

**COP26**

**Explainer**

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**COP26 – WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?**

COP26 is the world’s opportunity to deliver a credible, binding response to the climate change crisis. The latest science makes it clear that global emissions need to fall significantly in this decade.

Every country bringing the most ambitious commitments and actions they can to the table, and this will be coordinated at COP26.

This explainer as your go-to guide to COP26 and get you up to speed on what it’s all about and why it’s so important.

**FIRST, WHAT DOES COP26 STAND FOR?**

‘COP’ refers to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (‘UNFCCC’), which is the top decision-making body for the world’s climate change commitments.

The ‘26’ signifies that this is the 26th Conference of the Parties. They usually happen annually, though COP26 was delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

COP26 will be a 2 week-long series of conferences, talks and discussions between global leaders to discuss their commitments to combatting climate change and work out ways for coordinating efforts to ensure people can also adapt and build resilience.

**WHERE WILL COP26 BE HELD AND WHO IS GOING?**

This year’s COP is hosted by the UK and Italy and is being held in Glasgow, Scotland. So far, over 100 political heads of government have confirmed their attendance, making COP26 the largest political gathering the UK has ever hosted.

As well as state leaders, government officials and delegates, there will be representatives from environmental NGOs, business, academia and state and local governments from all over the world attending the summit.

**WHY IS THIS YEAR MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN OTHERS?**

Countries are expected to significantly increase their emissions reduction targets to satisfy their commitment to the [Paris Agreement](https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/why-australia-needs-the-paris-agreement/).

**AND WHAT IS THE PARIS AGREEMENT?**

Actual contributions towards cutting global emissions are determined by the countries themselves, and the first round of contributions fell short, leaving the world on a path to a devastating 3°C or more of warming. Finally, at the COP21 in Paris in 2015, countries reached a binding and universal agreement to guide and accelerate international cooperation on climate change.

It resulted in 195 countries around the world signing a treaty, known as the Paris Agreement, agreeing to limit global warming to well below 2 ̊C and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 ̊C. The latest science affirms that breaching the Agreement’s temperature goal would prove disastrous for humanity, in the form of catastrophic extreme weather events and potentially unliveable conditions.

The Paris Agreement was an important step towards addressing the global challenge of climate change, however, it only provided the framework for getting there. It was decided that countries must strengthen their commitments every five years – and COP26 marks the end of that five-year period and many countries will be increasing their climate goals ahead of the summit.

**WHAT SORT OF CLIMATE TARGETS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**

The science says that global emissions must plummet this decade, so COP26 is primarily concerned with countries ramping up their commitments to reduce emissions by 2030.

Seeing their national security threatened by climate change but also driven by the economic opportunities of the global energy transition, almost all the world’s wealthy nations have significantly strengthened their 2030 emission reduction targets ahead of the Glasgow conference, many rapidly shifting away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES 0.5 OF A DEGREE MAKE?**

A huge amount – our infographic here shows the dramatic impact just half a degree will make on land and sea, from the loss of coral reefs to a huge reduction in fish caught.

**WHAT SORT OF EVENTS ARE GOING ON?**

There are the official summit meetings between the state leaders, virtual pavilions with special on-line events around Ocean Day and Nature Day, and a host of ‘fringe’ events by climate organisations, businesses and others – the programme is here:

[UK-Presidency-Pavilion-at-COP26-Event-Programme.pdf (ukcop26.org)](https://ukcop26.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/UK-Presidency-Pavilion-at-COP26-Event-Programme.pdf)

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25 October 2021