

COP26

Country overview and stated priorities for largest emitters and selected others*

12 April 2021

Sources: Clean Air in London and BBC Monitoring

*ranked by territorial emissions in 2019

Global Carbon Atlas: <http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/en/CO2-emissions>

Executive Summary

This report pulls together an overview of the world's 20 most polluting countries and their response to climate change and air pollution, with particular reference to the forthcoming COP26 meeting in November this year.

In addition, it covers a group of additional countries in the Middle East (Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, and UAE) as well as the Small Island Developing States to capture their attitude and approach to the challenges of climate change.

Each entry provides a summary overview of the impact and importance of climate change and the challenges facing a country as well as its attitudes to solving these issues. In addition, there is a summary of three to five 'stated priorities' for each country or entity together with online links to further information or supporting evidence.

The report ends with a section on key players, initiatives and events within the EU and the UN.

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Australia

Overview (15th largest emitter in 2019)

Australia is one of the world's biggest per capita greenhouse gas emitters. The worsening heat waves, drought and the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires clearly revealed Australia's vulnerabilities to climate changes.

Despite the deteriorating climatic conditions, the Australian government has been criticised for not being resolute in committing to meet its zero emissions target by 2050.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would pursue emissions reducing technologies, such as carbon capture and storage and hydrogen. He told an Australian newspaper: "That is how you actually get to net zero. You don't get there by just having some commitment".

Labour leader Anthony Albanese blasted Australia's inaction on climate change as "embarrassing". Mr Albanese, stressing the opposition's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, said: "When it comes to these issues they shouldn't be allowed to hold the entire country back".

In December 2020, the Australian government formally submitted its updated climate pledge document to the UN, which stated that Australia is committed to greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030.

A spokesperson for Angus Taylor, the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction defended the Government's position by stating: "On a per capita or emissions intensity basis, Australia's 2030 target is more ambitious than those adopted by France, Norway, Canada, Japan or South Korea. Since 2005, Australia's emissions have fallen faster than the G20 average, the OECD average and faster than Japan, New Zealand and the United States".

Environment Minister Sussan Ley said: "Climate adaptation is about taking practical actions to help our environment, our communities and our economy deal with the impacts of climate change that are already taking place".

Greens leader Adam Bandt said: "the Coalition is driving us off the climate cliff, but want to let us know they've packed a box of band-aids for the trip".

The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer survey has found that 36% of Australians are more afraid of climate change than catching Covid-19. Around 66% of people are worried about the ill effects of climate change and they want government to do something about it.

Due to the 2019-2020 bushfires and heat waves, environment has emerged as a top concerning issue for 89% of Australians.

There is a rise in climate activism in Australia due to the worsening climatic conditions and due to the government's failure to reduce the emissions. Australia's climate issue is not just restricted to election campaigns and people are now taking it to the streets.

In September 2019, an estimated 300,000 Australians participated in climate change rallies across the Australia in one of the largest protest events in the country's history.

Inspired by young Swedish climate activists Greta Thunberg, several school going students in Australia, including Harriet O'Shea Carre and Milou Albrecht have started the School Strike For Climate (SS4C) movement in Australia.

Eight teenagers from across Australia filed a class action against the Australian government. They are challenging the federal Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley, to protect young people from climate change and the future harms of coal mining.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Net zero as soon as possible and preferably by 2050

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said: "Our goal is to reach net zero emissions as soon as possible and preferably by 2050". However, this goal divides the coalition government.

Links: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/morrison-eyeing-more-ambitious-climate-target-of-net-zero-by-2050-20210201-p56yj3.html>

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/climate-change/its-embarrassing-anthony-albanese-says-government-is-holding-australia-back-on-climate-change/news-story/8304673c9bcbbf76dad7fa2713e006a6>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/16/michael-mccormack-dismisses-claims-he-will-stand-down-as-nationals-leader>

Priority: Criticise carbon tariffs

At the G7 summit in Britain in June, the Morrison government will argue carbon tariffs are not aimed at combating climate change, but rather at economic objectives including protecting local industries such as British and European meat, cheese and wine.

Links: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/new-protectionism-australia-to-fight-boris-johnson-s-green-tariff-bid-20210210-p5714j.html>

Priority: Green technology

Summary: The Morrison government is going to identify "clean" hydrogen, energy storage, "low-carbon" steel and aluminium, carbon capture and storage and soil carbon as priority technologies slated for investment as part of its technology roadmap.

Links: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/22/morrison-tech-roadmap-flags-more-investment-in-carbon-capture-and-storage>

<https://reneweconomy.com.au/morrison-recycles-old-tactics-in-bid-to-avoid-zero-emissions-targets-71373/>

Priority: Renewable energy

Summary: The government is spending \$50m on carbon capture and storage to fund pilot projects to cut emissions from industrial facilities and allotted \$70.4m over five years for a regional hydrogen export hub.

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/06/australia-federal-budget-2020-disappointing-environment-budget-lacks-new-funding-for-australian-renewables>

Brazil

Overview (13th largest emitter)

Before Brazil's current President Jair Bolsonaro took office in January 2019, the Latin American country was a global leader in climate change initiatives.

However, even though Brazil has a high dependence on renewable energy sources – about 79% of its energy matrix as of 2018 - and had managed to significantly reduce the rate of deforestation by about 80% from 2005 to 2012, the Bolsonaro administration has rolled back some of these environmental protection efforts by prioritising the economy, among other areas, over the environment.

He has frequently downplayed the country's surge in deforestation and forest fires, and frequently denied the grave impacts of climate change on Brazil.

For example, in June 2020, the Bolsonaro government slashed the budget to fight climate change in Brazil as deforestation surged in the Amazon rainforest.

Bolsonaro has also cut the funds allocated to key environmental enforcement and research institutions by his predecessors and justified this move by saying that they were “suffocating” the economy.

Most recently, in February 2021, despite the push by environmentalists to phase out the use of fossil fuels, Bolsonaro said he was going to introduce a bill to cut taxes on diesel.

He has also said that in order to protect the Amazon rainforest, foreign investment is required.

Air quality continues to be poor across Brazil, especially in cities such as Sao Paulo and Rio. Air pollution has worsened due to the surge in wildfires which has also brought about various respiratory illnesses amid the country's Covid-19 crisis.

Deforestation and the rapid loss of biodiversity is the most prominent climate issue in the country, with most environmental NGOs focused on this area, particularly in light of the fact that the Bolsonaro administration does not consider it to be a top priority for the country, and has voiced its intention to ‘commercialise’ environmentally protected regions such as the Amazon.

Internationally, the Bolsonaro administration's poor environmental track record has led to the stalling of the EU-Mercosur trade deal and warnings of sanctions being imposed by the EU and the administration of US President Joe Biden.

It is worth mentioning that after Brazil's Environment Minister Ricardo Salles attended COP25, he wrote on his Twitter account: “COP 25 came to nothing. Rich countries do not want to open up their carbon credit markets. They demand [environmental protection] measures and point the finger at the rest of the world [...] but when it comes to putting their hands in their pockets, they don't want to. Protectionism and hypocrisy have gone hand in hand, all this time”.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Investment from the private sector, financial contributions to the Amazon fund, Brazil's agribusiness sector.

Summary: The government's Floresta+ [Forest+] programme is an incentive for the national and international market to pay for the upkeep and protection of Brazil's national forests. The "Adopt a Park" programme also invites national and foreign companies to pay for the monitoring, surveillance and other conservation expenses required for national parks located in the Amazon.

Link: <https://www.gov.br/mma/pt-br/assuntos/relacoes-internacionais-1>

Priority: Reducing greenhouse gases via the carbon credit trading market.

Summary: Brazil has recently discussed the use of carbon credits to protect the Amazon with the US government.

Link: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/politica/noticia/2021-02/brazil-us-discuss-environment>

Priority: Achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

Summary: The government says it needs \$10bn in funds from 2021 to meet this goal.

Link: <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c2028j6>

Priority: Combating deforestation.

Summary: Bolsonaro said in November 2020 that he would clamp down on countries who imported "illegal wood" from the Amazon.

Link: <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c2026bki>

Priority: Promoting sustainable economic inclusion and development in the Amazon region for the more than 20 million Brazilians who live there, particularly indigenous groups.

Summary: These were included in Brazil's priorities during COP25.

<https://www.gov.br/mma/pt-br/noticias/na-cop-25-ministro-do-meio-ambiente-defende-inclusao-economica-da-populacao-da-amazonia>

Priority: Asking richer countries who emit more greenhouse gases to compensate Brazil for its "environmental protection services".

Summary: This was included in Brazil's priorities during COP25.

<https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/618646-ministro-vai-defender-compensacoes-ambientais-para-o-brasil-na-cop-25/>

Canada

Overview (11th largest emitter)

The three key themes surrounding climate change in Canada are the oil business, the arctic regions and the indigenous peoples.

Canada is the world's 11th largest carbon emitter, and the country has a big oil industry. For example, 70% of the world's tar sand deposits are said to be in Alberta, Canada, and the government states that Canada's oil sands are the third largest proven oil reserve in the world.

Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been accused by the opposition of "exempting" the biggest polluters from key legislation. He also pushed for the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project that would connect Canada and the US, saying he was disappointed when new US president Joe Biden cancelled it earlier this year.

As in any country, in Canada the environmental targets and the oil business appear to be two separate shows, in two conflicting realities, with Trudeau's administration trying to maintain them both.

Canada is warming at double pace to the global rate, and most Canadians support climate change mitigation measures.

In 2019, the Trudeau government declared a "climate emergency" and recently Trudeau presented new, ambitious plans to achieve "net zero" by 2050. However, critics point out that up until now, Canada has "missed every environmental target it has ever set":

(see for example: <https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2020/11/16/canada-hasnt-hit-a-climate-change-target-since-1992-can-justin-trudeau-break-the-streak.html>).

Canadian glacier melt is the third biggest source of global sea water rise (following glacier melt on the Arctic and Greenland).

Indigenous people in Canada are often outspoken in climate issues, with many of the country's "key" climate change influencers being indigenous activists and indigenous groups. Canada has a very big group of "climate justice" and legal organisations. Indigenous people are also said to be over-represented in the lower socioeconomic bands and therefore more adversely affected by pollution.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Net zero by 2050

Summary: The Trudeau administration's new pollution targets have been advertised by both Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change Jonathan Wilkinson. In November 2020, Wilkinson tweeted: "Promise made, promise kept. Today I tabled our government's plan to legislate net-zero emissions by 2050." In his speech at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit in

December 2020, Trudeau said that Canada would raise its emission reduction ambitions, striving “for the upper end of a range of 32 to 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030”.

One of the steps towards net zero includes a raised levy on carbon pollution “by \$15 a tonne starting in 2023, and rising to \$170 Canadian dollars per ton by 2030”, as Trudeau said in his Climate Ambition Summit speech.

Links: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-11/trudeau-hikes-carbon-tax-positions-canada-to-hit-climate-goal>
<https://twitter.com/jonathanwnv/status/1329517376476471296>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eU7xXyuxY4>

Priority: Building back better

Summary: In his speech at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit in December 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Canada plans a Build Back Better scheme to rebuild after Covid-19, and that this scheme “must contain ambitious plan to take strong action against climate change”. A few months earlier, in July 2020, at a Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA), Minister Wilkinson said that Canada is committed to “building a stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable economy as the world begins to emerge from COVID-19.”

Links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eU7xXyuxY4>
<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/ministerial-on-climate-action-links-pandemic-recovery-to-climate-and-biodiversity-agendas/>

Priority: Investing in international climate finance

Summary: In his December 2020 Climate Ambition Summit speech, Trudeau said that Canada is “committed to making significant investments in international climate finance, because to effectively fight climate change at home, we must fight it everywhere”. He said: “This pandemic has taught us the importance of global cooperation, and we must translate that lesson to how we deal with the climate crisis”.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eU7xXyuxY4>

Priority: Powering past coal

Summary: Canada co-founded Powering Past Coal Alliance in 2017 to bring together governments and the private sector to accelerate the phase-out of unabated coal power.

