

A hand with a colorful beaded bracelet holds a large, melting block of ice. The block has a flat top surface with the text 'The Paris Agreement for young people' written on it in blue. The ice is melting, with water dripping down its sides and smaller ice chunks floating in the water below. The background is a light teal color with white, cloud-like shapes.

# The Paris Agreement for young people



## The Paris Agreement for young people

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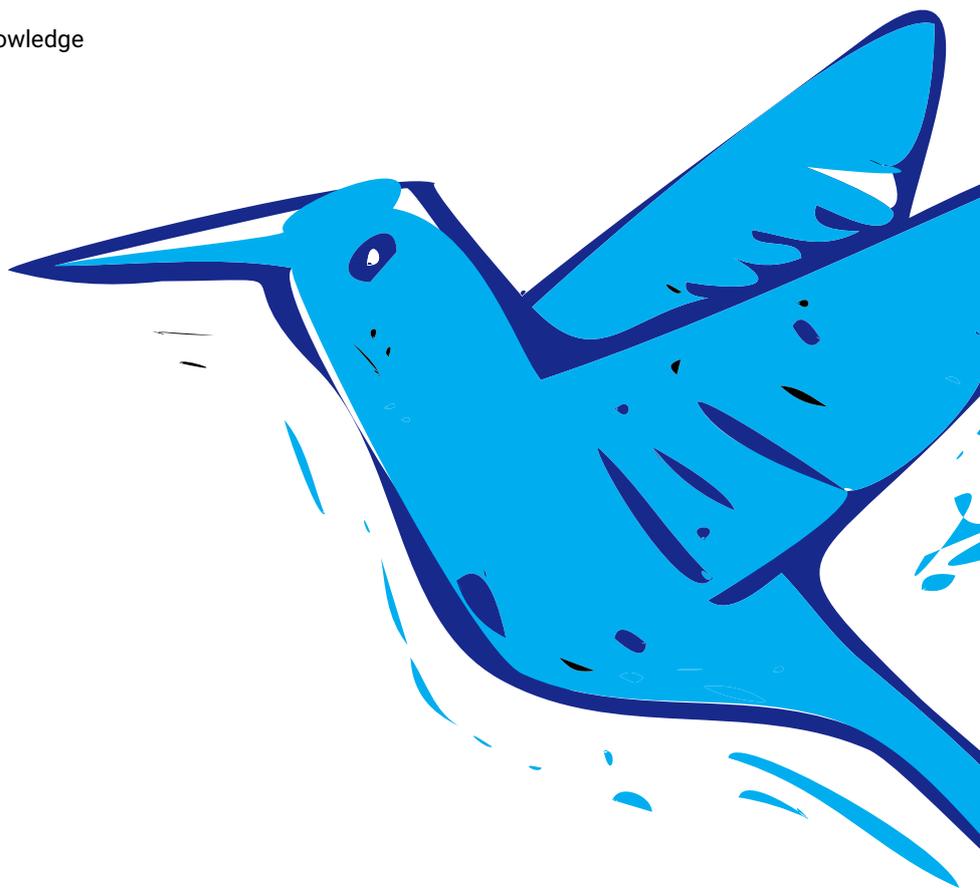
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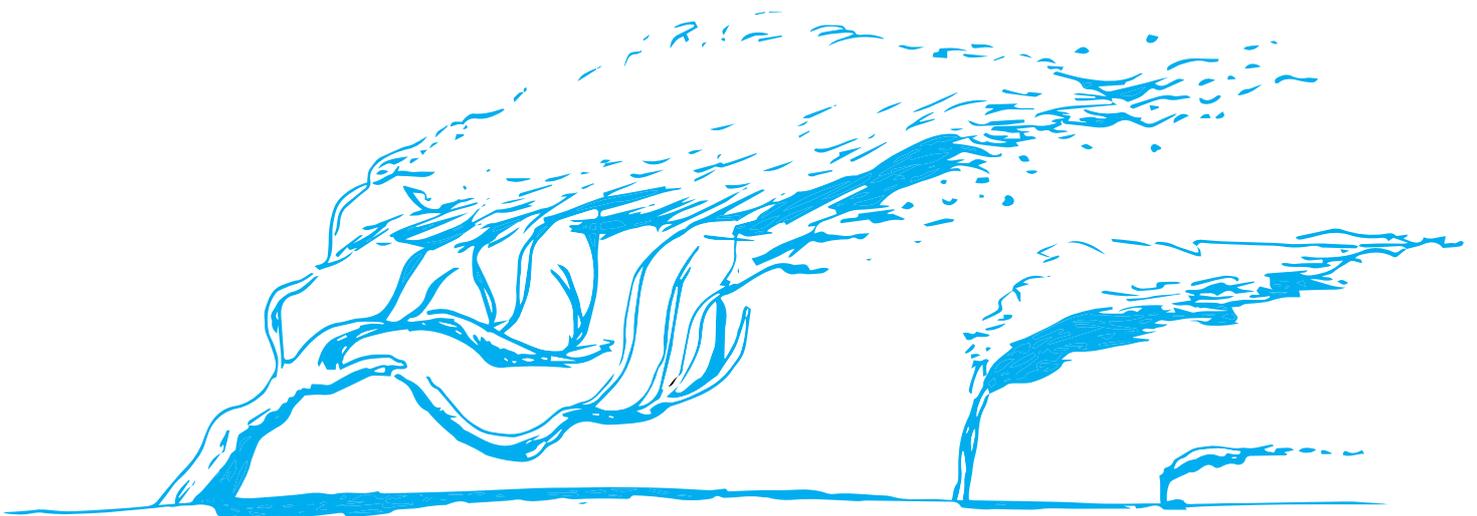
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# The Paris Agreement for young people

