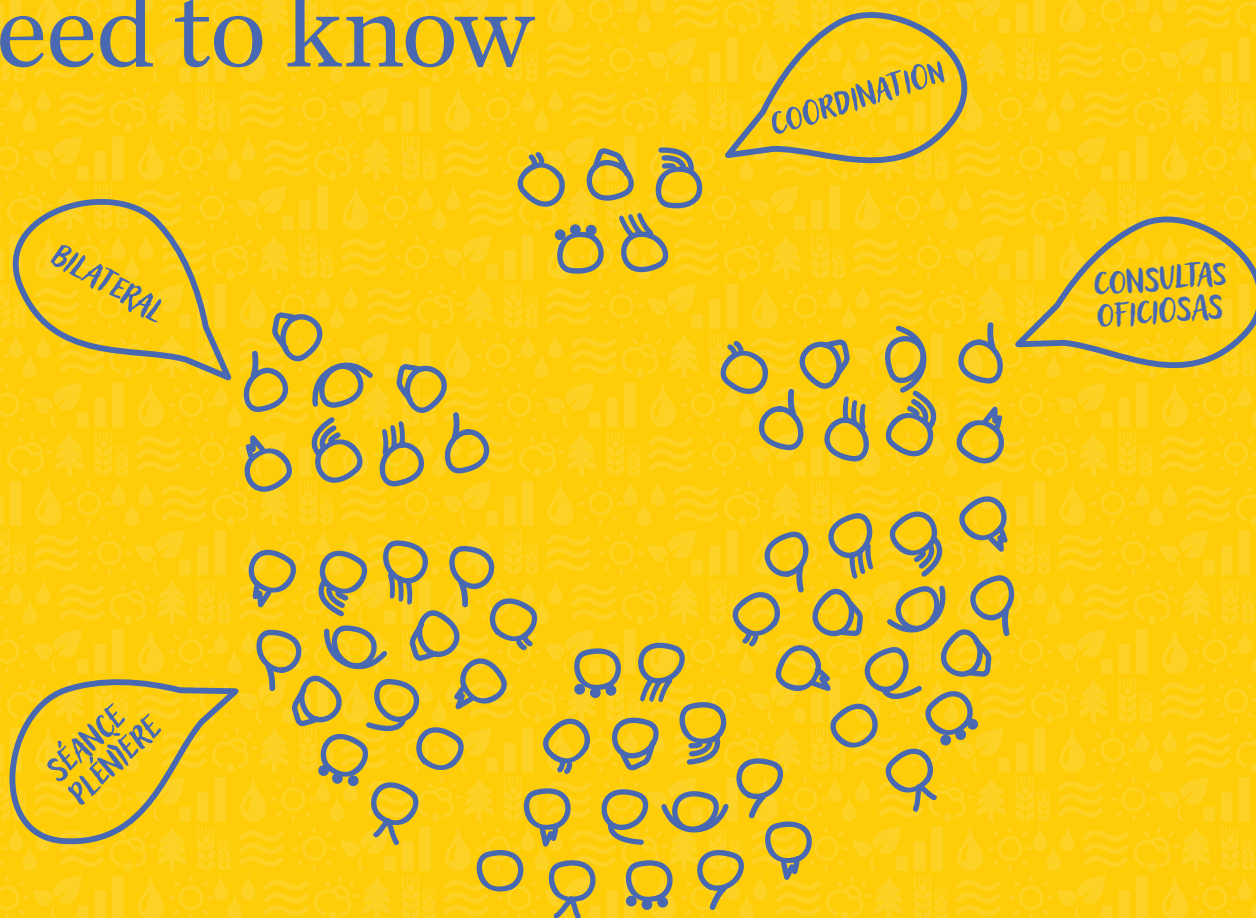


Becoming a UNFCCC delegate: what you need to know



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Foreword

As the Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group, I extend a warm welcome to all new negotiators joining our ranks. Representing the LDCs in the UNFCCC negotiations carries an enormous responsibility. You are not just arguing points at a negotiating table; you are fighting and advocating for the future of our nations, the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The path to becoming a UNFCCC delegate is not a straightforward one and it can be overwhelming even for experienced negotiators. Climate change is a multi-faceted issue that intersects with a variety of international challenges, making it a complex topic to negotiate. Getting started is usually the most challenging part, but with unwavering commitment, you can truly make a meaningful impact.

I want to express my deep gratitude to IIED for their sustained efforts to empower emerging LDC leaders in the climate space. This guide, 'Becoming a UNFCCC delegate: what you need to know', should be

indispensable reading for any new negotiator. My deepest thanks also go to UNEP, UNDP, IKI, and all other organisations contributing to this invaluable initiative.

In our hands lies not just paperwork and policy, but the hope and future of millions — let us make it count.

Madeleine Diouf Sarr

Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group in the UNFCCC (2023)
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The designations employed and the presentations in this paper do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNDP, UNEP, GEF or any other United

Nations or contributory organisations, editors or publishers concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authority. Mention of a commercial company or a product in this paper does not imply endorsement by UNDP, UNEP, GEF or any other United Nations or contributory organisations. The use of information from this publication concerning proprietary products for publicity or advertising is not permitted.

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Acknowledgements

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How to use this toolkit

Attending UN climate negotiations for the first time is daunting, especially if it's a Conference of the Parties (COP) session. With so many meetings happening in parallel — some open, some closed — and jargon and acronyms that constantly roll off people's tongues, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process is notoriously complex.

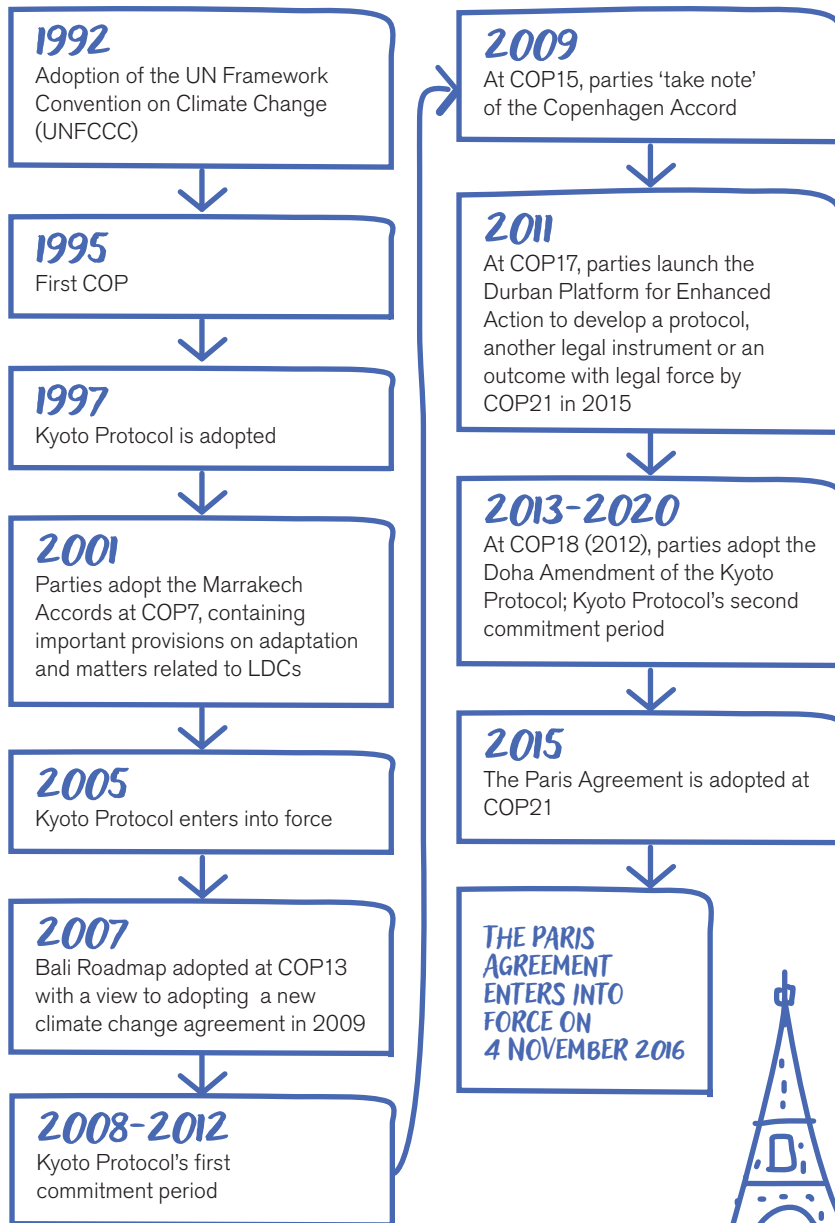
This toolkit has been written to help new delegates, in particular from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), navigate the session. It focuses on the process, rather than the content of negotiations, and offers some practical 'insider' tips for getting through the days (and nights).

There's no 'right' way to use this toolkit. Skip from section to section, or go through it from beginning to end.

We do however suggest the toolkit is used alongside its sister publication: 'Climate negotiations terminology: the pocket guide'. The pocket guide explains and will help you to apply the specialist language of the UNFCCC negotiations. It is available free of charge on IIED's website in English (<http://pubs.iied.org/10148IIED>) and in French (<http://pubs.iied.org/10148FIIED>). A very full acronym list is included in the pocket guide, hence not repeated in this toolkit.



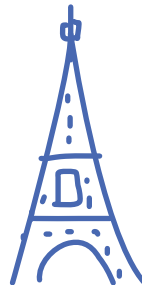
1. Understanding the UNFCCC



The UNFCCC

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is an international treaty that binds its signatories to cooperate in limiting global temperature increases, and in addressing the adverse effects of unavoidable climate change. It was adopted in 1992, and entered into force in 1994 (see timeline, left). There are currently 198 parties to the UNFCCC: 197 countries and the European Union (EU) which ratified the Convention as a bloc.

Under the Convention, developed countries are tasked with taking the lead in acting on climate change, given their historical responsibility for causing it. These countries are listed in Annex I of the Convention (often referred to as 'Annex I parties/countries') and include members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1992 as well as the Russian Federation and Central and Eastern European countries, considered at the time as 'economies in transition'. Annex II countries exclude those countries with economies in transition. Annex II parties have commitments under the Convention to provide finance and to develop and share ('transfer') technology. Developing countries will often be referred to as 'non-Annex I parties/countries' (<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/what-are-parties-non-party-stakeholders>). The full text of the UNFCCC is available in the six official UN languages online: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/history-of-the-convention/convention-documents>



“The ultimate objective of this Convention ... is to achieve ... stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”

Article 2, UNFCCC

Why are countries called “Parties”?

The UNFCCC is an international treaty signed by 198 countries. Legally speaking, any country that signs a treaty is considered as a part/party of the treaty. This means that the party has the right and obligation to fulfil the conditions of the treaty. In the case of the UNFCCC, the same logic applies.

