

Analysis from Conservation International

Outcome of Paris Climate Negotiations

Twenty-first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

30 November – 11 December, 2015

Paris, France

Context

The 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met in Paris, France, at the culmination of a 4-year process to negotiate a new universal climate agreement. Against the backdrop of dozens of commitments from the private sector, cities, religious authorities, bilateral deals, and finance pledges, Parties reached a historic deal, known as the [Paris Agreement](#).

COP 21 Key Outcomes Summary

The Paris Agreement:

- Commits to a long-term goal of limiting warming to well below 2° C and to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5° C. This is one of the most significant elements of the agreement;
- Establishes global goals for mitigation and adaptation, which ensure balance between mitigation and adaptation in the agreement;
- Sets out a framework for country commitments (nationally determined contributions) that will be submitted, implemented and strengthened in 5-year cycles starting in 2020;
- Includes strong recognition of the value of reducing emissions through forest protection, sustainable management and restoration, and the need to scale-up finance for these measures through, *inter alia*, international trading of credits;
- Reflects a commitment towards scaled up climate finance; and
- Acknowledges the need to address irreversible and extreme climate change impacts.

In addition to the Agreement, in the margins of the COP:

- Significant pledges to support action on climate change before the new agreement takes effect were made, including a new pledge of up to [US\\$5 billion for REDD+](#); and
- The Consumer Goods Forum Co-chairs, Unilever and Marks & Spencer, unveiled their “Produce and Protect” commitment, a new kind of public-private partnership in addition to and supportive of current commitments to net zero deforestation.

This document contains a detailed readout and analysis of the outcomes of COP 21 focusing on the final Paris Agreement – with a view to reflecting on the overall level of ambition, and highlighting the ways in which the contribution of ecosystems and nature for mitigation and adaptation efforts were reflected, specifically in the areas of REDD+, adaptation and climate finance.

For more information contact:

Shyla Raghav, Director, Climate Change Policy

Tel: +1 703 341.2583

Email: sraghav@conservation.org

www.conservation.org

The Paris Agreement

Preamble and Purpose

The preamble establishes the overarching context for the operative elements of the Paris Agreement. The Agreement recognizes the fundamental importance of nature to human well-being and development, permanently enshrining the role of nature in addressing the dual challenges of adaptation and mitigation. Similarly, the Agreement recognizes the need to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and gender equality. Specifically, the Preamble mentions:

- The importance of “sinks and reservoirs” for greenhouse gases, which includes ecosystems like forests, mangroves, wetlands and salt marshes. Sinks are also referred to in the section of the Agreement focused on mitigation action;
- The importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including oceans, and the protection of biodiversity;
- The intrinsic relationship between climate change and sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, and food security; and
- The need for sustainable production as well as sustainable consumption and lifestyles as part of the climate solution.

Analysis:

- This framing recognizes the importance of nature as the necessary foundation for the long-term survival and development of human society, and we can expect that this will lead to a greater focus on maintaining healthy ecosystems, which is an underrepresented dimension of climate change solutions. It also emphasizes that human societies must play their part in the climate solution, as we consider rights, responsibilities, and equity in our responses.

Mitigation and REDD+

The Agreement dedicates a specific article to the role of forests and other ecosystems in climate change mitigation, sending a strong political signal that countries should both implement and support forest protection, sustainable management and restoration. Specifically:

- Article 5 reminds countries that they should conserve and enhance the sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases that are found in a wide range of natural ecosystems, including forests, oceans and other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems; and
- Article 5 also highlights the previous COP decisions related to REDD+, providing a strong signal to countries to both implement and support REDD+ as an important part of their activities under the new agreement. The article refers to existing COP decisions and guidance for REDD+, and does not establish new administrative or technical elements.

