

Paris Agreement in a new era

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December 2025 marks the tenth anniversary of adoption of the Paris Agreement. Although we have seen both achievements and disappointments in the past decade, we believe that the Paris Agreement will keep playing a key role in international climate actions.

On 12 December 2015, the final draft of the Paris Agreement was adopted by 195 Parties at the conclusion of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 21). As a binding agreement, it is a landmark in multi-lateral climate governance history, and brings almost all nations together to make efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Ten years later, as we approach COP 30 in Belém, Brazil, contrary to the universal optimism back in 2015, we see more complex realities: geopolitical fractures among major powers; the rise of populism and scepticism; and, of course, a more apparent warming Earth than ever. However, we argue that even with the wide gap between ambitions and actions, the Paris Agreement will continue to be the cornerstone of international climate actions in the next decades.

Before moving forward, we provide a brief overview of the landscape before 2015. Since the first World Climate Conference in 1979, it has been a long and winding road to bring the global community together for collective action. The decades leading to the Paris Agreement were defined by diplomatic divides. The top-down model adopted by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 with rigid divides between developed and developing countries proved impractical, leading to the near collapse of the 2009 Copenhagen summit. Thus, the breakthrough for the Paris Agreement was a critical paradigm shift with a bottom-up



model based on nationally determined contributions. The flexible framework allowed breaking the long-standing deadlock and to create an acceptable accord that secured the participation of almost all nations.

Furthermore, the architecture of the Paris Agreement was designed to be a resilient framework even under unfavourable real-world conditions. The [Global Stocktake](#) creates a recurring scientific audit of the collective progress, which fuels the ratchet mechanisms to pressure nations to return with stronger pledges at the five-year cycle. Such iterative processes repeatedly put accountability and escalating ambitions centre stage of international negotiations.

Of course, it is not a perfect deal, and indeed, both positive and negative outcomes have been seen in the past ten years. In a [Viewpoint](#) in this issue of *Nature Climate Change*, we invited well-established experts in different aspects of climate governance to discuss to what extent the key Articles of the Paris Agreement have fulfilled their purpose, as well as potential future directions. Even though there has been progress such as expanding renewable energy capacity, comprehensive climate policy packages and wide societal engagement, more efforts are needed to cut emissions to avoid temperature overshoot and to reach the 1.5 °C target. An [infographic](#) also in this issue illustrates the achievements and challenges ahead.

When looking back, it is important to note that the Paris Agreement is not, and will never be, a single solution, but a durable and adaptable process. For international climate governance, it is vital to have a multilateral platform and to provide a stable channel for universal engagement. This may, in particular, be valuable not just for climate actions, but for general international cooperation given the increasing unrest on other fronts.

From a broader perspective, the Paris Agreement has served as a powerful catalyst by sending a clear, long-term political signal. It boosted the confidence of innovators and investors, who directed the accelerated technological progress. It also empowered civil society to actively participate in domestic political processes, pressuring greater ambitions from governments. In other words, we would not have seen those progresses in the past decade without the Agreement. In the new era, such roles should be amplified and wide-ranging social and economic transformation stimulated far beyond the negotiation halls.

In the next decades, the scientific community also needs to prioritize research that could provide concrete solutions to enhance the Paris Agreement. Researchers are critical for many issues including creating credible national emissions inventories, accelerating needed innovations in scalable decarbonization technologies and developing just transformative pathways. The Paris Agreement was never the end but a starting line. For the next decade, every effort must be made to keep building on what has already been achieved and to overcome obstacles. Most importantly, the spirit of solidarity and shared values that defined the Paris Agreement in 2015 remain the crucial assets in confronting the increasing risks from climate change.

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