The 198 parties to the Convention meet annually for a **Conference of the Parties (COP)** to agree on actions to implement commitments. The COP is the supreme decision making body of the UNFCCC.

Entry into force of the UNFCCC

Before an international treaty can enter into force, it must be ratified by the countries involved. Depositing an ‘instrument of ratification’ (in this case, to the UN Secretary General) indicates that a State has consented to be bound by a multilateral treaty and that it has completed all necessary processes at the national level to transfer the treaty to its domestic jurisdictional system.

The precise terms of entry into force are specified in the treaty. The Convention entered into force 90 days after the 50th party had ratified the agreement (on 21 March 1994).

Working languages

The six UN languages are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. All official documents, such as agreement texts, decisions and reports are available in these six languages. In plenary sessions (see page 31), simultaneous interpretation is available and parties may deliver their statements or make interventions in any of these languages. In smaller negotiating settings — including drafting groups — English is used and no interpretation is available. All party delegates need to be familiar with UNFCCC terminology (and acronyms) in English to engage effectively in the negotiations.

For more information on the ratification process,

see: Abeyasinghe and Prolo (2016) Entry into force of the Paris Agreement: the legal process. IIED, London.

For more on the terminology see:

Abeyasinghe, A, Prolo, C, Tenzing, J (2015) Climate negotiations terminology: the pocket guide. IIED, London.

The Kyoto Protocol

At the first COP, parties agreed to strengthen global cooperation to address climate change. This led to the **Kyoto Protocol**, adopted in 1997 at COP3 in Kyoto. This legally binding treaty committed developed country parties, as those historically responsible for the high concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, to reduce their emissions by an average of five per cent below 1990 levels during the first commitment period (2008–2012). The Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005.

The 'Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol' commits developed country parties to further reductions in the second commitment period (2013–2020) but has not yet entered into force.

Currently, 192 parties to the UNFCCC are also party to the Kyoto Protocol. These parties

meet annually for a Conference of the Parties serving as the **Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP)**, in conjunction with COP sessions. The CMP is the supreme decision making body of the Kyoto Protocol.

Despite its ambition, the effectiveness of the Kyoto Protocol faced notable challenges. The United States, a significant global emitter, never ratified the protocol, and this absence weighed heavily on its overall impact. Additionally, Canada formally withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2011, further weakening its influence. Other key countries, such as Russia and Japan, chose not to participate in the second commitment period

The full text of the Kyoto Protocol is available online in the six official UN languages:
<https://unfccc.int/documents/2409>

Entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on the 16 February 2005, 90 days after 55 parties, including Annex I parties representing at least 55 per cent of total CO₂ emissions for 1990, deposited their 'instrument of ratification' (a document, signed normally by the Head of State or Government) with the UN. The Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period was from 2008 to 2012.

The second commitment period started in 2013 and ended in 2020. The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol included new commitments for developed country parties for this period, including to reduce emissions by at least 18 per cent below 1990 levels. It also contained a revised list of GHG emissions that they must report on. The Doha Amendment entered into force on 31 December 2020 after surpassing the threshold of 144 instruments of acceptance for entry into force.

The Paris Agreement

At COP13 (2007), parties launched a work plan, known as the Bali Roadmap, which was supposed to lead to a new climate change agreement at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. Due to differences of opinion, parties did not adopt the 'Copenhagen Accord'. Instead they only 'took note' of it.

The failure to reach an agreement raised questions as to whether climate change could be addressed through multilateralism and diplomacy. But as scientific knowledge on climate change and evidence of its impacts increased, there was growing pressure for urgent global action.

Parties renewed efforts to strengthen the global climate change regime at COP17 in Durban in 2011, and set a deadline to agree on a universal, legally binding agreement by 2015. The **Paris Agreement** was adopted on 12 December 2015.

The supreme decision-making body of the Paris Agreement is the **Conference of the Parties Serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA)**. All parties that have ratified the Paris Agreement are represented in the CMA.

The full text of the Paris Agreement is available in the six official UN languages online: <https://unfccc.int/process/conferences/pastconferences/paris-climate-change-conference-november-2015/paris-agreement>

To strengthen the global response to climate change, the Paris Agreement aims to:

- (a) Hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change
- (b) Increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production
- (c) Make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

Entry into force of the Paris Agreement

The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016, the 30th day after the day on which at least 55 parties accounting for at least 55 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions deposited their instrument of ratification. Parties agreed on a roadmap for the Paris Agreement's implementation (known as the "Paris Rulebook") at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, in December 2018. It was finalised at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2021.

1.1 Negotiation sessions

The purpose of the negotiation sessions is for parties to regularly review implementation of the Convention and the other legal instruments adopted. The COP, CMP and CMA adopt decisions to ensure progress in implementing commitments.

COP/CMP/CMA

The COP meets annually, usually in November or December, with each session numbered. So the first ever Conference of the Parties, held in Berlin in 1995, was COP1. Recent COPs are often referred to by the city where they took place in.

The CMP has met alongside the COP since 2005, when the Kyoto Protocol entered into force. The CMP adopts decisions on issues to advance the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

The CMA convened for the first time in conjunction with COP22 and CMP12 in Marrakech, after entering into force on 4 November 2016. The CMA adopts decisions to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Each year, one party is elected to serve as COP/CMP/CMA president, with the presidency rotating between the five UN regional groups (the African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, the Eastern European Group, the Latin American and the Caribbean Group, and the Western Europe and Others Group). The country that holds the presidency will usually also host the COP/CMP/CMA (referred to simply as the 'COP'), with the session scheduled over two weeks.

The recent COP sessions are available online: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>

Before the COP session there is a preparatory week for negotiating groups to meet (see page 28)

Not all parties to the UNFCCC are party to the Kyoto Protocol. Parties to the UNFCCC that are not party to the Kyoto Protocol may attend and participate at CMP meetings but cannot take part in decision making. The United States and Canada are not party to the Kyoto Protocol. One way to tell if a party has ratified the Kyoto Protocol is by looking at the right edge of their badge: countries that have KP with a green tick next to it on their badge are parties to the Kyoto Protocol

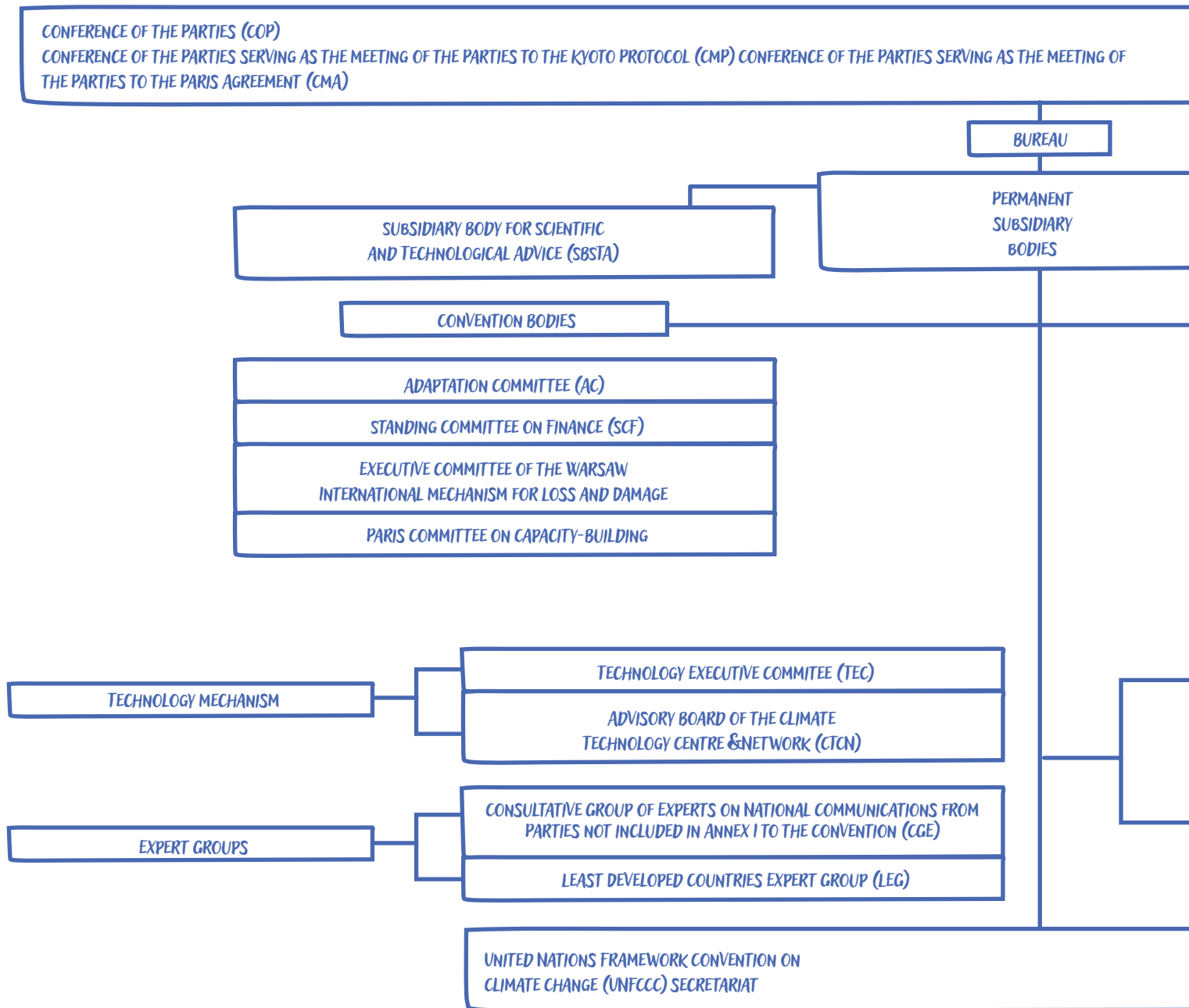


Participating in CMA discussions

On 5 October 2016, 74 parties to the Convention accounting for 58.82 per cent of the total global GHG emissions had ratified the Paris Agreement, triggering its entry into force 30 days later, on 4 November 2016. The CMA therefore convened its first session in conjunction with COP22, in November 2016.

As with the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, parties can still ratify the Paris Agreement after its entry into force and be part of the CMA's subsequent meetings. If they do not, they can participate in CMA discussions but cannot take part in the decision-making process to implement the Agreement. As of 20 November 2023, 195 Parties (194 States plus the European Union) had ratified the Paris agreement.

Decision-making bodies under the UNFCCC





SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR IMPLEMENTATION (SBI)

KYOTO PROTOCOL BODIES



FINANCIAL MECHANISM



OTHER FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS



Subsidiary bodies

There are two permanent subsidiary bodies to the Convention: the **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)** and the **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)** which support the COP, CMP and CMA. These meet in parallel, twice a year: once in Bonn, Germany, at the seat of the UNFCCC secretariat, typically in May or June (this is commonly referred to as an 'intersessional' or 'SB session'), and in conjunction with the annual COP sessions.

