

LaRutadelClima



Nº 2 Serie Justicia Climática en América Latina

**COP26
CLIMATE
SUMMIT**

**The Last
Train to
1.5°C**

Créditos

Editorial ©La Ruta del Clima –

COP26: *The Last Train to 1.5°C*, es una publicación de la serie: Justicia Climática en América Latina; de la Asociación La Ruta del Clima con el apoyo de la Fundación Heinrich Böll para Centroamérica.

ISBN: 978-9930-9744-1-4

Autor: Sam Goodman

Editorial: Adrián Martínez Blanco

Diseño gráfico y Diagramación: Sam Goodman y Adrián Martínez Blanco

Publicado en San José, Costa Rica 1a. edición, Septiembre 2021.



Esta obra está disponible en el marco de la licencia Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International".

El texto de la licencia está disponible en: <https://creativecommons.org/>

Dirección para pedir la publicación o descargar el texto: www.LaRutadelClima.org

Asociación La Ruta del Clima. San José, Costa Rica.

ISBN: 978-9930-9744-1-4



Introduction

This year's U.N. climate conference (COP26) presents an extraordinary set of challenges as nations are set to meet from October 31 to November 12 in Glasgow, Scotland.

The United Kingdom will preside over this year's climate talks in partnership with Italy, which will be hosting this year's Pre-COP in Milan from September 30 to October 2. The conference in Glasgow will mark the fourth consecutive COP taking place in Europe.

Alok Sharma, a Member of Parliament who has held multiple cabinet positions under Prime Ministers Boris Johnson and Theresa May, will serve as the President of COP26.

The conference will take place following a dire warning from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's first contribution to its Sixth Assessment Report. The scientists have made it clear that time is running out to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

“This is our last hope of keeping 1.5 degrees alive. Our best chance of building a brighter future,” said Sharma.

The annual conference, which was originally scheduled for last November, will be held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, raising concerns the negotiations could become a superspreader event.

Many hoping to attend from the Global South could be sidelined due to the prohibitive costs and vaccination inequality. Much uncertainty remains as to how the negotiations will happen.

Climate ambition and enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are central to this year's conference as nations are expected to submit revised climate pledges.

Also critical to this year's negotiations will be finalizing the Paris Rulebook and coming to an agreement on global carbon markets. Delivering on the collective goal to surpass the \$100 billion target in climate finance and operationalizing the Santiago Network will be key.



Who Will Participate?

A major challenge for the COP Presidency will be hosting the conference amidst a Delta variant surge.

Between 20,000 and 25,000 country delegates, media representatives, and members of civil society organizations are expected to attend this year's COP.

UK quarantine rules, vaccination issues, and the high price of hotels and Airbnb rentals have made the trek a difficult one for those looking to attend the conference with limited resources.

The host has agreed to relax some of its COVID-related rules, reducing the quarantine period for vaccinated delegates from 10 days to 5 for certain nations. The UK has promised vaccines to all COP participants who have requested them.

Depending on the severity of the outbreak, some countries are given a red-list designation. Vaccinated delegates from red-listed nations are required to quarantine for 5 days upon arrival, while unvaccinated delegates must quarantine

for 10 days. In a September 7 [press release](#), the UK agreed to pay quarantine costs for those coming from red-listed nations.

These new challenges threaten to further distort representation at the COP. NGOs from the Global South have been historically underrepresented at previous conferences. For example, at COP21 in Paris, NGOs from the Global South [only accounted for 25%](#) of the total representation.

The Climate Action Network (CAN), which represents more than 1,500 civil society organizations, has called for the postponement of COP26 over concerns for health and equity.

"Our concern is that those countries most deeply affected by the climate crisis and those countries suffering from the lack of support by rich nations in providing vaccines will be left out of the talks and conspicuous in their absence at COP26," [said](#) CAN's Executive Director Tasneem Essop.

COP Goals Set

The UK Presidency has established four major goals at COP26:

1. Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5°C within reach
2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats
3. Mobilize finance
4. Work together to deliver

With its first goal, the UK has made raising ambition the key to a successful COP26. Nations are expected to submit their revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement every five years, which coincides with COP26. To date, 85 countries plus the EU have submitted revised climate pledges.

To keep global temperature increase below 1.5°C, the UK identified accelerating the phase-out of coal, curtailing deforestation, speeding up the switch to electric cars, and encouraging investment in renewables.

As for its second goal, the UK is emphasizing the importance of adaptation in climate efforts. The UK Presidency is pushing for increased adaptation finance, raising awareness for protecting and

restoring habitats, and encouraging all nations to develop an "Adaptation Communication." In partnership with Egypt, Bangladesh, Malawi, the Netherlands, and Saint Lucia, the United Kingdom founded the Adaptation Action Coalition to "accelerate global action on adaptation to achieve a climate resilient world by 2030."