Gain in-depth understanding of the Paris Agreement, its importance and all its articles in youth-friendly language.

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# Presentation

We, as young people, are agents of change in different sections of society. We are not being left behind in **climate action**: our voices are being increasingly heard and we are demanding the right to **participate fully**. In fact, our participation is a right that should be central to the formulation of public policy.

The **Toolkit for Young Climate Activists in Latin America and the Caribbean** was created by young people who, like you, are concerned about our planet's situation and who, as activists, have faced many challenges when advocating and taking action.

Our goal is to share clear, concise, easily understandable information that describes the course that global, regional and national climate action is taking, in order to prepare you for **meaningful and informed participation**.

The booklets interrelate and are designed so that you can read them in succession and progressively deepen your knowledge of each of the topics. You can also consult them independently, according to your needs.

## These are:

**Tools for climate action:** Key tools for making progress towards the global climate action goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Paris Agreement, nationally determined contributions and other tools.

**What is climate governance?** Information about climate governance and the decision-making process at the national and international levels, including the Framework Convention on Climate Change, how it works and the mechanisms for participation.

**Prepare to take action!** Practical advice and accounts of other activists' experiences to help you develop the skills needed to take part in and influence the climate agenda.

**The Paris Agreement for young people:** Details of the Agreement, its importance, and all its articles in simple language.

**Escazú Agreement for young people:** Essential information about the Agreement, its importance, and its articles in simple language.

**Climate glossary for young people:** Important concepts and definitions that every climate activist needs to know.

This booklet uses the terms "youth" and "young people" to refer to adolescents and young people between 15 and 24 years old.

0 to 17

10 to 19

15 to 24

10 to 24

# Foreword

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You may think of the Paris Agreement as a legal document that governs global greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, that is true – but the Paris Agreement is much more than an environmental agreement. Given the impacts of climate change on human health and well-being and on the ecosystems on which we depend, and the ramifications for countries' economic and political stability, **the Paris Agreement should be understood as one of the most profound tools for defending the future quality of life of today's young people.**

You may also think that we have plenty of time to reduce global emissions, but that is not the case. Science has recognized that we have entered the most decisive decade for humanity – by 2030, we must have reduced global emissions by 50 per cent to avoid the worst effects of climate change. If we do not succeed in following this critical path, we will be condemning future generations to a world of constant physical destruction, increased human suffering and economic instability that will prevent planning in the medium or long term. Conversely, **if the world's countries, corporations and citizens together manage to halve emissions from today's levels, future generations will be able to enjoy a healthier, more stable, more productive and above all fairer world than the one we have today.**