The **SBI** supports the COP, CMP and CMA in ensuring parties are making progress on implementing their commitments under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement (including past decisions). Items on the SBI agenda include National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), matters related to least developed countries, and the Adaptation Fund, among other issues. The SBI chairmanship rotates among the five UN regional groups.

The **SBSTA** supports the COP, CMP and CMA by providing timely information and advice on scientific and technological matters. Agenda items include methods for financial reporting by Annex I parties, mechanisms that can be used to implement the agreements (eg the Clean Development Mechanism introduced under the Kyoto Protocol), or issues related to agriculture, for example. As with the SBI, the SBSTA chairmanship rotates among the five UN regional groups.

The SBI and SBSTA also work **jointly** on cross-cutting issues. For instance, COP27 mandated both bodies to establish the four-year Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (Decision 3/CP.27). This means that negotiations under this item will appear in both the SBI and SBSTA agendas. Joint agenda items do not necessarily have the same number, meaning agriculture could be SBI agenda item 5 and SBSTA agenda item 11.

A number of **other bodies, institutions and ad hoc working groups** have been set up to provide additional support. Unlike the two subsidiary bodies, these are not always permanent. The COP, CMP or CMA (depending on who established these bodies, institutions or working groups) is tasked to consider whether their mandate should be renewed every few years.

The COP, CMP or CMA usually specifies the criteria for membership and frequency of meetings of these bodies. Some bodies, such as the Adaptation Committee or the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, have limited membership. Ad hoc working groups under the COP, CMP or CMA are usually set up to launch a process where all countries (that are party to the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement) are involved, and are given a clear mandate and timeframe to complete their work.

Preparatory meetings
are also held before
SB sessions

EXAMPLES OF OTHER BODIES OR INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION:

- Adaptation Committee
- Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN)
- Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG)
- Standing Committee on Finance (SCF)
- Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM).

EXAMPLES OF AD HOC WORKING GROUPS:

- **Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP):** set up to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an outcome with legal force by COP21 in 2015. ADP concluded its function in COP21, following the adoption of the Paris Agreement
- **Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA):** The APA was established at COP21 to facilitate the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and prepare for its effective implementation. It operated from 2016 to 2018 and played a pivotal role in shaping the agreement's guidelines to implement the agreement (or Paris Rulebook). APA concluded its work at COP 24 in Katowice in 2018
- **Ad Hoc Working Group on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (AWG-6):** This group was established in 2019 to elaborate the rules, modalities and procedures for the mechanism established by Article 6, paragraph 4, of the Paris Agreement
- **Ad Hoc Working Group on Response Measures (AWG-RM):** This group was established in 2019 to implement the work programme on the impact of the implementation of response measures under the Convention and the Paris Agreement

Parties may decide there is a need for ad hoc working groups to meet outside of the COP or SB sessions. For example, in 2015, the ADP

met for a week in February, August-September and October, as well as during the SB session and COP.

2. Before you leave

Registration

Each party appoints at least one person as their UNFCCC 'National Focal Point'. The Focal Point is responsible for communicating the names of the people nominated to be in that country's delegation to the UNFCCC secretariat. In principle, the focal point must do this before the start of a session (even for ministers), but he/she can also add names to the delegation during a session. Once nominated, delegates should automatically receive a letter of acknowledgement (by email) from the secretariat.

Most, if not all delegates attend a 'preparatory week' (see page 28) ahead of the official start of the COP and SB meetings.

When you arrive at the venue (or when you arrive at the start of the official session), you will need to show your passport and acknowledgement letter at the registration desk. You will then be given a badge which must be worn at all times, with your name, photo and country delegation. The secretariat scans your badge whenever you enter and exit the venue. Pay attention to the badge colour as it will inform you of participants' affiliations.

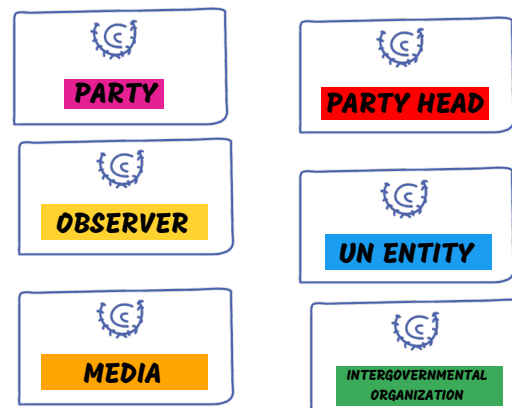
A typical delegation structure

There is no maximum (or minimum) number of people in a party delegation. Some parties, in particular from least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states

(SIDS) may have only one, two or three people on their delegation (the UNFCCC secretariat typically funds three delegates from each LDC or SIDS party for COPs, and one to two delegates for other sessions). Other parties may have 80 to 130 delegates. Occasionally even more. Delegates are usually government officials, but there may also be non-government representatives (for instance, from local NGOs, international organisations, law firms or academia) who provide technical support. Whether these delegates are allowed to negotiate on behalf of the party depends on the delegation.

All parties have one Head of Delegation. The focal point is not necessarily the Head of Delegation. At COPs, and sometimes at SB sessions, ministers will join the delegation, usually for the 'high-level segment'.

Here is a breakdown of the badges at the UNFCCC:



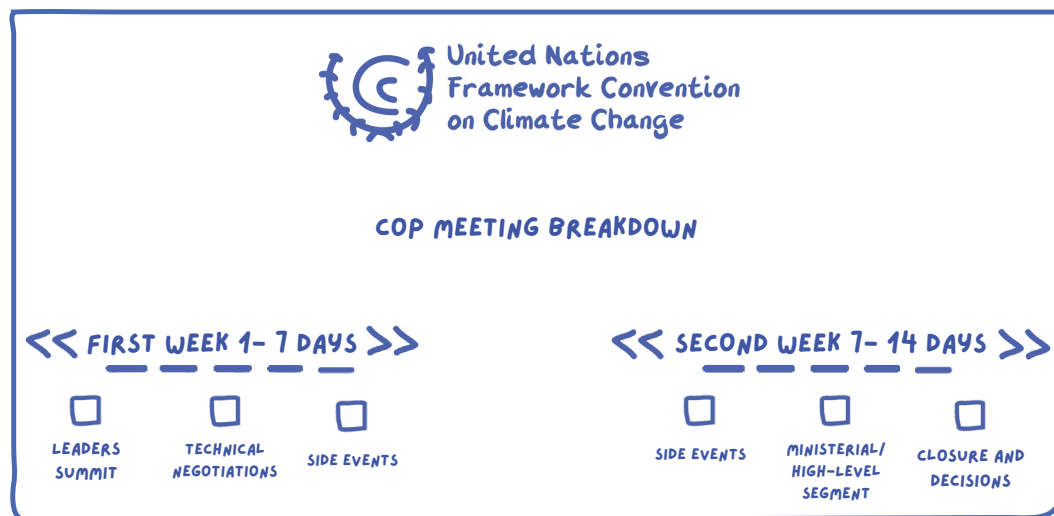
A list of all UNFCCC national focal points can be found online at: http://unfccc.int/parties_observers/parties_national_focal_points/items/9336.php

Party delegations tend to be larger for major conferences such as COP15 and COP21.

Communications from the secretariat:

Information from the UNFCCC secretariat to parties (eg election of officers, submissions) are available on the Notifications page on the UNFCCC website: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/parties-non-party-stakeholders/the-big-picture/notifications-to-parties-and-observers>

Typical breakdown of a COP's two weeks



First Week (Days 1-7):

Leaders' Summit: Occasionally, a Leaders' Summit is organized at the beginning of the conference. World presidents, prime ministers, and other leaders attend to deliver speeches and make significant announcements. This typically happens within the first two days.

Technical Negotiations: Subsequently, the majority of the technical discussions and negotiations take place, with delegates discussing specific agenda items in detail, including technical and scientific aspects. Subsidiary bodies like SBSTA and SBI also convene their sessions.

Side Events: Parallel to official negotiations, and for the duration of the conference, numerous side events are hosted by various stakeholders, highlighting specific climate change topics and showcasing best practices.

Second Week (Days 8-14):

Ministerial/High-Level Segment: Starting usually around Day 9 or 10, this segment sees ministers and other high-level officials give their statements, with major political decisions often emerging at this stage.

Closure and Decisions: By the end of the second week, various COP decisions and outcomes are adopted and announced. Sometimes, discussions extend beyond the planned schedule, especially when there are contentious points of negotiation.

2.1 Preparing for your first session

Familiarise yourself with the UNFCCC Code of Conduct

The UNFCCC Code of Conduct (<https://unfccc.int/about-us/code-of-conduct-for-unfccc-conferences-meetings-and-events>) provides guidelines for behavior at all UNFCCC events. It mandates respect for human rights, prohibits any form of harassment, and emphasizes ethical conduct. Anyone participating in a UNFCCC event, whether in-person or virtually, is expected to abide by these standards. Non-compliance can lead to various penalties, including removal from the event. It's crucial for participants to familiarize themselves with this code to ensure a respectful and productive environment at UNFCCC gatherings.

Be familiar with the texts of the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement

The UNFCCC process is notorious for using jargon and an alphabet soup of acronyms. Parties will refer to specific sections of the Convention, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement simply by the article number or even by the paragraph numbers within articles, or by acronyms. To prepare for this, save the text of the Convention, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement in an easily accessible place on your laptop or tablet, or carry printed copies with you.

Convention jargon buster:

- **Article 2:** this Article contains the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC (see page 7)
- **Article 3: Principles of the Convention, including:**
 - **Equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC):** this principle acknowledges that developed country parties should take the lead in combating climate change and its adverse effects
 - **Intergenerational equity:** that parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations
 - **Precautionary principle:** parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimise the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects. It further states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used for postponing such measures.
- **Article 4:** contains parties' commitments under the UNFCCC
- **Article 4.8:** this paragraph recognises the specific needs and concerns of some

developing countries, such as small island countries, countries with low-lying coastal areas, and countries with arid and semi-arid areas

- **Article 4.9:** recognises the specific needs and special situations of LDCs
- **Article 6:** refers to enhancing education, training, public awareness and public participation on climate change. This issue is now also covered under Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, but you may still find it referred to as 'Article 6 of the Convention' or simply, 'Article 6'.

Paris Agreement: what are the issues?

Most negotiators follow specific issues in the talks — so it helps to know where to find your issue. These are the issues covered under the articles of the Paris Agreement

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

Definitions given in Article 1 of the Convention apply to the Paris Agreement.

ARTICLE 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT

(see quote on page 9)

ARTICLE 3: NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCS)

NDCs are the actions that each party puts forward as their contribution to the collective effort to achieve the Paris Agreement's purpose. The Paris Agreement commits all parties to communicate NDCs every five years, and to increase ambition. They cover efforts to reduce GHG emissions, and can include actions related to adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity building and transparency. Prior to COP21, most parties put forward intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs); once a party has ratified the Paris Agreement, its INDC becomes its first NDC, unless it specifies otherwise.

