

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Background

1979 – “World Climate Conference” organized by WMO

- expressed concern that continued expansion of man’s activities on earth may cause “significant extended regional and even global changes of climate”.

1988– Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established by UNEP, WMO

- tasked to assess scientific information on the subject

1988 – UN General Assembly Resolution 43/53

- urged protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind.

1990 – IPCC First Assessment Report

1990 – Second World Climate Conference

- called for the creation of a global treaty.

UN General Assembly Resolution 45/212

- formally launched negotiations on a convention on climate change, to be conducted by an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)

1991 – INC meets

1992 – INC adopts text of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Rio Convention

1994 – UNFCCC enters into force

Principles in the Rio Declaration covered by the UNFCCC include:

- The change in the Earth’s climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind (Principle 1)
- States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (Principle 2)
- Responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner with a view to avoiding adverse impacts on the latter, taking into full account the legitimate priority needs of developing countries for the achievement of sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty (Principles 3, 4 and 5)
- Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects (Principle 15)
- Common but differentiated responsibilities (Principle 7)



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Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)

UNFCCC regulates all GHGs not addressed by Montreal Protocol (except HFCs – see Kigali Amendment further along)

Kyoto Protocol regulates 7 major groups of GHGs:

- **CO₂** – e.g. from combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas), agriculture land use, deforestation
- **CH₄** – methane
- **N₂O** – nitrous oxide
- **PFCs** – perfluorocarbons
- **HFCs** – hydrofluorocarbons
- **SF₆** – sulphur hexafluoride
- **NF₃** – nitrogen trifluoride

Paris Agreement – follows the UNFCCC

Global CO₂ emissions (2021)

% of total global emissions 2021. Source: Global Carbon Atlas



*175 countries

This factsheet on United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is included in the comprehensive report: *Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs)*, pp. 34–39.