Links: https://twitter.com/AlokSharma_RDG/status/1369376344057016323
<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/canada-and-the-uk-host-round-table-discussion-on-climate-risks-and-opportunities-with-finance-leaders-and-mark-carney-un-special-envoy-for-climate-action-and-finance-815212215.html>

China

Overview (Largest emitter)

After Xi Jinping's elevation to president in 2012, the issue of climate change took centre stage in China's domestic and foreign policy. In 2017, China enshrined "Xi Jinping Thought" into the party constitution, in which the principle of "new development ideas" detailed the shift to a more sustainable growth model.

The most important announcement from Xi came in September last year, when he committed China to the target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 at the UN General Assembly. A few months later, in December, he said he wanted to reduce carbon emissions per unit of GDP by 65% from the 2005 levels.

China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Other key targets include increasing the share of non-fossil fuel resources to about 25%, expanding forest cover by six billion cubic meters, and generating 1.2 billion kilowatts of solar and wind energy by 2030. China has also said that it will lead "green recovery" post the Covid-19 pandemic through multilateralism and has held meetings with regional allies as well as the European Union.

The announcement on carbon neutrality resulted in many expecting that there would be a further slashing of emissions. However, at the opening of the National People's Congress - China legislature - on 5 March, Premier Li Keqiang said the country would reduce carbon emissions per unit of economic output by 18% over the next five years. Notably, the target remains unchanged from the previous five-year plan.

Last year, China said its energy consumption per unit of GDP had dropped 13.2% between 2015 and 2019, while adding that the pollution control goals set out in the 13th Five-Year Plan were accomplished. However, in many cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, people continue to live with poor air quality.

Furthermore, there are also widespread concerns over China's coal production. Over the past six months, the country ramped up plans of coal-fired power generation. Most recently in February 2021, international researchers found that China had put 38.4 gigawatts of new coal-fired power capacity into operation in 2020.

Stated Priorities

China is yet to submit its nationally determined contributions ahead of COP26, however, President Xi Jinping announced in September last year that China planned to peak emissions by 2030. Based on priorities discussed during COP25 and the Paris agreement talks, China has set targets on a few key issues such as achieving carbon neutrality, pledging to increase forest cover and dependence on non-fossil fuels.

Priority: Achieving carbon neutrality before 2060

Summary: In September 2020, President Xi Jinping announced that China would aim to become “carbon neutral” before 2060. With this, China joined the EU, UK and a few other nations by setting climate targets as mandated by the Paris agreement. At the virtual Climate Ambition Summit on December 12, Xi said that he wants to reduce carbon emissions per unit of GDP by 65% from the 2005 level.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Increasing forest cover

Summary: In 2018, China’s forestry authority made a plan to boost the domestic forestry industry and increase its forest resources to the world's average by 2050.

Link: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/05/c_136875051.htm

Priority: Interim rules for carbon emissions trading

Summary: China’s Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in February 2021 that a set of provisional rules for carbon emissions trading management in China had come into effect. According to a report in the official Xinhua News Agency, a total of 2,225 power firms across the country, have been assigned with carbon dioxide emission caps, through which they can trade their emission quotas.

Link: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-01/06/c_139646191.htm

Priority: Green recovery, increase dependence on non-fossil fuels

Summary: At the Climate Summit in December 2020, Xi also said that China will increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 25%, increase the forest stock volume by six billion cubic meters from the 2005 level, and bring its total installed capacity of wind and solar power to over 1.2 billion kilowatts.

Link: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-12-13/China-will-lead-the-world-s-post-COVID-19-green-recovery-Wbbjl2M9bO/index.html>

France

Overview (19th largest emitter)

France has set the goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050, with the interim objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030.

Transport is the country's main contributor to climate change, responsible for 31% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018. The government said France would end sales of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040.

France lags behind Europe in terms of renewable energy production because over 70 percent of its electricity is currently produced by nuclear reactors. Under the French national energy plan, renewables are expected to replace nuclear and fossil fuels and increase 50% from 2017 levels by 2023, doubling by 2028.

France contributes to a variety of multilateral funds dedicated to fighting climate change. In 2019 President Emmanuel Macron described the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as an "immediate priority". The country has increased its contribution to the GCF in recent years, going from being the fifth biggest contributor in 2015-19 to the second biggest in 2020-23.

France has faced legal action at home and abroad over its climate policies. In 2021, four NGOs successfully sued the French state for failing to tackle climate change. In 2020, the EU Commission said it was taking France to court for flouting limits on air pollution for more than a decade.

The French parliament is set to debate a key climate bill in April 2021 that aims to cut French carbon emissions by 40% in 2030 from 1990 levels.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Achieve carbon neutrality by 2050

Summary: As part of this objective, France and the other 26 EU member states have decided to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030. Related goals include limiting support for the development of new oil and gas fields; stopping the construction of new coal-powered thermal plants; increasing businesses' financial transparency in matters of climate.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Increase financing for sustainable development

Summary: French President Emmanuel Macron called for "re-orienting private and public financial flows to align them with the objectives of the Paris Agreement". He said France, together with EU partners, is working on transforming the European Investment Bank into a "European Climate Bank".

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Reduce inequality within France and globally

Summary: “Our environmental transition should be a social transition,” Macron said. It requires a “profound transformation of the economy”. Macron also said fighting climate change is an “obligation we owe the most vulnerable countries who are suffering the consequences of past mistakes”.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Germany

Overview (7th largest emitter)

Germany is one of only a few of countries to have set the goal of climate neutrality by or before 2050 in its Climate Action Plan (November 2016).

The country's medium-term target is to cut greenhouse emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Germany ranks as number seven in the list of largest emitters of carbon dioxide.

In 2020, energy consumption in Germany hit a “historic low”, according to research by AG Energiebilanzen (AGEB), meaning the country is set to easily surpass its original 2020 target to reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent over 1990 levels.

However, some NGOs argued that this result was only achieved thanks to pandemic restrictions and a fairly mild winter.

And the independent Climate Action Tracker (CAT) describes Germany’s Nationally Determined Contributions as “highly insufficient”, allegedly falling outside the country’s “fair share” range and not consistent with holding global warming to below 2C.

CAT says Germany's 2038 coal phase-out date is almost a decade too slow to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and that a new coal-fired power station went online in May 2020.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is seen as a driving force behind the adoption of important climate decisions in the EU and Germany, including the July 2020 decision to phase out coal-fired power generation amid structural strengthening and expansion of wind and solar energy.

The government has been under constant pressure from environmental advocacy groups to massively increase expansion targets for renewables, significantly boost climate finance, rework a climate protection law and commit to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic and the September 2021 federal elections are among the key factors that will influence the country's climate agenda this year.

Internationally, Germany calls for a more streamlined effort to close ranks behind vulnerable and developing countries, including by allocating more money towards their climate pledges, and appointing a UN Special Envoy on Climate and Security, the move which was backed by France.

Stated Priorities

The European Union will be negotiating as a block on behalf of its members, including Germany, at COP26. Germany’s climate policy goals were outlined by Chancellor Angela Merkel at the Climate Ambition Summit 2020.

Priority: Renewable power generation

Summary: Phase out not only nuclear energy but also coal-fired power generation and further expand renewables.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Carbon trading

Summary: Commit to carbon pricing, hence the introduction of a national emissions trading scheme for the transport and heating sectors in 2021.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Fund mitigation

Summary: Allocate under 500m euros of additional funding to climate control mitigation.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Climate financing

Summary: Work for the launch at international level of a post-2020 climate financing process; keep pledge to double its budget climate financing to 4bn euros annually.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Support developing countries

Summary: Support developing countries with ambitious climate pledges within the framework of the NAMA Facility.

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

India

Overview (3rd largest emitter)

India is the world's third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases and is having to deal with major environmental problems.

Its big cities are choked by toxic air and it has faced an increasing number of extreme weather events attributed to climate change over the past few years.

It is expected to suffer major problems in the form of rising sea levels and changing weather. In 2019, monsoon rains continued for a month longer than usual.

Glaciers in the Himalayas, an important source of water, are melting.

India has pledged a big reduction in its emissions and the government says it is leading on climate action.

It says it is on track to fulfilling its commitments under the Paris Agreement to pursue sustainability, cut emissions in agriculture, move towards renewal energy generation and encourage a switch to electric vehicles.

It has faced some criticism at home for what is seen as a lack of action to adapt to climate change and mitigate for its effects.

And there is growing pressure from the public and activists for it to act.

Among the big issues that have been evident in recent years is air pollution, with major contributors being stubble burning by farmers, the use of coal in thermal power stations, emissions from waste-to-energy plants and the exhaust gases from vehicles.

Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, experiences a smog season between October and March when visibility drops substantially. Authorities have instituted a registration number plate scheme to compel private cars to be on the road only on alternate days.

Country wide, pollution is estimated to have accounted for nearly 1.7 million deaths in 2019 - or 18% of all deaths.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Stick to climate commitments.

Summary: Environment minister Prakash Javadekar says countries must commit to their pre-2020 climate change ambitions, not shift goal posts to 2050.

Link: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/idea-of-climate-action-shouldnt-be-to-move-climate-goal-post-to-2050-says-india-at-unsc/articleshow/81187395.cms>

Priority: Need framework for financial, technical and capacity-building support.

Summary: Javadekar says that climate action needs to go hand-in-hand with the framework for financial, technical and capacity-building support to countries that need it, but that commitments made by developed countries to support climate action since 2009 have failed to materialise.

Priority: Strengthen multilateralism, seek equitable solutions.

Summary: Javadekar says climate change is an opportunity to strengthen multilateralism and seek equitable and inclusive solutions to “leave a greener, cleaner and sustainable world for our future generations”.

Priority: Integrate low-carbon efforts into Covid-19 response and recovery.

Summary: Javadekar says there is an opportunity for countries to integrate low-carbon development in their COVID-19 rescue and recovery measures and long-term mitigation strategies.

Priority: Create partnerships.

Summary: Creating partnerships such as International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI) will lead to positive and persistent action, Javadekar says.

* These points were made by environment minister Prakash Javadekar at a February 2021 UN Security Council debate on climate and security. He referred to COP26 but did not specify what India would present at the conference.

Link: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/idea-of-climate-action-shouldnt-be-to-move-climate-goal-post-to-2050-says-india-at-unsc/articleshow/81187395.cms>

Indonesia

Overview (8th largest emitter)

Indonesia recognises threats posed by climate change and has committed to improving sustainability but it rarely goes beyond basic international recommendations.

Environmental issues aren't widely reported, and Indonesia also has one of the highest rates of climate change denial.

Among those who are concerned about climate change, a majority say they have faith that the government will be able to resolve these issues.

In the lead up to COP26, government figures have begun to talk about environmental issues more seriously than in the past.

President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo, who took office in 2014, has been criticised for only doing the bare minimum when it comes to addressing climate change. His speech during the Climate Action Summit in January 2021 was criticised for not committing to more ambitious targets.

During the 2019 presidential debate on the environment, both Jokowi and his challenger, Prabowo Subianto, were criticised for their lack of attention to climate change.

Last year Indonesia passed a highly controversial law on job creation, which rolled back some environmental regulations in its efforts to reduce bureaucracy and improve investment. There is concern these deregulations could increase deforestation as now only "high risk" projects are required to fill an environmental impact analysis.

Coal accounts for the most of Indonesia's energy and is expected to do so until at least 2028. New coal-burning power plants are still under construction. Jokowi has defended this decision as an economically feasible way to deliver power to more parts of the country.

In late 2020 a renewable energy bill was proposed to parliament to tackle regulations obstructing the growth of green energy. It sets a target renewable energy to account for 23% of the energy mix by 2025 and 50% by 2050. This was Indonesian parliament's first bill on renewable energy and was largely welcomed by activists and the industry alike.

Indonesia is the largest palm oil producer in the world. The industry has contributed to deforestation and the destruction of rainforests in a major way. Illegal forest fires to clear land for palm oil plantations leads to hazardous air pollution known as the Southeast Asian Haze, which causes adverse health effects in Indonesia and surrounding countries.