ARTICLE 4: MITIGATION

Mitigation means reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

ARTICLE 5: GHG SINKS AND RESERVOIRS, REDD+

GHG sinks and reservoirs such as biomass, forests and oceans absorb more GHG than they release; REDD+ is a framework under the UNFCCC relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

ARTICLE 6: COOPERATIVE (MARKET AND NON-MARKET) APPROACHES

Cooperative approaches are voluntary ways parties can work together towards achieving more ambitious mitigation or adaptation outcomes.

ARTICLE 7: ADAPTATION

Efforts to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

ARTICLE 8: LOSS AND DAMAGE

Loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change involves the inevitable or residual impacts of climate change that could/have not been avoided through current mitigation and adaptation efforts.

ARTICLE 9: FINANCE

ARTICLE 10: TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER

Promoting technology development and transfer is seen as a way to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change while pursuing their poverty eradication and sustainable development efforts.

ARTICLE 11: CAPACITY-BUILDING

This refers to building the capacity of developing countries to address and respond to climate change.

ARTICLE 12: EDUCATION, TRAINING, PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

See: 'Article 6 of the Convention'

ARTICLE 13: TRANSPARENCY OF ACTION AND SUPPORT

ARTICLE 14: GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

The global stocktake refers to a process to periodically take stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement in order to assess the collective progress towards achieving its purpose and long-term goals.

ARTICLE 15: FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

This is to ensure that parties implement what they have said they will do.

For more information on the Paris Agreement see: "Paris Agreement A to Z", a mobile application developed and regularly updated by Legal Response International (LRI, <https://legalresponse.org>). The app can be downloaded for free from Google Play for Android phones and the App store for Apple phones.

Scheduling

Negotiations frequently take place in parallel and it is impossible for one person, or even for a small delegation to be present in all discussions.

The secretariat tries to manage meeting schedules so that negotiators following a particular issue (eg finance) are not expected to be in two (or more) places at once.

Check what's happened so far

If you already know which themes, agenda items or sub-items you will follow, it's a good idea to look up what has been previously agreed on the issue(s) in question, including past COP/CMP/CMA decisions as well as draft conclusions from the SBI or SBSTA. Keeping these documents on file will also come in handy if you'll be involved in drafting new decisions on that issue.

Know the position of your delegation, and if applicable, the negotiating bloc your delegation belongs to. Look at past statements and submissions by your delegation (available on the UNFCCC website) and, if applicable, the negotiating bloc(s) it belongs to and associates itself with. These are also available on the UNFCCC website (see page 25 for information on negotiating blocs).

'Scenario notes' and 'reflection notes' are sometimes provided by the co-chairs of an ad hoc body to summarise what they propose or envisage to progress discussions at the upcoming session (a scenario note) or their perspective on discussions at the previous session (a reflection note). While these types of papers have no legal status, it's a good idea to read them if you are following the negotiations under that body. Parties will almost certainly react to them, either in bilateral meetings with the co-chairs that prepared the note, with other parties, and/or in one of the first meetings of that body when the official session starts.

Get to know the UNFCCC website

Essential information for delegates will be passed to each party's designated focal point but is also available on the UNFCCC website.

The UNFCCC website (<https://unfccc.int>, see illustration on page 23) is the official portal of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It contains information about the UNFCCC process and meetings, the Paris Agreement, the countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs), the long-term strategies for decreasing greenhouse gas emission process development, and more.

Before you leave

The website also provides access to various platforms, portals and microsites related to climate change, as well as news and updates on the latest developments and events. It is composed of the following main sections, that you need to follow closely as a negotiator:

- **Next COP:** This very important section presents all the information you need to know about the upcoming COP, from the daily meetings schedule and provisional agendas to a full list of side events and pavilions, updates from the Presidency, etc. This is also where you will find a link to the official COP website.
- **Process and meetings:** This section provides information on past and upcoming meetings, agendas, documents, decisions, reports, and webcasts for the UNFCCC process and its governing bodies, such as the COP, the SBs and the constituted bodies.
- **Topics:** In this section, you will find a list of the main climate change topics that are discussed at the UNFCCC such as adaptation, capacity building or gender. Each link in the list will take you to a page introducing the topic, providing further information, relevant internal and external links, related documents, events, etc.
- **Calendar:** You might want to check this section regularly because it provides a comprehensive list of UNFCCC meetings and events, past and future. You can filter the events by location, theme, date, and each entry contains a link to a more detailed description, including video recordings and key outcomes for past events.
- **Climate action:** This section showcases the initiatives and partnerships that are taking place to address climate change. It features access to other platforms, events and initiatives that aim to address climate change, such as regional climate weeks.
- **Documents and decisions:** This crucial section contains all documents related to the UNFCCC process, including parties' submissions. As a new negotiator, it is highly recommended that you visit this section and read the documents related to your area(s) of interest.
- **News:** This section provides the latest news and articles on climate change issues and events. It also includes press releases, statements, speeches, media advisories, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, videos, photos, and social media channels.



UNFCCC WEBSITE:
[HTTPS://UNFCCC.INT](https://unfccc.int)

2.2 Practical tips: be prepared

BE PREPARED FOR EARLY MORNINGS, LONG NIGHTS AND ODD NEGOTIATING TIMES



The 'official' meeting times are 10–1pm, 3–6pm, and sometimes 7–9pm. However, the negotiating blocs you belong to may have coordination meetings between these sessions (usually starting at 8am), and 'informals' may go on well after 9pm (see section 5.1 for more information on types of meetings).

COP sessions can be hectic, particularly during the second week 'crunch time' when everyone is trying to finalise decisions before the closing of the COP. It's not unusual for meetings to be reconvened at 2am and to last until 6am, only to start again at 8am.

BE AWARE THAT COPs OFTEN OVERRUN BY AS MUCH AS A DAY OR TWO

This is frustrating for planning travel, and has obvious financial implications. Some delegates are able to change their travel plans at short notice, or plan their trip so that they leave two days after the scheduled closing of the COP. However, this is not possible for everyone (mainly an option for funded delegates) — discuss this with your delegation/office.

BRING COMFORTABLE SHOES (AND A BAG WITH WHEELS)

As the UNFCCC process grows, so do the conference venues! COP venues are huge and it's safe to assume you'll be doing a lot of walking from one place to the next, during the day and throughout the session.

CHECK THE WEATHER AND OUTSIDE TEMPERATURES



This may seem obvious, but keep in mind that you could be negotiating through the night. It may be summer at 3pm but much cooler outside at 3am. Delegates at COP13 in Bali were invited to dress down because of the high temperatures. Air conditioning can be fierce — or non-existent!

BRING SNACKS, RE-USABLE WATER BOTTLES, CHOCOLATE — WHATEVER YOU NEED TO KEEP YOU GOING

You'll want these throughout the day, but especially during those late nights when cafeterias at the venue are closed or out of food and drinks!



3. Who's who

3.1 A guide to the negotiating groups

Negotiations under the UNFCCC are held between parties, but while each party has a national 'position', parties can also negotiate as part of a group. There are a number of country groupings within the UNFCCC process, some overlapping. These country coalitions usually share common interests, or in some cases common circumstances (eg physical characteristics, vulnerability, etc.).

Negotiating as part of a group gives parties a stronger voice. Group members also support one another (in the negotiations and in the corridors). Negotiating as part of a larger group is particularly helpful for small delegations that cannot follow all the issues and meetings happening in parallel.

Parties can still take the floor in their own right, particularly if their national position is not fully reflected in their group's position. If members of a group do not agree on a position, then there is no 'group position' on the issue in question.

The largest negotiating bloc is the **Group of 77 and China (G77 and China)**, which has 134 members, mainly from developing countries. The G77 and China also negotiates in other UN processes, including in New York. The chairmanship rotates every year; whichever country is chair of the G77 and China in New York also chairs the G77 and China under the UNFCCC process (www.g77.org).

The **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)** also negotiate as a bloc. Members are categorised as 'least developed' according to the UN (criteria includes income, economic vulnerability to external shocks, human assets, etc.). There are currently 46 LDCs. The LDCs negotiate as a group in the wider UN system, as well as within the UNFCCC, but with a different chair. The vast majority of LDCs are also members of the G77 and China (www ldc-climate.org).

The 40 **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** are also recognised as a group by the UN. All of the SIDS, except for Bahrain, negotiate as the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**. The Alliance also includes island entities that are not UN member states, such as Niue. AOSIS is a recognised negotiating bloc in other UN processes. Nine LDCs belong to AOSIS, and most AOSIS members belong to the G77 and China (www.aosis.org).

The **Africa Group (AG), or African Group of Negotiators (AGN)** is the only UN regional group that negotiates as a bloc. Made up of 54 countries, the AG negotiates as a group across UN processes. There are 34 LDCs in the Africa Group, and all are part of the G77 and China.

The **Arab Group**, which includes 21 parties, is also part of the G77 and China.

The 46 Least Developed Countries:

Afghanistan	Lesotho
Angola*	Liberia
Bangladesh	Madagascar
Benin*	Malawi
Bhutan*	Mali
Burkina Faso	Mauritania
Burundi	Mozambique
Cambodia	Myanmar
Central African Republic	Nepal*
Chad	Niger
Comoros	Rwanda
Democratic Republic of Congo	São Tomé and Príncipe*
Djibouti	Senegal
Eritrea	Sierra Leone
Ethiopia	Solomon Islands
Gambia	Somalia
Guinea	South Sudan
Guinea-Bissau	Sudan
Haiti	Tanzania
Kiribati	Timor Leste
Lao People's Democratic Republic*	Togo
	Tuvalu
	Uganda
	Yemen
	Zambia

* countries graduating between 2023 and 2026

European Union (EU) members also form a negotiating bloc, and the EU is also a party to the Convention. While other groups will have one country (the chair) speaking on behalf of their group, the EU has its own seat and party flag to use when it wants to make a statement or intervene.

Other country groupings, including some that are unique to the UNFCCC process, are outlined below:

– **The Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC):**
Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru (www.ailac.org)

– **The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA):**
Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Venezuela

– **ABU:** Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay

– **BASIC:** Brazil, South Africa, China, India

– **Caribbean Community (CARICOM):**
Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Monserrat, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago (<https://caricom.org>)

– **Coalition for Rainforest Nations:**
made up of 40+ countries with the three largest tropical forest areas — Amazonia, Congo Basin and New Guinea (www.rainforestcoalition.org)

– **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG):**
Mexico, Liechtenstein, Monaco, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland. The OECD members of this group came together in 2000 because they did not share the positions of the Umbrella Group (see below); they were joined later by Liechtenstein and Monaco

– **Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs):** Algeria, Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela. The LMDCs are all members of the G77 and China

– **Umbrella Group:** A coalition of non-EU developed countries. While there is no formal list, the Umbrella Group is usually made up of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Russian Federation and the US.

