

A horizontal illustration at the top of the page depicts a city skyline with various buildings, wind turbines, and solar panels, rendered in shades of green and grey.

# COP 26 - AN INTRODUCTION

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## What does COP 26 mean?

COP 26 stands for the 26th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Convention was initially signed in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro when the world's nations first reached agreement on the need to address climate change. It is an international legal treaty between nations.

A COP is a meeting of the countries that are Parties to the Convention, i.e. a Conference of the Parties. A COP is held every 1-2 years. COP 26 is therefore the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties since the Earth Summit in 1992. Delegations from countries that are party to the Convention come together to discuss, debate and negotiate climate actions. The Paris Agreement was negotiated and adopted at COP 21 in Paris in December 2015 by 196 Parties (i.e. countries) to the Convention.

As well as the formal negotiations between governments (which is held in a badged and secure venue), the COPs are always accompanied by an enormous non-governmental, business and civil society event - a festival in its own right, rather like the Edinburgh Fringe sits alongside its more formal cousin. There are many events and locations and it is a great melting pot of ideas, debates, showcasing innovations.

## COP 26, 1-12 November 2021 planned for Glasgow

Different countries act as hosts to the Convention (rather like the Olympics or the World Cup). The hosts for COP 26 will be the UK and Italy. Glasgow will be the host city but with many venues spread across the city to accommodate the festival aspect of the event. The event was postponed in 2020 but it is hoped it can take place in Glasgow from 1-12 November 2021; (COVID allowing).

The formal part of COP 26 will follow the UN agenda of the business of the legal treaty. It is invariably highly political. COP 26 is six years on from COP 21 which agreed the legally binding Paris Agreement which was important because it applied to all nations and not just developed countries. (The earlier Kyoto Protocol agreed in 1997 required only developed countries to take action (times were different and developed countries which had been industrialised first were still the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases). By 2015 this was no longer true, it was important therefore that all nations agreed to take action, hence why the Paris Conference and Agreement was considered such a success.

The Paris Agreement expects countries to take actions to limit global warming to well below 2°, preferably 1.5° degrees Celsius to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century. Countries are required to put in place by 2020 national actions plans on how they will achieve this target; these are defined as their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). A review of the NDCs will be high on the COP 26 agenda. The UK NDC was submitted to the Convention in December 2020.

The “festival” part of COP 26 will host a myriad of events, some sponsored by the UK government or sponsors it has signed up.

## The UK government and COP 26

Post BREXIT, the UK is keen to be hosting on the global stage (it will also be chairing the G7 at the same time). The government wants to showcase its commitment and policies to deliver its target of 68% reduction in carbon by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. It will highlight its green industrial revolution proposals, its policies and actions to decarbonise all aspects of the economy from energy sources, to transport, to buildings. It will especially promote green finance as it sees the City of London spearheading this new financial sector.

It is seeking to get companies, both large and small to sign up to the Race to Zero Commitment, and to promote UK plc green innovations, and drive export markets.

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## Further reading

- <https://ukcop26.org/>

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