



UNFCCC COP 26 – Glasgow 2021

U3AC Environment Group Seminar



Speakers:

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The background

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.

The 1st Climate Report was issued in August 1990 and most recently the 6th Climate Report was issued in August 2021 and this provides the latest scientific basis for discussions at the Glasgow Conference.

<https://www.ipcc.ch>

The Earth Summit - Rio de Janeiro 1992 and the formation of the UNFCCC

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992 brought together political leaders, diplomats, scientists, representatives of the media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from 179 countries for a massive effort to focus on the impact of human socio-economic activities on the environment.

Outcomes included the formation of a Convention on Biological Diversity, **the Framework Convention on Climate Change**, Principles of Forest Management, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and Agenda 21, which required countries to draw up a national strategy of sustainable development. The summit also led to the establishment of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Article 1. Definitions of terms e.g. climate system, emissions, sink etc.

Article 2. The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.



Article 3. PRINCIPLES. In their actions to achieve the objective of the Convention and to implement its provisions, the Parties shall be guided, INTER ALIA, by the following:

1. **The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.** Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof.
2. **The specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change,** and of those Parties, especially developing country Parties, that would have to bear a disproportionate or abnormal burden under the Convention, should be given full consideration.
3. **The Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects.** Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures, taking into account that policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost. To achieve this, such policies and measures should take into account different socio-economic contexts, be comprehensive, cover all relevant sources, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and adaptation, and comprise all economic sectors. Efforts to address climate change may be carried out cooperatively by interested Parties.

Article 3 Principles - continued



4. **The Parties have a right to, and should, promote sustainable development.** Policies and measures to protect the climate system against human-induced change should be appropriate for the specific conditions of each Party and should be integrated with national development programmes, taking into account that economic development is essential for adopting measures to address climate change.

5. **The Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change.** Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjust

<https://unfccc.int/resource/ccsites/tanzania/conven/text/art03.htm>



Parties to the Convention

In 1992/3, 166 parties had signed up to the convention and currently there are 197 states and one regional economic organization.

Within this number are also several sub-groupings of states such as the G77 (developing Countries), SIDS (Small Island Developing States), the Arab States, which can represent countries with similar interests that can work together in climate negotiations.

Some UNFCCC COPs

COP 1 — Berlin, 1995, this was predominantly an administrative meeting to agree organizational matters.

COP 3 — In December 1997, delegates to the third session of the COP in Kyoto, Japan, agreed to a protocol committing industrialized countries and countries in transition to a market economy to achieve emissions reduction targets. This resulted in a situation whereby the costs involved in transitioning away from fossil fuels puts nations at an economic disadvantage, reducing their incentive to take action. This has led to complex negotiations over the years resulting in limited progress.

COP 21 — In December 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed, as a legally binding international treaty on climate change and appeared to be a step forward. It was adopted by 196 Parties on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. However, there are no enforcement mechanisms and progress has been less than anticipated. The agreement dictates that countries review their commitments every five years so the next one is COP 26.

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

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Some of the key issues to be discussed are:

Ambition – reviewing pledges and increasing commitment to reduce emissions

Equity/ responsibility/ capability – protecting communities, strengthening adaptation and resilience

Finance to support developing countries

Loss and damage – compensation to countries affected

Carbon markets and rules around transparency and reporting



Climate Change is a collective action problem

We have one world in which we are all stakeholders

Some of us are more advantaged than others and can do more

Some of us suffer the consequences more severely and need help

Some of us are more implicated for historic emissions

No one country can solve it on their own

We need behaviour change, innovation and financial mechanisms to support action in every sphere.