Find more information on the negotiating groups on the UNFCCC website: http://unfccc.int/parties_and_observers/parties/negotiating_groups/items/2714.php

3.2 Who's who in the negotiations process

The UNFCCC process is supported by the **UNFCCC secretariat** — a permanent staff of some 500, who ensure meetings run smoothly from a logistical point of view, and who provide technical expertise and support to all parties and Convention bodies (as mandated or requested). The secretariat also manages side events and the participation of observer and intergovernmental organisations.

The **executive secretary** holds the highest position within the UNFCCC secretariat and is a key figure in the climate diplomacy space. The executive secretary can serve a maximum of two four-year terms.

The secretariat does not play a part in the negotiations, but is there to support the process and the parties. It also holds essential institutional memory about the UNFCCC process.

Each COP is run by the COP/CMP/CMA Bureau. This is made up of 11 elected 'officers', including the **COP/CMP/CMA president**, seven vice-presidents, the **SBI chair**, the **SBSTA chair** and the rapporteur (who communicates the report on the proceedings of meetings). Bureau members also assist the COP president in exercising his or her functions.

The **COP president** controls proceedings, under the authority of the COP/CMP/CMA. The country that hosts the COP (and/or

holds the presidency) will normally nominate a minister (usually of foreign affairs, or environment) as COP president (and the nominee is subsequently elected by the COP). The president provides political leadership and ensures progress is made in the negotiations. He/she must also ensure the process is inclusive and transparent, carrying out regular consultations with parties. The president cannot negotiate as a representative of his or her party.

The **SBI chair** and **SBSTA chair** preside over the meetings of the SBI and SBSTA, respectively. Normally two co-chairs are nominated and elected to oversee **ad hoc bodies** such as the APA — one from an Annex I party and one from a non-Annex I party, usually following the system of regional rotation. The SB chairs and co-chairs of ad hoc bodies act under the authority of the COP/CMP/CMA and are guided by the COP president. They play an important role in ensuring that their parts of the negotiations move forward, consulting frequently with parties.

Observer organisations also attend the UNFCCC conferences. They can be UN entities or other intergovernmental organisations, or non-governmental organisations. Observer organisations must be accredited to attend a UNFCCC session.

Ensuring regional balance:

Each of the five UN regional groups has two representatives in the bureau, plus one member from AOSIS. The president and the rapporteur rotate among the five regional groups.

4. Before COP starts

4.1 Prep meetings

In the week before the official start of COP meetings and SB sessions, the UNFCCC secretariat allocates time and space for 'pre-sessional', or 'preparatory' meetings for four developing country negotiating blocs: the Africa Group, LDCs, SIDS (or AOSIS) and G77 and China. These meetings are closed, meaning that only party delegates in these groups can attend.

Each group is given two days to meet ahead of COP/SB sessions, and one day ahead of shorter sessions such as those of ad hoc bodies.

The sequence of meetings typically begins with the LDC Group, succeeded by the AGN and SIDS which convene concurrently. The preparatory week concludes with the G77 and China, and then the COP formally starts.

Other negotiating blocs or country coalitions may also hold preparatory meetings, but make their own arrangements.

Groups decide what is discussed at the preparatory meetings. The group chair will normally propose an agenda and members will make amendments or suggest other items for discussion at the start of the meeting. Usually, the chair asks lead negotiators (or 'coordinators') to update the group on thematic negotiation issues or specific agenda items. The meeting will discuss aspects that are important for the group, potential difficulties, and perhaps share insights on other parties' positions.

The preparatory meetings are an important opportunity for groups to discuss what their positions should be on the issues being negotiated as well as their negotiating strategy.

These meetings can also be used to assign members of the group to follow specific thematic issues and form negotiating teams. These are led by the coordinator for that issue who speaks on behalf of the group during the negotiations.

The 'coordinator' has a mandate from a group to speak on behalf of all its members at the negotiations on the issue in question and so leads negotiations on that issue:

The coordinator can be a representative of any party that is a member of the group. Other group members may provide support. The coordinator is expected to regularly report back to the chair and group members on progress, and to seek guidance and inputs from the group.

4.2 Arriving at the negotiations

COP sessions are held once a year, usually in November or December, bringing together some 20,000 delegates or more to make progress on achieving the aims of the UNFCCC.

Finding your way around

COPs take place in large, often temporary conference venues, sometimes spread across different buildings or halls. Transport from the hotel to the venue is normally arranged by the host country and information is available on the website.

The venues usually have various meeting rooms and spaces, including large plenary halls, delegation offices, 'pavilions', exhibition areas and booths where observer organisations share publications, and of course, places to buy food and coffee. There will also be a computer area, printers, and access to wifi.

Some party delegates have offices (organised and paid for via the secretariat or host country). The secretariat usually provides an office for the chairs of the LDCs, SIDS and Africa Group, as well as the G77 and China.

'Pavilions' seem to become more impressive with every COP. These are spaces within the venue, paid for by either a party delegation or group of parties to showcase climate actions in their country or region, for example. They are usually open to all delegates, and may provide a space to meet informally, or find publications, 'freebies', or a space to relax. Some have restricted areas used for bilateral meetings or as private offices. Others may host side-events.

Arriving for subsidiary body sessions

Subsidiary body (SB) sessions are usually held in Bonn, Germany, at the World Conference Centre Bonn (WCCB) — or 'UN Campus'. Most of the meeting rooms are named after cities where there are UN offices (in German).

There are lockers and coat racks on the lower ground floor of the building; you need a €1 coin for the lockers.

Maps of the WCCB/UN campus are available online: www.worldccbonn.com/en/information/general-plans

Finding the rooms:

Printed maps showing the layout of the rooms are normally available — and are displayed around the venue. Signs indicate the way to the main meeting rooms, and all rooms usually have their name on the door. The host country often arranges for volunteers to help delegates find their way around.

What's going on where?

The business for the day is contained in a **daily programme**, issued by the secretariat and available on the website the night before or in the early hours of the morning. It's helpful to go through this to get a sense of what meetings will be held that day (for example official side-events, receptions, press conferences, etc).

Live meeting updates:

Click on 'Schedule of meetings' and then 'Live meetings schedule' on the right hand column of the main UNFCCC meetings page. Don't forget to refresh the page to check for updates.

As the day unfolds, this programme is likely to change (with extra formal and informal meetings added to the schedule) — meetings may also be cancelled, and rooms and times may change.

You can get the most up-to-date information about when and where meetings are taking place online.

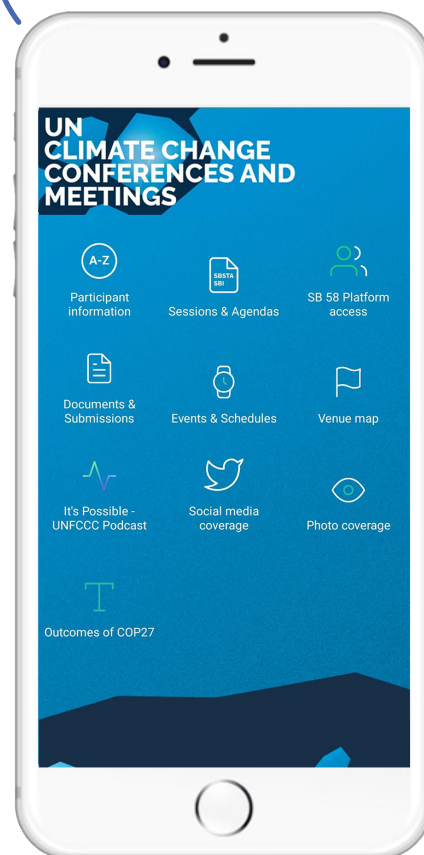
There are also **screens** around the venue with updated schedules.

Be aware that some meetings may not appear on the daily programme or elsewhere. These include 'informal' meetings like spin-off groups or drafting groups (see page 33).

Tip:

A useful new tool is the **UN Climate change application**, available for free on Google Play and the App Store (see <https://unfccc.int/about-us/press-and-media/un-climate-change-mobile-app>). This provides up-to-date information about where and when meetings are taking place, logistics and other information and alerts when new documents are issued.

UN CLIMATE CHANGE APPLICATION



5. A guide to the negotiations

5.1 What to expect from different meetings

There are many different types of meetings, and these vary in terms of length, how open they are, and whether interpretation will be available, among other things. Some are considered **'formal'** and others **'informal'** — both are part of the negotiating process. Other meetings, such as **coordination meetings** and **bilaterals**, are important as well. We look at these four broad types of meeting in turn below.

Formal meetings

Plenary

Plenary meetings are **open to all**, including observer organisations and media representatives (although there are usually restrictions on where they can sit). Plenaries take place in a large hall with country flags arranged in alphabetical order. There are normally four seats per party (two at the table, two behind), and seating at the back for others. Interpretation is usually available, so parties can take the floor or listen to speakers in any of the six UN languages.

Each body has to meet in plenary in order to adopt agendas, agree on other procedural matters, and adopt decisions or conclusions. This is because all parties must be included. Two plenaries will not usually take place at the same time.

A session usually begins with an **opening plenary** (of the COP, CMP, CMA and/or other body) and remarks from the current COP president, incoming COP president, and the executive secretary of the UNFCCC secretariat. Parties will then adopt the agenda, and deal with other procedural matters such as electing officers for the COP bureau. The COP president (who chairs COP/CMP/CMA plenaries) or the relevant chair of the body may make proposals regarding the session and parties may respond. Finally, the president will invite parties, followed by observers, to deliver statements.

DRAFT RULES OF PROCEDURE:

The opening session of the COP will always include a short segment to consider the Draft Rules of Procedure. This is because the Rules of Procedure of the UNFCCC have not been formally adopted. Although the Draft Rules of Procedure (contained in FCCC/CP/1996/2) are applied, parties have never been able to agree on Rule 42, which deals with voting on substantive matters. Consequently, all decisions on substantive matters under the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement require consensus to be adopted.

Statements:

Statements for plenary sessions are usually prepared and read out. Group statements will have been carefully crafted and agreed by all group members before they are delivered by the chair or spokesperson. Statements are usually made available on the UNFCCC website after the session.

The order:

The order in which parties take the floor depends on a certain protocol — groups speak first, followed by individual parties (if they wish to speak). The Group of 77 and China, as the largest group, is given the opportunity to speak first if it has asked for the floor.

Interventions:

Delegates can make 'interventions' in response to what has been said. These are not prepared in advance and while they may be made in plenary, they are more common in smaller meetings.