Alongside neighbouring Malaysia, Indonesia has firmly challenged the European Union's ban on palm oil.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Meeting Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Summary: Indonesia has committed to unconditionally reduce emission levels in 2030 by 29 per cent or by up to 41% per cent with international assistance as outlined in the Paris Agreement. Current estimates say Indonesia is well placed to achieve these targets. However, the government said it will not commit to more ambitious emission goals due to its economic growth targets.

Links: <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/indonesia-emissions-reduction-climate-carbon-economy-growth/>

Priority: Combating deforestation

Summary: Indonesia has seen progress in reducing its rate of deforestation since 2016, with record low numbers in 2020. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry touted this reduction as the result of the government policies, including a ban on new permits to clear primary forests and peatlands; a moratorium on new palm oil plantation licences; forest fire mitigation; a social forestry programme; land rehabilitation; and increased enforcement against environmental violations. However, observers warn that deforestation could spike again next year.

Link: <https://news.mongabay.com/2021/03/2021-deforestation-in-indonesia-hits-record-low-but-experts-fear-a-rebound/>

Priority: Restoring peatlands and mangroves

Summary: In December 2020, Jokowi renamed the Peatland Restoration Agency to the Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency and extended its mandate until 2024. The agency has been tasked with restoring around 2 million hectares of peatland and mangroves.

Link: <https://www.aseantoday.com/2021/01/indonesia-pushes-to-restore-peatlands-and-mangroves-at-the-center-of-the-climate-crisis/>

Priority: Urging developed countries to do more

Summary: Indonesia has repeatedly said that developed countries should be doing more to combat environmental issues, while developing countries should be given more leeway. Jokowi emphasised in his Climate Action Summit 2021 speech that developed countries with more resources need to fulfil their climate commitments. Indonesia has called for developed countries to help environmental projects in developing countries.

Iran

Overview (6th largest emitter)

Iran is the world's sixth largest emitter of carbon dioxide and one of the biggest producers of fossil fuels.

Its major cities are among the most polluted on the planet and its water crisis is getting worse by the day.

While the country is known as one of the most biodiverse in the region it is losing its species to drought, overgrazing and a lack of environmental protection.

The contributors to the current environmental crisis range from war and climate change to international economic sanctions, which are considered to have hampered the generation of renewable energy.

A lack of water in some regions is forcing people to migrate, shifting pressure onto new areas.

Air pollution, caused by the inefficient and eco-unfriendly local car industry and a fossil fuel dependent energy sector, has made living conditions in Iran's cities increasingly challenging.

Wind erosion is aggravating the desertification of agricultural land, putting greater pressure onto remaining arable areas and worsening the water crisis.

Biodiversity is under threat but is not a major concern for politicians dealing with "more important issues" such as fighting economic sanctions, increasing local production, and extracting more oil to sell in order to fix the economy broken by sanctions, corruption, mismanagement and more recently the Covid-19 pandemic.

Environmental activism is discouraged by the state.

Iran has not featured prominently in international efforts to deal with climate change. It acknowledges climate change as a major threat but has not yet ratified the Paris Agreement.

Stated Priorities

Iran published its Nationally Determined Contribution in 2015 but has said these efforts are partly conditional on the lifting of economic sanctions. It says that in spite of major obstacles such as the sanctions, the 1980-88 war with Iraq and the burden of refugees from neighbouring countries, it has done much to minimise its impact on the environment. (https://www.ctc-n.org/sites/www.ctc-n.org/files/UNFCCC_docs/indc_iran_final_text.pdf)

It has not made public what it hopes COP26 will achieve.

Italy

Overview (18th largest emitter)

Italy, co-organiser with Britain of the COP26 conference and holding the Presidency of the G20, gained a new government at the beginning of 2021 which created a Ministry of Ecological Transition, a move seen as a sign that it aims to create a more environmentally sustainable economy.

The new minister, Roberto Cingolani, reflected this change of mission in his first public address in a #Youth4ClimateLiveSeries webinar by focusing on the role that cities can play in tackling climate change by acting as “laboratories for sustainable growth, energy transition and climate action”.

With over 80% of Italians living in urban areas, the improvement of air quality in cities is a particularly urgent issue in Italy. The region stretching from Turin to Venice in northern Italy is heavily polluted due to population density and the presence of heavy industry.

The Air Quality Life Index says living in the Po Valley shaves many months off life expectancy. Grassroots and citizen groups in individual cities campaign for change, but decisive government action at a local level has been slow.

Climate change and environmental degradation is already a pressing issue for Italy which has been experiencing an increase in wildfires and flooding.

Desertification is already happening and is expected to increase especially in the South as temperatures rise.

Economic inequality between the North and poorer South has long been a feature of Italy but rising temperatures are expected to amplify these inequalities.

And while many Italian cities are working to adapting to climate change by planting trees, preserving permeable land and conserving water, these tend to be in the North.

As one of the world’s 10 biggest economies and one of its 20 biggest emitters of carbon dioxide, Italy is this year leading efforts to deal with climate change.

In September 2021 it will host the first “Youth for Climate: Driving Ambition” summit, in which almost 400 young people aged between 18 and 29 will meet to elaborate concrete proposals on topics that affect the negotiation process of Pre-COP26 in Milan and COP26 in Glasgow.

Mariangela Zappia, Italy’s permanent representative at the UN, has promised that “Italy will give all its full backing to new generations”. “The Italian approach aims at actively involving all players, starting from young people, and to... increase the synergy between the COP26 and G20 initiatives”.

Stated priorities

Priority: Working towards climate neutrality by 2050

Summary: The European Commission in 2021 published the first draft of the “Climate Law”, aimed at the concrete implementation of the ‘European Green Deal’, which foresees the achievement of EU climate neutrality by 2050.

Italy says it is fully aligned with the “European Green Deal” and will work within the EU to promote increasingly ambitious domestic targets for 2030.

Link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

Priority: Preparing the ground for COP26

Summary: Italy, along with the UK, is an organiser of the COP26 conference in Glasgow and will be hosting a number of preliminary gatherings whose results will feed into the main conference. These events include a series of Youth4Climate conferences as well as Pre-COP - the final official ministerial meeting ahead of the COP26.

Links: <https://ukcop26.org/pre-cop/pre-cop-milan/>

<https://www.minambiente.it/pagina/towards-cop26-pre-cop-and-youth-event-youth4climate-driving-ambition>

Priority: Energy and ecological transition

Summary: Prime Minister Mario Draghi replaced the Ministry of the Environment with a new Ministry for Ecological Transition in February 2021 headed by new minister Roberto Cingolani, a physicist and former scientific director of the Italian Institute of Technology. He will manage the influx of green projects stemming from EU Recovery Funds alongside the newly appointed infrastructure and technology innovation ministers. Prime Minister Mario Draghi has explicitly mentioned the strong environmentalist aims of his government and that all policies will factor in the impact of measures on the reduction of emissions, and long-term ecological sustainability. On 26 March 2021 Roberto Cingolani stated: “We are about to launch an impressive 70-80 billion action linked to the Recovery fund - he explains - our ecological transition will involve massive operations relating to the water cycle, the soil, the energy self-sufficiency of agriculture”.

Link: <http://www.governo.it/it/articolo/le-comunicazioni-del-presidente-draghi-al-senato/16225>
<https://www.minambiente.it/comunicati/clima-ministro-cingolani-webinar-cop-26-con-recovery-operazione-da-70-80-miliardi>

Priority: Health (National Prevention Plan 2020-2025)

Summary: New national health strategy being implemented under the banner of a ‘One Health’ approach with ‘environment, climate and health’ one of six key objectives. The environment and health strategy aims are linked to the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement and UN Framework

Convention on Climate Change. Aims include reducing air pollution, improving water quality, water management, to promote the use of cleaner energy sources and more sustainable urban transport systems and strengthening the response to health risks associated with climate change.

Link:

http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/p3_2_1_1_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&menu=notizie&p=dalministro&id=5029

http://www.salute.gov.it/imgs/C_17_notizie_5029_0_file.pdf

Japan

Overview (5th largest emitter)

Japan has long been criticised for not doing enough to tackle climate change, but Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga now hopes to change that with ambitious new targets.

As a major developed nation, Japan is in the “Umbrella group” for international climate talks overseen by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and played a key role in brokering the Kyoto Protocol when it hosted a UNFCCC meeting in 1997.

Despite this leading role, Japan’s government has typically focused on achievable environmental targets rather than more challenging objectives.

Under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan in March 2020 reaffirmed its 2015 target of cutting emissions by 26% by 2030 rather than raising its goals. Laurence Tubiana, a key player in the 2015 Paris Agreement as France's climate ambassador, described the lack of ambition as “disappointing”.

This situation changed after Suga, a close aide to Abe, succeeded him as prime minister in September and made climate change mitigation one of his core priorities.

In his first policy address as leader in October 2020, Suga pledged to cut Japan’s greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 and increase the focus on renewable energy.

The shift to clean energy sources represents a major shift for the world's seventh-highest greenhouse gas emitter, with oil, natural gas and coal making up 87% of energy consumption as of 2019. The reliance on fossil fuels has been particularly prominent since Japan suspended nuclear power plants in 2011 due to the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster, causing a shift back to more traditional energy sources.

The increased focus on climate change mitigation also extends to natural disaster management, a key focus for a country that has historically been vulnerable to frequent earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and floods.

Japan has long emphasised the “Build Back Better” concept in its crisis recovery efforts, following each natural or man-made disaster with new technologies, processes and solutions to ensure similar disasters in the future can be mitigated.

But an increase in the frequency, severity and duration of recent disasters - as well as the impact of global warming - has led to Japan emphasising long-term climate change mitigation alongside short-term post-disaster efforts in its crisis management planning.

Stated Priorities

Japan has not officially highlighted priorities or a specific vision with COP26 in mind, but announced an initial roadmap for “Green Growth Strategy Through Achieving Carbon Neutrality” in December 2020 (published in January 2021).

Priority: Net zero by 2050

Summary: Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, addressing Japan's Diet in his first policy speech in October 2020, pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 and “realise a carbon neutral, decarbonised society”. Suga's proposal to ensure a “green society” while placing the environment as “a pillar of our growth strategy” was further developed in a “Green Growth Strategy” roadmap announced in December. The roadmap highlighted that climate change mitigation could be a major opportunity, enabling economic growth alongside protecting the environment. To this end, it outlined a set of national vision and goals, taking into account the needs of businesses as well, and identified 14 sectors with high growth potential in three overall industrial domains of energy, transportation/manufacturing and home/office.

Links: https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2020/1225_001.html

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/99_suga/statement/202010/_00006.html

Priority: Funding ‘green innovation’

Summary: The roadmap for ensuring green growth and decarbonisation relies heavily on the involvement of the private sector, for which the government has pledged to provide support. To this end, it has proposed the creation of a Green Innovation Fund worth 2 trillion Japanese yen over the course of 10 years, and aims to stimulate 15 trillion yen worth of private research and development and investment. The government also plans to provide tax incentives to stimulate 1.7 trillion yen worth of private investment over a decade. Through these initiatives, the government hopes to implement Suga's stated vision of “revolutionary innovations”, such as developing next-generation solar cells and carbon recycling, and become a global green industry leader. Japan also aims to boost this green innovation through “digital transformation” in environment-related fields, in line with Suga's other aims of digital renewal and regulatory reform.

Links: https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2020/1225_001.html

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/99_suga/statement/202010/_00006.html

Priority: International collaboration on decarbonisation

Summary: The government, in its Green Growth Strategy roadmap, has pledged to cooperate with both developed and emerging nations on green innovation policy, standardisation and rule-making, carbonisation solutions and joint projects. It also aims to organise a “Tokyo Beyond-Zero Week” to globally promote its net zero vision, although details for such an event are yet to be announced.

