

FORUM: General Assembly

ISSUE: Measures to Strengthen Global Cooperation to Combat Climate Change and Achieve Net Zero Emissions

STUDENT OFFICER: Na Ye Kim

POSITION: Head Chair of General Assembly

Introduction

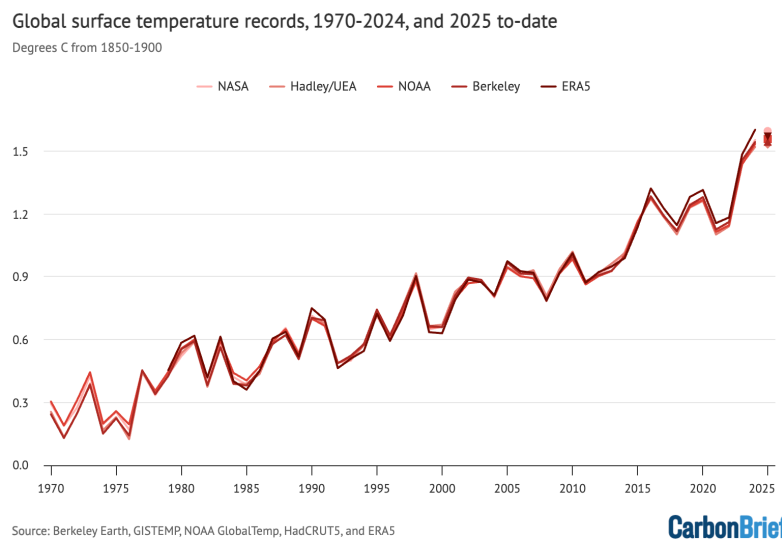


Figure 1: Global surface temperature records from 1970 to 2025

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the biggest threats to civilization. The effects are already visible, and it is expected to become more catastrophic unless timely action is undertaken. It is clearly stated in the United States Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), that people should “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. The International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) opinion stated on July 23rd, 2025, further highlights this point, affirming that climate change is an “urgent and existential threat”, reinforcing its severe and far-reaching impacts on both the ecosystems and human communities. Furthermore, it has confirmed that greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions are “unequivocally caused by human activities,” and member states must exercise due diligence to prevent further environmental harm, and cooperate in good faith with efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (Dugal). Nonetheless, the influences of climate change are not distributed to a specific country, hence creating a global effect in the world. This means every country is on the threat to become the victims of the problem. Sometimes, it results in unequal impacts in some regions, such as Africa receiving the hardest hit from climate change including increase in droughts, floods and food insecurity despite only contributing 3.8% of the global



TIANMUN

emission. In this vein, it is inevitable for the General Assembly to create feasible and effective solutions to acknowledge that international cooperation is the most essential pathway to collectively address this problem (Mariani).