'Suspend' and 'close':

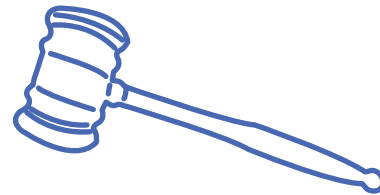
When the Ad Hoc Body on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) met leading up to COP21, the co-chairs decided to 'suspend' the meetings at the end of each session rather than 'close' them, so that meetings at the following session could resume more promptly without having to adopt a new agenda.

The COP president or chair of a body may call for one or more **stocktaking meetings** over the course of the session, bringing parties together to assess progress on a certain issue. Parties may ask the president or chair for an alternative way forward. These stocktakes usually also take place in plenary.

The **closing plenary** is usually when formal decisions or conclusions are agreed. The decision texts or draft conclusions are negotiated in smaller meetings and then forwarded to the COP president (or SB/ad hoc body chair) and subsequently adopted at (usually) the closing plenary. The closing plenary will often also include remarks by the COP president and executive secretary, as well as statements by parties and observers.

POINT OF ORDER:

A delegate may at any time (in plenary or other formal and informal meetings) raise a 'point of order' by asking for the floor and making a 'T' sign with his or her country placard or hands. A point of order is usually raised for procedural matters, for example, regarding how the meeting is being conducted — it cannot be about a substantive issue in the negotiations. Whoever is chairing the meeting must immediately give the floor to the delegate raising the point of order, and decide how to proceed.



Contact group

The COP/CMP/CMA (or SB) often decides in plenary that certain agenda items or sub-items merit further discussion because they are likely to lead to a COP decision, either at the current session or imminently. These discussions usually take place in a smaller setting, called a **contact group**. Two people are usually asked to facilitate each contact group — one representative from an Annex I party and another from a non-Annex I party. The contact group comes up with a text — for example, a draft decision or conclusion — which it then forwards to the respective plenary (COP, CMP, CMA or subsidiary body) to be formally adopted (if it's a draft decision) or approved (if it's a draft conclusion). Draft conclusions sometimes include a draft of a decision recommended to the COP/CMP/CMA for adoption; after the conclusions have been approved in the SB plenary, the draft decision is forwarded to the COP, CMP or CMA plenary for adoption.

Contact groups are open to all parties, but not always to observers. The co-facilitators of the contact group normally make this clear to all parties before a meeting. Observer organisations are normally allowed to attend the first and final contact group meetings.

There is usually no interpretation available for contact group meetings. Negotiations take place in English and negotiating text is always drafted in English. Translations of draft decisions and conclusions are issued shortly before they are adopted or approved.

Informal meetings ('informals')

It's also possible that one of the SB chairs introduces an agenda item at plenary and proposes that it be discussed through **informal consultations**, without convening a contact group. This is usually done if it's not absolutely clear from past decisions or conclusions that discussions on this item will lead to a new COP/CMP/CMA decision. These informal consultations may result in SB conclusions, with a recommendation for further discussion, prior to (ideally) adopting a decision at specified COP session. These meetings can look similar to contact groups (with two appointed co-facilitators, and parties represented around a table and sitting behind country flags).

Need to know:

Informal meetings are normally listed in the daily programme, but this is not always the case, especially if they are convened shortly before taking place. They are announced in the larger meeting (eg the contact group) and normally also via email. Make sure the delegates facilitating the contact groups or informal meetings on the items you follow (or the members of the secretariat supporting these groups) have your email address. They will typically circulate a mailing list at the first meeting on that agenda item.

Non-papers:

Any party (including the chair of a body) may produce and circulate 'non-papers' during sessions, normally with the intention of helping to move discussions forward. These are informal documents that do not have a legal status. Parties may choose to consider them in the negotiations or not refer to them at all.

Informal informals:

Sometimes, there is a need for even *further* informal discussion among parties to overcome a deadlock in the negotiations. In such cases, the co-facilitators of the contact group may suggest that the parties concerned meet, without anyone necessarily facilitating the discussion (parties will typically do away with country flags and will refer to one another by name) to try to reach a compromise. These meetings are commonly referred to as '**informal informals**'. Again, whatever is discussed here gets reported back to the larger contact group setting.

Some of the agenda items or sub-items discussed by contact groups may need further focused discussion, especially if there is an issue that parties are having difficulty agreeing on. The co-facilitators of the contact group may suggest that parties meet outside the contact group to try to find a way forward.

These additional meetings are sometimes also called **informal consultations**, or **spin-off groups**. The co-facilitators or one of the parties involved will usually give a brief summary of what was discussed at the next contact group session, to bring everyone up to speed.

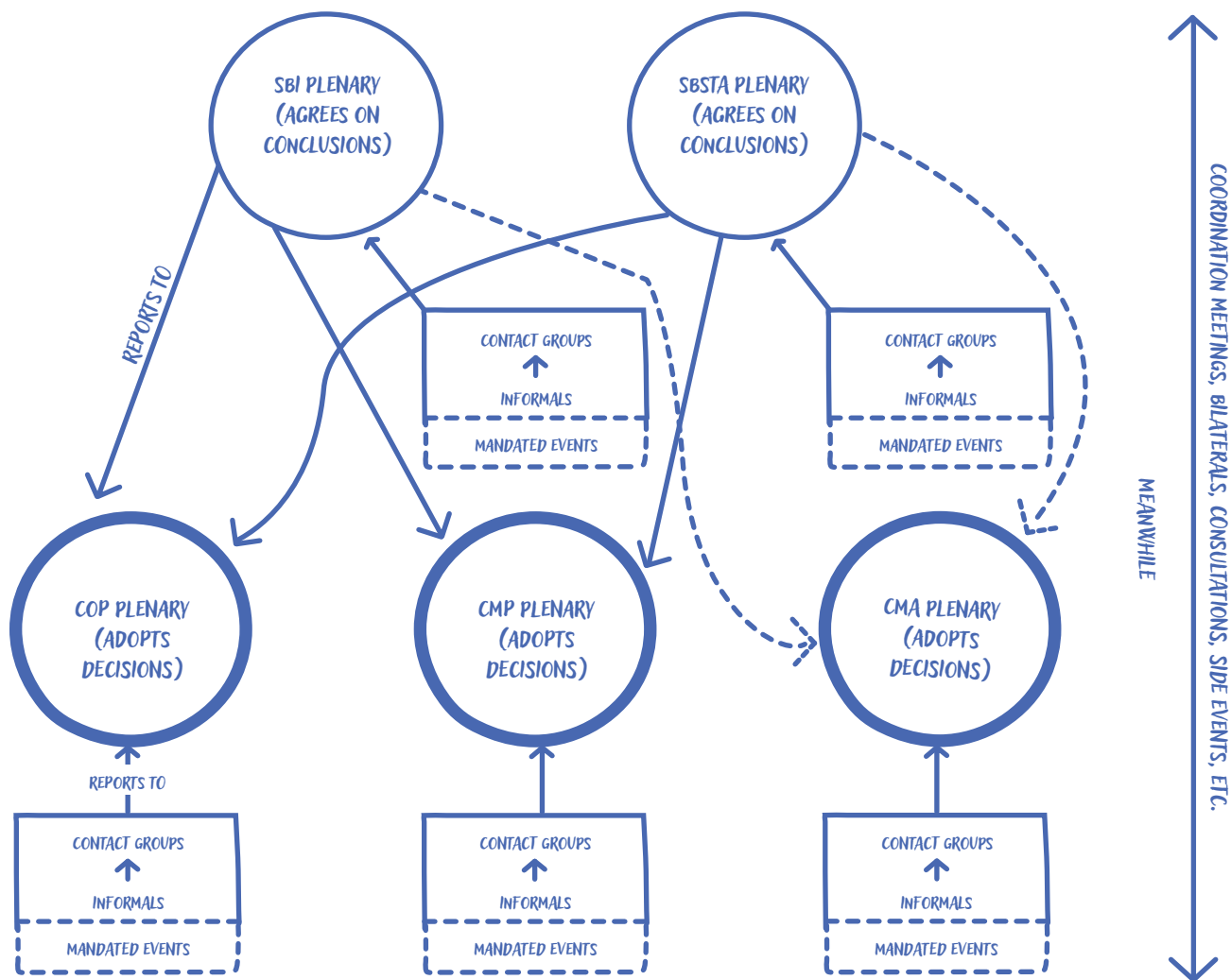
Similarly, if parties in the contact group are having difficulty agreeing on an aspect of their draft text (it could be a paragraph), the co-facilitators may suggest that interested parties meet in an informal drafting group. The **drafting group** works to come up with bridging language (ie. language that is acceptable to all sides), which it presents to the contact group for parties to approve (or amend).

The reason for all these informals — and why so many meetings during COP and SB sessions happen in parallel — has mainly to do with the fact that negotiations are so time-sensitive. No more than six 'formal' meetings can be scheduled to take place in parallel. Decisions or conclusions must be reached before the end of the session — and because there are so many agenda items (around 100 at COPs) and because many delegates follow multiple items, there's only so much formal meeting time and space each item can be given. More time to negotiate does not necessarily mean better outcomes.

Summary: Contact groups and informals take place for each body in the negotiations. All the outcomes of contact group and informal negotiations will be forwarded to the corresponding plenary.

Remember, the COP, CMP and CMA, are the supreme decision making bodies of the Convention, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement; so whatever is approved at one of the SB plenaries will usually also be forwarded to the COP, CMP or CMA plenary for approval (see hierarchy diagram opposite).

Hierarchy of meetings



NOTES:

- THERE CAN BE JOINT PLENARIES (e.g. COP-CMP OR SBI-SBSTA) TO CONSIDER AN AGENDA ITEM RELEVANT FOR BOTH BODIES.
- AD HOC BODIES CAN BE ESTABLISHED UNDER THE COP, CMP OR CMA. THEY REPORT BACK TO THEIR CORRESPONDING BODY WHICH ADOPTS DECISIONS ON ITS WORK.
- FOR INFORMATION ON MANDATED EVENTS, SEE PAGE 43.

Top tips:

Make friends! Staying well informed through networking is critical to being a good negotiator. Also, while the negotiations can be tense, bilateral friendships can help build bridges and resolve differences.

When formulating national/ group positions, keep in mind that compromises may be needed in future. Build space for negotiation into your positions.

Coordination meetings

Group coordination meetings are held daily throughout COPs and at SB meetings. They are open to group members and provide an opportunity to update on what is happening in different meetings and to consult on group positions and the way forward.

The first coordination meeting is usually a preparatory meeting before the official COP or SB session starts (see page 28).

DAILY COORDINATION SCHEDULES FOR THE LDC GROUP, AOSIS AND AGN ARE USUALLY AS FOLLOWS:

- 8–9am: AGN | AOSIS | LDC Group
- 9–10am: G77 and China
- 1–2pm: LDC Group
- 2–3pm: G77 and China
- 6–7pm: AGN | AOSIS

Bilaterals

A party or a group may request a bilateral meeting with another delegation or country grouping. This can be to clarify their position and interests, to find areas of convergence or to share views about ways to overcome negotiating deadlock, for instance. Bilaterals are closed meetings, open only to the delegates who have been requested to attend. Discussions between two or more negotiators can also take place in very informal settings — in the corridors, over coffee, a meal, or a cigarette. Such ‘meetings’ can be very helpful for delegates to get further clarity on one another’s negotiating positions and interests in order to find common ground.