Link: https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2020/1225_001.html

Priority: Increasing focus on renewable energy

Summary: In line with his decarbonisation aims, Prime Minister Suga has emphasised increasing the use of renewable energy sources, including returning to the use of long-dormant nuclear energy capabilities and moving away from coal power. Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi will play a key role in such initiatives, and in December 2020 he proposed increasing renewable power sources to more than 40% of Japan's energy consumption by 2030. This almost doubles the government's previous goal of renewables comprising 22-24% of energy usage by 2030, but an increasing number of politicians and businesses are advocating a switch to renewable sources. Media reports suggest this may prove tricky, however, given Japan's heavy reliance on fossil fuels and the expectation of high costs to enable such a drastic change in under a decade.

Another barrier may be Japan's terrain - mostly mountains and coastlines - which does not have much flat land or shallow waters suited to solar and wind farms.

Links: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Environment/Climate-Change/Japan-s-Koizumi-ups-climate-ante-with-goal-of-40-renewable-power>

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/99_suga/statement/202010/_00006.html

Kazakhstan

Overview (21st largest emitter)

With an economy dependent on the extraction of raw materials and large-scale wheat production, and a history of being used as one of the main sites for Soviet nuclear weapons' tests, Kazakhstan faces many serious environmental issues.

Most of the country's industrial infrastructure is Soviet-built and depends on fossil fuels. The industrial sector disposes of more than 2.5m tonnes of waste into the air annually, with the amount growing by 100,000 tonnes every year, according to the Environment Ministry. In most Kazakh cities air pollution exceeds guidelines by 8-10 times.

The excessive use of the country's water sources in the Soviet period has left much of them unusable. The most devastating consequence of those policies was the dramatic shrinking of the Aral Sea. There are growing concerns about another large inland body of water, the Lake Balkhash in eastern Kazakhstan - its surface area has shrunk by 2,000 sq.km, and the water level dropped by more than 2m in recent years. The Caspian Sea, a site of massive oil production by transnational oil companies, has been losing its capacity for self-purification.

Kazakhstan also faces the problem of rehabilitating areas around the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground in the east that saw nearly 500 nuclear tests between 1949 and 1989. Russia continues to use the Soviet-built military testing grounds and the Baykonur space site on Kazakh soil. The country also faces the issue of ensuring secure storage of Soviet-era radioactive waste as well as the waste from its atomic industry.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Carbon neutrality by 2060

Summary: Speaking at the Climate Ambition Summit 2020, President Kasym Zhomart Tokayev said Kazakhstan aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and plant 2bn trees in the next five years.

He said Kazakhstan "hoped that an agreement can be found at COP26 to the outstanding issued of the Paris climate package". "This will help unlock fully the potential for joint action and increased cross-national cooperation on greenhouse gas mitigation".

Link: <https://www.climateambitions summit2020.org/ondemand.php>

Priority: Switch to renewable energy

Summary: The government has sets targets on switching to renewable sources of energy. Energy Minister Nurlan Nogayev told a government meeting in February that in 2020 the country achieved its first, 3-percent target. By 2025 the share of energy coming from renewable sources in overall consumption is planned to reach 6 percent, 10 percent by 2030, and at least 50 percent by 2050.

In a speech on 25 February, President Tokayev said that unless Kazakhstan creates “favourable conditions for developing an alternative energy industry, it risks finding itself hopelessly behind”. He said the state policy in the area remains “vague” and ordered the government to draft a bill on developing the sector of renewable and other alternative sources of energy.

Links: https://forbes.kz/news/2021/02/09/newsid_243530

https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/internal_political_affairs/in_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-na-v-zasedanii-nacionalnogo-soveta-obshchestvennogo-doveriya

Priority: Raise standards of environmental protection

Summary: On 2 January President Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev signed into law a new Environmental Code aimed at raising national environmental protection standards and improving mechanisms to ensure their observation.

The new Code is based on “all progressive international requirements” on environmental protection, according to official reports.

The Code makes climate change adaptation measures a legal norm for regional and sectoral policy planning. It also increases the role of civil society in identifying and solving environmental issues; and introduces measures to increase government subsidies for green projects.

Under the new Code, the government is switching from the system of fining industrial enterprises for causing environmental damage to making them invest in technological modernisation. The 50 most polluting enterprises (in the oil and gas, ore mining, metals, chemical and power generation sectors) will be required to introduce such changes within the next 10 years. The Code also introduces research standards and government funding for biodiversity and ecosystem protection measures.

Link: <https://www.kazpravda.kz/articles/view/balans-ekologicheskikh-interesov>

Priority: Monitor protected areas

In 2017 Kazakhstan also passed a law On Strictly Protected Natural Areas, which along with the new Environmental Code reflect recommendations from the UNDP’s office in the country.

The government is currently working on a project to create a Single State System for Monitoring the Environment and Natural Resources. It will be a “comprehensive and accurate” database on the environmental situation in the country (the state of the air, soil, waters, and wildlife, climatic changes and so on) to be used as a basis for taking “management and economic decisions”.

It is also creating a Single Environmental Protection Information System to simplify gathering of information on industrial and consumer waste. It will include creation of a map of dangerous waste.

Link: <https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/presscenter/news/2021/january/ecocode.html>

Kuwait

Overview (40th largest emitter)

Kuwait is highly dependent on income from oil production and has avoided committing to targets to reducing greenhouse gases.

At the same time, it is highly vulnerable to climate change, which has been blamed on rising temperatures - which have exceeded 50C in the shade - declining rainfall and an increasing frequency of dust storms.

Nevertheless, Kuwait set up the Environment Public Authority (EPA) in 1995 with tasks including designing strategies and plans for environment protection and preserving natural resources, squaring up to environmental disasters and drafting relevant laws and regulations.

In its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2019-2030, Kuwait committed itself to preserving the local and regional environment, with the moto being “Enhanced Climate Resilience to Improve Community, Livelihood and Achieve Sustainability”.

Kuwait introduced the Environmental Protection Law in 2014 and completed its bylaws in 2018 to cover the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions.

Kuwait also ratified the Paris Agreement in 2018.

The EPA also launched an ambitious system called Environmental Monitoring Information System of Kuwait (eMISK), which aims to establish, build and maintain a comprehensive geo-environmental database for Kuwait.

Stated Priorities

Kuwait’s most recent Nationally Determined Contributions were set in 2015.

Priority: Resilience to climate change

Summary: The National Adaptation Plan aims to build capacity and resilience that reduces Kuwait’s vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

The most sensitive sectors to climate change are coastal zones, marine life and fisheries.

Kuwait experiences high temperatures up to 48 degrees Celsius in summer, with climate projections showing even higher future temperatures and a decrease in the already low annual rainfall.

These climate projections put pressure on Kuwait water resources, especially in light of exponential growth in population with an average growth of 41% yearly.

Link: <https://epa.org.kw/Portals/0/PDF/NAPCompleted.pdf>

Priority: Tackle air pollution

Summary: The country suffered massive air pollution when hundreds of oil wells were set on fire were during the 1st Gulf war in 1990-91.

Kuwait's environment body EPA has launched a project for monitoring pollutants to improve air quality in a phased manner from 2020 to 2035.

Link: <https://epa.org.kw/en-US/Air>

Priority: Diversify energy sources

Summary: The secretary-general of the Kuwait-based Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) has described COP26 and the implementation of the Paris agreement as an “important transformation” in limiting climate change and said that the demand for energy will keep increasing for decades. While the demand for oil would remain high for some time to come, he said the world's energy mix would need to include a variety of sources.

Link: <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1604247129769958000/>

Lebanon

Overview (79th largest emitter)

With one of the oldest environment ministries in the Middle East, its famous snow-capped mountains and a plethora of civil society-led environmental organisations, Lebanon should be at the cutting edge of environmental protection in the Middle East.

However, pollution and shortages have become synonymous with the corruption and poor governance that have characterised the country since its civil war ended in the early 1990s. In 2015, protests over the country's towering rubbish piles led to anti-establishment protests with a simple message for the ruling class: "You Stink".

Government has been unable to provide basic services, such as running water, 24-hour electricity and waste management long before the country entered a phase of unprecedented economic collapse in 2019.

A parallel market exists for all these functions, selling electricity produced by diesel-fuelled generators, underground water delivered by the truckload and dumping waste in unmanaged landfills along the country's coastline or directly into the sea.

The country's once booming tourism industry was premised on being able to visit "pristine mountains and golden beaches" on the same day. Both have suffered from the absence of a centralised waste management strategy, with rubbish piling up on the seaside and in rivers.

The influx of Syrian refugees, estimated to be around 1m – roughly a 25% increase of the population – has put further strain on resources.

In 2015, Lebanon committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 and signed the Paris Agreement, but it was only ratified by parliament in 2019.

However, critics pointed to parliament also approving massive incinerators to deal with the country's endemic waste management crisis as counterproductive.

The country's current government, starting with the minister of the environment, resigned following the massive blast in the port of Beirut last August, but it continues to act as caretaker amid a stalemate in negotiations to form a new technocratic government.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Renewable energy

Summary: Lebanon's environment ministry says that it aims to increase the use of renewable energy sources to cover 30% of the country's needs.

The country could even soon be plunged into darkness, as it struggles to pay for fuel imports, officials have warned.

Lebanon's rulers had long seen the possibility of building dams as the silver bullet to resolve the country's water shortages (ample surface water is barely used) and to produce cheap, clean hydro-electricity.

However, dam projects have faced intense opposition from local residents and environmental activists worried about threats to biodiversity, corruption and lack of planning.

In September 2020, the World Bank cancelled \$244m of undisbursed funds for the Bisri Dam – a project that authorities said would remedy water shortages in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Climate change has been impacting the origin of the fresh surface water, with temperatures rising in the mountains and cedar woodland – the country's national symbol – being devastated by drought and pests.

Links: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/03/11/Lebanon-crisis-Lebanon-heads-for-total-darkness-blackout-as-electricity-funds-dry-up>

<https://www.alhurra.com/lebanon/2020/05/18/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%A4%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%B3%D8%AF%D9%91-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%AD%D8%AC%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D8%A9>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2020/09/04/cancellation-of-water-supply-augmentation-project-bisri-dam-project>

Priority: Generate green jobs, attract funding

Summary: The ministry of environment sees the environmental commitments as an opportunity to create green jobs. Securing foreign funding for environmental projects has always been an objective for Lebanese politicians. Critics and activists have long accused officials of channelling such aid to their allies through dubious contracts. Now, the Lebanese system needs access to “fresh dollars” more than ever.

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/03/world/middleeast/lebanon-protests-corruption.html>

Mexico

Overview (14th largest emitter)

Mexico is located in a geographically vulnerable position when it comes to climate change, especially due to its susceptibility to natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes and landslides, especially during summer months.

The country also has high levels of pollution, not only in major cities like Mexico City, the capital, where contamination levels are often high.

Mexico also relies heavily on tourism, meaning that preservation of natural areas, in particular beaches like Cancun, is critical for the country's economy. This is especially true in coastal areas that would also be more vulnerable during the hurricane season.

Climate change and socio-economic conditions in Central America (Hurricanes Eta and Iota) have also led to increased migration through and to Mexico.

A major concern in Mexico is the homicide of environmental activists, specifically from indigenous communities. Indigenous groups are some of the strongest activists for environmental preservation, although representation in the national agenda is infrequent.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador promised to prioritise environmental policy, promote reforestation programmes and phase out the herbicide glyphosate. He railed against fracking during his 2018 campaign. However, in terms of policy, Lopez Obrador has prioritised state-owned oil and energy companies the Federal Energy Commission (CFE) and Mexican Petroleum (Pemex).

His government also postponed a rule requiring cleaner-burning diesel until after he leaves office in late 2024, arguing that the state-owned petroleum company Pemex lacks the infrastructure to meet it. Recently, as a result of nation-wide blackouts caused by harsh winter weather conditions in Texas, Lopez Obrador has promoted a move towards natural gas self-sufficiency.

Mexico has also lowered its ambitions when it comes to meeting commitments outlined under the Paris Climate Accord.

One of the major problems facing efforts against climate change in Mexico is that environmental policy does not figure prominently on the agenda of most Mexicans.

