



Urgent Action on Climate



“By 2030, 193 Heads of State and Governments agree to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by –

- mobilizing \$100 billion annually to enable developing countries implement meaningful mitigation actions*
- strengthening climate change measures and adaptive capacity to climate-related natural disasters in all countries – and –*
- improving education and awareness about climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.”*

UN Sustainable Development Goal 13

Good News: The Green Economy is producing some good financial returns and could, if investments rise as they need to, create hundreds of millions of jobs.

Bad News: Between 1998 to 2017, the cost of climate disasters has been estimated at US-\$3 trillion and 1.3 million people dead, displaced or rendered homeless.



16-year old Climate Activist, Greta Thunberg, arrives in New York by solar sail-boat – greeted by 17 Yachts representing the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Of all the Sustainable Development Goals, this is the one that is getting most attention by the public – witness the extraordinary impact of Greta Thunberg and her worldwide school strikes and the Extinction Rebellion actions. Sadly, their energy and enthusiasm is not matched by the actions of their governments. Although 185 countries are signed up to the Paris climate agreement, one of the world's top 3 per capita polluters, the USA, has withdrawn from it – and several others are not meeting their commitments.

UN Scientists tell us we have 11 years to reduce our carbon emissions and transition to green, sustainable behaviours. Though public pressure, especially from youth, is increasing – there is currently nothing like enough to force the changes we, and our planet, need.



Balance Sheet

Achievements

185 countries have signed the Paris climate agreement, agreeing to deliver annual contributions to limiting GHG emissions (April 2019). [2]

28 developing countries have accessed the **Green Climate Fund** to finance national adaptation plans, with a value of \$75 million. [2]

The 1987 Montreal Protocol, ratified by all UN member states, designed to phase out the emissions of ozone layer-depleting substances, has been successful, **with ozone levels predicting to recover by 2050-2070**.

Climate-related spending is increasing, with global flows of **\$681 billion in 2016**, an increase of 17% from 2015. [3]

Work Left to Do

The US has withdrawn from the agreement. It is also not legally binding, and only covers one-third of the necessary emissions reductions to limit warming to 2 degrees.

Between 1998 and 2017, climate-related natural disasters killed 1.3 million people, and cost nearly \$3 trillion (in direct costs only). [3]

CO2 levels reached 405.5ppm in 2017, the highest ever recorded, compared to 280ppm of pre-industrial levels. The rate of increase recently has been 100x that of recorded natural increases at the end of the last ice age. [3]

This is still less than financial activities related to fossil fuels (\$781 billion in 2016), and falls short of the spending necessary. [3]



Achievements

Developed countries are committed to jointly raising **\$100 billion** by 2020 to assist developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change. [2]

Rapid implementation of the SDGs could contribute \$20 Trillion to the Global Economy and create hundreds of millions of new jobs. The report, Better Business, Better World describes how, in just 4 x areas, transition to green behaviours grows the economy and makes for more inclusive growth. (5)

\$26 trillion is another estimate for the net economic benefits of taking the necessary climate action. [1]

Work Left to Do

Sea levels have risen by 20cm since 1880, with another 30-120cm predicted by 2100. Five of the Solomon Islands have become submerged, and the Maldives could become uninhabitable by 2100. [1]

2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 were the four warmest years on record, with global temperatures having risen by 1 degree Celsius since 1880. This sounds small, but an increase of even 2 degrees is believed likely to cause nonlinear changes in the climate system, such as irreversible permafrost melting or disrupted ocean currents.

Rapid climatic changes are likely to lead to the loss of vegetation and plant life, and along with them the vital services they provide to human societies (resources and regulation).



Sources

1. [UNDP - SDG13](#)
2. [SDGs Knowledge Platform - Goal 13](#)
3. [SDG Report 2019 - Section 13](#)
4. [The 2030 Agenda](#)
5. [Business & Sustainable Development Commission Report](#)

Points to Ponder

- The Paris Climate Change agreement is an aggregation of every UN Member States' Individually Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC): it was supposed to be a 'legally binding instrument' – but UN Member Governments don't want to sign up to these as it "limits their sovereignty..." What do you feel about giving up some of your nation's sovereignty to save the planet? Would you?
- What do you feel is the correct balance between individual action (recycling, vegetarianism, fewer flights etc) versus governmental and industrial action?
- The UN's Agenda 21 included local targets for each local authority in each country. Should the SDGs have included these? What action could you take to convince your local government to adopt their own climate targets?
- 12 countries and 20 cities have agreed to ban fossil-fuel powered vehicles by 2030 or 2040 – one, Costa Rica, will ban them in 2021. A similar measure in California only got 8% compliance – and many countries clearly think the measure impossible. What do you think? Extinction Rebellion is calling for a total global ban by 2025: is that possible?

Take Action

- Air dry clothes instead of using a machine
- Eat less meat and fish
- Freeze and reuse leftovers, and plan out your meals
- Adjust the thermostat downwards in winter – wear a sweater!