Analysis:

- The COP started with a major announcement by Germany, Norway and the UK that they will provide up to US\$5 billion for countries to reduce their deforestation between now and 2020, and that they aim to continue to provide US\$1 billion a year after 2020. This sort of long-term financial commitment provides an essential incentive for forested countries to implement the policies needed to halt deforestation;
- There were strong signs that developing countries are making progress with REDD+ implementation. During the COP, Brazil became the first to publish required documentation to show that it has completed all of the readiness requirements for REDD+, and that it is prepared to start receiving payments for its efforts; and
- The Paris Agreement and accompanying decisions provide a strong signal that REDD+ is ready to move into full implementation. The ‘rules for REDD+’ are now complete under the UNFCCC; no new administrative bodies are planned, and countries are encouraged to reduce emissions by protecting,

sustainably managing, and restoring forests. Related items in the Agreement and COP decisions also provide the enabling conditions needed for REDD+, including recognition of the role of markets which can increase the scale of finance for REDD+.

Adaptation, Loss and Damage

The main issue on adaptation has perpetually been the extent to which adaptation is considered on parity with mitigation. As such, the fundamental emphasis for adaptation discussions tends to be the high-level, political importance given to adaptation, as well as the amount of finance and other means of implementation provided to support the implementation of adaptation in developing countries. The Agreement includes language that addresses both issues by establishing a global goal for adaptation, and calling on developed countries to scale up support for adaptation respectively. In addition to adaptation, the Agreement also acknowledges extreme or irreversible climate change impacts for which adaptation is no longer possible. The Agreement has an article on adaptation as well as a separate article on loss and damage. Specifically:

- The Agreement establishes a global goal for adaptation that is qualitative, seeking to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change — while referencing the temperature goal (recognizing the links between mitigation and future adaptation needs);
- The principles referenced on adaptation are very strong, which acknowledge vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, as well as traditional knowledge and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.
- Developed countries and United Nations agencies providing funding for adaptation are encouraged to support adaptation efforts — making the link between finance and adaptation;
- The Agreement has been set up as a vehicle for cooperation between countries to share experiences on adaptation and strengthen collective knowledge — but also to facilitate adaptation planning, prioritization and implementation for all countries;
- Countries will be communicating periodically reflecting their priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions through a registry that will be established; and
- Article 8 of the Agreement recognizes that the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss & Damage will serve the COP (as opposed to creating a separate mechanism), that it may be enhanced and strengthened, and encourages cooperative action. It also defines potential areas for action and support.

Analysis:

- A global goal on adaptation helps frame global actions on adaptation and guides the objective of this Convention with respect to adaptation;
- The inclusion of loss and damage within a dedicated article in the Agreement itself is of incredible importance and paves the way for additional study and possible support to countries facing extreme or existential climate impacts; and
- The importance of ecosystem and socioeconomic and ecological systems is recognized in the text — and should serve as an entry point for the inclusion of ecosystem-based approaches as countries assess and implement adaptation actions, with a view to strengthening this understanding over time.

Finance

Developed countries agreed to continue to provide financial support for climate action in developing countries, recognizing the importance of increasing their support and also expanding the sources of funds for climate solutions. The Agreement emphasizes the importance of immediate investments for both mitigation and adaptation, especially supporting developing countries and particularly those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The inclusion of these actions for financing climate solutions will provide increasing opportunities for using nature's power to combat climate change. Specifically:

- The Agreement calls for developed countries to continue to provide financial resources to developing countries and encourages other Parties to do so on a voluntary basis;
- The Agreement also calls for developed countries to take the lead in mobilizing funds from a variety of sources, which includes the public sector, to greater levels;

- To enhance the predictability of financial flows, developed country Parties shall communicate indicative quantitative and qualitative information about future flows every two years;
- Parties agreed that the Financial Mechanism of the Convention and its operating entities shall serve as the financial mechanism of the Agreement;
- Decision 1/CP.21 states that developed countries intend to continue their existing finance goal to mobilize US\$100 billion per year. Before 2025, countries will discuss setting a new quantified goal beyond US\$100 billion per year; and
- In Decision 1/CP.21, Parties recognized the importance of adequate and predictable finance for REDD+, including through results-based payments.

