National Designated Contributions (INDCs). This is in contrast to the 5.2% global greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for 2012, compared to 1990 levels, which was agreed in Kyoto in 1997 and only applied to developed countries.

There was near-universal acceptance by governments in the run up to the conference of the need to act and to be seen to act. As a result, the expectation was that some form of agreement will be reached in Paris. However, as countries would be putting forward their own INDCs it was viewed as unlikely that any agreement would set the necessarily stringent targets that would reflect scientific advice, as set out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Even if it did, this would only ensure that it is 66% likely that global temperature increases will be limited to 2°C

Countries had an informal deadline of 31 March 2015 to submit their INDCs, The EU, the US, Switzerland, Norway, Mexico, Russia and Gabon did so. These countries represent 29 % of global emissions. By August 28, [56 countries representing](#) 62% of global emissions had submitted their INDCs. India and Brazil had not yet done so.

### EU INDC

The principles of the EU wide INDC was agreed by the European Council in October 2014.<sup>3</sup> This set out an overall target but did not allocate targets to individual countries:

The European Council endorsed a binding EU target of an at least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. To that end:

2.1 the target will be delivered collectively by the EU in the most cost-effective manner possible, with the reductions in the ETS and non-ETS sectors amounting to 43% and 30% by 2030 compared to 2005, respectively;

2.2 all Member States will participate in this effort, balancing considerations of fairness and solidarity;

The [INDC](#) was submitted in March 2015, with this target. However, it was [criticised](#) for lack of detail and because it would appear to include emissions from land use, land change and forestry (LULCF) which would effectively water down the necessary reductions from other sectors:

Policy on how to include Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry into the 2030 greenhouse gas mitigation framework will be

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<sup>3</sup> European Council Conclusions, [EUCO 169/14](#), 24 October 2014

established as soon as technical conditions allow and in any case before 2020.

The EU INDC ruled out the use of international credits to meet targets.

## 4.1 Criticisms of INDCs

As INDCs continued to be published one of the [problems](#) that became evident was a lack of an agreed approach to presenting them, which makes them very difficult to accurately compare or aggregate. This was [exemplified](#) by the lack of a common base year in different INDC's, as set out by RTCC:

- The US doesn't like 1990 because its emissions kept rising after that; it's easier to target cuts from 2005, when the country's emissions more or less peaked.
- The EU, on the other hand, likes 1990. Communism collapsed in 1989, which led to massive drops in Eastern European emissions, making cuts since then look really impressive.
- Developing countries, meanwhile, don't have emissions data going back that far, so comparing on that basis would require guesswork.

The biggest problem with this bottom up approach, which was expected even as it was agreed, was that the cumulative effect of all these pledges would not be enough to meet the cuts required to limit temperature increases to 2°C. Carbon Action Tracker examined [submissions](#) to September 2015 and found this to be the case. It also concluded that other than the EU and China most countries do not have policies in place to meet the targets they have committed to in their INDCs:

Around 65% of global emissions are covered by the "Intended Nationally Determined Contributions" (INDCs) submitted by 29 Governments as of 1 September 2015. The CAT has assessed 15 of these INDCs, covering 64.5% of global emissions, and has rated seven as "inadequate," six "medium" and only two as "sufficient."

The CAT analysis shows that in order to hold global warming below 2°C, governments need to significantly strengthen the INDCs they have submitted to date: they need to collectively reduce global emissions by a further 12-15 GtO<sub>2e</sub> by 2025, and 17-21 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> by 2030.

The projected emissions pathway from the combined INDCs also show a very different situation in 2025 than in 2030. If the current 2030 INDCs are locked in, holding warming below 2°C would become almost infeasible, as CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction rates would need to exceed 5% a year after 2030, and would make holding warming below 1.5°C almost impossible.

The submission by New Zealand, which was [accused](#) of using creative accounting to allow emissions to rise also highlighted the problems which face the negotiations. Carbon Tracker concluded "if most other countries were to follow New Zealand's approach, global warming would exceed 3–4°C".

Because of this there were calls for any agreement at Paris to be a flexible agreement that is reviewed periodically and can be ratcheted up if necessary. This also led the previous Coalition Government to call for countries to make commitments to pre-2020 mitigation actions, together with more ambitious long-term commitments.

Nicaragua refused to submit an INDC because it believed that “voluntary responsibility is a path to failure”. Paul Oquist, lead envoy at the conference for the country [stated](#): “We don’t want to be an accomplice to taking the world to 3 to 4 degrees and the death and destruction that represents”.

### 4.2 Aggregated INDCs

The UNFCCC published its [report](#) on the aggregated 146 Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that had been received by 1 October on 30 October 2015. It concluded that emissions in 2030 would exceed a cost-effective path to 2°C:

UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres said the pledges, if implemented, would reduce expected warming of 4-5C to around 2.7C. While the ambition is too low to avoid 2C, she added that current pledges are a “foundation on which even higher ambition can be built”.