In a country with high levels of poverty and an alarming presence of organised crime groups and cartels, the economy and security are among the government's top priorities.

Most concerns about the environment tend to be related to agriculture, including drought and flooding.

Mexican political decision-making is also heavily connected to the United States, in terms of trade, agriculture, technology and energy, among others.

Under the new Biden administration, Mexico may come under pressure to switch to greener energy sources as well.

Stated Priorities

Mexico outlined its contributions and priorities at COP25.

Priority: Multilateral approach

Summary: Mexico favours multilateralism in tackling climate change.

Link: <https://cambioclimatico.gob.mx/mexico-participo-en-la-cop-25-de-manera-constructiva-y-con-el-objetivo-de-fortalecer-la-cooperacion-en-materia-climatica/>

Priority: Regional, technical innovation.

Summary: Mexico favours technological innovation in the region to tackle climate change, improve agricultural processes and develop greener energy sources.

Link: <https://cambioclimatico.gob.mx/mexico-participo-en-la-cop-25-de-manera-constructiva-y-con-el-objetivo-de-fortalecer-la-cooperacion-en-materia-climatica/>

Priority: Carbon market.

Summary: Mexico has expressed an interest in an international carbon market.

Link: <https://cambioclimatico.gob.mx/mexico-participo-en-la-cop-25-de-manera-constructiva-y-con-el-objetivo-de-fortalecer-la-cooperacion-en-materia-climatica/>

Priority: Finance to deal with risk.

Summary: Mexico is keen for a focus on financing actions to prevent and minimise risks.

Link: <https://cambioclimatico.gob.mx/mexico-participo-en-la-cop-25-de-manera-constructiva-y-con-el-objetivo-de-fortalecer-la-cooperacion-en-materia-climatica/>

Poland

Overview (20th largest emitter)

Poland, host of the COP24 summit in 2018, could put Europe at risk of missing its climate targets because of its reluctance to wean itself off coal.

It is the only EU state that has refused to pledge climate neutrality by 2050 and has been accused of dragging its feet towards renewable energy sources in its latest energy plan.

Pollution in the form of dust from the coal mines as well as smoke from domestic stoves burning coal for heating and cooking is blamed on thousands of premature deaths annually.

Environmentalists near the mines demonstrate the problem by scraping off a grey layer of dust to reveal white snow below.

While critics say the PEP2040 energy strategy unveiled in February 2021 lacks ambition, the government says it provides a compass to help the country navigate away from coal.

The plan is for renewable energy to rise to at least 23% of the mix by 2030, which is little compared with the EU as a whole, where renewables generated 38% of electricity in 2020.

Poland is planning one new coal-fired power plant. And the Czech Republic plans to take legal action against plans to expand a Polish coal mine on their common border.

While some other EU countries - notably Germany - are moving away from nuclear, Poland plans to open a series of nuclear power plants within the next few years.

The development of onshore wind power has been constrained by a 2016 “distance act” requiring wind turbines to be a certain distance from farms and villages, reportedly ruling out the most attractive sites for their deployment. And the government is reportedly keen to phase out onshore wind turbines altogether, while boosting offshore wind power generation.

The UN Environment Programme gave Poland a pat on the back by rating it as a “leader” in efforts to build back better following the onset of Covid-19.

Praiseworthy measures included support for electrifying transport, a clean air programme to replace boilers and improve insulation. However, at the same time Poland bailed out a coal company and allocated funds for new roads.

The government has come under fire on another environmental front recently, for allowing logging to resume in Bialowieza forest, one of Europe’s last and largest remaining primeval forests. The forest is home to 800 European Bison, a species which was saved from extinction.

The country has not been immune from the effects of climate change, registering an increase in the number of hurricanes and a rise in temperatures - which are expected to extend the growing season.

Stated Priorities

While Poland's priorities for COP26 have not been publicised, it has acknowledged the need to deal with climate change and in early 2021 published its energy strategy - PEP2040 - setting out several goals.

Priority: Reduce greenhouse gases

Summary: Under PEP2040 Poland will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% in 2030.

Link: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-energy-idUSKBN2A225K>

Priority: Increase renewable energy

Summary: PEP2040 outlines plans for the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to rise to at least 23% by 2030.

Link: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-energy-idUSKBN2A225K>

Priority: Bring nuclear power on stream

Summary: PEP2040 envisages a series of nuclear power plants

The government also pledged to start a first nuclear plant with capacity of 1.0-1.6 GW.

Link: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-energy-idUSKBN2A225K>

Qatar

Overview (39th largest emitter)

Qatar is busy preparing to host a carbon neutral FIFA World Cup in 2022 while at the same time massively increasing its capacity to export fossil fuels.

It already produces a third of the world's liquified natural (LNG) gas and is now planning to increase output by 64% by 2027 - for which it will need a fleet of more than 100 extra ships.

LNG is seen as a viable and greener substitute for coal - but it is also a potent source of greenhouse gases. Methane, which is the chief component of natural gas, is 84 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

FIFA and Qatar worked together to develop a "sustainability strategy" meant to ensure that the 2022 football tournament leaves a positive legacy.

And Qatar says the event, which is expected to attract more than a million visitors, will be carbon neutral, something which it says will be achieved in part by a new solar power plant, implementing greater energy efficiencies and the provision of transport by electric buses and metros between stadiums.

How an environmentally friendly tournament can be held in one of the hottest places on earth is in some doubt since entire stadiums will be air conditioned to make temperatures bearable.

Qatar's innovations are all part of the country's diversification drive meant to reduce its vulnerability to price fluctuation of hydrocarbons.

The country gained its wealth from oil and gas but it is also reaping the rewards of investing those oil earnings internationally. It isn't short of cash to fund innovation and big projects.

It says it is striving for sustainable development under its National Vision 2030, which stipulates that "the environment shall be managed in a way that guarantees harmony and balance between economic and social development and environmental protection".

Qatar signed the 2015 Paris Agreement but has not committed to specific carbon reduction targets, saying in its 2015 nationally determined contribution that it wouldn't accept carbon-cutting policies as they would risk its oil-based wealth.

And it claimed that it "has been contributing indirectly to the global efforts to mitigate climate change by exporting Liquefied Natural Gas as a clean energy".

Brazil singled out Qatar and other wealthy "developing" countries for not doing enough to tackle climate change.

In 2021, Qatar appointed veteran diplomat and former head of the Qatar-based Global Dryland Alliance Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani as a special envoy of the foreign minister for climate change affairs and sustainability.

The UK is a key partner in Qatar's environmental efforts. For example, Qatar has started issuing green bonds through the London Stock Exchange and the UK embassy supports the #KeepQatarClean campaign launched by Sheikha Maysa Al Thani.

Stated Priorities

There has been little publicity about any objectives Qatar might have for COP 26, but it has outlined various general environmental and economic objectives which might indicate its position at the conference.

Priority: Natural gas production

Summary: As one of the leading natural gas exporters, Qatar has put the cleaner fossil fuel at the heart of its environmental strategy. It aims to use compressed natural gas across the transport network, increase recovery in its fields and use it to generate electricity and to desalinate water efficiently.

Link: <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/21/09/2019/Qatar-makes-great-efforts-in-addressing-climate-change>

Priority: Water and food security

Summary: Like most Gulf countries, Qatar is one of the most arid lands on the planet. With rapid urbanisation and development in recent decades, underground water reserves no longer sustain the population and energy-intensive desalination is used.

Qatar's food security has also been a key priority for the government since a spat with Qatar's neighbours in 2017 caused food shortages.

Qatar is home to the Global Dryland Alliance, which aims to "work with local, regional, and international partners to identify, disseminate, and implement solutions for agricultural, water, and energy challenges of dryland countries".

Link: <http://www.globaldrylandalliance.org/en/about-us/vision-mission/>

Priority: Maintain biodiversity

Qatar has prioritised the conservation of its flora and fauna in recent years amid rising nationalism across the Gulf. For example, it has moved to protect the Arabian Oryx, the symbol of its national carrier, from extinction and to sequence its genetic code. Since 2010, it has also started studying the large shark population surrounding its offshore oil field of Shahin.

Link: <http://www.globaldrylandalliance.org/en/about-us/vision-mission/>

Russia

Overview (4th largest emitter)

Russian experts largely see the country's efforts on climate change as slow, insufficient, vague, and mostly revolving around economic issues. The country's actions are driven by global climate policies and are reactive in nature, they say.

Thus, the EU Green Deal and the EU carbon border adjustment mechanism are major topics in Russia as well as important drivers for Russian climate change initiatives, since they are likely to significantly affect Russian energy and metal corporations for whom the EU is the main export market.

In this context, state officials are working on making climate change measures well-defined and verifiable for them to be validated and accepted abroad.

At the same time, while Russian corporations make their independent efforts to decarbonise, they often oppose a systemic approach and legislative frameworks proposed by the state.

In addition, Russian state officials occasionally express their concern regarding the potential of the climate change issues to be politicised, while the EU climate endeavours are sometimes viewed as being directed against Russia.

Some warn that foreign companies might relocate harmful production to Russia because of its lack of control or monitoring facilities.

Russia is in danger of missing its chance to join the global club of countries actively fighting climate change, they say.

President Vladimir Putin has made a number of statements over the past two years emphasising the significance of climate change and especially global warming which could have a major effect on Russia since 70% of its territory is situated in the frozen, but fast melting, North.

Putin has expressed doubts about whether climate change is manmade. However, he insists that the changes should be taken seriously and that efforts should be made to mitigate them.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Forest carbon credits

Summary: Russian special presidential representative for climate issues Ruslan Edelgeriyev said that the projects in the Russian forest sector would be the main focus for the country in COP26 talks so that Russian forestry carbon credits can be traded on the international carbon market. As an experiment, Russia is launching a pilot decarbonisation project in Sakhalin in the country's Far East aimed at demonstrating Russia's willingness to set the price for carbon in a separate territory, which could then be replicated in other parts of Russia if successful.

Link: <https://www.finanz.ru/novosti/aktsii/af-predstavit-na-peregovorakh-v-glazgo-po-klimatu-v-2021-g-proekty-po-lesam-i-sakhalinu-1029822175>

Priority: Development of knowledge

Summary: A presidential decree signed on 8 February 2021 instructs the government to develop a federal scientific and technical programme in the areas of ecological development and climate change for 2021-2030. The document should be ready by September 2021. A special council will be responsible for the implementation of the programme, consisting of leading Russian scientists and state officials.

Link: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/AKh2dmiiH3CN8MniSrmxkZAWsi9O8wzj.pdf>

Priority: Emissions control

Summary: Ahead of COP26, the Russian government approved its first laws on cutting emissions of greenhouse gases in Russia - within obligations of the Paris agreement. The legislation will affect companies with over 150,000 tons of CO₂ emissions, with companies over 50,000 tons of emissions to be added after 2024.

Link: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/1116605-7>

Saudi Arabia

Overview (10th largest emitter)

In oil-rich Saudi Arabia, environmental reform is often imposed top-down. Environmental protection has notably become a priority for the kingdom under the de-facto leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Protecting the environment features prominently in the objective of his Vision 2030 to modernise Saudi society and in key projects such as the new northern development of Neom, the regeneration of the capital Riyadh and the Red Sea Coral Bloom put sustainability at the forefront.

The crown prince also increased protected areas in the kingdom from 4% to 14% of the territory, created “Special Forces for Environmental Security” and raised penalties for environmental violations.

In 2006, the first environmental non-profit, the Saudi Environmental Society (SES), was established in the city of Jeddah with governmental support.

Saudi Arabia had long argued that limiting the use of hydrocarbons would disproportionately impact oil and gas producers, but it signed the Paris agreement, with Khalid Abu al-Lif leading negotiations on climate change.

Saudi Arabia made the environment a ministerial portfolio for the first time in 2016, adding it to the pre-existing functions of water and agriculture to create the ministry of environment, water and agriculture.

The ministry has a wide mandate with missions such as increasing the production of food locally, preserving wildlife, building dams, inspecting food imports and providing irrigation water and research. It also seeks to preserve and maximise vegetation cover to prevent afforestation, for example enforcing a total ban on local lumber.

