COP31 · COUNTDOWN

Understanding the Climate COP

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

COP31 TÜRKİYE ANTALYA

9 – 20 · NOV · 2026

No. 3 **Towards COP31**· Antalya 2026



THE COUNTDOWN

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A BACKGROUND GUIDE FOR THE CLARETIAN FAMILY

Every year, the United Nations climate conference brings governments together to discuss their response to climate change. News reports usually call this gathering “COP.” But what does COP mean, and how does it work?

01 What is COP?

COP stands for Conference of the Parties. It brings together the countries that have joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as the UNFCCC.

The COP is the Convention’s highest decision-making body, where governments review progress and agree on further action to address climate change. These meetings normally take place every year.

02 What is the UNFCCC?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the international climate treaty adopted in 1992, during the period of the Rio Earth Summit.

It entered into force on 21 March 1994. Its purpose is to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

The Convention has 198 Parties: 197 countries and the European Union.

1992 Adopted during the period of the Rio Earth Summit

1994 Entered into force on 21 March

198 Parties: 197 countries and the European Union

03 Why do countries meet?

Climate change crosses national borders. Greenhouse gases released in one country affect the whole planet. No country can solve the problem alone.

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COP provides a space for countries to coordinate their response: reducing the emissions that cause warming and helping people prepare for its impacts.

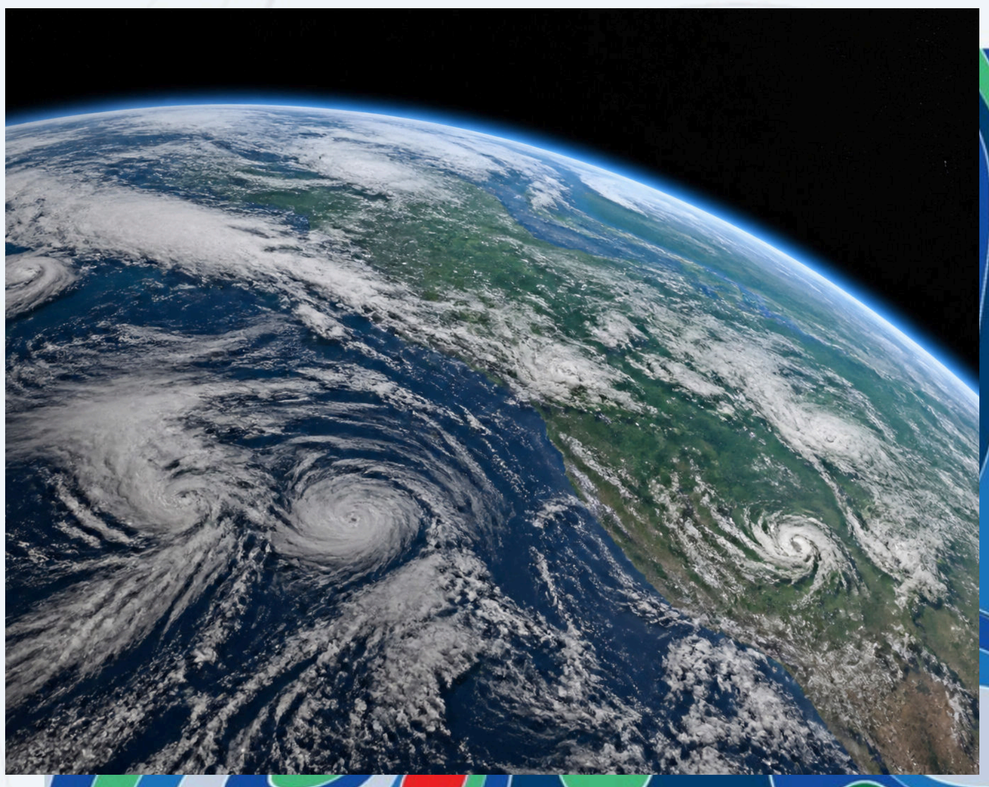
MITIGATION

Reducing the emissions that cause warming

ADAPTATION

Helping people prepare for its impacts

04 What is climate change?



Climate change means long-term changes in temperatures and weather patterns.

Since the 1800s, human activities—mainly burning coal, oil and gas—have been its main driver. These activities release greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. The resulting warming affects weather, oceans, ecosystems and people's lives.

FROM CAUSE TO EFFECT

Burning coal, oil and gas → **Greenhouse gases** → **Heat trapped in the atmosphere** → **Weather, oceans, ecosystems and people affected**

05 How did COP begin?

From a shared concern to international agreements

The climate process did not begin with the Paris Agreement. It developed over several decades, with each major agreement building on earlier work.

Four milestones help explain the process:

1992

The UN climate convention

UNFCCC

Countries adopted the UNFCCC, establishing the foundation for international climate cooperation.

1995

The first COP

COP1

The first COP took place in Berlin, Germany.

1997

The Kyoto Protocol

COP3

At COP3 in Kyoto, Japan, countries adopted the Kyoto Protocol. It established binding emissions-reduction targets for participating industrialized countries and economies in transition. It entered into force in 2005

2015

The Paris Agreement

COP21

COP21 adopted the Paris Agreement, bringing countries into a shared framework for stronger climate action.