Further analysis from Climate Brief is available [here](#). The World Resources Institute drew the following [conclusions](#) from the report:

- INDCs represent greater climate action and go beyond business-as-usual emissions trends
- Countries still need to do more
- The Paris agreement can increase ambition
- Countries are taking adaptation seriously
- The agreement must provide support for implementation and increasing ambition

## 5. UK priorities

The Coalition Government was committed to the international negotiations process, stating that the most cost-effective and reliable way to achieve a safe limit on temperature increases was through an international, legally binding agreement with mitigation commitments for all. It also published [Paris 2015: Securing our prosperity through a global climate change agreement](#) in 2014.

After the 2015 general election the Amber Rudd, the new Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, [reiterated](#) the Government’s commitment to an international agreement stating in a speech in July 2015:

Getting a global deal on climate change in Paris in December is one of my highest priorities this year.

And all the signs are that a deal is in reach. There is still a long way to go and there is no room for complacency.

Key for me will be to ensure three things:

- First - that the deal must keep the global 2 degrees goal within reach, because that is what the science tells us will avoid the worst effects of climate change – and so that must remain our ambition.
- Second - the deal must include a set of legally binding rules that give us confidence that countries will deliver on their commitments.
- Third - that we agree a process of regular five yearly reviews where we can increase our global ambition, taking account of what the science says is required and taking advantage of the increasingly lower costs of renewables and advances in technology.

As a whole, the deal needs to send a clear signal that the future is low carbon. By doing that we will change investment incentives and unleash the private sector to lead the transformation that we need.

The Government also wrote a [letter](#) to the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee in September 2015, restating priorities for the conference. In this the Minister set out pushing other countries to come up with ambitious emission reductions commitments in their INDCs as a main priority. She also set out the UK's further priorities:

Other UK priorities includes seeking to agree a five yearly cycle of reviews that would provide the opportunity to reflect on progress and increase ambition, including in relation to 2030, capitalising on the falling cost of low carbon technology. This will be important as we do not expect the cumulative commitments contained in countries' INDCs to be enough to put us on track to meet the global below 2°C goal. We are also building support for legally binding rules to help ensure transparency and accountability so that there can be confidence that the action committed is being taken. Alongside this we are pressing for a long term goal that will provide a clear signal of the commitment to a low carbon future and help provide business with the certainty it needs to invest at the scale it required.<sup>4</sup>

## UK Policy

The UK has been seen as leader in the international negotiations up to date and the Government has [restated](#) its commitment to an agreement. However, the recent changes in renewables support policy, which have seen the UK drop down the league table of [attractiveness for renewables investment](#) have resulted in [concerns](#) both at home and abroad about the UK's continued commitment to implementing the changes required to meet climate targets. More recently the Government [announced](#) that it would be consulting on phasing out unabated coal generation by 2025 and would be making gas generation a priority.

## 5.1 Trends in UK greenhouse gas emissions

The Climate Change Act 2008 established a target for the UK to reduce its emissions by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. To ensure that regular progress is made towards this long-term target, the Act also

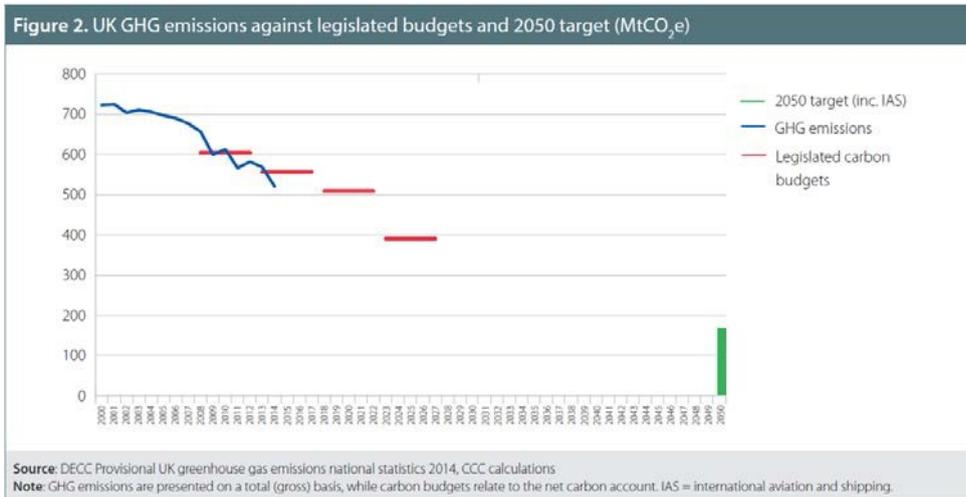
<sup>4</sup> Letter from Secretary of State, DECC to Chairman, Energy and Climate Change Committee [Climate negotiation priorities for COP 21 Paris](#) September 3, 2015

established a system of five-yearly carbon budgets, to serve as stepping stones on the way. The first four carbon budgets, leading to 2027, have been set in law.

