

## Factsheet – the International Climate Response

*Carbon neutral:* is balance between human-caused carbon dioxide emissions released and emissions taken out of the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide can be absorbed by growing trees and plants, as well as through some emerging technological processes that can remove carbon dioxide from the air.

*Net-zero:* is when human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere are equal to human-caused removals over a specified period.

Human-caused greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

### International Agreements

Scientists globally agree that climate change is happening at an unprecedented rate. They agree this is due to human activity, primarily those leading to increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere<sup>1</sup>.

There is a global consensus that action is required. There are a number of international agreements that are designed to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. They are:

➤ **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).** The aim of the UNFCCC is to prevent 'dangerous' human interference with the climate system. The Convention was established in 1994 and has 197 Party members. The UK's ratification includes Jersey as a signatory. The Kyoto Protocol was developed as a result of the UNFCCC to help achieve its aim.

➤ **Kyoto Protocol.** This commits industrialised countries to individual reduction targets of greenhouse gas emissions. It was adopted by 192 Parties in 1997. Under this protocol, the UK and Jersey must reduce their emissions by 80% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels. Jersey is a signatory, through the UK, to the Kyoto Protocol and has agreed to the same target.

➤ **Paris Agreement.** This is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. Its goal is to limit the global average temperature to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the international climate summit or 'Conference of Parties', COP21 in Paris, December 2015 and entered into force in November 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> [Scientists Reach 100% Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming](#) Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society. 37(4): 183–184. doi:10.1177/0270467619886266)

The United States have recently re-joined the Paris Agreement and in September 2020 China strengthened its 2030 climate target and pledged to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. These two nations represent about 40% of global emissions.

The Paris Agreement is the first of its kind; a legally binding agreement that brings all nations into a common cause to combat climate change.

The Paris Agreement works on a 5-year cycle of increasingly ambitious climate action carried out by countries. In 2020, countries submitted their plans for climate action. These are known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Under this the UK has committed to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

### **National implementation of targets**

To achieve these international targets, individual countries will need to introduce their own emissions reduction policies.

➤ **UK:** The UK Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. In June 2019, this target was made more ambitious. The UK committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Boris Johnson has committed the UK to an interim target of reducing emissions by 68% by 2030.

➤ **EU:** The EU aims to adopt a 2030 Climate Target Plan to reduce at least 55% of emissions by 2030, relative to 1990 levels as a stepping stone to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

### **Action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activity**

To achieve the objectives of the international agreements outlined above, nations must take immediate action. Actions can include:

- Reduced demand for energy e.g. through energy efficiency improvements leading to the generation of fewer greenhouse gas emissions.
- Producing low-carbon energy or renewable energy and displacing high-carbon energy in their economies.
- Carbon sequestration – increasing the long-term removal, capture or storage of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, e.g. growing more trees and through emerging technological processes that can remove carbon dioxide from the air.
- Carbon offsetting – a country or individual can invest in or sponsor carbon reduction activities or projects which increase carbon dioxide absorption, to offset residual emissions.

*[Note all of the above are considered in more detail in other factsheets.]*

## **Future international agreements**

COP stands for 'Conference of the Parties' and refers to the decision-making body of the UNFCCC. In November 2021, Glasgow will host COP26, which is the 26th annual conference.

At COP26, heads of state from 200 countries, climate experts, civil society and negotiators will meet to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. They must agree a balanced negotiated package to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and move the UNFCCC forward.

To ensure success, COP26 wants all countries to commit to further cuts by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions as soon as possible.

## **Why is it so difficult to reach a global climate agreement?**

It has been, and still is, challenging to achieve a global agreement on actions to reduce future climate change and/or return the atmosphere to a better position. All countries are affected differently and have differing priorities. Some such considerations are detailed below.

- Economies that have evolved with a dependency on fossil fuels, will have a great deal to change.
- Some suggest wealthier nations have a social and moral duty to act, especially if their wealth is due to the past use of, or exploitation of, fossil fuels.
- Countries with immediate problems of poverty and disease have differing priorities if reducing their carbon emissions impacts on their ability to tackle other, pressing, problems.
- The physical geography of certain countries and island states means they are more exposed to the impacts of climate change. Adaptation will therefore be more costly to them. E.g. low-lying islands, such as the Maldives, and flood prone areas, such as Bangladesh.

## **What are Jersey's International Obligations?**

Jersey is a signatory, through the UK, to the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As with other countries, our international obligations currently extend only to the greenhouse gas emissions generated directly on the Island. These are monitored, independently validated and reported on an annual basis via the UK's accredited auditor, Aether.

In line with the Kyoto Protocol, Jersey has committed to lower greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. The [Energy Plan](#)<sup>2</sup> details how this will be achieved.

In 2019, the States Assembly declared a Climate Emergency and voted to approve the amended [Carbon Neutral Strategy](#)<sup>3</sup>. The Carbon Neutral Strategy builds on the Energy Plan and sets out a strategic framework of principles and a plan to aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

To date, Jersey's reported emissions have reduced by 47%, relative to 1990 levels. This reduction was mostly due to switching from on-Island fossil fuel electricity generation, to low carbon electricity (from nuclear and hydro-electric sources) imported from the French grid.

As a Crown Dependency, international agreements that the UK signs, such as the Paris Agreement, are not automatically extended to us in Jersey. The Paris Agreement has not yet been extended to Jersey, but the Government of Jersey is currently actively working on ensuring that this is achieved in time for COP26, where we intend to have a strong presence.

In line with the UK and the EU, under the Paris Agreement, Jersey will be expected to commit to at least net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

### **Read more on international agreements to tackle climate change:**

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/what-is-the-united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change>
- Kyoto Protocol: [https://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol](https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol)
- What is the Paris Agreement?: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreementv>

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<sup>2</sup> Energy Plan: Pathway 2050 - <https://www.gov.je/Government/Pages/StatesReports.aspx?ReportID=1039>

<sup>3</sup> Carbon Neutral Strategy - <https://www.gov.je/Government/Pages/StatesReports.aspx?ReportID=5138>