Background

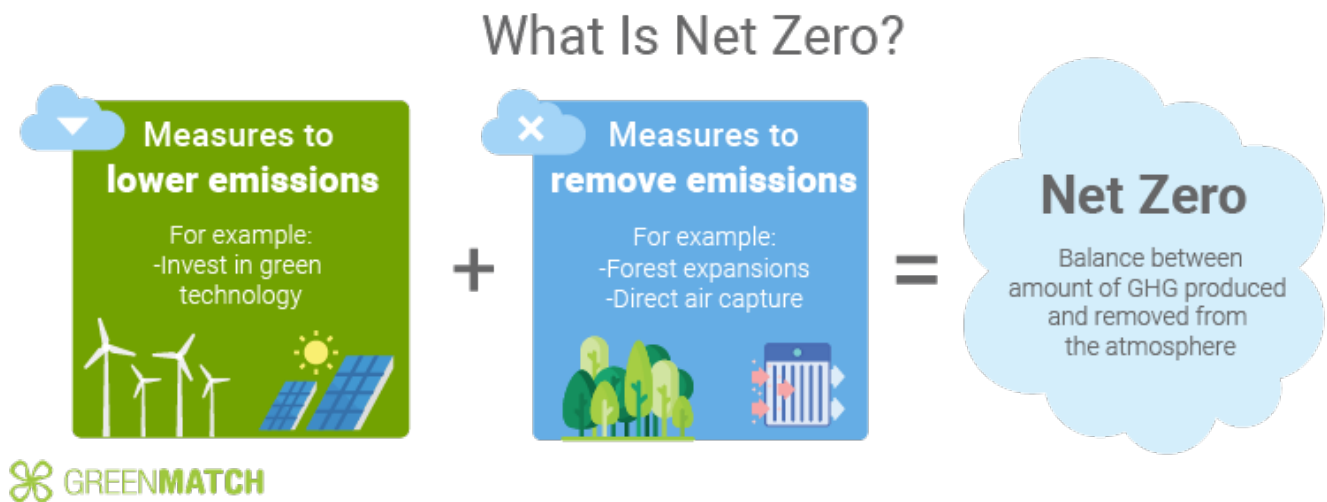


Figure 2: Diagram explaining the concept of Net Zero

Climate change is originally defined as long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns which its cause can be natural, due to changes in activity of the sun or volcanic eruptions. Nonetheless, with increasing use of fossil fuels from the industrial revolution, the GHGs emission has risen, trapping the sun's heat in our atmosphere and raising the temperature of our planet. Major GHGs include carbon dioxide and methane which results from using fossil fuels. Another common cause of increasing GHGs includes agriculture, oil and gas operation, clearing land and cutting down forests (What Is Climate Change?).

Consequences of climate change are like a ripple effect; it is interconnected to each other. A single impact in the environment engenders countless socioeconomic effects in our society. The Arctic is one of the ecosystems which is the most vulnerable to climate change, with the melting land ice sheets and glaciers resulting in rising sea levels and damaged coral reefs. Subsequently, weather patterns gets impacted, with increasing heatstroke, droughts and flooding. This ultimately affects the function of our food chain, health and infrastructure (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). Specifically, some people are known to be more vulnerable to climate impacts, especially those living in small island nations and other developing countries. Sea level rise and saltwater intrusion has impacted them to be displaced and relocated, losing their precious home (What Is Climate Change?). Furthermore, it is also

likely to exacerbate political instability, migration crises and intrastate warfare, with increased military spending to repair or rebuild existing infrastructure.

In order to resolve this issue at hand, a creative idea that has been developed is “net zero”. Net zero refers to reducing carbon emissions to a small number of residual emissions, which then can be absorbed and durably stored by nature and other carbon dioxide removal methods, leaving “zero” in the atmosphere. This idea was supported by research indicating how in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and retain a livable planet, global temperature must be limited to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Unfortunately, the Earth is already 1.2 degrees warmer compared to the pre-industrial revolution period, while the emission continues to rise. As a result, it was deduced that emissions need to be reduced by 45% in 2030 and ultimately reach net zero by 2050. Transitioning to a net-zero state is one of the greatest challenges the Earth has faced. It requires a complete transformation of our consumption patterns and usage of energy. These methods include replacing non-renewable sources, the fossil fuels with renewable sources such as wind or solar energy.

Nonetheless, there are numerous obstacles faced when achieving Net Zero, and it is discovered by the scientists that there is an 86% chance of the Earth’s temperature rising over 1.5 degrees in the next five years (Dawson). With its characteristic of requiring collaborative effort, international cooperation is crucially needed to overcome this issue.