It is precisely because the progress of climate change violates the human rights of young people and the most vulnerable in every country that timely action against this threat is the greatest contribution we can make for the good of humanity. It is important that young people understand the Paris Agreement so they can contribute to its timely implementation. **It is not enough to do what you can, we have to do what needs to be done. The future of humanity depends on it.**

Christiana Figueres  
October 2020



# Acknowledgements

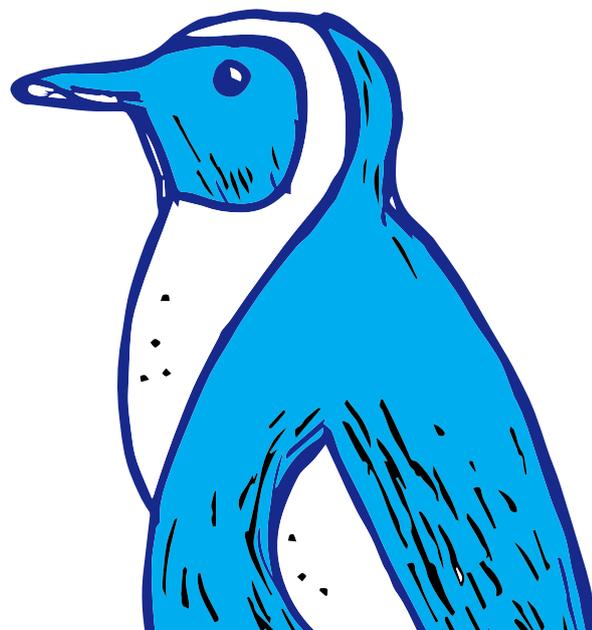
The toolkit was written by Sara Cognuck González, a young climate activist from Costa Rica, and Emilia Numer, a UNICEF consultant, with technical advice from Adrián Martínez and Hanoch Barlevi. All the content was co-created with young climate activists from 15 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

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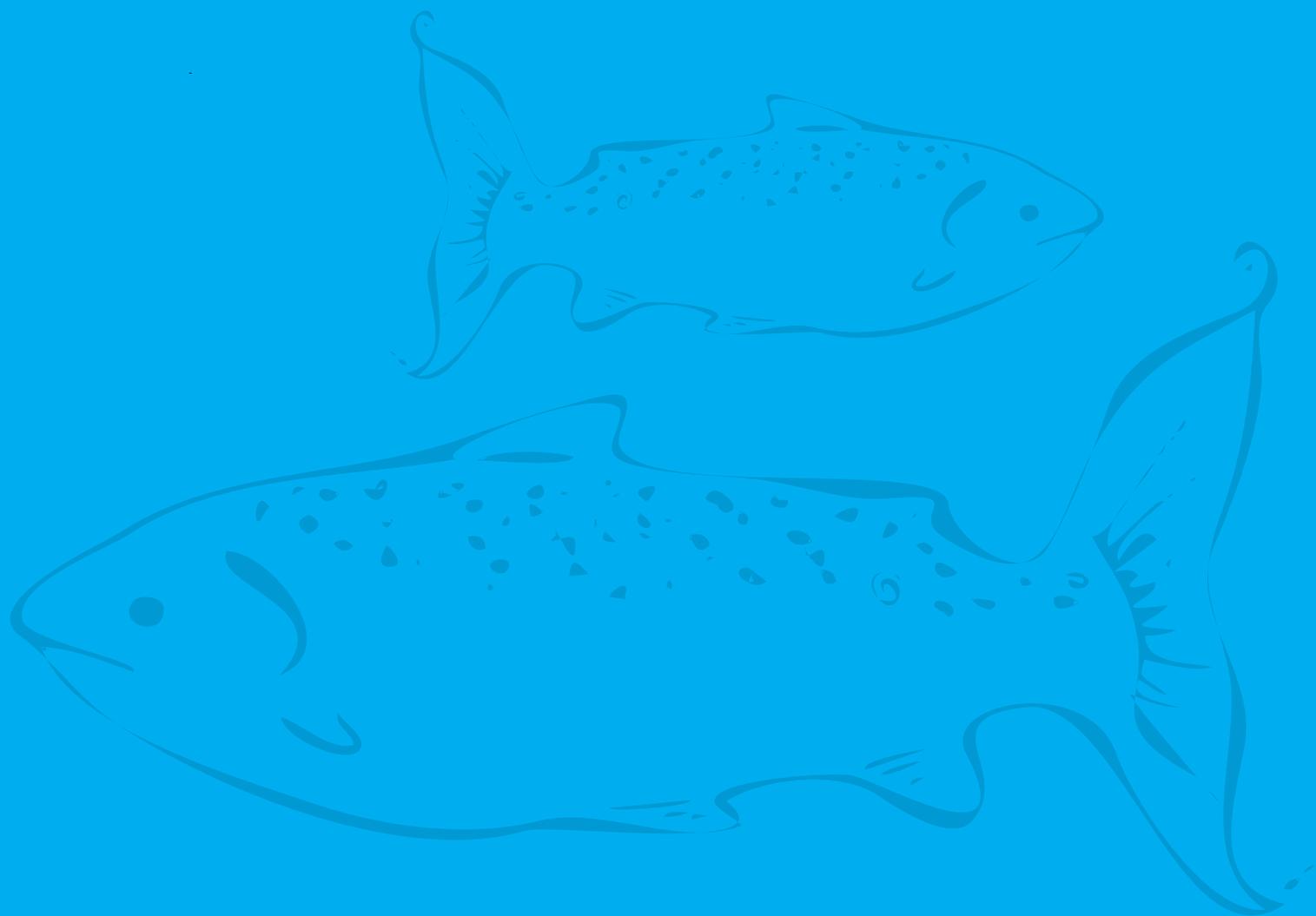
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# Acronyms and abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>CMA</b>    | Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement |
| <b>COP</b>    | Conference of the Parties  |
| <b>MGCY</b>   | United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth                                      |
| <b>NDC</b>    | Nationally Determined Contribution   |
| <b>UNFCCC</b> | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change                                  |
| <b>WIM</b>    | Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage                                     |
| <b>YOUNGO</b> | Constituency of Youth NGOs   |



