

# Paris Agreement, Objectives, NDCs, Significance, India's Role

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The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted at COP21 in December 2015. It aims to limit global warming, enhance resilience, and mobilise climate finance through a cooperative but flexible framework. For UPSC, it is important because it connects the environment, global governance, India's climate policy, and sustainable development.

## Paris Agreement Background

The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015 in Paris and entered into force on 4 November 2016 after meeting the dual threshold of ratification by at least 55 Parties contributing over 55% of global emissions. It replaced the Kyoto Protocol's top-down model with a bottom-up system where countries set their own climate targets called NDCs.

- First universal climate treaty with participation from 195+ countries.
- Kept the long-term temperature limit at **1.5-2°C**.
- Replaced Kyoto Protocol's top-down targets with bottom-up NDCs.

- Introduced mechanisms for finance, technology transfer, and transparency.

## Paris Agreement Objectives

The Paris Agreement lays out four major objectives aimed at balancing ambition with flexibility.

1. **Mitigation:** Limit temperature rise to **well below 2°C** and pursue **1.5°C** by reducing global GHG emissions by ~45% by 2030.
2. **Adaptation:** Strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities, and support climate-resilient development.
3. **Finance & Technology Transfer:** Mobilise financial and technological resources, especially for developing countries.
4. **Transparency & Global Stocktake:** Introduce a robust system for reporting, monitoring, and raising ambition every five years.

## COP30 of UNFCCC

COP30 was held in Belém, Brazil from 10–21 November 2025, focusing on adaptation, climate finance, and fossil-fuel phase-out negotiations. The Amazon rainforest's ecological importance made this COP particularly significant. Countries pushed for enhanced accountability and a stronger roadmap for achieving the 1.5°C pathway.

- Adoption of **Global Adaptation Indicators** for monitoring resilience.
- Disagreements on fossil fuel phase-out; only a voluntary roadmap was adopted.
- Strengthened discussions on operationalising the **post-2025 finance goal (NCQG)**.
- Greater inclusion of Indigenous and local community perspectives.

## Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are self-determined national climate action plans submitted every five years. They include mitigation targets, adaptation strategies, and financial/technological needs. NDCs embody the spirit of flexibility and national sovereignty, allowing each country to set ambitions according to capability and development stage.

- Define mitigation, adaptation, and implementation needs.
- Must be updated every **five years** with enhanced ambition.
- Form the central mechanism for achieving global climate targets.
- Subject to reporting under the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF).

### India

- Reduce the emissions intensity of **GDP** by 45% from 2005 levels by 2030.
- Achieve 50% cumulative electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

### United States

- Cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50–52% below 2005 levels by 2030.
- Focus areas include clean energy transition, energy efficiency, and sustainable transportation.

## China

- Peak CO<sub>2</sub> emissions before 2030.
- Achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.
- Transition towards low-carbon industries, renewable energy expansion, and green technologies.

## Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

CBDR recognises that all countries must act on climate change but developed states bear greater historical responsibility. It was originally embedded in the UNFCCC (1992) and retained in the Paris Agreement to safeguard equity.

- Emphasises different capacities and historical emissions.
- Developed nations must provide finance and technology support.
- Developing countries get flexibility to align climate action with development.
- Central to debates on climate finance, equity, and global targets.

## New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) under COP29

The **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)**, adopted at **COP29**, marks a major upgrade in global climate finance commitments, replacing the earlier **\$100 billion annual goal**. It aims to provide predictable, scaled-up, and equitable financial support to developing nations for mitigation, adaptation, and loss & damage. The NCQG sets both a **core finance target** and a **total global finance target**, to be achieved by **2035**. This framework strengthens trust in climate negotiations and aligns global finance flows with the Paris Agreement goals.