Problems Raised

Free-riding factor

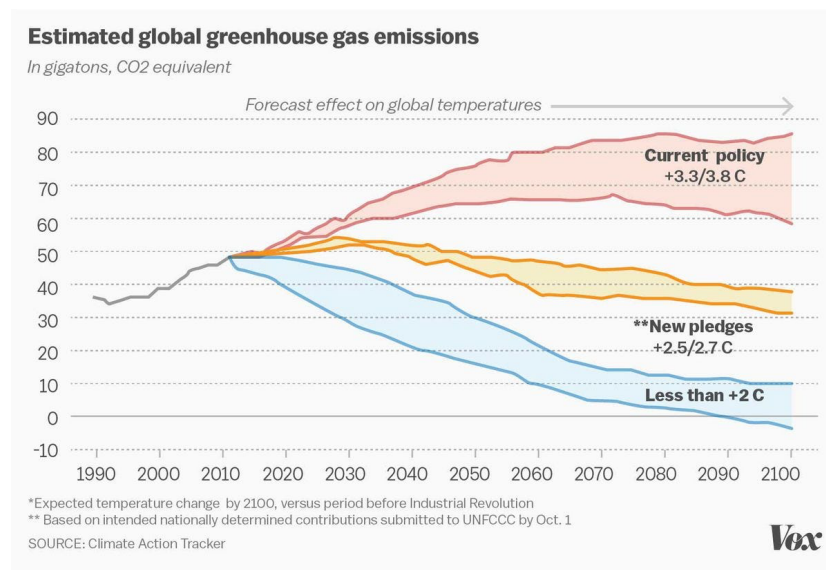


Figure 3: Graph revealing the impact of free riders on the lines for current policy and new pledges

A crucial aspect of impacts created by climate change is that the damage is not necessarily distributed to the country which generated the emissions. Hence, there is a possibility in which the



TIANMUN

expenditures to reduce emissions could not benefit the country paying but other completely unrelated countries. These countries may include those heavily reliant on fossil fuels, acting as free-riders by benefiting from other nations' climate expenditures without contributing themselves. Continuation of this situation made some countries with the biggest expenditure to invest in minimizing the effects of climate change in their own land, not for reducing the net emission of the whole world (Mariani).

This problem is exacerbated when discussing the priorities of the nations. Decisions to reduce fossil fuel are often weighed against immediate local returns such as investments in infrastructure, schools and hospitals, especially in developing nations. In these situations, the political leader of the nation could make decisions that will benefit their next election, making more visible investments (Mariani). This political phenomena is especially prominent when a significant part of the population is climate change skeptics, wishing for direct and visible return in their lives, instead of long-term investment in achieving net-zero emission (Anderson).

Mistrust between countries



Figure 4: Leaders of India and China

Another problem generated was the constant blame game between the developing and developed nations. Developing countries often argue that developed nations have benefitted the most from the Industrial Revolution initially. Consequently, developing countries contend that it is now time for the developed countries to bear the consequences of the emissions, not them. Nonetheless, developed countries are not willing to sacrifice their own economic development for the good of the whole world, especially without a certain form of compensation (Mariani).

For instance, two biggest emitters of this world, China and India have been regularly arguing that the developed countries are the ones which have caused climate change from the 1850s. They state the theory of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, meaning that the share of responsibility depends



on the development of the countries. Nevertheless, developed countries often enunciate the opposite, evoking how the grouping of countries is now outdated and requires revising. Having been labelled as developed and developing back in 1992, many critics say that developments have been made, especially for countries like China and India, which are now prominent economies and GHGs emitters. These disagreements delay the creation of according fundings and solutions to effectively handle global cooperation.

Lack of enforcement

Global cooperation is always built on an identifiable source of threat. Nevertheless, the consequences of climate change are complex, all nations are responsible and hence the target of its destructive nature. With its characteristic of not bringing immediate life-threatening dangers, many member states do not take the responsibility to resolve this issue at hand. Consequently, the consequences will build up over time and reach the level where it cannot be controlled. The lack of enforcement mechanisms when handling global climate change will ultimately impact the efficiency of countless acts.

International Actions

Kyoto Protocol



Figure 5: UNFCCC Conference in Kyoto, 1997

Having been created in Kyoto, Japan in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was a previous international agreement proposed to reduce carbon emissions and lower the GHGs in the atmosphere by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Having been ratified by 192 countries in the world, its primary purpose is to demand the developed countries with higher levels of industrialization



to reduce emissions and mitigate the following consequences. In order to ensure active participation of the member states, the member states were given carbon credits, a permit or certificate that is indicative of the right to emit one metric of carbon. If a country contributed to a higher level of carbon emission or did not contribute to limiting global warming, they were penalized with limits for the next period being adjusted accordingly. Nonetheless, this protocol has placed unrealistic expectations on developing countries, making it only feasible to be implemented for developed countries, hindering the overall global ability to reduce GHGs concentrations. Thus, it is often said to be a successful baseline for steppingstone for the future treaties, yet it is criticized as the beneficial impact was not guaranteed. Furthermore, world's leading emitters of GHGs including the United States and China did not participate in this protocol, limiting the potential for the whole world to reduce the GHGs emission. Ultimately, this ambitious international agreement was officially expired by 2020 and replaced by the Paris Agreement (Gendre).