# Introduction

The Paris Agreement (adopted in 2015 in Paris, France) changed the course of global climate action. It united nations behind the common cause of undertaking ambitious actions to tackle climate change, adapt to its various effects and ensure adequate support for developing countries.

The Agreement, which has been signed by 195 countries, was developed during the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), also called the Conference of the Parties (COP).



**Countries that participate in the Agreement or the UNFCCC are called Parties.**

The Agreement is a key instrument for meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Climate change responses and measures are closely related to equitable access to sustainable development and poverty eradication. The priority of the Agreement is to protect food security and to put an end to hunger. It also notes the importance of protecting all ecosystems (including oceans) and biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as “Mother Earth”.

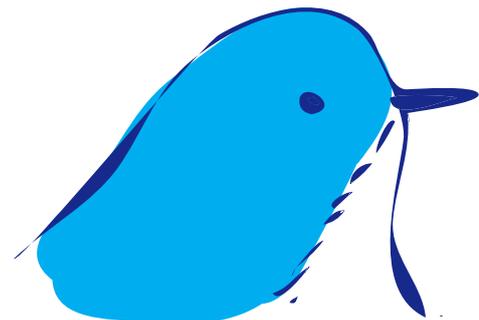
The Agreement calls for countries to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to help societies and ecosystems adapt better to climate change. Participation is voluntary and countries are not penalized if they do not meet their commitments. Civil society therefore plays a very important role in monitoring the implementation of the Agreement at the national and local levels.

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**There are two main bodies that ensure that the Agreement is applied and its terms are met:**

 The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA), which represents the countries that signed the Agreement, acts as the supreme body overseeing the Agreement's implementation and takes the decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation.

 The Agreement Secretariat, which is the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; it organizes the sessions of the annual conferences, receives reports from the countries and provides them with assistance.



**This timeline lists the milestones that led to the signing of the Paris Agreement:**



**1992**

Creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change based on the Earth Summit.