The National Centre for Environmental Technology at the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) is the leading research institution for environmental science with partnerships across the public sector.

Oil giant Saudi Aramco says it aims to reduce the environmental impact of its operations through partnerships with institutions like KACST and by soliciting suppliers who can offer innovative green solutions.

Critics accuse the firm of embellishing its image and say it is a large emitter of greenhouse gases.

Stated Priorities

Saudi Arabia occasionally voices support for global efforts to combat climate change. However, there has been little publicity about specific objectives for COP26.

Some of its priorities appear to be at odds with its stated support for moves to beat climate change.

Priority: Transition to post-oil world

Summary: Vision 2030 primarily aims to prepare the economy and society for a post-oil world by diversifying the economy and providing employment for young Saudis. The kingdom aims to secure revenue streams other than energy exports through taxation, investment and increased employment. This means that the potential for technology transfer, as well as the training and employment of young nationals, make green ventures attractive for the government.

Much of these ambitions rest on the monumental project on Neom led by Bin Salman in northern Saudi Arabia. In January, he announced “The Line”, a linear zero-car city with underground transport as part of the futuristic development.

Saudi Arabia has invested some \$5bn to create the world’s largest hydrogen plant, also as part of Neom, with the ambition of leading the new “clean fuel” sector.

Links: <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c202apam>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201112-the-green-hydrogen-revolution-in-renewable-energy>

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/economy/%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%82-%D8%B6%D8%AE%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%91%D9%8E%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%80-700-%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1>

Priority: Defend the oil market

Summary: Saudi Arabia seeks to develop its crucial oil and petrochemicals sectors and maintain a level of control over global prices through partnerships with OPEC countries and Russia.

This appears directly opposed to its stated intention of moving away from fossil fuels. However Saudi Arabia argues in favour of a gradual transition and says that by investing in cleaner technology and controlling supply, environmental targets can still be reached.

Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, rather than the minister in charge of the environment, is likely to lead the Saudi COP26 delegation, like his predecessor.

Links: https://www.aleqt.com/2021/03/05/article_2043781.html

https://www.aleqt.com/2017/11/16/article_1284286.html

Priority: Dealing with stranded oil tanker

Summary: Saudi Arabia has taken to UN the Security Council to warn of an impending “environmental and humanitarian disaster” if the stranded FSO Safer tanker continues to erode off the coast of Yemen. Saudi Arabia blames Yemen’s Houthi rebels for not cooperating with the UN in efforts to deal with the stranded vessel and fears an oil leak that would inflict irreparable damage on the Red Sea. It has been leading a military campaign to support the Yemeni government against the Houthis since 2015.

Link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-53417464>

Priority: Protect Saudi image

Summary: Saudi Arabia’s leadership has come under intense scrutiny for the war in Yemen and the suppression of dissent at home. One of the main objectives will be to keep the conversation about the environment and avoid isolation, with media and foreign officials likely to probe other issues.

Links: <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c200bdvq>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56213528>

SIDS

Overview

Small island developing states (SIDS) are clear and vocal about being in the midst of a climate emergency.

Most are represented internationally by the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), which has played a leading role in creating awareness of the effects of climate change.

The primary issue is rising sea-levels which threaten the very existence of low-lying member states. Tuvalu is expected to be uninhabitable by 2050 and five Pacific islands face full submersion by the year 2100. Already, coastal erosion has engendered migration and continues to pose a threat as coastal habitation is common on the islands - in the Caribbean, more than half the population lives within 1.5 km of the sea.

Due to their geographic location, a vast majority of the small island developing states are particularly vulnerable to climate events such as hurricanes, storms, cyclones and floods.

Despite causing less than 1% of the world's emissions, the countries are the first and most heavily impacted by the damaging effects of global warming. They struggle to bear the economic burden of climate change, consequently, global financial support is a key driver in negotiations at an international level.

The association with the ocean, particularly in the Pacific, is historic and cultural as well as economic.

This means the destruction of the ocean is another key issue for the islands - some of which are designated 'large ocean states' because they have exclusive economic zones which are far greater than their land mass.

Overfishing is affecting marine ecosystems and poses a significant threat to food security and the economy. Higher ocean temperatures have also left marine species searching for cooler waters which is having an impact on fishing, tourism and marine life.

The biological diversity in SIDS is among the most threatened in the world. Issues include coral bleaching and high rates of wildlife extinction, including endemic species.

These islands are scattered around the world and in their various groupings, such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), the islanders have tried to bring their concerns to the attention of global bodies.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Finance for loss and damage

Summary: Islanders want progress on Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM).

Link: https://twitter.com/fekita_u/status/1235922576968429568

Priority: Adaptation and resilience

Summary: Seeking to adapt but also continue to continue to sound the alarm

Links: https://twitter.com/fekita_u/status/1235922576968429568

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-02-27/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-alliance-of-small-island-states-%28aosis%29-event-%E2%80%9Cadvancing-ambition-building-bridges-mobilizing-means%E2%80%9D-prepared-for-delivery>

Priority: Finance for disaster recovery

Summary: Pressuring countries to meet the commitment to raise \$100bn per year, increased access to direct finance, building bridges to private finance and faster reconstruction after disasters.

Links: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-02-08/secretary-generals-remarks-briefing-member-states-incoming-cop26-president-delivered>

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-02-27/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-alliance-of-small-island-states-%28aosis%29-event-%E2%80%9Cadvancing-ambition-building-bridges-mobilizing-means%E2%80%9D-prepared-for-delivery>

Priority: Renewable energy

Summary: Pacific islanders confirm their commitment to achieving sustainable energy goals

Links: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/437530/pacific-commits-to-energy-transition-ahead-of-cop26>

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-02-27/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-alliance-of-small-island-states-%28aosis%29-event-%E2%80%9Cadvancing-ambition-building-bridges-mobilizing-means%E2%80%9D-prepared-for-delivery>

Priority: Generating momentum in negotiations

Summary: Generating momentum and also rebuilding trust in the negotiation space by, for example, adopting robust rules on international carbon markets

Link: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-02-27/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-alliance-of-small-island-states-%28aosis%29-event-%E2%80%9Cadvancing-ambition-building-bridges-mobilizing-means%E2%80%9D-prepared-for-delivery>

See also

Pacific SIDS statement for COP25:

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FIJI_cop25cmp15cma2_HLS_EN.pdf

Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM)

<https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/loss-and-damage-ld/warsaw-international-mechanism-for-loss-and-damage-associated-with-climate-change-impacts-wim>

\$100bn per year - <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/climate-finance-roadmap-to-us100-billion.pdf>

South Africa

Overview (12th largest emitter)

South Africa is one of few countries with a constitution guaranteeing citizens the right to a clean environment. Nevertheless, South Africa continues to be one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world.

The UK has pledged a £3 million grant to support the South African government's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero by 2050. The economy has been singled out as one of five global economies which will suffer the most negative consequences if changes are not made.

South Africa - the second biggest economy on the continent - is the world's 12th largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

This is in part due to heavy reliance on coal, with incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa admitting that large coal reserves have provided cheap energy.

The country is planning to build at least two new coal fired power stations in the face of opposition from environmentalists.

And the murder of an anti-mining activists in 2020 highlighted the controversy over plans to expand a coal mine in an eastern province.

Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe has been accused of being a coal fundamentalist, a claim he has denied. More positively, during Ramaphosa's tenure, a carbon tax and mandatory greenhouse gas reporting have been implemented.

The ruling African National Congress (ANC) promised to focus on renewable energy and public transport and invest in safe, reliable and integrated public rail transport as part of its election manifesto in 2019, and Ramaphosa vowed to support the use of renewable technologies.

Climate Action Tracker (CAT) South Africa's Paris pledge as "critically insufficient" and "not at all consistent" with the Paris Agreement's goals.

South Africa is warming at twice the global average and has experienced droughts which have been blamed on climate change, with Cape Town, one of its biggest cities, almost running out of water in 2019.

The country has some of the worst air quality areas in the world, and often experiences smog. The World Health Organisation estimates that 20,000 people die prematurely due to air pollution every year, making it a leading killer in the country.

Climate change and pollution have contributed to a decline in biodiversity already under threat of poaching.

Environmentalists face violence. Fikile Ntshangase, a vocal campaigner against the expansion of a coal mine, was murdered in 2020, and Sikhosiphi “Bazooka” Rhadebe, who opposed the proposed mining of titanium in coastal dunes, was killed in 2018.

Stated Priorities

Senior government figures have spoken in favour of driving down greenhouse gas emissions but there hasn't been much publicity about specific priorities for the upcoming COP26.

Priority: Plan for a low-carbon economy

Summary: A Presidential Climate Change Commission was established in 2020 to develop a “clear plan to take us from an aspirational commitment to a low-carbon, climate resilient economy and society awake to the reality of new technology, new investment and, above all, new jobs”.

Environment Minister Barbara Creecy said current trading partners might shun South Africa if it continued with its carbon-intensive production.

Link: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2021-02-17-sa-working-towards-low-carbon-climate-resilient-economy-barbara-creecy/>

Priority: Investment in green economy

Summary: The government is encouraging investment in the green economy, with Environment Minister Creecy saying: “It opens access to new green financing opportunities; it offers the possibility of significant proven job creation; it has potential to localise production and services which will build small and medium enterprises; and of course it enhances our long-term competitiveness while mitigating our transition risks.”

Link: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/minister-barbara-creecy-debate-state-nation-address-17-feb-2021-0000>

South Korea

Overview (9th largest emitter)

South Korea has a history of environmental activism at the local level as well as widespread public awareness of global environmental issues, but under President Moon Jae-in the country is now taking more ambitious steps to combat climate change.

Moon has advocated increasing efforts to address environmental challenges since coming to power in 2017, but in 2020 he went further by pledging to work toward net carbon neutrality by 2050 and unveiling a “Green New Deal” for sustainable economic development.

These goals were not announced in relation to the upcoming COP26 conference, although the October 2020 announcement of the 2050 carbon neutrality target came soon after a visit by COP26 President-designate Alok Sharma.

For many environmentalists, these measures finally give hope that decades of promises of “green growth” may finally come to pass.

The earlier promises reflected the country's willingness to acknowledge climate change and other environmental issues, but in practice South Korea's rapid industrialisation has long been a barrier to real change.

This industrialisation has largely relied on fossil fuels, with oil, coal and natural gas comprising 87% of South Korea's energy consumption as of 2019.

Under the new proposals, however, the government plans to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy and build forward with an environmental focus at the heart of new, post-Covid-19 economy.

This long-term vision also reflects an increasing awareness in society of the problems of climate change. South Koreans have long acknowledged the seriousness of climate change, but in the short term their biggest concern has typically been the continuing problem of fine dust pollution.

Apart from government efforts to address climate change and the continuing work of environment-focused NGOs, South Korea's popular entertainers have also contributed to raise awareness of the need to tackle the issue.

K-pop artists like Blackpink - also an official ambassador for the COP26 conference - and BTS have used their popularity to spread messages about climate change and mobilised their global fanbases to carry out environmental campaigns.

Stated Priorities

South Korea has not officially highlighted priorities or a specific vision with COP26 in mind, but it has laid out an agenda for climate change and sustainable development in its detailed 2050 Carbon Neutral Strategy policy brief, released in December 2020.

Priority: Carbon neutrality by 2050

Summary: South Korea announced in late 2020 that it plans to become completely carbon neutral by 2050, expanding greatly on previous commitments - linked to the Paris Agreement - to reduce emissions by 2030 to 37% below business-as-usual (BAU) levels. President Moon Jae-in later announced plans to establish a presidential committee to oversee this process, while details of the roadmap for achieving carbon neutrality were released in December 2020.

Links: [2050 Carbon Neutral Strategy of the Republic of Korea](#)
[The Carbon Brief Profile: South Korea](#)

Priority: Green New Deal

Summary: The carbon neutrality pledge complements another proposal put forward in 2020, a “Green New Deal” aimed at building a green economy. The Green New Deal and Digital New Deal together comprise the “Korean New Deal”, a \$138 billion initiative aimed at building a new, post-pandemic economy centred on the green and digital sectors.