The Paris Agreement

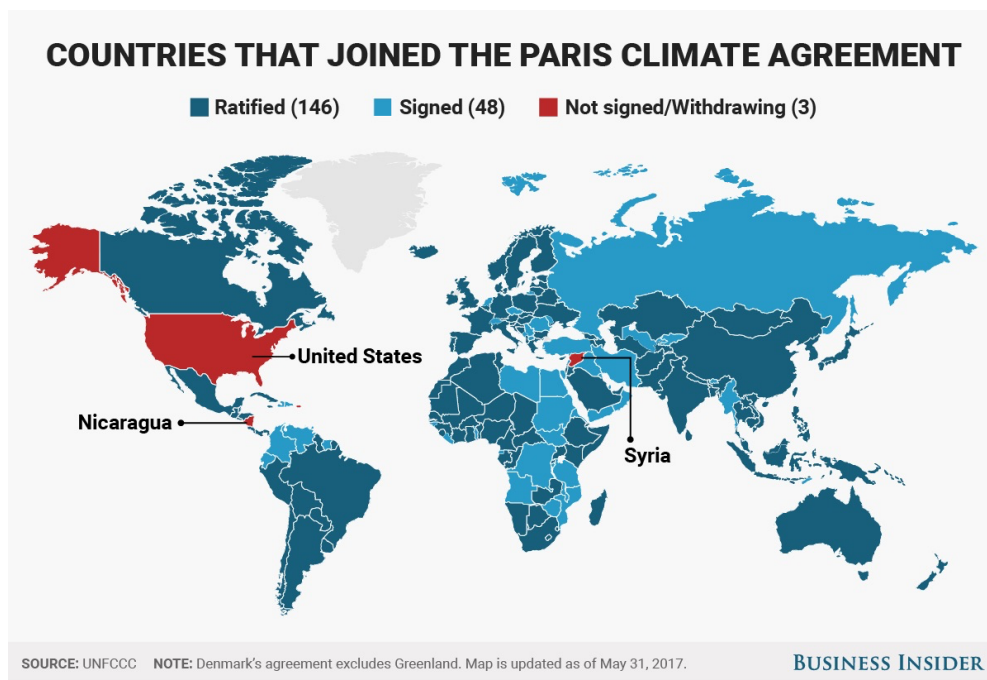
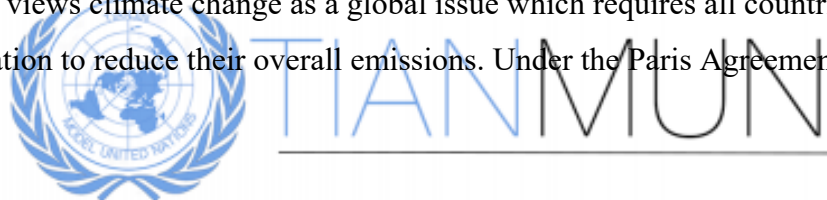


Figure 6: Countries that ratified the Paris Agreement

Paris Agreement is an international treaty that aims to fight against climate change, coming into effect by November of 2016. Its major goal is to reduce the level of global GHGs emission to keep the global average temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrialization levels, which is the global temperature rise limit set by the scientists. If the climate change exceeds this level, it is expected to result in catastrophic and potentially irreversible changes. In contrast to the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement views climate change as a global issue which requires all countries to commit to the equal level of dedication to reduce their overall emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, member states are



expected to submit their nationally determined contribution (NDC) under an enhanced transparency framework, called ETF. By using the ETF, the progress considering emissions reductions and actions taken organized into NDC can be effectively monitored through international authorities. It also encourages and encourages countries to use science and technology to mitigate the consequences, through global partnership such as The Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Despite being ratified by 195 parties and signaling progress in meaningful endeavor, the Paris Agreement is not sufficient on its own, more active participation and broader commitments still remains crucial (Anderson).

