

Policy pointers

Scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the dangers of exceeding 1.5°C of warming supports longstanding calls from the Least Developed Countries for an ambitious outcome at COP24.

All governments must ensure that COP24 adopts implementation guidelines robust enough to achieve the global goals of the Paris Agreement, while recognising the specific needs of LDCs.

LDCs can use the high-level phase of the Talanoa Dialogue at the conference to urge all countries to deliver more ambitious emissions targets, support for resilience and adaptation efforts.

LDCs must use COP24 to urge developed countries to significantly scale up climate finance so they can achieve their conditional Nationally Determined Contributions and address climate-related loss and damage.

Higher ambition for lower temperatures: what LDCs could achieve at COP24

In October, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a special report that spelled out the devastating implications of global temperatures increasing to and beyond 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) participating in the COP24 climate summit in Poland in December can use these findings to strengthen their argument for an ambitious outcome. Specifically, LDCs should use the meeting to push for: a robust set of rules to govern the implementation of the Paris Agreement; stronger commitments to reduce emissions; and greater climate finance to, for example, fund adaptation action and offset climate-related loss and damage.

At the end of a pivotal year in climate politics, world leaders will gather in the Polish city of Katowice in December for a conference that will shape climate action for years to come. Formally known as the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the meeting marks the deadline for countries to agree a set of rules to guide the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The outcome will be of critical importance to the group of 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the world's poorest countries who contribute the least to climate change yet suffer some of its worst impacts.

While governments of LDCs have long been pushing for stronger climate action, a new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has strengthened their hand. In October, the IPCC published its special report on 1.5°C.¹ The conclusion was

stark: rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in society are needed to limit warming to 1.5°C and avert the worst effects of climate change.

The sense of urgency conveyed in the special report could play a vital role in galvanising greater ambition at COP24. If the world is to keep warming close to 1.5°C, then the meeting will have to adopt the most robust and comprehensive possible implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement. The conference will also present an important opportunity for countries to consider how they can increase their commitments and enhance current and new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) through the Talanoa Dialogue. World leaders will also discuss climate finance, which needs to increase significantly to help LDCs deliver on their ambitious climate plans and to meet their conditional NDCs.

With devastating climate impacts at only 1°C, limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C is a red line for LDCs

The IPCC 1.5°C special report

Informed by more than 42,000 expert and government comments (the most ever received by the IPCC on a report), and with over 200 expert contributing authors, the report helps to answer the following questions:

- What mitigation pathways would be required to limit warming to 1.5°C?
- What are the impacts of 1.5°C of warming, compared to 2°C and higher?
- How can countries strengthen the global response to climate change (mitigation and adaptation options)?

The report notes that climate risks would be considerably reduced if warming is limited to 1.5°C instead of 2°C.² Negative consequences for natural and human systems will be far more devastating and widespread if global temperatures rise beyond 1.5°C (see Box 1). For example, the report found that the number of people who suffer from poverty due to global warming could vary by several hundred million by mid-century depending on whether or not warming exceeds 1.5°C.

The report notes that LDCs specifically are at disproportionately higher risk. While climate risks would be considerably reduced across the globe if warming is limited to 1.5°C instead of 2°C, for LDCs this 0.5°C difference is beyond fundamental — it's existential. Compared to 2°C, a rise of 1.5°C would mean smaller reductions in the yields of staple crops; less intense extreme weather events, including droughts; and less exposure to irreversible sea level rise. Given the vulnerable geographic

locations of many LDCs, their heavy reliance on agriculture and low levels of social and economic development, such factors would weigh heavily on future prosperity and could reverse development efforts to eradicate poverty. With the world already experiencing devastating climate impacts at only 1°C of warming, limiting temperature increase to 1.5°C is a red line for the LDCs.

The special report found that it could still be possible to bend the emissions curve and limit global warming to 1.5°C. Nevertheless, the authors said that this would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society, including urgent and deep emissions cuts in all economic sectors. The report confirms the urgency of what LDCs have been calling for all along: more urgent and ambitious action than ever before.

LDCs' expectations for COP24

LDC Ministers and Heads of Delegations met in October 2018 and delivered the Addis-Ababa LDC Ministerial Communiqué on Climate Change³ to spell out the group's priority areas and expectations for COP24. These officials affirmed their commitment to climate action and collaboration to achieve the shared goals of lifting their people out of poverty and achieving low-carbon, climate-resilient sustainable development. The LDC group sees COP24 as an opportunity for all countries to step up and bring the spirit and vision of the Paris Agreement to life — achieving the 1.5°C temperature goal and protecting communities across the world from the devastating impacts of climate change.

Paris implementation guidelines. The LDCs are committed to completing and adopting comprehensive, robust, fair and effective

Box 1. Key findings from the IPCC special report on 1.5°C

1. Human activities have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels and climate-related risks are higher for global warming of 1.5°C than at present, but lower than at 2°C.
2. Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C.
3. Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems.
4. Estimates of the global emissions outcome of current nationally stated mitigation ambitions as submitted under the Paris Agreement would not limit global warming to 1.5°C.
5. The avoided climate change impacts on sustainable development, eradication of poverty and reduction of inequalities would be greater if global warming were limited to 1.5°C rather than 2°C.

guidelines at COP24 to enable the full and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement. Getting this right matters because strong guidelines will help ensure governments take adequate action to cut emissions, adapt to climate change and address loss and damage. Strong guidelines will also help ensure that poorer countries receive the support they need to implement these goals.