Analysis:

- The language on finance does not specify a new quantified goal post-2020; developed country Parties are expected to continue to mobilize \$100 billion per year as agreed in Copenhagen. The decision text calls for further discussion on this before 2025, which could lead to a revision in the figure; and
- Forests were the only sector specifically highlighted within the finance section of the decision. This provides an important signal for increased support for REDD+ activities, including through results-based payments.

Markets

The Agreement recognizes that some countries may choose to meet at least part of their national commitments to reduce emissions by cooperating with other countries through investment in mitigation activities abroad, as indicated in a number of NDCs. The Agreement acknowledges that such cooperation may increase ambition while promoting sustainable development and environmental integrity. Specifically:

- The Agreement specifies that countries shall apply robust accounting rules and avoid the double counting of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes, consistent with future guidance adopted by the CMA; and
- In Decision 1/CP.21, the COP requested the SBSTA to develop and recommend guidance regarding the transfers of international mitigation outcomes. In order to avoid double counting of emission reductions, the COP called for both the transferring and acquiring countries to adjust their national emissions registries and inventories to equally reflect the transfer.

Analysis:

- The recognition of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes under the Agreement could help the world collectively limit warming more quickly and provides basic rules to ensure that they are carried out openly and fairly.
- Such cooperation is also likely to drive investment in keeping forests standing as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- The specific language included in the decision will avoid any ambiguity in how countries define double counting, which will strengthen the environmental integrity of transfers. This language also explicitly mentions the transfers of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks, an important signal for the inclusion of REDD+ and other nature-based solutions to climate change.

Note: This analysis only covers internationally transferred mitigation outcomes and not the establishment of a sustainable development mechanism.

Nationally-determined Contributions (NDCs), Review, Transparency, and Global Stocktake

The Agreement leaves it to countries to define their emission reduction targets through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), but it sets out a common architecture to ensure that they increase their ambition over time in line with the long-term goal. The Agreement also foresees a global stocktake exercise to assess collective progress, and inform the review of the NDCs. Specifically:

- The Agreement puts in place a system in which countries shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs every 5 years. Each country's successive NDC will represent a progression beyond the previous one, and reflect its highest possible ambition;

- Developed countries should continue taking the lead and should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts. The least developed countries and small island developing states may prepare and communicate strategies, plans and actions for low greenhouse gas emissions development reflecting their special circumstances;
- Countries are permitted to adjust their existing nationally determined contributions with a view to enhancing their level of ambition;
- The Agreement also foresees a “global stocktake” exercise, in order to assess the collective progress on mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation and support towards achieving the purpose and long-term goals of the Agreement. The first global stocktake will take place in 2023, and every five years thereafter;
- The section on transparency gives the Agreement legitimacy in that it requires countries to provide information regarding their (1) emissions and sinks inventory, and (2) progress in meeting their NDCs. It also adds legitimacy to the process as a means to verify country action; and
- Decision 1/CP.21 also establishes a facilitative dialogue, which will serve the same purpose of assessing collective progress, but it will take place in 2018 — before the Agreement enters into force.

Analysis:

- As the NDCs are determined at the national level, the Agreement provides guidance on the differentiated required level of ambition for developed and developing countries, but it does not contain any legally binding provisions on the content of the NDCs, which ensures broad support and buy-in for the NDCs as a vehicle for the Agreement. The distinction between developed and developing countries is the extent of differentiation in the agreement — while it is clear that all countries are expected to take action under this agreement. However, all Parties are held accountable for their NDCs once communicated and they must comply with the review architecture and rules; and
- The regular global stocktake will be essential to calculate the projected temperature rise corresponding to ongoing efforts, as well as the emission gap to contain global warming under the 1.5° C threshold.

Other Relevant COP Decisions

In addition to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), through which the agreement was negotiated, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) were also convened. The COP weighed in on the the SBSTA and SBI’s recommendations, which were reflected in additional COP decisions.