**1997**

COP3: countries adopt the Kyoto Protocol aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



**2005**

The Kyoto Protocol comes into force.



**2009**

COP15: the targets set are not met; countries only agree to limit the global temperature increase to 2°C but do not set targets to meet by 2050. Countries move the new agreement to 2015.



**2007**

COP13: countries agree to work on a new text to replace the Kyoto Protocol.



**2013**

COP19: countries propose the Warsaw International Mechanism as a mechanism to address climate change loss and damage.



**2010**

COP16: countries adopt the Cancun Agreements. The creation of the Green Climate Fund of the Technology Mechanism is noteworthy. Industrialized countries' mitigation actions and targets are recognized. Countries introduce adaptation as an important component of climate action.



**2014**

COP20: countries adopt the Lima Call for Climate Action, which contains the key elements for the Paris Agreement. The goal of pursuing climate ambition is consolidated. Launch of the "intended nationally determined contributions".



**2015**

United Nations Summit: adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**2015**

COP21: countries adopt the Paris Agreement.

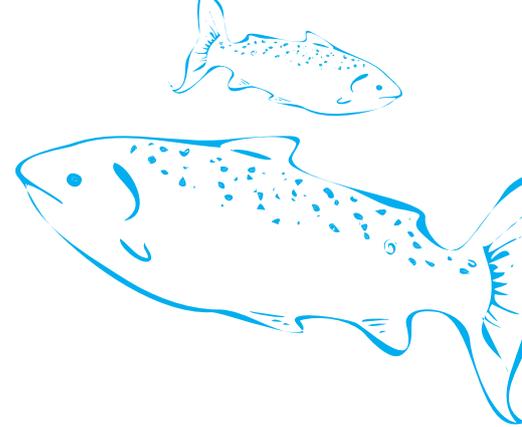
# Why is the Paris Agreement important?

## Because of its ambition and goals

-  It sets ambitious targets for climate action in countries.
-  It promotes commitments to limit this century's average global temperature increase to no more than 2°C, and pursues additional efforts to limit the increase to only 1.5°C.
-  It seeks to increase countries' capacity for adaptation to climate change.
-  It lays the foundation for a shift to low-emission, climate-resilient development models.
-  It aims to achieve a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and removals.

## Because of its content

-  It promotes climate change **mitigation and adaptation** measures, which include strengthening resilience, reducing vulnerability, and increasing and conserving natural areas that have the capacity to absorb greenhouse gases, in order to protect ecosystems and people.
-  It promotes **innovation and technology transfer** to improve resilience and provide an effective response to the impacts of climate change in the medium and long term.
-  It addresses the **damages and losses** associated with the adverse effects of climate change, which occur when adaptation is no longer possible, and it recognizes the importance of supporting countries suffering from such effects.
-  It establishes mechanisms for **voluntary cooperation among countries** by facilitating the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs).



**Attention!** A “balance” between emissions and removals is not enough; we need to absorb much more than we emit to compensate for all the years that we have been emitting rather than absorbing.



**Mitigation:** The reduction of sources of greenhouse gas emissions or the increase in sinks (natural areas that absorb greenhouse gas emissions).

**Adaptation:** The process of adjusting natural or human systems to the actual or expected climate or its effects in order to moderate adverse effects or benefit from opportunities.

**NDCs:** Each country's commitments to address climate change at the national level, taking into account its priorities and capacities.



## Because it calls for action, collaboration and accountability

 **Action:** All measures adopted should be reflected in **NDCs**, which are the actions that each country decides to take to address climate change. The contributions should be highly ambitious, so that the objectives of the Agreement are met, and adapted to the reality of each country, taking into account its priorities and capacities.

 **Collaboration:** It proposes that developed countries support developing countries with its implementation through measures such as capacity-building and funding for implementing actions.

 **Accountability:** It establishes a **transparency framework** that offers a clear vision of climate action in each country, the progress made and the support given or received by the different countries. This transparency framework has flexibility to take into account the capacities of developing nations.



The Agreement calls for countries to take **ambitious and progressive action** and enables a collaborative approach to climate action. In addition, it takes special account of the capacities of developing nations.