- **Core Financing Target:** Mobilize **at least \$300 billion per year by 2035** specifically for developing countries to support climate action.
- **Total Global Climate Finance Target:** Scale up overall climate finance to **\$1.3 trillion annually by 2035**, sourced from **public and private** finance.
- **Replaces Earlier Goal:** Supersedes the **\$100 billion per year** goal set under COP15 (Copenhagen) and reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement.
- **Focus Areas:** Funding prioritized for **mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer**, and **loss & damage**.
- **Equity & Responsibility:** Reinforces the **CBDR-RC** principle, ensuring developed nations take the lead while enabling fair burden-sharing.
- **Predictability & Accountability:** Includes mandatory **biennial reporting**, transparency frameworks, and assessment cycles for finance delivery.
- **Private Sector Mobilization:** Encourages blended finance, green bonds, carbon markets, and risk-sharing mechanisms to leverage private capital.

## India's Commitments Under the Paris Agreement

India's commitments under the Paris Agreement reflect its strategy to balance development needs with climate responsibility. India has pledged to significantly lower its emissions intensity, expand renewable energy capacity, and enhance carbon sinks by 2030, while charting a long-term pathway to achieve **net-zero emissions by 2070**.

- **500 GW Non-Fossil Fuel Capacity:** India aims to install **500 GW** of electricity generation capacity from **non-fossil fuel sources** by 2030.
- **50% Renewable Energy Share:** Ensure that **50% of India's energy requirements** are met from **renewable sources** by 2030.
- **45% Reduction in Emissions Intensity:** Reduce emissions intensity of GDP by **45% from 2005 levels** by 2030.
- **1 Billion Tonne Emissions Reduction:** Lower total projected carbon emissions by **1 billion tonnes** by 2030.
- **Carbon Sink Enhancement:** Create an additional **2.5 to 3 billion tonnes** of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent through expanded **forest and tree cover**.
- **Net-Zero by 2070:** India aims to **achieve net-zero emissions by 2070**, becoming carbon-neutral while sustaining economic growth and development.

## India's Progress Towards NDC Targets

India has shown strong and measurable progress toward its NDC commitments, achieving major targets ahead of schedule while maintaining economic growth. The country has significantly reduced emissions intensity, rapidly expanded non-fossil fuel capacity, and strengthened carbon sinks through large-scale afforestation.

- **Emission Intensity Reduction:** Reduced emissions intensity by **over 36% from 2005 levels**, progressing well toward the **45% target for 2030**.
- **Non-Fossil Energy Capacity:** Surpassed the **2030 target of 50% non-fossil capacity** in **June 2025**, with **256 GW** installed, achieved **five years early**.
- **Carbon Sink Enhancement:** Planted **over two billion trees**, contributing to expanded **forest and tree cover**.

## Role of Climate Finance: Green Climate Fund (GCF)

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world's largest dedicated climate finance mechanism, created under the UNFCCC to support developing countries in achieving low-emission and climate-resilient growth. It plays a central role in helping nations implement their NDCs under the Paris Agreement by funding mitigation, adaptation, and institutional strengthening.

- **Finances Climate Action:** Provides funding for **mitigation and adaptation projects**, supporting developing countries in lowering emissions and building resilience.
- **Catalyzes Private Investment:** Uses tools like **blended finance** to attract larger volumes of private capital by reducing investment risks.
- **Strengthens National Institutions:** Builds capacity in developing nations to design, plan, and access climate finance and implement climate strategies effectively.
- **Promotes Transformative Change:** Supports policies and programs that drive **system-wide shifts**, such as integrating climate action into national development and budget frameworks.
- **Follows a Country-Driven Approach:** Works through **National Designated Authorities (NDAs)** to ensure all projects align with national needs, priorities, and NDC goals, especially for **LDCs, SIDS, and**

African countries.

## Paris Agreement Significance

- **Universal Climate Framework:** Brings **all 195+ countries** under a common system of climate action, unlike earlier agreements focused only on developed nations.
- **Long-term Temperature Goal:** Seeks to limit global warming to **well below 2°C**, with efforts to restrict it to **1.5°C above pre-industrial levels**.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** Empowers countries to set their **own climate targets**, encouraging ambition and national-level responsibility.
- **Enhanced Transparency System:** Introduces a **robust monitoring and reporting framework** ensuring accountability and clarity on climate progress.
- **Support for Developing Countries:** Facilitates **climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building**, crucial for adaptation and sustainable growth.
- **Strengthens Global Cooperation:** Encourages collaboration through mechanisms like **global stocktake**, carbon markets, and climate partnerships.
- **Promotes Low-Carbon Development:** Guides the global transition toward **clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and resilient economies**.