Conference of Parties (COPs)



Figure 7: COP29 at Baku, Azerbaijan

COP stands for Conference of Parties, which is a generic phrase that refers to a committee created after an international treaty is signed, managing decision making and implementation of the treaties. Although the term is used for various occasions, it has come to be especially associated with the meeting of one particular committee, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). With a total of 154 countries signing the UNFCCC in June 1992, the COP meeting has been scheduled annually to discuss progresses and achievements. Each COP is usually called by its number in the series, such as COP30 being the 30th COP meeting. Every year, a different country becomes the president of COP and becomes responsible to organize and run that year's meeting. Not only do politicians, diplomats and national government representatives are invited to COP but also many others participate to influence the outcome, pushing forward for climate action and justice. Throughout the conference, member states had the opportunity to discuss the most recent climate issues, submitted NDCs and turned those negotiations into actions. ("Everything you need to know about COP.").

Key Players



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

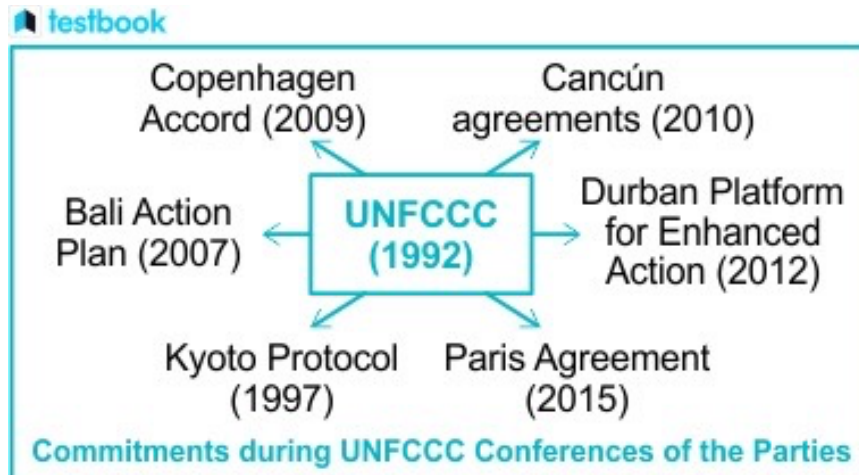


Figure 8: Commitments of UNFCCC

Established during the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), UNFCCC is an environmental treaty negotiated under the UN. Having 198 countries ratified, UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994. Its ultimate objective is to stabilize GHGs concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. It is found as one of the first international actions completed for this issue that bound member states to act in the interests of human safety, even in the face of scientific uncertainty. The Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and COPs are all held by UNFCCC, remarking its prominent influence regarding the world's climate crisis.

European Union (EU)

With all countries ratified to the Paris Agreement, EU countries are all legally committed to combat climate change by shifting to a climate-neutral economy with net-zero GHGs emissions by 2050. This goal was set in December 2019, resulting in the launch of the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal highlights the need for all policy areas to contribute in fighting climate change. To do so, they have the key goals of climate neutrality, circular economy, clean industry, healthier environment, sustainable farming and climate justice and fairness. By their active actions, they were able to achieve over 30% cut of emission by 2020, which was an overachievement from the initial goal of reduction by 20%.

United States of America

Being the second leading emitter of GHGs, the United States of America plays a pivotal role in reducing emissions. Nevertheless, many modifications have been made to their environmental regulations, especially since the inauguration of president Trump. On the day of his inauguration, he announced that the USA will withdraw from the Paris Agreement, just like his attempt in 2017 which was



reversed by President Biden in 2021. Simultaneously, he has declared a “national energy emergency” and halted federal support for renewable energy and electric vehicle incentives, reversing environmental regulations from the Biden-era. This abandonment reveals how the Paris Agreement is now losing its efficiency due to lack of participants, turning international cooperation a harder challenge to overcome (McGrath).