## Because of its relationship to human rights

 Implementing the Paris Agreement is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and making progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The Agreement recognizes the importance of protecting and respecting human rights in all climate actions. Those rights are, principally: the right to health, development, gender equality, the empowerment of women and intergenerational equity, as well as the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, people with disabilities, people in vulnerable situations and children.

## Because of the importance of citizen participation

 The Agreement sets ambitious goals, but actions by countries are voluntary. **It is extremely important that civil society, including young people and adolescents, exercises its right to participate and be involved in defining national plans and climate targets, and demands that those targets be met.**

 It is important to create different mechanisms to integrate social actors. Among the most important are YOUNGO (**Youth+NGO**), which officially represents children and young people in the UNFCCC, and the United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth (**MGCY**). There are also many other organizations and networks that were founded by and for young people so that they can participate and be involved in climate decisions. We advise you to find out what organizations and networks exist in your country.

# Articles of the Paris Agreement

1

For the purpose of the Agreement, the definitions contained in Article 1 of the CMNUCC apply. In addition:

- **Convention:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- **Conference of the Parties:** Conference of the Parties to the Convention
- **Parties:** countries that participate in the Agreement (in this document, we will call the parties “countries”).

2

The Agreement aims to strengthen countries' response to climate change in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Its objectives are:

- 1: to limit the global temperature rise this century to 2°C and enhance efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to to 1.5°C
- 2: to increase countries' ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change
- 3: to achieve low-carbon economic development.

The Agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances.

3

Countries should strive and be ambitious with their NDCs to comply with the Agreement. In addition, the needs of developing nations should be taken into account.

4

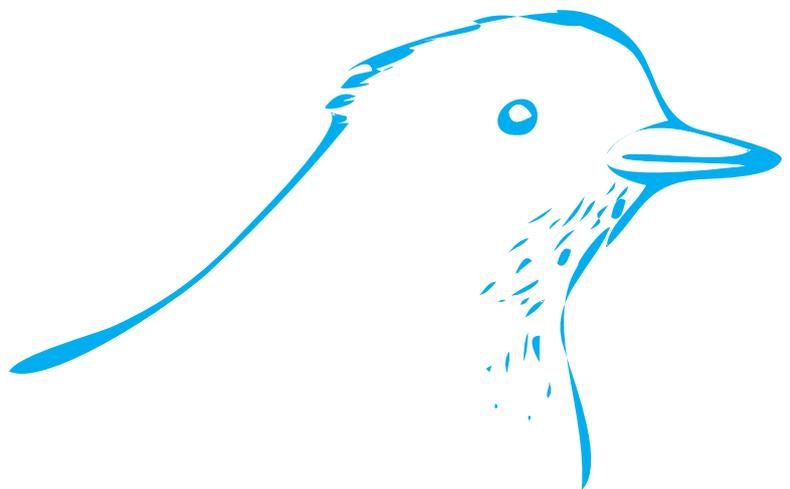
To fulfil the objective of the Agreement, countries should aim to reach peaking of emissions and then rapidly reduce them. The aim is to achieve a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and the capacity to absorb those emissions.

In addition, each country must communicate its intended NDCs, which should include the actions it intends to take to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

NDCs should progressively increase in ambition, reflecting countries' shared responsibilities while taking into account their differences and their capacities. Developing nations will receive support to help them achieve this. A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions may be considered a secondary mitigation benefit resulting from these adaptation measures.

5

Countries should conserve and enhance sinks and reservoirs (i.e. natural areas that absorb greenhouse gas emissions). Countries may also introduce incentives to reduce forest degradation, build sustainable management and increase forest cover. Alternative approaches are proposed, which combine mitigation and adaptation for integrated forest management.



6

This article establishes two intercountry cooperation mechanisms for the implementation of NDCs. Such cooperation is voluntary, and is governed by the principle of promoting sustainable development, ensuring environmental integrity and transparency, and avoiding the double counting of countries' actions. The first mechanism is the exchange or transfer of greenhouse gas emission reductions between countries. The second mechanism focuses on intercountry cooperation for mitigation, adaptation, financing, technology transfer and capacity-building. The technical rules that will govern the mechanisms of this article are currently being negotiated.