For its third goal, the UK has targeted raising climate finance in both the public and private sectors to reach the \$100 billion goal set forth in Copenhagen in 2009 and reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement. To help facilitate this, the UK has committed to doubling its own International Climate Finance commitment to £11.6 (\$16) billion over the next five years and has encouraged other countries to follow suit.

For its fourth goal of working together to deliver, the UK has identified the importance of finalizing the Paris Rulebook, which will make the Paris Agreement operational. The key to finalizing the Rulebook is to come to a resolution on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Disagreement over market mechanisms derailed negotiations on this article at the last two COPs.

UK Climate Goals

The UK has made several key announcements ahead of COP26

68%

REDUCTION IN EMISSIONS

The UK's revised NDC aims for at least a 68% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

£11.6 billion

CLIMATE FINANCE

The UK doubled its climate finance targets to £11.6 (\$16) billion over the next five years.

2024

COAL PHASEOUT

The UK intends to eliminate coal from its electricity matrix by 2024.



Phasing Out Coal



The UK has been particularly vocal about phasing out the use of coal. It is on track to eliminate coal from its electricity matrix by 2024. Last year, only 1.8% of the UK's electricity came from coal, which is down from 40% in 2012.

While the phaseout of this dirty fossil fuel is an important step, the UK is moving to expand drilling in the North Sea.

“That’s not how you build leadership and it really undermines the message we have on coal,” said Sébastien Duyck, Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law's Climate & Energy Program. “The UK is just cherry picking their fossil fuels. It’s not my fossil fuels versus yours.”

A Stronger NDC Target

In an attempt to demonstrate leadership and keep the 1.5°C target alive, the UK submitted a revised NDC last December.

At the core of this updated pledge is a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions at least 68% by 2030 from 1990 levels. The goal is significantly higher than what the United States (50%), Canada (40-45%), and the European Union (55%) have put forth in their revised NDCs. Still, the target may not be high enough for a nation hoping to lead the world to a 1.5°C future.

“The UK has got a better target than most, but it’s not what we were asking for,” said Katherine Kramer, global climate lead at Christian Aid. “We had called for a 75% reduction.”

The UK also announced it will be publishing a Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26 that will lay out the government's vision for transitioning to a net-zero economy by 2050. It also stated it will be publishing a series of individual plans, such as an Energy White Paper, Transport Decarbonisation Plan, England Peat Strategy, and Heat and Buildings Strategy.

Code Red for Humanity

This past June, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I published its contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report, a devastating indictment on the state of the planet.

“Today’s IPCC Working Group I report is a code red for humanity,” wrote U.N. Secretary General António Guterres. “The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse-gas emissions from fossil-fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk.”

The report’s 200-plus authors confirmed that evidence of observed changes in extreme weather events driven by climate change has strengthened since the previous report in 2018. It concludes that we will exceed global 1.5°C and 2°C unless drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are made in the coming decades.

“The science is clear,” said Quamrul Chowdhury, who has served as Lead Climate Negotiator of Least Developed Countries. “Now it is in the court of the policymakers to act right here and right now. That is the key message.”

Despite hope that the IPCC report could trigger a stronger response at COP26, it’s worth remembering that the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Kuwait blocked nearly 200 countries from “welcoming” an earlier IPCC report during the first week of COP24 in 2018.

Such a hostile approach toward the scientific consensus will be less likely this year. With the Trump Administration gone, petrostates that wish to engage in science denial will not have as much political cover.

A successful COP26 will mean not only “welcoming” the latest IPCC report, but using it as the basis for every decision made this November.

“

“If we don’t respond to the call of the IPCC, we are going to miss the last opportunities. This is the last train. There will not be another train to reach 1.5°C.”

Quamrul Chowdhury

”



The U.S. Returns

The landscape of international climate diplomacy changed dramatically in 2021 under the U.S. leadership of President Joe Biden and Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

On Day 1 of his Administration, Biden moved to rejoin the Paris Agreement, the first step in the country's return to the world stage. The United States officially exited the agreement on November 4, 2020 under President Donald Trump, becoming the only nation to do so.

The return of Obama-era figures such as Biden and Kerry has raised the question of whether the Biden Administration would largely be a return to the Obama Era or if it represented something more transformative.

The U.S. announced its revised NDC to the Paris Agreement in April of this year.

The new NDC seeks a 50 to 52 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by 2030. It also reinforces Biden's target of eliminating greenhouse gases from the electricity sector by 2035.

