

TOWARDS A CARBON-NEUTRAL FUTURE

Climate change and sustainable development are the central challenges of our time. They are inseparably linked and need to be addressed together. Action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate impacts is essential for ensuring sustainable development. At the same time, only sustainable development can provide the stable political, economic, social and environmental conditions that all countries need to address climate change successfully and build carbon-neutral economies. This is why the UN system is fully committed to supporting the international community as it confronts climate change while working to build a sustainable world for the twenty-first century.

Climate change is warming the planet, altering weather patterns, increasing the severity of floods and droughts, raising sea levels, acidifying the ocean, melting sea and land ice, threatening plant and animal species, and affecting the spread of diseases. These emerging climate impacts are already aggravating other stresses on sustainable development, ranging from land degradation and resource depletion to land, air and water pollution.

Drawing on the best available science, Governments have recognized that the average global temperature must rise by no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels if dangerous climate change is to be avoided. This can be achieved if global emissions peak within the coming decade and then decline until there are no new net emissions as early as possible in the second half of the century. Ambitious action is needed, and it is needed now. Fortunately, there are at least three good reasons to have confidence in our ability to meet the challenge:



A family in Tarialan, Uvs Province, Mongolia, uses a solar panel to generate power for their ger, a traditional Mongolian tent.
UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Reflection of the United Nations Headquarters building seen from the windshield of one of the electric cars parked at the UN.
UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

1. **The resources are available:** The human, financial and technological resources required to succeed are already available in many parts of the world. They need to be deployed faster and in innovative ways to complete the transformation to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.
2. **An international legal framework is in place:** Governments have been collaborating over the past two decades through the UNFCCC to reduce emissions, build climate resilience and promote sustainable development. They are now developing a new, universal climate agreement to be adopted in Paris in late 2015. The aim is to raise ambition in the immediate future – from now through 2020 – and to put the world on track to achieve its medium and long-term climate goals.
3. **Many people are already taking action:** There is today a rising groundswell of action by local and national governments, communities, businesses and investors. These diverse actors recognize the huge opportunities offered by a low-carbon, climate-resilient future, including such co-benefits as greater security, reduced pollution, improved public health, the sustainable management of the world's natural and socio-economic resources, and the creation of decent jobs.

The UN and its specialized agencies, programmes, funds, conventions and other bodies are united in their conviction that addressing climate change and achieving sustainable development will require coordination and cooperation across all levels of governance, economies and societies. The UN system brings to the table the advantages of international political legitimacy, wide-ranging and cross-cutting expertise, a national and regional presence, and strong partnerships with civil society, academia and the private sector. It relies on these strengths to promote action through both UNFCCC and an integrated portfolio of programmes and projects. This brochure describes a selection of UN system activities in support of local, national, regional and global action on climate change.