Link: [2050 Carbon Neutral Strategy of the Republic of Korea](#)

Priority: Contributing to global climate action

Summary: In its policy brief on the 2050 Carbon Neutral Strategy, South Korea says that “as a party to the Paris Agreement and a responsible member of the international community” it will participate in efforts to limit the global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Furthermore, it will pursue efforts to limit this margin to as little as 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In addition to its own efforts, South Korea says it is keen to engage with other countries for joint efforts against climate change and plans to support developing countries by sharing technological innovations and knowledge.

Link: [2050 Carbon Neutral Strategy of the Republic of Korea](#)

Turkey

Overview (16th largest emitter)

Turkey is susceptible to the effects of climate change, with its biodiversity particularly threatened.

Almost 1,000 extreme weather incidents were recorded in the country in 2020, marking an “all-time record”, Turkish media outlets reported. 2020 was also reportedly “the third hottest year” on record since 1971. The hottest September, October and January (2021) on record was measured in dozens of cities.

Water in Istanbul’s dams reportedly fell to “the lowest level in the last 15 years” in January due to low rainfall, prompting concerns about whether Turkey’s most populous province would have enough water for its millions of residents.

Air pollution is also a major problem. The European Environment Agency (EEA) said in a 2014 report that 97.2% of the urban population in Turkey is exposed to “unhealthy levels” of air pollution. The country’s Right to Clean Air Platform estimates that more than 30,000 people die each year from air pollution-related illnesses.

While surveys suggest that most people in Turkey acknowledge climate change, the issue is not prominent in national political discussion or the media. Drought or floods are often reported as extreme events, without detailed reference to the implications of climate change. While Turkey has a small but vocal environmental activist tradition with some success in preventing projects, climate change or environment are not decisive issues in elections.

Ankara ratified the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2004. It became a party to the Kyoto Protocol on 26 August 2009, four years after it came into force.

Turkey signed the Paris Agreement on 22 April 2016 but has not ratified it. It is reportedly the only G20 country not to have ratified the Paris Agreement.

Ankara submitted its intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement in 2015, declaring its intention to achieve “up to 21% reduction in GHG emissions from the Business as Usual level by 2030”, according to the country’s foreign ministry.

Climate Action Tracker (CAT) rates Turkey’s Paris pledge as “critically insufficient” and “not at all consistent” with the Paris Agreement’s goals.

There appears to be increased planning within the country on climate action, though concrete steps and results are yet to be seen.

Turkey has published a National Climate Change Strategy (2010-2023) and National Climate Change Action Plan (2011-2023).

In 2017 the country launched a national “Zero Waste Project”, sponsored by First Lady Emine Erdogan. It also started imposing a fee on plastic bags in 2019.

In February 2021, the environment minister presented the Fight Against Climate Change Declaration, including “smart-city programmes, zero-waste programmes and the founding of new energy-efficient, climate-sensitive residential areas”, pro-government Daily Sabah news website reported.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) reported in March 2021 that Turkey’s renewable electricity generation has nearly tripled in the last decade. Renewables’ share in Turkey’s total power generation reached 44% in 2019, including the notable growth in distributed solar generation, the IEA said.

However, while Turkey has seen diversification of its energy mix in the past decade, it continues to invest in fossil fuels. Oil, coal and gas still make up a majority of Turkey’s total primary energy supply, according to the IEA.

In 2020, a Turkish drilling ship discovered 405bn cubic metres of natural gas reserves in in the Black Sea, while Turkey continues its efforts to search for gas in the East Mediterranean.

Meanwhile, Russia’s state-run nuclear energy company Rosatom is currently building Turkey’s first nuclear power plant in the southern province of Mersin. The Akkuyu plant is due to start operating in 2023.

Stated Priorities

Priority: Access to international climate finance

Summary: Turkey has mostly focused on securing access to international climate finance in UN climate talks up to now. This is expected to remain its main priority in COP26.

Turkey’s chief climate negotiator Mehmet Emin Birpınar said in an interview in 2018 that Ankara requested access to the Green Climate Fund.

“We said that the main reason behind our demands was to scale up Turkey’s fight against climate change, that we could achieve further emission reductions and increase uptake of renewable energy if we had access to these funds,” Birpınar said.

In a more recent speech in September 2020, he said Turkey needed about 80bn euros in climate change mitigation funds “in order to reach EU standards” on environmental issues. Sir Laurie Bristow, the UK government’s COP26 Regional Ambassador to the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and China was in the audience.

Link: <https://www.iklimhaber.org/chief-climate-negotiator-turkey-does-not-have-a-luxury-to-be-a-laggard-in-terms-of-climate-action/>

<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cevre-ve-sehircilik-bakan-yardimcisi-birpinar-cevre-konusunda-ulkeler-fonlarla-cezalandirilmamali/1980558>

Priority: Redefine Turkey's status

Summary: Turkey's concerns over financing mainly stem from its position as a middle income country with low historic emissions, but on the threshold of developed country status as a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Mehmet Emin Birpınar said in 2018 that “a mistake” was made in 1992, when Turkey was “listed among developed countries that are required to achieve absolute emissions reduction targets”. This prevented Turkey from receiving financial support for the transition, he said.

“Turkey's special circumstances were recognised in [various] COP decisions... However, these decisions were unable to provide a viable solution to Turkey's request on achieving a fair position,” the Turkish Foreign Ministry says.

“We want to be listed along with developing countries such as South Korea, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Saudi Arabia, and China. These countries can receive financial support,” Birpınar says.

At COP25 in 2019, Turkey's delegation initially demanded to be removed from the category of “Annex-1” developed countries.

However, it withdrew this demand citing “a lack of time for negotiations” and a request from counterparts to finalise the issue there, according to an environment-focused Turkish news website.

“COP25 failed. Don't leave any party behind. If you do, you will fail more in the future,” Birpınar tweeted at the time.

Birpınar suggested in September 2020 that Turkey's placement would once again be on Ankara's COP26 agenda.

“We have made the necessary compromises. They have been stalling us for five or six years. Turkey is on the list of ‘developed countries’ in the UN agreement. Promises that we would be removed from this list have not been kept. While even the Middle East and China can benefit from EU funds, Turkey cannot,” he was quoted as saying.

Links: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change- unfccc - and-the-kyoto-protocol.en.mfa>

<https://yesilekonomi.com/ek-1-talebimiz-cop25te-kapatilmak-istendi/>

Priority: Delay ratification of Paris agreement

Summary: Turkey is the only G20 country to not ratify the 2015 Paris Agreement pledging to hold global temperature increases below two degrees Celsius. Ankara's position on financing and placement in UN talks is directly linked to its decision to not ratify the agreement.

Birpınar said in his September 2020 speech that “there is no possibility” that Turkey will ratify the Paris Agreement “unless these issues are resolved”. He stressed that this was “on the order” of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

“Turkey has maintained the necessary efforts until now to keep the system intact and so negotiations could continue. But I must say that Glasgow will be a more difficult COP,” he said, in remarks reported by state-funded Anadolu Agency.

“Tactics to stall Turkey must be abandoned. Turkey has waited enough and has no patience left,” he added.

President Erdoğan said in 2017 that Turkey signed the accord after France had promised that it would be eligible for compensation for some of the financial costs of compliance, Reuters reported.

“So we said if this would happen, the agreement would pass through parliament. But otherwise it won't pass,” Erdoğan said, adding that parliament had yet to ratify the agreement.

Links: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/turkey/ngos-petition-turkey-to-ratify-paris-climate-agreement/31987>

<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/cevre-ve-sehircilik-bakan-yardimcisi-birpınar-cevre-konusunda-ulkeler-fonlarla-cezalandirilmamali/1980558>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-g20-climatechange-turkey/erdogan-says-u-s-stance-stalls-turkish-ratification-of-paris-climate-deal-idUSKBN19T11R>

UAE

Overview (31st largest emitter)

The United Arab Emirates - which already suffers major environmental problems and expects serious consequences of global warming - regards itself as a regional leader in efforts to protect the environment.

The desert nation's cities endure high levels of pollution because of emissions from industry and desalination plants, the high levels of motorised traffic and dust storms. Unlike many other cities, dry UAE lacks trees and other vegetation to temper these effects.

Rising sea levels due to climate change could be expected to inundate its coastal cities in the distant future but the country is already suffering from dust storms whose intensity and frequency appears to be increasing, partly because the region is becoming drier.

The UAE is diversifying its energy mix by drawing on solar power, and controversially, by starting up the Arab world's first commercial nuclear power station. It is set to come on stream in 2021.

The motivation is suspected to be partly to reduce dependence on oil and gas, which can be sold more profitably abroad.

Dubai claims to have the largest single-site solar energy project in the world. It is being developed over multiple phases and is designed to have a total capacity of 5GW of renewable energy by 2030.

The country, which marks its 50th anniversary this year, has become a space faring nation, with a space craft in orbit around Mars, a mission which it hopes will enhance knowledge of climate change.

Separately, a low-orbiting nano satellite was scheduled to start work in March 2021 monitoring pollution and dust storms in the UAE.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment is actively engaged in environment protection activities, especially through holding climate-related events, such as the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week held in January 2021.

And in February 2021, a senior official outlined his government's commitment to combating climate change: "The UAE's second NDC reflects its target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 23.5 percent compared to business as usual for the year 2030. By then, the country aims to expand its clean power capacity to 14 GW, rising from just above 100 MW in 2015.

"In boosting nature-based climate solutions, the UAE has committed to planting 30 million mangroves by 2030 to conserve and enhance coastal blue carbon ecosystems," said Fahed Al Hammadi, Acting Assistant Under-Secretary of the Green Development and Climate Change Sector.

The Climate Action Tracker rated the UAE's first nationally determined contributions as highly insufficient, but its new target as nominally stronger.

Stated Priorities

The country's officials are actively preparing for COP26 as part of its commitment to scaling up its climate action. At the COP21 United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2015, the UAE affirmed its plan to generate 24 percent of its electricity from clean energy sources by 2021. The UAE is committed to continuing to work on progressive climate action and is the first in the region to announce an economy-wide emissions reduction by 2030.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment tweeted on 12 March: "Recognizing that climate change is humanity's no. 1 existential threat, the UAE is an active contributor to global climate efforts and a driver of regional climate action".

Priority: Reduce greenhouse gases by 23.5% by 2030

Summary: The UAE says in its latest nationally determined contributions that it is aiming for a reduction of 23.5% in GHG emissions for the year 2030, relative to BAU (business as usual). BAU scenario emissions in 2030 stand at about 310 million tonnes, assuming a moderate annual economic growth rate based on historical growth trends.

Link:

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/United%20Arab%20Emirates%20NC4%20revised.pdf>

Priority: Waste recycling

Summary: Waste management is one of the key issues that the country is trying to handle. The UAE has managed to turn waste into an economic resource and set a target to reach a 75% recycling of waste by 2021.

Link: <https://www.moccae.gov.ae/ar/knowledge-and-statistics/wastes-and-chemicals.aspx>

Priority: Protect fisheries

Summary: The environment agency in Abu Dhabi said it took 14 measures to preserve fisheries and prevent over-fishing and draining of fish reserve. One of the problems the agency is handling is the high increase in the number of fishing boats. Studies showed a 90% decline in fish reserves over the past 40 years.

Link: <https://www.emaratalyom.com/local-section/other/2018-08-11-1.1125351>

Priority: Ensure water security

Summary: The UAE suffers a shortage water due to its arid weather. It has designed a strategy for water security which aims to ensure sustainable access to water during both normal and emergency conditions.

Link: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/federal-governments-strategies-and-plans/the-uae-water-security-strategy->

[2036#:~:text=In%20September%202017%2C%20Ministry%20of,vision%20to%20achieve%20prosperity%20and](#)

UK

Summary (17th largest emitter)

The UK is in a special position leading up to COP26 as it will be hosting the meeting, and almost all domestic climate change issues are being discussed with COP26 in mind.