This is a significant improvement from the country's first submission in 2016 under President Obama, which committed the U.S. to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025 from its 2005 levels. According to the [World Resources Institute](#), the new NDC represents a 30% increase in the average annual pace of reductions in emissions.

The Need for Ambition



The anticipation heading into COP26 in 2020 was that this would be a conference focused on raising ambition. Countries are expected to submit their revised climate pledges every five years and COP26 marks the fifth summit since Paris.

The delays from the ongoing pandemic have helped suppress the original narrative.

“COP26 was supposed to be the big year of ambition and we’ve totally lost the narrative,” said Duyck. “It is very hard to see what could be brought to the table,

whether in the process or outside, to really bring some energy back on ambition.”

Even without the COP taking place last year, 84 countries plus the EU27 have submitted revised NDC targets. Major greenhouse gas emitters, such as the United States, European Union, and the United Kingdom, have all submitted stronger NDC targets, according to Climate Action Tracker. Other nations, including the Russian Federation, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, and Indonesia, submitted targets that did not increase ambition.

NDC Enhancement

Australia: In December 2020, Australia announced its intention to follow through with its first NDC commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030 and noted that this target is a "floor for Australia's ambition."

Brazil: The country's "weak" revised NDC seeks a 37% cut in emissions by 2025 from 2005 levels and a 43% reduction in emissions by 2030 from 2005 levels.

Canada: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada is committed to a 40 to 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 from 2005 levels.

China: The world's largest greenhouse gas emitter proposed a stronger target of net-zero by 2060 but has yet to formally submit its revised NDC. Climate Action Tracker rated this target highly insufficient.



European Union: Member states submitted a revised NDC in December 2020 that seeks to cut emissions at least 55% by 2030 from 1990 levels.

Japan: At Biden's Earth Day Summit in April 2021, Japan announced a new target to reduce emissions by 46% by 2030.

Russian Federation: The Russian Federation's revised NDC largely reinstates its previous NDC commitment of a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 from 1990 levels.

United Kingdom: The UK's revised NDC targets a 68% reduction in emissions by 2030.

United States: seeks a 50 to 52% reduction greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and has pledged to have a clean electricity matrix by 2035.

Resolving Article 6

Key to a successful COP26 is the resolution of Article 6, the section of the Paris Agreement that deals with global carbon market mechanisms.

Article 6 has three key paragraphs, with the first two addressing carbon markets and the third discussing non-market approaches.

Article 6.2 provides an accounting framework for international cooperation and permits carbon credits to be transferred between countries. Article 6.4 creates a mechanism to trade emission reduction credits. Non-market mechanisms, including taxes to discourage emissions, are addressed in Article 6.8.

Market mechanisms are a critical piece of the Paris Agreement since they could potentially “make or break” the integrity of the treaty. To ensure a 1.5°C future, a resolution on Article 6 must eliminate loopholes and adequately address the issue of the carryover of Kyoto-era credits. An Article 6 resolution must also adopt robust language that addresses human rights, especially when it comes to the rights of indigenous populations.

Article 6 is the only remaining piece of the Paris Rulebook that was not finalized during the negotiations in Katowice, Poland at COP24. The negotiations derailed that year when Brazil, which had just elected President Jair Bolsonaro, made a last-minute push to allow for the double-counting of their carbon credits.

With so much unresolved, many are worried about whether a robust resolution is even possible at COP26.

“

"Article 6 is really a very challenging piece to deliver because it's a mechanism that doesn't work. It doesn't add ambition. It's been documented through the Kyoto Protocol. It's a way for governments and also companies to outsource emission reductions rather than embracing the fact that there is no future for certain forms of industries. We just really need to plan for a phasing out of fossil fuels."

Sébastien Duyck, Senior Attorney
CIEL's Climate & Energy Program

”

The \$100 Billion Climate Finance Goal

Climate finance is critical for developing nations to make large-scale investments in mitigation and adaptation measures. The Global South needs support from developed nations like the United States to fund investments in clean technologies and sustainable infrastructure. Costa Rica's electric train, for example, will be partially financed with a \$250 million loan through the Green Climate Fund.

The benchmark for climate finance is the 2009 Copenhagen Accord, which calls for developed countries to mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries. This \$100 billion goal was reaffirmed in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Climate finance provided and mobilized by developed nations is on the rise, with total funding increasing from \$58.6 billion in 2016 to \$79.6 in 2019, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Developed countries are falling short of the modest goals set forth in Copenhagen.

In September 2019, the UK announced it would be doubling its climate finance efforts to at least £11.6 (\$16) billion over the next five years.