Negotiation sessions are now virtual!

The COVID pandemic has forced us to adapt to new ways of working, and the UNFCCC process is no exception. Delegates who are not able to physically attend the UN climate change conferences (SBs or COP) now have the opportunity to attend thematic discussions through an interactive platform which livestream contents. The platform provides information on scheduled sessions and side events, as well as session documents and a space where virtual participants can engage and network.

How does it work?

The platform is accessible to all registered participants of the UN climate change conference (SBs and COPs). Typically, delegates will receive an email following their registration including a password and username to access the platform.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NEGOTIATIONS GET TRICKY?

Negotiations rarely go smoothly and the COP president or one of the chairs of subsidiary bodies will typically want to conduct consultations with parties during a session, in the margins, to try and find ways to move forward. Who is invited to these consultations depends on who has called for it, but it will usually be the chairs or country grouping spokespeople and representatives of delegations that take a strong position on the issue being discussed.

Bilateral meetings are usually kept small to facilitate discussion. That said, unless the invitation list is made explicit,


there's no hard and fast rule about who should attend and who does not need to. If you want to attend — it can be a good way to get further understanding of issues — you may wish to approach the chair or coordinator or your group or your head of delegation, as appropriate.

The G77 and China chair (or chairs of other groups) may also consult with various delegates on an issue that needs resolving within the group. In order to facilitate discussion, a series of consultations will usually be held, involving a small number of people at a time.



Friends of the chair:

Sometimes, the COP president or chair will put together a small group of delegates (carefully balanced so that certain interests and views are not excluded or dominant) to help him or her in carrying out consultations or other tasks, often known as the 'Friends of the chair'.

Week 1, day 2

		Notes
8:00–9:00	Africa Group coordination	Updates
9:00–10:00	G77 and China coordination	Finalising the G77 chair's statement for the SBI opening plenary – text on the screen, running out of time!
10:00–13:00 [Negotiation period]	SBI Opening Plenary	Crept out to buy a sandwich before LDC coordination ... Isatou took notes for me in exchange for a sandwich.
13:00–14:00	LDC Group coordination	Adaptation Fund negotiations started while I was in plenary – need to find out what happened.
14:00–15:00	G77 and China coordination	Discussions getting detailed. Adaptation team is going to use a Google group for updates. Grabbed coffee and some fruit (lunch!) on the way to contact group. 
15:00–18:00 [Negotiation period]	15:00–16:00: contact group on agenda item 7(b) (SBI)	Contact group on 'Matters related to LDCs'. I'm supporting Bubu, the LDC lead negotiator. Financial support for NAPS looks tricky – meeting for informal consultations later ...
	16:00–17:00: LDC coordination for adaptation team	LDC adaptation team meeting ahead of the 'LDC matters' contact group. Updates.
	17:00–18:00: informal on agenda item 7(b) (SBI)	Informal consultations – important to have a clear provision on support for NAPS. The Africa Group coordinator supported us. Success! Report back to the contact group tomorrow.
18:00–19:00	Africa Group coordination (if applicable)	Yeh! Informal consultations ended 5 mins early. Time for dinner before coordination!
19:00–20:00	LDC Group coordination	LDC coordination – strategy for tomorrow. Daily programme looks like it's going to be a full day for the adaptation team!

Week 2, day 4

		Notes	
8:00–9:00	Africa Group coordination	Crazy, crazy, crazy. Here until 2am!	
9:00–10:00	G77 and China coordination	G77 chair reported back – COP president wants views from all parties. Left early for a quick G77 adaptation team meeting before contact group.	
10:00–13:00 [Negotiations period]	10:00–11:00: contact group on agenda item 7(b) (SBI)	Nearly done on 'Matters related to LDCs' – only 4 paragraphs left to agree on.	YAY! 
	11:00–12:00: informal consultations with COP president	COP agenda item 3 stuck ... COP president wants to meet with LDC Group. Invited to join meeting.	
	12:00–13:00: final contact group on agenda item 7(b) (SBI)	'Matters related to LDCs' is done! Facilitators will take the draft decision to the SBI plenary this afternoon.	
13:00–14:00	LDC Group coordination		
14:00–15:00	G77 and China coordination – EU bilateral	Joined LDC chair for bilateral with the EU on agenda item 3. Tricky. And getting hungry!	
15:00–18:00 [Negotiations period]	SBI plenary	Discussions don't seem to be going anywhere ...	
	15:00–16:00: contact group on COP agenda item 3		
	17:00–18:00: informal on COP agenda item 3	Starting to make progress!	
18:00–19:00	Africa Group coordination	Meetings with the COP president. And a hot meal!	
19:00–21:00 [Negotiations period]	19:00–21:00: informals (19:00–20:00 LDC Group coordination)	Informal scheduled during coordination – this makes things so hard. Had to split the delegation.	
21:00– ...	Informal continued	The COP president has asked for further consultations with the LDCs at 00:30.	
	0:30: consultations with COP president on agenda item 3	Informal will reconvene at 2am. I need to find some coffee or a sofa for an hour's sleep.	
	2:00– ...: informal consultations resume on agenda item 3	The COP president issued new text ... parties mostly happy, but we're not there yet.	
	4:30	Text agreed!!! Closing plenary scheduled for 7:00am.	
7:00	COP closing plenary	Session ends. Finally!!!	

For more information, see our pocket guide:

Climate negotiations terminology: the pocket guide (in English: <http://pubs.iied.org/10148IIED.html> and in French: <http://pubs.iied.org/10148FIIED.html>)

New agreements:

Even new agreements have to be adopted by COP decisions. The first operative paragraph of decision 1/CP.21, for example, is "[The Conference of the Parties] Decides to adopt the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ... as contained in the annex;"

5.2 Outcomes: what's what?

Decisions

The COP, CMP and CMA adopt decisions and these sets of decisions are the outcome of the COP sessions. They are intended to advance (through commitment to certain actions on various issues) the implementation of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

Decision documents usually start with a 'preamble' which provides background or context and which guides the interpretation of the 'operative' text. The first verb used in preamble paragraphs usually ends in '-ing', such as 'noting', or 'considering'.

The preamble (which in itself has no legal authority) is followed by an 'operative' section with numbered paragraphs. These operative paragraphs are the core of the decision and focus on what parties have actually agreed to do.

Decisions are denoted by a number and the COP, CMP or CMA session at which they were adopted. Although they have titles, they are more often referred to by their number as this is more specific. (eg Decision 1/CP.21: Adoption of the Paris Agreement; decision 1/CMP.11: Report of the Adaptation Fund Board)

Decisions are compiled in the Report of the COP/CMP/CMA at the end of each session. You can also search for them individually on the UNFCCC website.

Drafting text

Much of the nitty gritty of negotiating happens in contact groups and informals. Usually, at the first few contact group sessions, parties will have a general discussion to voice positions and interests on the issue at hand. Whoever is chairing the discussion (the COP president, the co-chairs of an ad hoc body, or the co-facilitators of a contact group) may also consult in smaller settings with parties, particularly if major points of divergence have already become obvious.

Once this is done, they will usually propose a first version of a draft text (decision, conclusion, or agreement) that tries to reflect what was discussed. Often, they will have invited parties to email them with textual proposals, to help them produce a balanced draft (supported by the secretariat). Parties then start negotiating around this text.

It helps to be familiar with some of the jargon that exists around negotiating text:

'Agreed language': word-for-word text that comes from the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement or any previously agreed decision is often re-used in new decisions, as a way of ensuring that an issue or concept keeps getting highlighted, or to overcome a deadlock.

Square brackets [...]: Bracketing text when drafting means that the wording in the text is not yet agreed and still under negotiation.

'Agreed ad ref.': When a paragraph in a draft text has been finalised but other parts of the text are still under negotiation (i.e. in square brackets), the chair of the contact group might indicate that this paragraph is 'agreed ad ref' (short for ad referendum). By this, it is understood that the paragraphs will not be open for negotiation any longer. This may also be implied simply by the removal of square brackets around the paragraph and within the paragraph.

Preamble paragraphs are referred to as **'PP'**, sometimes followed by a number; in the final text, the preamble paragraphs will not be numbered.

Operative paragraphs are referred to as **'OP'** followed by their number.

Putting forward proposals for new paragraphs

Parties may wish to **insert** paragraphs in a draft text. To indicate where exactly they would like to do so (and in order for everyone to be able to keep track of changes in the text), they refer to the paragraph that would directly precede their new proposal, followed by Latin numbers:

Bis (2); ter (3); quater (4); quinquies (5); sexies (6); septies (7); octies (8); novies (9); decies (10)

Bis and ter are used the most frequently.

So, if someone says "I would like to propose language for an OP3bis" it means he or she wants to insert a new paragraph directly following OP3 (which s/he would then read out).

The same person or another party may then raise their flag and propose a 'OP3ter', which means that they would like a new paragraph to follow the OP3bis that has been proposed.

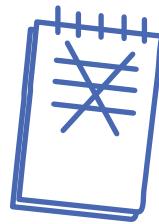
Similarly, parties may wish to propose a new paragraph to **replace** one that is in the draft text. They will do so by referring to the specific paragraph followed by **'alt'**.

So, if someone says “I would like to propose a PP5alt”, it means he or she would like to delete the current PP5 and replace it with a new paragraph.

To take the previous example, a party may also propose a “OP3bis alt” — which would be an alternative to the paragraph OP3bis that another party has proposed.

Conclusions

The SBI and SBSTA each agree **conclusions**. These are the outcomes of the negotiations on the items in their respective agendas. These conclusions have limited legal authority, but include recommendations to the COP. They give an indication of the direction of travel of negotiations on various issues.



Sometimes, conclusions will include the text of a draft decision which the body recommends to the COP/CMP/CMA for adoption.

It's possible for ad hoc bodies to also agree on conclusions.

At the end of the session, each subsidiary body produces a report containing the proceedings of negotiations and the agreed conclusions for each agenda item. Before this report is compiled, stand-alone documents containing the 'draft conclusions' or final agreed text for each agenda item will be available on the UNFCCC website.

Agreed conclusions for each agenda item are contained in the report of each subsidiary body.

5.3 Events alongside the negotiations

Meetings, events and activities are often organised alongside the main business of the negotiations, and may provide opportunities for negotiators to further their understanding of issues, or make contacts. These events may be linked to the COP/CMP/CMA process (see Workshops and mandated events below) or may be organised by observer groups.