In addition, appropriate guidelines will be vital to create an even playing field to build the confidence needed to coordinate climate action across borders and deploy capital at scale. The findings of the IPCC special report make the case for agreeing robust guidelines even more compelling.

For LDCs, adaptation will be just as important as mitigation. The special report notes that adaptation needs will be lower if global warming is limited to 1.5°C compared to 2°C. But even with temperatures where they are now, adaptation and resilience-building are essential. The special report further indicates that if global warming is limited to 1.5°C compared to 2°C,⁴ then adaptation options could actually yield benefits in terms of sustainable development and poverty reduction, provided they are crafted carefully and tailored to specific national contexts.

Nevertheless, the special report emphasised that there are limits to the extent to which human and natural systems can adapt even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C, meaning some losses are inevitable and their impacts may be long-lasting or irreversible. These findings are particularly pertinent to discussions on loss and damage in the UNFCCC, where the LDCs advocate strongly for increased support to address current and anticipated loss and damage in line with their priorities and needs. The guidelines agreed at COP24 will need to treat adaptation as well as loss and damage — crucial components of the Paris Agreement for the LDCs — with the same degree of priority as mitigation.

Furthermore, the LDCs need financial, technological and capacity building support to plan, develop and implement their NDCs, National Adaptation Plans and other climate plans. The Paris implementation guidelines need to clearly recognise the special circumstances and needs of LDCs and these must be adhered to in every delivery mechanism of climate finance. COP24 should also deliver decisions that significantly scale up climate finance for poor nations to meet their conditional NDCs, including their adaptation needs, and address climate-related loss and damage.

Talanoa Dialogue. The Talanoa Dialogue is a UNFCCC process designed to take stock of collective efforts towards implementing the Paris Agreement and to inform the preparation of updated and enhanced NDCs by 2020. The next phase of the Dialogue, taking place at COP24, represents the first opportunity to make practical use of the findings of the IPCC special report at a global level. Delegates are due to complete a year-long preparatory phase of sharing experiences of climate realities on the ground during the first week of the gathering, before moving on to the political phase during the second week. The special report provides a clear message for the Talanoa Dialogue: although 1.5°C is not a safe level of warming, it needs to be considered a defensive line to avert the worst devastation from climate change.

The LDC Group in the Talanoa Dialogue is calling for increased momentum so that political leaders meeting at COP24 can agree on stronger action to limit warming. The Talanoa Dialogue is also a good opportunity for all countries, including the LDCs, to reflect on their climate impacts and losses, and to call on others to make changes in terms of their business models, technology use, private sector engagement and their various partnerships and collaborations.

The Talanoa Dialogue must encourage countries to commit to more ambitious targets and urgently reduce global emissions if the world is to have a real chance of limiting global temperature rise to below 1.5°C by mid-century. Countries should discuss the possible revision of NDCs before 2020 to raise levels of ambition in terms of action and support, consistent with their responsibility for climate change and their capacity to respond.

In addition, the LDCs should push for a political declaration and formal COP decision through the Talanoa Dialogue at COP24 to send the strongest possible message in support of the spirit and vision of the Paris Agreement.³

High-level segment. The high-level segment taking place during COP24 will include a stocktake on pre-2020 climate action, implementation and ambition as well as a ministerial dialogue on climate finance.

Against the backdrop of the warnings in the special report, the high-level segment should send a strong signal to countries to ratify and implement the Doha amendment of the Kyoto Protocol, which calls for effective pre-2020 climate action. This would both spur on faster action and serve as a point of reference for post-2020 pledges.

The dialogue on climate finance is also an opportunity for countries to discuss a clear roadmap for delivering on the committed annual US\$100 billion of climate finance by 2020, and much more in the years and decades to follow. For the LDCs to implement conditional NDCs and adapt to climate change, they will need accessible, adequate, predictable and sustainable funds.

Looking ahead for increased ambition

The special report underscores the urgency of a rapid and far-reaching transition to a low-carbon economy to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C. The report's stark findings should give LDCs greater leverage as they call for countries to submit new and more ambitious NDCs by 2020.

In parallel, LDCs should use COP24 to emphasise the importance of helping vulnerable societies to strengthen their capacity to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. This kind of support will be vital to advance a sustainable transition towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient society. With the right support in terms of finance, technology transfer and capacity building, LDCs and other developing countries could use this transition to leapfrog traditional development pathways.

Including a 1.5°C temperature target in the Paris Agreement was a major victory for the poorest and most vulnerable countries.⁵ A landmark international agreement is now in place that offers all countries, especially the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, more hope for a viable future. Three years on, the IPCC's special report provides a frank assessment of what the difference between a 1.5°C and a 2°C temperature increase means for the world. COP24 is the time for all countries to commit to greater climate ambition. The report, though sobering, provides important leverage for the LDCs to push world leaders to adopt the targets needed to bring the 1.5°C limit within reach.

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Notes

¹ Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 21, from UNFCCC COP21. IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. / ² IPCC. Special report. Global Warming of 1.5°C. Summary for Policymakers. See: http://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf / ³ Least Developed Countries Ministerial Communique on Climate Change. See: www ldc-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Addis-Ababa-LDC-Ministerial-Communique%CC%81-on-Climate-Change-2018_EN.pdf / ⁴ IPCC. Special report. Global Warming of 1.5°C. See: www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/ / ⁵ See: <http://theconversation.com/turning-up-the-heat-how-the-diplomatic-push-for-1-5-unfolded-in-paris-52465>