On *finance*, the COP deliberated on the issue of long-term finance, as well as guidance to one of the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention, the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

- In the COP decision on [Long-term Climate Finance](#), developed countries are urged to increase levels of financial resources for adaptation activities in developing countries while striving for balance between resources for mitigation and adaptation activities. The COP decision also calls for the second ministerial dialogue on climate finance to focus on the issues of adaptation finance, to be informed by an in-session workshop in 2016 and the Standing Committee on Finance’s second biennial assessment of climate finance flows; and
- The [COP guidance to the Green Climate Fund \(GCF\)](#) urged the GCF Board to operationalize results-based payments (RBP) for mitigation and adaptation activities, including REDD+. The COP also encouraged the Board to explore opportunities for the mobilization of finance for forest-related activities from the private sector, acknowledging that alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches, may also be appropriate. This important guidance from the COP provides a signal to the Fund and Secretariat to develop technical modalities for RBP implementation, conduct consultations with relevant stakeholders and identify key issues requiring additional decisions, such as pricing, harmonization of the Fund’s safeguards with the UNFCCC’s, qualifications of accredited entities eligible to put forward RBP project proposals, project pipeline and approval processes, etc.

On *REDD+*, the COP adopted the final agenda items related to *REDD+*, which had been negotiated in June. These include decisions related to joint mitigation and adaptation approaches, the information that countries are expected to provide related to *REDD+* safeguards, and the non-carbon benefits associated with *REDD+*. With these adoptions, UNFCCC guidance on *REDD+* is complete, meaning that countries can focus on implementation. These decisions include:

- [Alternative policy approaches to REDD+](#), which provides guidance to countries related to alternative policy approaches to *REDD+*, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests;
- [Further guidance on REDD+ safeguards](#), which provides high-level guidance to countries regarding the information that they are to provide about how they have addressed and respected the *REDD+* safeguards; and
- [Non-carbon benefits from REDD+](#), which recognizes that countries may seek support for integrating non-carbon benefits into their *REDD+* activities and encourages these countries to share information about these activities through the UNFCCC *REDD+* platform.

On *adaptation*, several decisions were adopted on the national adaptation plans, Adaptation Committee, the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, and the Nairobi Work Programme. These decisions help bolster the landscape of bodies and mechanisms that support adaptation under the Convention, particularly as they are leveraged for the new Agreement.

- On [National Adaptation Plans](#), aims to reinforce the NAP process by requesting the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to consider how to improve access to financial support. The decision also includes guidance to the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) and Adaptation Committee (AC) to support the NAP process. Parties are also requested to submit information on their progress made towards the process to formulate and implement NAPs by 1 February 2018, after which the Secretariat will prepare a synthesis report and organize a meeting of experts to reflect on progress;
- For the [Adaptation Committee](#), encourages the AC's further cooperation with other bodies under the Convention. This will be important as the AC continues to play an important role in the context of the new Agreement. In the COP decisions related to the agreement (Decision 1/CP.21), the Adaptation Committee has been given a mandate to develop additional methodologies, particularly related to the mobilization of financial support for adaptation; and
- Regarding the [Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage](#) (WIM), the COP decision notes with concern the slow progress on work thus far. The WIM will increase in importance as it will be serving the new Agreement henceforth.

Conclusion and Post-Paris Expectations

The Paris Agreement represents a historic achievement as the first legally binding agreement applicable to all countries to combat climate change. The Agreement sets forth the goals, modalities, procedures, and institutional framework for collective action, but stops short of codifying countries' pledges to reduce their emissions. Instead, countries have voluntarily pledged to carry out their NDCs subject to the framework and rules set up under the Paris Agreement. More than anything, the Paris Agreement represents a new paradigm, whereby all Parties have agreed to take collective responsibility with the hope that they can push one another to take ambitious action. While the Agreement is by no means perfect, it represents a significant shift in global, collective action on climate change. The amount of effort and political will that has gone into producing the Agreement cannot be underestimated — but the Agreement very much is a starting point and basis for implementation of actions globally. It represents a call to action to leverage and catalyze the progress made thus far to have a measurable impact on mitigation and adaptation.