7

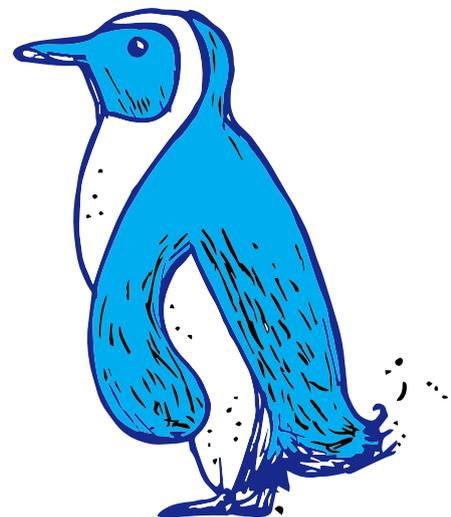
Each country must increase its capacity to carry out adaptation processes, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, while contributing to sustainable development. Adaptation is a challenge that involves all people at all levels of governance. Adaptation processes should be transparent, participatory, inclusive and gender-sensitive. In addition, they should be based on scientific information and local and traditional knowledge, as well as the knowledge of indigenous peoples. Adaptation aims to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems. Each country can adopt measures such as formulating or improving plans, programmes and policies.

8

It is important to prevent, reduce and address the loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change. Countries could strengthen understanding, actions and support in a cooperative and facilitative manner through the [Warsaw International Mechanism](#) (WIM).



Article 6 is the most complex article of the Paris Agreement to understand, and the one that generates the most conflict during negotiations. The most important thing you need to know about this article is that it is the driving force behind the Paris Agreement and sets out the mechanisms for developing climate action through voluntary international cooperation with integrated, holistic and balanced approaches.



9

Developed countries should provide financial resources to developing countries to assist them in implementing mitigation and adaptation actions. Other countries are encouraged to provide support on a voluntary basis. Balance should be maintained in financing for adaptation and mitigation measures, taking into account the priorities of each country. The needs and constraints of developing nations should also be considered, especially those of the most vulnerable.

In addition, developed countries should submit information on the resources provided and developing countries will report on their progress. This information will be taken into account in the “global stocktake”.

10

Countries should strengthen cooperation in developing and transferring technology to improve climate change resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This will require boosting collaboration, research and development; facilitating access to technology (particularly for developing nations); and accelerating innovation for an effective and long-term response to climate change.

Countries will need to secure financial resources to promote collaborative research approaches. This article establishes a [Technology Mechanism](#) to promote and facilitate the strengthening of technology development and transfer.

11

The Agreement should enhance the capacity and capabilities of developing nations, especially the most vulnerable, for effective climate action. To do this, it should facilitate technological development, access to climate finance and the relevant aspects of education and public awareness.

Capacity-building should be participatory, cross-cutting and gender-sensitive. All countries should cooperate to improve the capacity of developing nations. A developed country should report when it provides support to developing countries through regional, bilateral or multilateral approaches. The country in receipt of support should report on the assistance received and its capacity-building process.

12

Countries should cooperate to improve education, training, public awareness and participation, and access to information on climate change.

13

This article establishes the transparency framework to provide a clear picture of the measures taken to address climate change, and offers flexibility in considering the capacities of developing countries. In addition, developing nations will receive support to build capacity for implementing transparency.

The article sets out the reports that each country should submit. This information is reviewed by a group of experts that highlights the points that each country needs to improve, and at the same time ensures transparency. Developed countries are evaluated by the support they provide to other countries.



15

14

A global stocktake will be conducted periodically to determine the collective progress towards the purpose and objectives of this Agreement. Mitigation, adaptation, means of implementation and support generated will be considered, in the light of equity and based on the best available scientific information. The global stocktake also informs countries where their actions could be improved.

15

An expert committee will facilitate the implementation and enforcement of the Agreement. The committee of experts will pay attention to the capacities and circumstances of the countries.

16

The COP is the central decision-making meeting of the countries and will serve as the supreme body of the countries that have signed the Agreement. Countries that are parties to the Convention but not to the Agreement may participate as observers in the meetings of the COP, as may countries that have withdrawn from the Agreement. The agencies of the United Nations or its Member States and the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) may be observers. National or international, governmental or non-governmental organizations that have jurisdiction in the matters covered by the Agreement and which inform the Secretariat of their wish to be represented may also be observers, unless there is opposition.