## Paris Agreement Recent Developments

Recent developments under the Paris Agreement reflect a growing emphasis on climate finance, enhanced transparency, and ambitious national climate actions. COP28, COP29, and the COP30 have accelerated negotiations on global stocktake findings, delivery of the new climate finance goal, and stronger commitments from major emitters.

- **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) at COP29:** Adoption of a new climate finance target of **\$300 billion annually for developing countries** and **\$1.3 trillion global climate finance by 2035**, replacing the \$100 billion target.
- **Global Stocktake (GST) Outcomes:** GST findings call for **rapid reduction of emissions**, phase-down of fossil fuels, and major scaling up of **renewables and energy efficiency**.
- **COP28 UAE Consensus:** Countries agreed to **triple global renewable energy capacity** and **double energy efficiency rates** by 2030.
- **Updated NDCs and BTR Submissions:** Many nations, including India, are preparing **enhanced NDCs** and **Biennial Transparency Reports** under the Paris Agreement's transparency framework.
- **Expansion of Climate Alliances:** Initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, **Global Biofuel Alliance**, and **Loss & Damage Fund operationalization** are strengthening implementation efforts.

## Paris Agreement Criticism & Challenges

The Paris Agreement, despite being a landmark global climate treaty, faces significant criticism regarding its effectiveness, equity, and enforceability. Its **bottom-up NDC approach** allows countries to set their own emission

targets, leading to inconsistent ambition and weak collective progress.

- **Non-binding Targets:** NDCs are **not legally binding**, allowing countries to adopt weak or unambitious emission targets without penalties.
- **Inadequate Climate Finance:** Developed nations have repeatedly failed to meet the earlier **\$100 billion annual finance goal**, causing trust deficits and slowing climate action in developing countries.
- **Ambition Gap:** Current global NDCs put the world on track for **2.4-2.8°C warming**, far above the Paris goal of 1.5°C.
- **Slow Fossil Fuel Phase-Down:** No clear global mandate to **phase out fossil fuels**; many nations continue expanding coal and oil infrastructure.
- **Weak Transparency and Accountability:** Though the transparency framework exists, enforcement mechanisms are limited, and reporting quality varies among countries.
- **Adaptation Gap:** Funding for adaptation is still **far lower** than required, leaving vulnerable countries at high climate risk.
- **Equity Concerns:** Developing countries argue that the Agreement does not adequately reflect **CBDR principles**, as historical polluters are not delivering sufficient finance or technology.
- **Technological and Capacity Barriers:** Many countries lack the technical and institutional capacity to meet NDC requirements or implement large-scale climate projects.

## Paris Agreement Way Forward

Strengthening the Paris Agreement requires ambitious global action, enhanced climate finance, and stronger accountability mechanisms to keep the 1.5°C goal within reach. Countries must close the emissions and adaptation gaps by updating NDCs, accelerating renewable energy transitions, and phasing down fossil fuel use. Equitable finance flows, technological cooperation, and capacity-building must be scaled up to support developing nations.

- **Enhance NDC Ambition:** Countries must submit **stronger, science-aligned NDCs** to achieve rapid emission reductions before 2030.
- **Scale Up Climate Finance:** Deliver the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** and ensure predictable funding for mitigation, adaptation, and loss & damage.
- **Accelerate Energy Transition:** Triple global renewable capacity, double energy efficiency, and gradually **phase down fossil fuels**, particularly coal.
- **Strengthen Transparency Framework:** Improve the quality of **Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs)** and implement more robust monitoring systems.
- **Support Developing Nations:** Increase **technology transfer, capacity-building, and adaptation finance**, prioritizing LDCs, SIDS, and climate-vulnerable regions.
- **Promote Nature-Based Solutions:** Expand forest restoration, afforestation, and ecosystem-based adaptation to enhance carbon sinks and resilience.

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