Possible Solutions

Making climate pledges binding

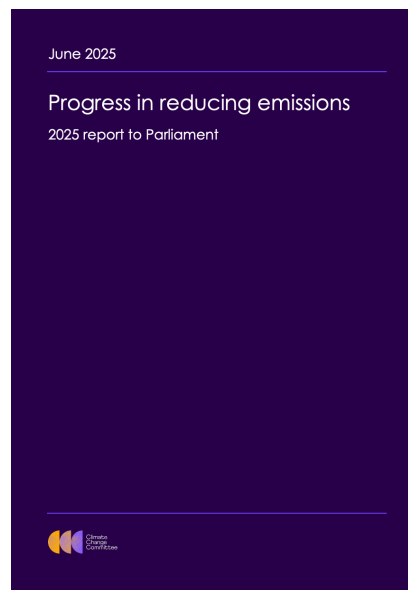


Figure 9: Latest Report created by Climate Change Committee

One of the first steps that must be taken to achieve net-zero emission is to make climate pledges more enforcing and binding. This could be done through shifting from searching voluntary targets to legally binding commitments. To do so, it is essential to introduce new enforcement mechanisms and clearer accountability (Anderson).

An impactful method to make pledges binding is to integrate international pledges into domestic law. For instance, the UK has established the Climate Change Act in 2008, becoming the first country to come up with a long-term legally binding framework to reduce carbon emissions. It contains a target requiring emission reductions to Net Zero by 2050, which aligns with international Net Zero goal (Climate action). Simultaneously, they have established the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to advise the government through recommending climate targets and policies while publishing reports about assessing the progress being made. Through this integration, the UK has been an active and leading participant in tackling climate change, with other nations such as Denmark, France, Mexico, Sweden and New Zealand publishing similar law acts (Climate action).

Align trade and climate policy

Another effective way to achieve net-zero emission is to align trade and climate policy. For instance, a government could set and enforce standards for emissions-intensive industries such as car industry. At the same time, they could enhance market access for climate-friendly products. By doing so, it will increase the production of climate-friendly products while limiting the use of emission-intensive industries, engendering them to create more eco-friendly products. Finally, the government could use trade policy and agreements to accelerate low-carbon solutions such as renewable energy. These solutions could be further polished and elaborated by collaborating with organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or National Trade Ministries (Anderson).

Improve transparency and data sharing

Improving the transparency in data sharing is crucial to resolve this on-going crisis. For instance, governments could expand access to open-source climate and emissions data. At the same time, they should strengthen reporting mechanisms and legal assistance for climate litigation. This means that support is shared through all collaboration platforms and each member state will be able to come up with their own adaptive solutions to achieve net-zero emissions, especially since they can access diverse data sources (Anderson).

Glossary

International cooperation

International cooperation refers to consolidated efforts of nations to work together in global issues, often facilitated by international organizations. It is essential to reduce GHGs emission and achieve net-zero (International Cooperation).

Free riders

Free riders are those who benefit from collective efforts to resolve climate change but do not actively contribute. They are the key reason why many nations are reluctant in actively participating in behavioral climate action.

The Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)

SBTi refers to a global partnership which works to enable companies to set emissions reduction targets to mitigate GHGs emission through latest climate science and technology (Safdie).



Carbon Credit

Carbon credits are permits that allow the owner of the credit to emit a designated amount of GHGs. The ultimate goal of this system is to reduce the emission of GHGs to the atmosphere (Kenton).

Climate neutrality

Climate neutrality refers to the state in which GHGs emissions generated by human activity reduce to the level in which there is no impact left on the climate system.