The debate does not only concern how the issues relate to the COP26 targets, like it may do in other countries, but also how the issues and the handling of them will reflect on the UK chairmanship itself: What does the UK's handling of its own climate goals say about its ability to “deliver” on the Glasgow summit as a whole?

Just like most other developed countries, the UK is behind on emission targets, but this is perceived in the media as worse than ever because of the country's key role in the COP26.

The UK is the birthplace of the industrial revolution and still struggles with legacy industries and their pollution. The government has close ties with, and enjoys economic support from, businesses in the pollution-heavy transport and industry sectors. In 2020 the Committee on Climate Change reported that the UK had failed to meet 17 of 21 climate adaptation targets.

The government has launched ambitious climate goals in anticipation of COP26 but has not fully managed to turn around years of policy just for this one event, so a lot of old structures, such as tax relief for carbon-intensive businesses, remain in place.

COP President Alok Sharma told the British Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee that while processes are in place, he “certainly do[es] not underestimate the amount of work that we all collectively need to do,” adding that: “We need to do more in terms of closing the gap”.

Critics say the government isn't doing enough to reach its climate targets and warn that the UK's negotiating power will be “weakened” by the granting of new licences for North Sea oil and gas projects and if a planned Cumbrian coalmine project isn't halted.

The country has an active environmental movement fighting on many fronts against air pollution and unsustainable development. It is challenging plans for a massive road building programme, financing for fossil fuels and more broadly, the system which it says promotes economic growth at the expense of the environment.

There have been some encouraging environmental trends. The UK's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 were half of 1990 levels, according to an analysis by Carbon Brief, which says the country is now halfway to meeting its target of “net-zero” emissions by 2050.

The reduction in the past three decades is attributed to cleaner power generation and cleaner industry. However, slower progress was made on heating, and almost no progress has been made on transport, which is still responsible for a quarter of the UK's emissions, Carbon Brief says.

And the government is planning a major shake-up of farming with an environmental land management scheme aimed at funding the rewilding of habitats, creating new woodlands, cutting the use of pesticides and generally producing healthy and profitable food in a sustainable way.

Stated priorities

Priority: Net-zero by 2050

Summary: The UK's latest Nationally Determined Contribution, submitted in December 2020, commits it to reducing economy-wide domestic greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. It says this “represents a step forward for the UK’s ambition to tackle climate change over the next ten years, as the UK accelerates towards meeting the legally binding commitment to net zero by 2050. It is a significant increase from the UK’s previous contribution to the EU’s Intended NDC of 40% by 2030.”

Links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-nationally-determined-contribution-communication-to-the-unfccc>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sets-ambitious-new-climate-target-ahead-of-un-summit>

Priority: Cut emissions by 78% by 2035

Summary: The government further raised its targets in April 2021 by accepting the advice of its independent Climate Change Committee (CCC) to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035, compared with 1990 levels. Environmentalists welcomed this but warned that ministers had consistently failed to achieve previous CCC-set targets and they said Chancellor Rishi Sunak must show clearly how the transition is to be funded.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/09/ending-uk-climate-emissions-affordable-net-zero-climate-change-committee>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56807520>

Priority: Adapt

Summary: Together with the NDCs, the country also lodged an adaptation plan detailing “how the UK is improving resiliency and mitigation against the climate crisis both at home and overseas”.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-adaptation-communication-to-the-united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change-unfccc-2020>

Priority: Start a green industrial revolution

Summary: Prime Minister Boris Johnson set out a ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution in November 2020. He said the blueprint was important in the run-up to COP26 and would allow the UK to make progress in eradicating its contribution to climate change by 2050.

Links: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-outlines-his-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution-for-250000-jobs>

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/boris-johnson-ten-point-net-zero-plan>

Britain's ambitions as host for COP26

Priority: International agreement to curb emissions

Summary: COP26 President Alok Sharma appears to be making some progress towards putting together a package of elements which can be agreed upon in Glasgow in November, saying in April 2021 that he had spoken to ministers and negotiators from 80 countries and that they had mostly prioritised several common issues. These included: The need for full implementation of the Paris Agreement; Adaptation; Loss and damage (averting, minimising and addressing); Finance (delivering on the \$100 billion mobilisation goal); Mitigation; Inclusive action (to accelerate action by all).

Link: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CPD%20letter%20to%20all%20Parties.pdf>

Priority: Five themes

Summary: Earlier Mr Sharma listed five areas he describes as critical: finance, nature, adaptation resilience, clean transport and clean energy. Observers suggested that these might become the main part of the agenda in Glasgow, but wondered why it doesn't include agriculture - one of the main emitters of greenhouse gases.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDGWIZ5XWSE>

Priority: International co-operation

Summary: Mr Sharma said one of his key goals was international collaboration to bring governments, industry, investors, development banks and civil society together around the five critical areas of finance, nature, adaptation resilience, clean transport and clean energy.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDGWIZ5XWSE>

Priority: Adaptation

Summary: Mr Sharma told an African leaders' conference that all countries should put adaptation to climate change at the heart of their response to the pandemic. "I urge you to join the Adaptation Action Coalition which aims to scale up action on adaptation around the world particularly relating to water, health and infrastructure". The international community must support these efforts by making finance available, he said.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmCtwIOT-FE>

Priority: Finance

Summary: Mr Sharma has made it one of his priorities to get public and private finance flowing, and to get developed countries to honour their commitments to raise 100 billion dollars a year in international climate finance.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDGWIZ5XWSE>

USA

Overview (2nd largest emitter)

The United States, the world's second biggest polluter, is now on track to take a lead in the fight against climate change.

After undermining international efforts to save the planet, the US has made a U-turn under the leadership of President Joe Biden who, within days of taking office in January 2021, issued an executive order placing the fight against climate change at the centre of domestic and foreign policy.

And Wall Street financiers, who for years have been accused of backing polluters and opposing legislation to rein them in, now appear to be going green as well.

In 2020 a record number of corporations are said to have pledged to go “net zero” and move to cancel out the carbon emissions they produce to halt a catastrophic rise in global temperatures.

Climate change denial financed by US oil is alleged to have seriously weakened international efforts to curb the use of fossil fuels.

And climate change denying ex-President Donald Trump further undermined multinational efforts by pulling the US out of the Paris climate agreement.

However, a number of states and businesses pledged to continue cutting carbon and to try and make up for the Federal government's decision to walk away from the US commitments.

There is a growing recognition within the US that rather than facing a problem sometime in the future, it is already in the middle of a climate crisis.

Wildfires that raged in California, the increasingly frequent storms which have battered the east coast as well as the snowstorms which hit Texas in 2021 are widely associated with climate change.

It appears that the scene is set for the US to do something about the crisis.

Stated priorities

US President Joe Biden issued an executive order within a week of his inauguration in January 2021 committing to tackling the climate crisis at home and abroad. The order contains both national and international priorities.

Priority: Put climate crisis at centre of foreign policy and national security.

Summary: The executive order says that the US will work with others to put the world on a sustainable climate pathway, and that it will rejoin the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

Priority: Press for raised climate ambitions

Summary: The US will host a Leaders' Climate Summit on Earth Day, April 22, aimed at raising climate ambition and making a positive contribution to COP26.

Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

Priority: Develop the US nationally determined contributions (NDC)

Summary: The US will aim to submit its NDCs before the Leaders' Climate Summit. The most recent NDC which the US filed is dated 2016.

Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

Priority: Help finance developing countries' emission reduction measures

Summary: The US will develop a climate finance plan to help developing countries develop ambitious reduction measures, promoting the flow of capital toward climate-aligned investments and away from high-carbon investments.

Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

National objectives include the following:

Priority: Net-zero emissions by 2050

Summary: The US aims to deliver an equitable, clean energy future, and put the United States on a path to achieve net-zero emissions, economy-wide, by no later than 2050.

Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

European Union

Events, initiatives and key people

EU Action Plan Toward a Zero Pollution Ambition

- This is an EU initiative working towards reducing pollution.
<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12588-EU-Action-Plan-Towards-a-Zero-Pollution-Ambition-for-air-water-and-soil>

European Green Deal

- The green deal is a plan to make the EU's economy sustainable. It was launched in 2019.
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- For players please see spreadsheet for list for people tweeting about Green Deal and lobbyists under 'EU Environment Council Meetings'.

EU Environment Council meeting

- The council, made up of ministers or government representatives responsible for the environment, meets around four times a year.
- Key players
 - o Delegates
 - o Environmental lobbyists (for example, the European Environmental Bureau in Brussels connects many of the green organisations: <https://eeb.org/>)
 - o Business and industry lobbyists (according to most reports, the majority of lobbying, in terms of money spent and hours worked, comes from businesses and industry, with BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell, and Total having 200 lobbyists in Brussels.)

Horizon Europe

- Horizon Europe is a [European Union](#) scientific research and investment programme succeeding the current [Horizon 2020](#) programme. It has several mission areas, two of which are relevant for CAL:
 - o Adaptation to climate change including societal transformation (hashtag #MissionClimate)
 - o Climate-neutral and smart cities (hashtag #MissionCities)
- Key players
 - o Experts and consultants involved in the preparation of the Adaptation to climate change mission People who have tweeted about #MissionClimate
 - o Members of the “Commission expert group: Mission Board for climate-neutral and smart cities”
 - o Members of the “Mission Assembly for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities” (most of them run city-focussed organisations, or they are urbanity scientists)
 - o People who have tweeted about #MissionCities

EU Green Week in Lahti, Finland

- Lahti is Europe's green capital 2021 and therefore hosts this year's annual EU Green Week. The Green Week initiative is run by Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius and his team.

COP26 and the United Nations

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) secretariat is tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. The Convention is the parent treaty of the 2015 [Paris Agreement](#).

The secretariat organises between two and four **negotiating sessions** each year – the largest of which is the annual Conference of the Parties (COP).

The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 1–12 November 2021.

The UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn, Germany, is led by Patricia Espinosa. There is also a UNFCCC “bureau” that deals with process issues. The bureau members only serve for a few years. Most of the current ones come from the COP25, which was held in Madrid, Spain, in December 2019.

The official power of the COP belongs to the delegates, or parties. They often negotiate together in blocks, or form alliances towards specific goals.

There are also groups that can observe but not take part, such as UN bodies (UNEP, WHO, UNHCR, etc), NGOs and others.

Power arguably also rests with the many scientists, committee members and advisers that feed into the many expert committees and subgroups that advise the UNFCCC, for example the IPCC, as well as with the many lobbyists sponsoring and interacting with the administration.

The COP26 is not run by the IPCC (they are an expert group, a “body”) or UNEP (they are there to observe, just like WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, etc).

Key players

Secretariat

Executive Secretary: Patricia Espinosa <https://twitter.com/PEspinosaC>

Deputy Executive Secretary: Ovais Sarmand <https://twitter.com/OvaisSarmad>

Adaptation Division, Intergovernmental Support and Collective Progress division: Youssef Nassef <https://twitter.com/ynassef>

Means of Implementation Division and Administrative Services, Human Resources, and Information and Communication Technology Division: Daniele Violetti

Mitigation Division, Communication and Engagement Division: James Grabert

Transparency Division: Donald Cooper

Legal Affairs Division: Hafida Lahiouel

Conference Affairs Division: Laura Lopez

Bureau

The bureau was elected during COP25. A new bureau will be elected in COP26, with some members perhaps remaining on the board. See here for names/positions of current board:

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Bureau%20members_cop_cmp_cma_web.pdf

The Glasgow COP26 team

President: Alok Sharma https://twitter.com/AlokSharma_RDG

See here for full team: <https://ukcop26.org/uk-presidency/our-team/>

UNFCCC and IPCC committees and expert groups

Please see spreadsheet for those with Twitter accounts.

Other key people

Names mentioned frequently in traditional and social media outlets, and by experts, as important players leading up to the Glasgow meeting. (Please note again that just like with the EU, there is a small bit of overlap in the Excel sheet, where a handful of names appear in two or more groups.)