2026

Next stop: COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye

06 What is the Paris Agreement?

The Paris Agreement is an international climate treaty. It aims to

GOAL 1

well below 2°C

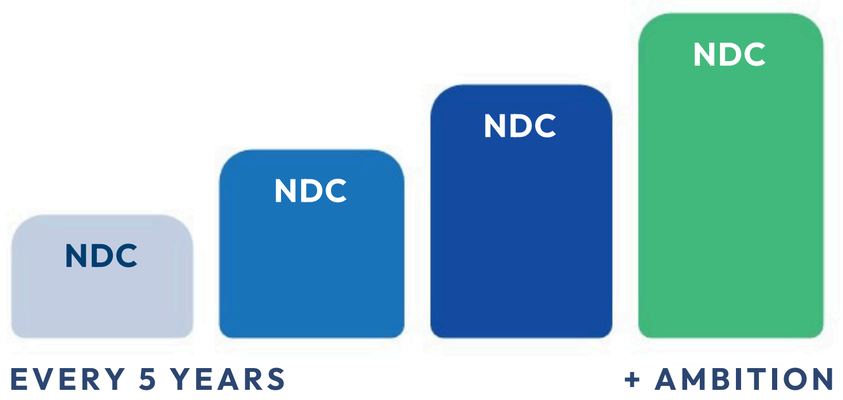
Keep global warming well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

GOAL 2

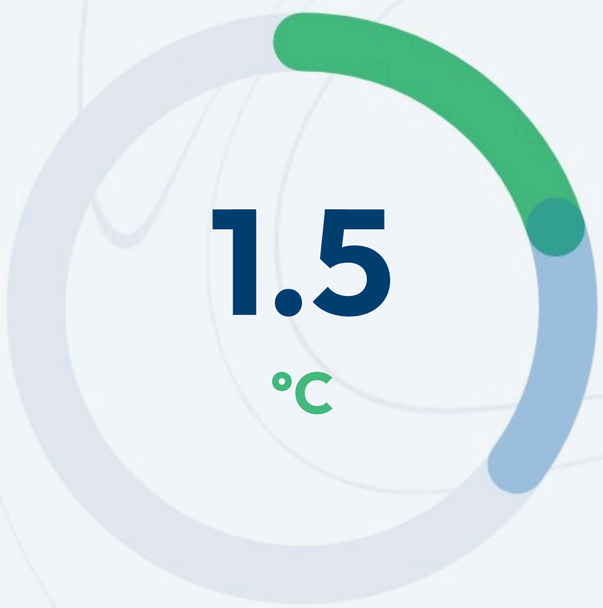
limit to 1.5°C

Pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.

Under the Agreement, countries submit national climate action plans, called NDCs, every five years. Each new plan is expected to be stronger than the previous one.



07 Why does 1.5°C matter?



The figure refers to the rise in the Earth's long-term average temperature compared with the period before large-scale industrialization.

It is not a daily temperature or the temperature of one country. Even a small increase in the global average can intensify risks to people and ecosystems.

> **Every fraction of a degree matters: less warming means less harm.**

08 Who takes part in COP?

Government delegations

NEGOTIATE AND DECIDE

Government delegations negotiate and take the formal decisions.

Observers

PARTICIPATE, BUT DO NOT DECIDE

UN agencies | Scientists | Civil society | Indigenous Peoples | Young people

UN agencies, scientists, civil-society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, young people and other observers also participate. They share knowledge, bring community concerns and advocate for action, but they do not take decisions on behalf of governments.

09 What happens during COP?

about 2 weeks

The conference usually lasts about two weeks. During this time:

1 Governments

Governments review progress and discuss what further action is needed.

2 Negotiators

Negotiators work on draft decisions, debate, edit and vote on regulations and sometimes binding rules to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, track country climate targets, and hold nations accountable to past treaties

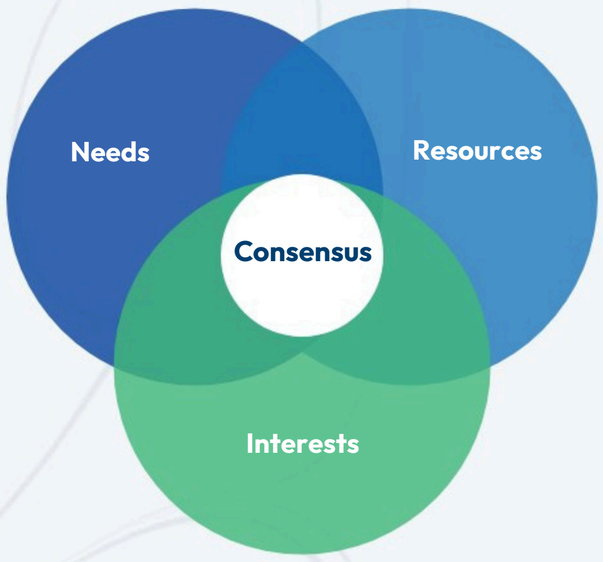
3 Ministers

Ministers help resolve difficult political questions.

4 Observers

Non-voting groups at the UN climate talks—called observers—host side events, pitch policy ideas, keep watchful eye, share proposals and follow the negotiations.

10 How are decisions made?



Countries have different needs, resources and interests. Negotiations seek common ground among them.

Decisions are generally adopted by consensus, rather than majority voting. Reaching an agreement can therefore take time and involve compromise.

✓ Consensus

~~Majority voting~~

11 What happens after COP?

COP decisions must lead to action at home.



Governments are responsible for putting commitments into practice through national policies and programmes. Under the Paris Agreement, countries report on their efforts, while a Global Stocktake (GST) every five years assesses collective progress and guides stronger action. The first GST concluded at COP28 in 2023.

1st GST concluded at COP28 · 2023

Observers act as accountability watchdogs. Back in their home nations, they monitor whether their domestic governments are actually implementing the pledges made at the summit

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Looking ahead to COP31

Antalya, Türkiye | **9 to 20 November 2026**

COP31 will take place in Antalya, Türkiye, from 9 to 20 November 2026. It continues this global process of reviewing progress and advancing climate action.

COP31 TÜRKİYE ANTALYA

NEXT EDITION

Countdown 2

In Countdown 2, we will look at COP31's key issues, expectations and their significance for the Claretian Family.

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