

# The Paris Agreement



The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

## The UNFCCC

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit. Countries joined this international treaty as it provides a framework for international cooperation to combat climate change. Currently there are 197 parties (i.e. countries) in the convention.

Every year there is a convention of parties (COP). The most recent one, COP 24, was held in Katowice, Poland in December 2018.



## The Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement was adopted in Paris on 12th December 2015 and entered into force on 4th November 2016. It seeks to accelerate and intensify the actions and investment needed for a sustainable low carbon future.

Its central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, ideally to limit the temperature increase to a further 1.5 degree Celsius.

To date, 184 countries out of 197 have ratified the agreement. To ratify the agreement means that the country has approved and pledged commitment to adopt the framework that the agreement sets out. The UK ratified the Paris Agreement in November 2016, at COP22 in Marrakesh.

Each country decided what measures and targets they would like to take past 2020 to lower their carbon emissions. These were brought to the table to be discussed and a final deal was negotiated for each country. This bottom up approach was taken after many countries pushed back against the top-down approach of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

The Paris Agreement is argued by some to have been a big breakthrough.



It has brought together both developed and developing countries; almost every country has ratified it. We need this unanimity, as without it there is no solution.

Every country offers their own nationally determined contribution; this recognises each country's right to develop.

Taking a bottom up approach, where each country brings their own measures and targets to the table, has allowed each country to feel empowered.

However others argue that there are issues with The Paris Agreement.

What is proposed and negotiated by and for each country is very dependent on the country's leadership at that time.

Letting countries decide their own measures and targets brings up climate justice issues. Is it fair to let some countries do less than is necessary when low lying states, such as the Maldives, could be submerged if warming goes over 1.5°C?

Is it a question of doing what is best or a question of doing what is necessary? We are running out of time; is some countries best sufficient enough?

Further reading:

UNFCCC Website: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

You can also find a KS4 and KS5 lesson, in the educational resources section of the ECO<sub>2</sub> Smart Schools Website, based on the Paris Agreement, where children will debate whether countries should be allowed to decide their own targets and measures for reducing carbon emissions.