At the G7 summit this June, Canada moved to double its previous climate finance commitment to CAD 5.3 billion (\$4.2 billion) over the next five years. Despite this uptick, Canada's pledge falls woefully short of what is needed, providing only 24% of its fair share, according to a working paper by ODI.

Germany also upped its pledge to €6 (\$7.1) billion annually by 2024, a comparatively more robust commitment than Canada.

Japan, which notoriously financed a Vietnamese coal plant through an environmental fund, unveiled its climate finance commitment over the next five years. Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide committed to approximately JPY 1.3 trillion (\$11.8 billion) per year in public and private climate finance.



The biggest obstacle to meeting the \$100 billion goal is the United States' inadequate contributions. Under President Barack Obama's leadership, the United States pledged \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund, but only \$1 billion was transferred before Donald Trump withdrew the country's support.

The Biden Administration released its International Climate Finance Plan in April. The plan would double the U.S. annual public climate finance to developing countries relative to the Obama Administration and triple adaptation finance by 2024. This new climate finance pledge puts the U.S. on track for \$5.7 billion by 2024.

Still, Biden's climate finance targets fall far short of what is needed to help developing nations reduce their emissions and adopt new climate technologies.

ODI shows that a fair share of climate finance compensation for the United

States should be between \$30.2–47.2 billion per year based on gross national income, cumulative CO₂ emissions, and population size.

If Biden's modest requests are met, the United States will only be meeting 18% of its fair share of contributions, according to ODI.

Forty-six environment, development, and faith groups have called for at least an \$8 billion contribution to the Green Climate Fund, \$2 billion to fulfill the first pledge and an additional \$6 billion "to bring the U.S. in step with other key contributors."

The United States, they say, should do more:

"As the world's largest historical greenhouse gas emitter, it is both a legal obligation and a moral imperative for the United States to provide finance for developing countries for climate action."

Scaling Up Loss and Damage Action

Loss and damage refers to irreparable damage or irreversible losses from the adverse impacts of climate change. This concept goes beyond the limits of climate adaptation and addresses economic and non-economic elements, such as cultures, traditions, languages, and forced migration.

While loss and damage should be considered the third pillar of international climate policy, in addition to mitigation and adaptation, it has not been given equal weight in previous negotiations.

“The impact is more than adaptation,” said Willy Missack, who serves as the Adaptation and Loss and Damage negotiator for Vanuatu. “We are at the stage where we can see frontline countries, especially small island states, are losing more than just their livelihood.”

The topic has historically been one of the most contentious areas of negotiation, with developed nations often taking adversarial positions. Developed nations have been particularly reluctant to provide finance for nations suffering irreversible losses.

COP19 in Poland represented a major breakthrough in loss and damage with the development of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), the UNFCCC's principal mechanism to deal with loss and damage.⁶ The Paris Agreement further raised the profile of loss and damage, becoming the first international climate treaty to directly address the issue.

At the same time, action on loss and damage is stymied by Paragraph 51 of the COP Decision accompanying the Paris Agreement, which explicitly states:

“Article 8 of the Agreement does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation.”

The COP25 negotiations on loss and damage action resulted in the establishment of the Santiago Network under the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), the UNFCCC's principal mechanism to deal with loss and damage.⁷

Operationalizing the Santiago Network

The Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD) was created with the vision of bringing together various actors to catalyze the technical assistance for the “implementation of relevant approaches for averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage at the local, national, and regional level.”

At this point, the Santiago Network remains a relatively abstract concept and the next step would be fully operationalizing the network.

With the focus shifting on loss and damage, some rich nations have been softening their tone. Those following the negotiations closely are hopeful the Biden Administration could inject some new energy into this effort.

“I think the U.S. is going to try to do something with loss and damage, which is something it has been resistant to in the past,” said Natalie Lucas, Executive Director of Care about Climate and USCAN Liaison to CAN International. “It is very likely they will try to operationalize the Santiago Network.”

Moving beyond the operationalizing of the Santiago Network could once again be challenging for negotiators, but more must be done to address this critical issue.

“We just heard from the IPCC of the future we are going to face,” said Duyck. “How do we deal with the issue of loss and damage that’s just technical expertise being shared through the Santiago Network?”

“

“Based on these outcomes from COP25, there are two ways forward. The first is to develop the implementation of the SNLD, which was agreed upon but not fleshed out. This should be relatively easy as all countries have already agreed to it, but the devil is, as always, in the details. If this issue is not discussed and fleshed out then it will be reduced to being just another website!”

Saleem Huq
Director of the International Centre for
Climate Change and Development in
[The Daily Star](#)

”