The UK is currently in the second carbon budget period (2013-17).<sup>5</sup> By 2025, UK emissions must be 50% lower than in 1990, emitting on average less than 390 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e each year from 2023 to 2027.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) undertakes an annual assessment on whether the UK is on course to meet its carbon budgets, and reports this progress to Parliament. On 30 June 2015, the CCC published its most recent assessment of progress towards meeting these targets.<sup>6</sup>

This report explains that provisional emissions statistics for 2014 indicate that UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions were 520MtCO<sub>2</sub>e (the legislated in-year carbon budget was 556MtCO<sub>2</sub>e). This represents an 8% decrease compared with 2013, is 36% below 1990 levels and less than the in-year carbon budget for the period 2013-17.



Source: Committee on Climate Change, [Reducing emissions and preparing for climate change: 2015 Progress Report to Parliament](#)

Energy supply is still the largest source of GHG emissions in the UK, followed by transport. Total annual emissions have reduced, but progress in reducing emissions in some sectors (e.g. industrial processes) has been faster than in others (e.g. transport).

<sup>5</sup> Committee on Climate Change, [“Carbon Budgets and targets”](#), Accessed online: 22 September 2015

<sup>6</sup> Committee on Climate Change, [Reducing emissions and preparing for climate change: 2015 Progress Report to Parliament](#), 30 June 2015

## 6. Negotiating Positions

The UINFFCC recognises five regional groupings. However these do not play a major role in the negotiations. Instead countries negotiate in groupings that reflect their common positions. These groupings are not official and therefore have a certain level of fluidity, but the main ones are set out below.

### 6.1 Country Groupings

The **Group of 77 + China** is a group of developing nations, which now consists of 134 member states. The [Group's position](#) was that developed countries, given their historical responsibility, need to take the lead in addressing climate change, recognise common but differentiated responsibilities, and provide financial and technological support to developing countries.

The [Alliance of Small Island States](#) is a coalition of over 44 coastal and low-lying islands states particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. They called for warming to be limited to 1.5°C. They also called for effective climate finance and for the principle of Loss and Damage to be recognised in an agreement and a process or system that addresses it.

The **European Union** negotiated a common position, set out below, which is then conveyed by the country that holds the EU Presidency to conferences.

The **Umbrella Group** in the past had included countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the US. Many of these have strong fossil fuel interests and as a group are often accused of stalling negotiations. However, the recent changes of position of some of the countries, including the US, Australia and Canada, affected how the group operated in Paris.

The **Environmental Integrity Group** (consisting of Mexico, Switzerland, South Korea, Liechtenstein and Monaco) were generally progressive with regards to an agreement.

The **Like Minded Developing Countries** is a group of developing countries with a [strong position](#) on not changing the definition of countries in a way that may increase the requirement for them - as relatively more developed - to reduce emissions or limit their access to climate finance. It also included countries with strong political views on climate equity. The latest meeting in September 2015 was attended by Argentina, Bolivia, China, Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador, Iran, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Malaysia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and India.

**BASIC countries** include Brazil, South Africa, India and China. This group first came together in 2009, although it was not clear to what extent they would continue to work as a group in Paris.

## 6.2 European Union

The UK negotiated as part of the EU block. The EU position was summarised in a brief from the [European Parliamentary Research service](#). The EU has proposed binding targets for 2030 and 2050, reducing the supply of EU ETS allowances after 2020 and for mitigation commitments to be updated every five years:

The EU was among the first Parties to submit its [INDC](#) in March 2015. Based on the October 2014 [European Council conclusions](#) on the 2030 EU climate and energy framework, the EU commits to a binding target of at least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990. In July 2015, the Commission [proposed](#) legislation to limit the supply of allowances in the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) after 2020, in line with its submitted emissions reduction target.

In February 2015, the Commission issued a [communication](#) on the 'Paris Protocol'. It proposes a transparent and dynamic legally binding agreement, whose long-term goal should be to reduce global emissions by at least 60% below 2010 levels by 2050. Mitigation commitments should be binding on all Parties; countries with the highest responsibilities and capabilities would have the most ambitious commitments. The communication advocates a five-year cycle for reviewing and strengthening mitigation commitments. Linking of carbon markets and transfers of mitigation commitments between countries should be allowed. The EU considers that the agreement should provide a framework for shifting investment towards low-emission climate-resilient programmes and policies, and improve the environment for climate-friendly investments.