Moving forward, to leverage and maximize the potential of the Paris Agreement, Parties, civil society organizations, sub-national entities and companies should:

- Scale up implementation and delivery of financial resources for both mitigation and adaptation to implement NDCs and respective adaptation plans, building on the political momentum created by this agreement;

- Ensure that NDCs are revised and strengthened to include aspects of landscapes in their emission reduction contributions, including REDD+, agriculture, land-use and land-use change and forestry, and coastal ecosystems;
- Mainstream and integrate climate change into sustainable development and other regional or sub-national actions;
- Ensure the rules for accounting and the sustainable development mechanism are sound and in line with the principles of the Agreement;
- Support the work of the Adaptation Committee given its current mandate as well as its mandate under the new Agreement; and
- Augment the outcomes of the new Agreement with continued action from non-state actors.

Conservation International looks forward to working at all levels (global, national, local) with all of those pursuing a stable global climate.

2016 Meetings		
22 April (TBC)	High-Level Signature Ceremony for the Agreement (TBC)	New York, USA
16 May - 26 May	UNFCCC SBSTA 44, Subsidiary Body on Implementation 44	Bonn, Germany
7 Nov -18 Nov	UNFCCC COP 22	Marrakesh, Morocco

Background + Additional Resources

UNFCCC COP 21 Outcomes:

- [UNFCCC website outcome documents](#)
- [Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#) UNFCCC COP 21 Report

CI's blogs during Paris:

- [Nature's role comes through in historic climate deal](#)
- [Can the Pacific islands stave off a disaster in slow motion?](#)
- [How climate change affects women differently — and what we can do about it](#)
- [A world away from Paris, erratic climate pushes a country to the edge](#)
- [Halfway through Paris climate talks, this is where things stand](#)
- [Expert warns of hidden impacts of climate change](#)
- [Eyeing coffee's climate impact, new initiative seeks sustainability for entire crop](#)
- [Ready for REDD? 3 questions about forests and climate change for Steven Panfil](#)
- [To solve climate change, it's time to get business on board](#)

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UNFCCC Background

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one of the three conventions to emerge from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1992. One hundred ninety-four countries participate in the UNFCCC. The objective of the Convention is to “prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system.” Because it is a framework convention, the Convention itself does not spell out how countries will work together to achieve that goal. The Kyoto Protocol, agreed in 1997, provided the details on how Annex I (developed countries) were to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Not all of the UNFCCC parties (most notably the United States) have ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

In 2005 the UNFCCC began considering long-term issues—the commitments that would be needed after Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period, which runs from 2008-2012. In 2007, countries agreed to the Bali Action Plan, which established a process and outline for a comprehensive Agreement including all countries and encompassing adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building. The goal was to have an Agreement that would come into effect after 2012 and that could be finalized in Copenhagen in 2009. COP 15 failed to achieve the much anticipated Agreement, however, and instead produced a political declaration—the Copenhagen Accord. The 2010 Cancun Agreements breathed new life into the multilateral process, reaffirming the desire of countries to collaborate under the UNFCCC to take climate action. COP 17 in Durban, was another step forward. It not only provided some of the details necessary to make the Cancun Agreements implementable on issues such as finance, adaptation and REDD+, but also established several landmark decisions. These included establishment of a new Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) and a process to establish an Agreement “with legal force” by 2015 at the latest to be implemented by 2020. At COP18 in Doha, parties agreed to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, to raise the level of ambition from 2012-2020 (keeping the world on track to limit climate change to 2 degrees Celsius), and concluded the AWG-LCA and AWG-KP. At COP19 in Warsaw, countries agreed to launch a process to define nationally determined contributions from countries to be put forth in early 2015 to populate the new agreement, and also agreed to the Warsaw REDD+ package of decisions. COP 20 in Lima was an important building block towards the Paris Agreement - a text was produced which was the basis of discussions in 2015 for the new climate agreement. Additional information can also be found on the [UNFCCC website](#).