Sources

- Anderson, Kara. "International Cooperation: Key to Combating the Climate Crisis." *Greenly*, 2 June 2025. Accessed 16 Aug. 2025.
- "Paris Agreement: All you Need to Know." *Greenly*, 30 June 2023, [greenly.earth/en-gb/blog/ecology-news/paris-agreement-all-you-need-to-know#anchor-articles_content\\$2617a0cd-a774-48ef-a16a-82c80c8f0730](https://greenly.earth/en-gb/blog/ecology-news/paris-agreement-all-you-need-to-know#anchor-articles_content$2617a0cd-a774-48ef-a16a-82c80c8f0730). Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.
- "Climate action." Climate Change Committee, [www.theccc.org.uk/climate-action/#:~:text=The%20Climate%20Change%20Act%20\(2008,to%20Net%20Zero%20by%202050](http://www.theccc.org.uk/climate-action/#:~:text=The%20Climate%20Change%20Act%20(2008,to%20Net%20Zero%20by%202050). Accessed 8 Sept. 2025.
- "Climate change: what the EU is doing." *European Council*, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/climate-change/. Accessed 30 Aug. 2025.
- Commitments of UNFCCC. Testbook*, testbook.com/ias-preparation/unfccc. Accessed 30 Aug. 2025.
- COP29 at Baku, Azerbaijan. United Nations*, news.un.org/en/events/cop29/date/2024-11-11. Accessed 31 Aug. 2025.
- Countries that joined the Paris Agreement. Business Insider*, www.businessinsider.com/195-countries-that-signed-paris-climate-agreement-accord-deal-2017-5. Accessed 31 Aug. 2025.
- Dawson, Daniel. "News Briefs Global Temperatures Expected to Rise 2°C by 2030." *Olive Oil Times*, 3 June 2025, www.oliveoiltimes.com/world/global-temperatures-expected-to-rise-2oc-by-2030/140446. Accessed 9 Sept. 2025.
- Diagram explaining the concept of Net Zero. Greenmatch*, www.greenmatch.co.uk/blog/2021/02/renewable-path-to-net-zero-emissions.
- Dugal, Manleen. "ICJ Advisory Opinion: The World's Top Court Has Spoken Unequivocally on States' Climate Change Obligations." *Earth*, earth.org/icj-advisory-opinion-the-worlds-top-court-has-spoken-unequivocally-on-states-climate-change-obligations/. Accessed 28 Aug. 2025.
- "Everything you need to know about COP." *Global Witness*, 11 Aug. 2025, globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/fossil-fuels/everything-you-need-to-know-about-



cop/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=13050085427&gbraid=0AAAAADm6LOBXE4Cr-ZZLwz65cosVHeTwD&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIxY6Jj-6xjwMV3tUWBR1oIwHeEAAYASAEgKpv_D_BwE. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

Gendre, Ines. "Kyoto Protocol: All You Need to Know." *Greenly*, 29 Sept. 2022, greenly.earth/en-gb/blog/ecology-news/kyoto-protocol-all-you-need-to-know#anchor-articles_content\$af66347d-78d4-494d-9722-031d021e8ce4. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

Global surface temperature records from 1970 to 2025. Carbon Brief, www.carbonbrief.org/state-of-the-climate-2025-close-behind-2024-as-the-hottest-start-to-a-year/. Accessed 28 Aug. 2025.

"Identifying American climate change free riders and motivating sustainable behavior." *Nature*, www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-57042-w#citeas.

"International Cooperation." *Science Direct*, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/international-cooperation#:~:text=International%20cooperation%20refers%20to%20the,often%20facilitated%20by%20international%20organizations. Accessed 30 Aug. 2025.

Kenton, Will. "Carbon Credits: What They Are, How They Work, and Who Buys Them." *Investopedia*, www.investopedia.com/terms/c/carbon_credit.asp. Accessed 30 Aug. 2025.

Leaders of India and China. German Institute for Global and Area Studies, www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/competition-and-cooperation-india-and-china-in-the-global-climate-regime. Accessed 8 Sept. 2025.

Mariani, Pedro. "Climate Change and International Cooperation." *Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative Social Impact Review*, 2 Feb. 2025, www.sir.advancedleadership.harvard.edu/articles/climate-change-and-international-cooperation. Accessed 17 Aug. 2025.

McGrath, Matt. "Trump vows to leave Paris climate agreement and 'drill, baby, drill.'" *BBC*, 21 Jan. 2025, www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20px1e05w0o. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Climate Change Impacts*. 13 June 2025, https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impacts.



TIANMUN

Safdie, Stephanie. "What is the Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi)?" *Greenly*, 5 Aug. 2025, greenly.earth/en-gb/blog/company-guide/what-is-the-science-based-targets-initiative-sbti. Accessed 30 Aug. 2025.

UNFCCC Conference in Kyoto, 1997. *Nature*, www.nature.com/articles/474576a. Accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

"What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?" *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/what-is-the-united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change. Accessed 24 Aug. 2025.