On 18 September 2015, EU Environment Ministers adopted [conclusions](#) on the COP 21 preparations, calling for a durable, legally binding, agreement, preferably a protocol. The agreement should include mitigation commitments for all Parties, to be updated every five years. Concerned about the slow progress of the negotiations, the Council proposes early ministerial engagement before COP 21 as a way forward.

## 7. Agreement Reached

Agreement was reached on [Paris](#) on 12 December 2015 on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol that will apply to all countries, and come into force by 2020. There has been widespread relief that this had been achieved, whilst also recognising that it is a first step towards limiting anthropogenic climate change to safe levels.

The final agreement was pushed for by a “[High Ambition Coalition](#)” of over 100 countries that did not reveal itself until the second week of the conference. This coalition, which had met in the run up to the conference, included the EU, the US and 75 developing and least developed countries from the Pacific, Caribbean and Africa. Their stated aim was not to accept a minimalist agreement, calling for a 1.5°C temperature goal, a clear pathway for a low carbon future, a five-year review process, and a climate finance package.<sup>7</sup> These countries were then joined by Brazil, Switzerland, Iceland, the Philippines, the Seychelles, Luxembourg, Canada, and eventually Australia.<sup>8</sup> This coalition put pressure on countries such as China and Saudi Arabia who objected to some of the proposals in the draft agreement for a variety of reasons.<sup>9</sup>

### 7.1 Paris Agreement in Detail

An unexpected outcome of the conference was that the ambition of the emissions goal has been increased beyond what was previously agreed to keeping temperatures “well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels”. The agreement also sets an aim for emissions to peak “as soon as possible” and for emissions from human activity and absorption by carbon sinks to balance sometime in the second half of the century.

There are [two documents](#): a 12 page Paris Agreement and a 32 page decision document adopting the Paris Agreement, which sets out the decisions to give effect to the agreement. Agreement was also reached on:

- **Reviewing nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** – developed countries were keen to include a mechanism for a review of the commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions made by individual countries. This is because current contributions are not sufficient to meet the 2°C target and will need to be “ratcheted” up to do so. Developed countries wanted any mechanism to increase ambition to apply to all countries. Agreement was reached that NDCs will be reviewed in 2018, updated every five years, from 2020. The decision document sets out that by 2020 countries should publish NDCs up to 2030.

<sup>7</sup> Business Green, COP21: '[High ambition coalition](#)' vows to strengthen Paris text, 9 December 2015

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian, [Australia belatedly joins 'coalition of ambition' at Paris climate talks](#), 11 December 2015

<sup>9</sup> The Independent, [Saudi Arabia accused of 'blocking' climate change deal at Paris summit](#), 9 December 2014

- **Climate finance** – the target for \$100bn a year of climate finance by 2020 will continue beyond to 2025. One of the debates during the conference was to what level wealthier countries that are considered developing under the UNFCCC, including countries such as China, South Korea and Malaysia, should contribute to this finance. Agreement was reached that developing countries will be “encouraged to provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily”.
- **Loss and damage** – developed countries were concerned about the inclusion of the concept of loss and damage to countries caused by climate change in the agreement and any implications of financial liability for historic emissions. The agreement recognizes “the importance of averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage” but the decisions document sets out that this does not provide a basis for any liability or compensation.
- **Transparency and reporting** – developed countries were keen to ensure a reporting mechanism was included in the agreement. The agreement provides for an enhanced transparency mechanism for action and support. It includes the provision that all countries should regularly provide a national inventory of emissions and sinks, together with information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving NDCs. The decision document states that the information should be provided at least every two years.

The UK Government [welcomed](#) the agreement stating that it marks a clear turning point towards a sustainable and low carbon future. The long-term goal agreed:

Sends a strong signal to investors, businesses, and policy-makers about the shift to a low carbon economy and provides confidence that will help drive the scale of investment needed. As a global leader in low carbon goods and services the UK is in a unique position to benefit from this.<sup>10</sup>

## 8. Ratification

The agreement will enter force when 55 parties, covering at least 55% of global emissions, have ratified it.

In advance of a [signing ceremony](#) convened by the United Nations in New York for 22 April 2016, to which more than 130 countries confirmed attendance, the White House [announced](#) in March that both the US and China would be attending:

The United States and China will sign the Paris Agreement on April 22nd and take their respective domestic steps in order to join the Agreement as early as possible this year.

The UN also published a document [Entry into force of the Paris agreement: legal requirements and implications](#) on 7 April 2016.

Further details of the ongoing ratification process aimed at bringing the Agreement into force by the end of 2016 can be found in the Library Paper on [Ratifying the Paris Climate Agreement](#)

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<sup>10</sup> DECC, [A historic new global climate agreement has been struck at the United Nations conference on climate change in Paris](#), 12 December 2015

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