Workshops and mandated events

Sometimes a COP/CMP/CMA decision or a subsidiary body conclusion requires that a constituted body (such as the Adaptation Committee, or the LEG) organise a workshop or event at a future negotiating session, usually with support from the secretariat. These events are not a space for negotiations but are meant to support the negotiation process. They may be set up as a way to share experiences, gain clarity on an issue from technical experts, and/or brainstorm about an issue with a view to inform or advance negotiations.

Workshops are usually open to observers and the organisers may also involve representatives from other UNFCCC bodies as well as observer organisations in the workshop. Delegates attending do not necessarily have to speak or participate in their national capacity, but may wish to share lessons learnt to facilitate or advance negotiations on the workshop theme.

Side events

Side events happen on the sidelines of the official SB/COP business. They are opportunities for parties as well as observer organisations to share their views and work. They also provide opportunities for networking. Negotiators are often invited to participate. Official side events are arranged through the UNFCCC secretariat and take place at the meeting venue (the Blue Zone), so anyone wishing to attend must be accredited (ie. must have a badge). Side events held in the Green Zone are open to all.

The side events schedule is posted on the UNFCCC website. Observer organisations also hold 'unofficial' side events outside the COP venue to open the discussion to people who do not have UNFCCC accreditation.

The zones:

The venue where all the negotiations take place is known as the **blue zone**. You need to be accredited to enter. However, there is also a **green zone**, normally not too far away, which is open to the general public. The green zone is full of exhibits and is a venue for side events as well.

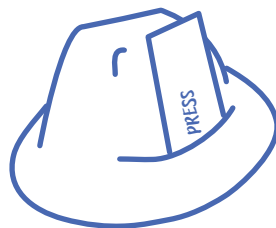
Press conference rooms:

Press conference rooms must be booked in advance online:

<http://unfccc.int/press/items/4862.php>

Press conferences

The UNFCCC process has attracted increasing interest from the media over the years and a large number of journalists are usually accredited to attend COPs and SB sessions and will be following the negotiations. Press conferences are organised through the secretariat — and can be called by an individual party, a group, an informal alliance of parties or by observer organisations. They can be a useful way to raise the profile of a particular issue in the talks. They are usually also webcast so can be followed online. The UNFCCC executive secretary usually holds regular press briefings to update the media on progress in the negotiations.



Observers

Often side-lined, observers in fact play a vital role in the UNFCCC process. They bring a diversity of views, perspectives and expertise to the negotiations, and can help or push parties to be more ambitious in their decisions and actions.

Observers can provide a bridge with stakeholders outside of the UNFCCC process, and this means they can (and do) take on a watchdog role to flag when parties are (in their view) not being ambitious, or not meeting and/or backsliding on commitments. Or they can highlight ambitious actions and statements to encourage similar behaviour, or amplify the voices of parties and stakeholders that aren't being heard.

BINGOS, RINGOS, YOUNGOS...

NGO observer organisations usually join one of nine constituencies:

- Business and industry NGOs (BINGOs)
- Environmental NGOs (ENGOs)
- Local government and municipal authorities (LGMA)
- Indigenous peoples organisations (IPO)
- Research and independent NGOs (RINGOs)
- Trade union NGOs (TUNGOs)
- Farmers and agricultural NGOs (Farmers)
- Women and gender NGOs (Women and Gender)
- Youth NGOs (YOUNGOs).

Observers can essentially say 'what cannot be said' by parties in negotiations.

Representatives of observer organisations are sometimes invited to participate in mandated events such as in-session workshops (see page 43) as panellists or to facilitate discussions. They also engage with the negotiations process through side events (see page 43) and often have exhibition booths where they share publications and talk to participants (see UNFCCC website for a list of exhibitors). At COPs, there is usually a very large space in the venue for these booths.

In plenary sessions (time permitting), the COP president or a chair of one of the subsidiary bodies will usually give the floor to a representative of NGO constituencies.

Top tip:

Some organisations produce daily publications that summarise what was discussed in the previous day. These can be extremely useful to get an overall idea of how negotiations are progressing.

Look out for the **Earth Negotiations Bulletin** (ENB), briefings from the **Third World Network** (TWN), and the **ECO newsletters** in particular. Printed copies of these daily briefings are usually on tables around the conference venue and at the document centre; you can also find them on their website or get them to your phone through their respective apps.

USEFUL TO KNOW: UNFCCC DOCUMENT CODES

All official papers (including draft decisions and conclusions, but not non-papers) have document codes in the top right corner of the page. Familiarising yourself with these can help ensure you are looking at the correct document and that you know what kind of document you are looking at. Every code starts with 'FCCC', and is followed by the code for the relevant body and the year the document was issued:

- **/CP/2022/** — for the COP
- **/KP/CMP/2022/** — for the CMP
- **/PA/CMA/2022/** — for the CMA
- **/SBI/2022/**
- **/SBSTA/2022/**
- **/APA/2022/**
- ...or **/TP/[year]** if a document is a technical paper not associated with one particular body.

After the year, there will normally be a number, or letter and number.

If the code **-/L. ...** is used, it means that the document is a draft, with the number denoting the version. You will hear people referring to 'L. docs'. Remember, 'draft conclusions' from a subsidiary body that only need plenary approval to be considered 'final' are still 'L. docs' — you need to know which number corresponds to the latest L. doc that is being forwarded to plenary for approval.

Other useful codes to know:

- **-/CRP/-** for 'conference room paper', which is a document that parties agree to use in the negotiations
- **-/INF/-** for information notes such as a synthesis of submissions prepared by the secretariat, or the list of participants for a session

- **-/MISC/-** for miscellaneous documents, such as compilations of submissions from parties and/or observers

Codes may end with:

- **-/Add.** ... for addendum (usually the second part of a report)
- **-/Corr.** for documents that needed a correction (which may only apply to one of the translations)
- **-/Rev.** ... for documents that have had text revised from the previous version

The code for decision 1/CP.21 adopting the Paris Agreement, for example, is FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.

Paper free:

The UNFCCC is trying to go paper-free – providing documents on the website and via apps, and providing “touch-to-collect” technology for digital resources. Hard copies of daily programmes, agendas or draft texts are usually available from the Document Centre (look for this on conference venue maps).

5.4 How a decision might be reached

Before the session, an ‘annotated’ provisional agenda is circulated. Parties develop national positions on issues they consider to be of importance.

During **preparatory meetings** and **coordination meetings**, party groupings discuss group positions and negotiating strategies for the session.

In **plenary** (and through submissions), parties (including groups) state their positions.

At the plenary, the COP president/SB chairs/ad hoc body chairs set up **contact groups** on an agenda item, sub-item, or thematic issue.

In the **contact group**, parties clarify their positions and interests. If an issue seems to need further in-depth discussion, the chairs or facilitators may set up a **spin-off group**. They may also hold informal consultations with parties.

Parties may also discuss among themselves in informal bilateral meetings or one-to-ones. Spin-off groups report back to the contact group (ideally with a way forward).

The chairs or facilitators of the contact group then put forward a draft text. Parties start to negotiate with the text projected on a screen.

If there is a deadlock around a certain paragraph, the chairs or facilitators may set up a **drafting group** to help produce a compromise text. (Individual delegates may also take the initiative to do this on their own, consulting with others in the margin of negotiations). The drafting group brings their new text back to the contact group (and it is then either accepted or worked on further).

The contact group agrees on a **draft text** (contained in an L. doc). The co-chairs or co-facilitators take this text back to their body and/or to the COP president.

The draft text is taken to plenary, where it is formally approved and adopted. If the text is intended for a COP decision but has only been approved by a subsidiary body, the chair(s) of the body forwards it to the COP and recommends it for adoption. At the COP plenary, the decision is put forward and the COP president gavels to indicate that the decision is adopted.

(Remember at COP sessions, the COP, CMP, CMA, SBI, SBSTA and any ad hoc body will meet in parallel — and the outcomes of their discussions must be brought back to a plenary. Plenary sessions do not overlap with one another, but contact groups and informal meetings will.)

5.5 Practical tips: during the session

MAKE TECH WORK FOR YOU.

Download WhatsApp onto your phone or laptop.

Set up or join a WhatsApp group to link with your negotiating team.

Get a local phone / SIM card.

Put a local taxi number in your phone.

TAKE THE CHANCE TO SLEEP OR NAP WHEN YOU CAN.

DON'T FORGET TO EAT AND DRINK. YOU WON'T BE EFFECTIVE IF YOU DON'T.



TAKE CARE NOT TO FALL ILL!

Take vitamins or do what helps you stay healthy. The negotiation process will not stop to accommodate delegates who are sick or otherwise absent.

MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS ARE KNOWN.

Bring business cards if you have any, or make an e-card through a QR code. It's especially important to go to the first contact group or informal. The secretariat will collect email addresses for the group. Those on the list will receive updated drafts of the text, meeting time and room changes, and any other announcements.

Make sure your email and phone number are on the appropriate lists in group coordination meetings as well.



6. Useful resources

Our companion toolkits

Abesinghe, A, Prolo, C, Tenzing, J (2015)
Climate negotiations terminology:
the pocket guide. IIED, London.
<http://pubs.iied.org/10148IIED>

Abesinghe, A, Prolo, C, Tenzing, J (2016)
Manuel de terminologie des négociations sur
le climat : anglais-français. IIED, London.
<http://pubs.iied.org/10148IIED.html>

Online

UNFCCC website:
<https://unfccc.int>

Earth Negotiations Bulletin:
<https://enb.iisd.org/>

ECO (Climate Action Network International):
www.climateactionnetwork.org/eco-newsletters

Climate Home:
www.climatechangenews.com

Carbon Brief
www.carbonbrief.org/

On X (formerly Twitter)



[@UNFCCC](#)

Official account of the United Nations climate change secretariat. Also in French ([@CCNUCC](#)), Spanish ([@CMNUCC](#)) & German ([@UNKlima](#))

[@UNFCCCDocuments](#)

Notifies followers about publication of UNFCCC in-session documents

[@IISD_ENB](#)

IISD's Earth Negotiations Bulletin team at the UNFCCC climate change negotiations

[@CANIntl](#)

Network of over 1900 NGOs fighting climate change. Watch here for updates on UN climate talks, the ECO newsletter, Fossil of the Day & other member activities

[@IIED](#)

The International Institute for Environment and Development's account

[@IPCC_CH](#)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change

[@LDCChairUNFCCC](#)

Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group at UN climate change negotiations, working to secure a strong and fair global deal

[@AOSISChair](#)

Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States

[@AGNChairUNFCCC](#)

Chair of the African Group of Negotiators

Toolkit

November 2023

Climate change

Keywords: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Least Developed Countries (LDCs), capacity building

Attending UN climate negotiations for the first time is daunting, especially if it is a Conference of the Parties (COP) session. With so many meetings happening in parallel and using unfamiliar jargon and acronyms, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process is notoriously complex.

This toolkit will help new delegates, in particular from the Least Developed Countries, navigate the session. It focuses on the process, rather than the content of negotiations, and offers some practical tips for getting through the days (and nights).



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