17

This article establishes the Secretariat of the Convention as the secretariat of the Agreement, which will perform any functions assigned by the COP.

18-19

These articles establish two bodies to support the Agreement: the [Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice](#) and the [Subsidiary Body for Implementation of the Convention](#); the COP specifies their functions. Observer countries to the Agreement may participate in the deliberations of the supporting bodies.

20-24

These articles deal with the procedures for the Agreement's entry into force. In addition, they indicate that articles of the Convention may be applied to the Agreement by making the respective necessary changes.

25

Each country has one vote in the Agreement.

26

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is the body that holds the Agreement.

27

The Agreement applies as a whole, without the possibility of excluding any of its articles.

28

Countries may withdraw from the Agreement after three years from its entry into force; the waiver must be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. A country that withdraws from the Convention will be withdrawing from the Agreement. The waiver will take effect one year after notification or the date indicated in the notification.

As of June 2020, the only country that has withdrawn from the Agreement is the United States.



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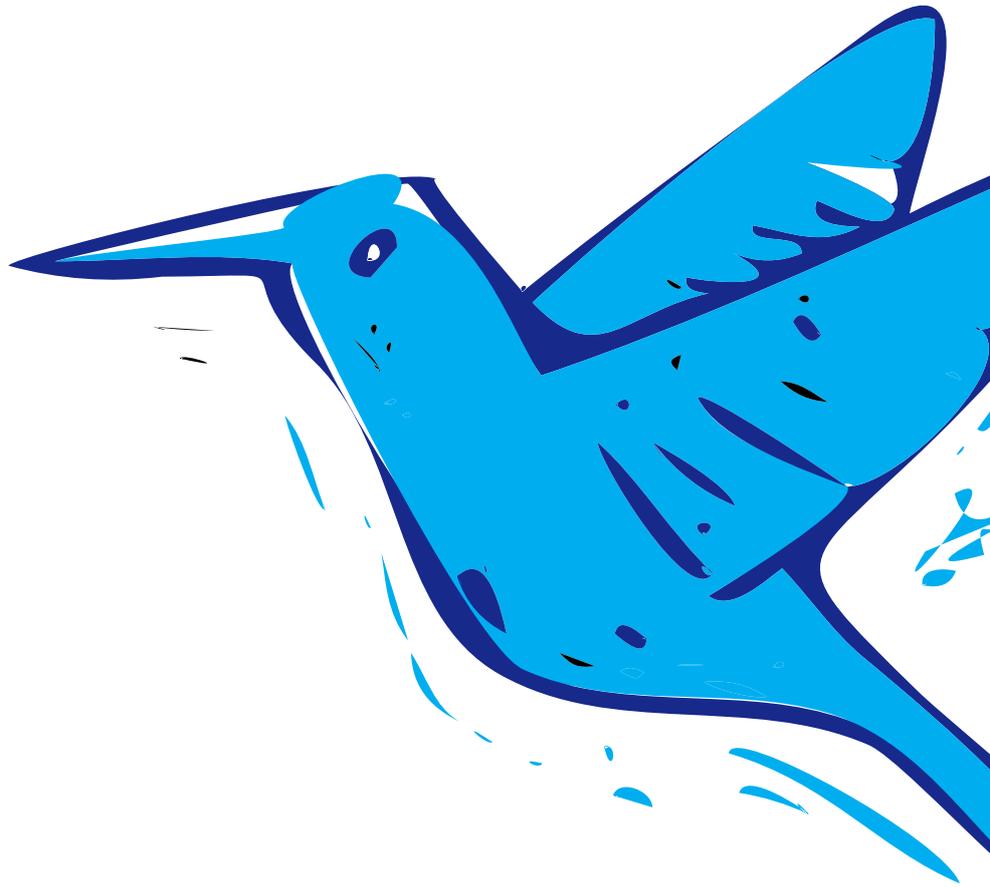
The Agreement is available in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, French and Arabic.

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