

What is the Climate Ambition Summit?

With [COP26 postponed](#) by a year, on the 12th December 2020, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy, will co-host a virtual [Climate Ambition Summit 2020](#) to build momentum ahead of COP26 in Glasgow and to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

Five years since the [Paris Agreement](#) was adopted by almost 200 countries at COP21, this event will provide a platform for government and non-governmental leaders to demonstrate and deliver on their commitments to the Agreement.

What can we expect at the Ambition Summit?

The COP26 President, Alok Sharma has written to the leader of every country that has ratified the Paris Agreement inviting them to make ambitious commitments at the Summit. These commitments are likely to be made by heads of state by pre-recorded video. The Climate Ambition Summit hosts are calling on UN members states to set out [stronger commitments](#), specifically:

- more ambitious [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#), centred on cutting emissions over the next decade (see box below)
- Long-Term Strategies (LTSs) setting out a path to net zero emissions by mid-century
- finance commitments to support the most vulnerable countries
- ambitious climate adaptation plans.

The US has recently left the Paris Agreement under President Trump; however, [President Elect Joe Biden](#)'s administration promises to re-join as soon as possible. It is unclear what role the incoming US administration will play at the Summit. It is possible that Biden's newly appointed Climate Envoy John Kerry could make an appearance, though nothing has been confirmed.

The recent announcement that the UK will reduce its aid spending from 0.7% to 0.5% may create some friction at the event, where developed countries have been asked to present ambitious financial commitments in line with the pledge first made in 2009 to be mobilising at least \$100bn per year by 2020 to help the poorest nations protect against climate change impacts and decarbonise.¹

[Non-state actors](#), from business, civil society and academia will also take part in the event, making their own commitments and building momentum on climate action. The UK has stated that it wants to increase inclusion and diversity of participants at this event and at COP26.

Chile is co-hosting the event as it holds the Presidency of the UN climate convention until COP26; Italy is working in partnership with the UK on COP26; France is marking the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement.

We can expect the event to focus on three broad areas:

- country commitments on mitigation and adaptation;

¹ Note, the UK climate finance commitment is entirely from the UK aid budget. Foreign secretary Dominic Raab has said the UK climate finance – which the government doubled from its previous commitments – will remain unchanged, putting a greater squeeze on other international development funds.

- real world actions, focused on the ‘[race to zero](#)’ led by the [High-Level Climate Champions](#), Nigel Topping from the UK and Gonzalo Muñoz from Chile; and
- a platform for vulnerable countries and peoples.

Momentum so far in 2020

The UK, the first major economy to put a [net zero](#) by 2050 target into legislation, is [preparing to unveil its own NDC](#) at or before the Summit, its first outside the European Union (see more details below). It is not clear whether Mr Johnson will formally publish the NDC and submit it to the UN climate convention this month, or just reveal what will be in it.

The EU is also in the process of raising its own 2030 target, from the current target of 40%. The EU leaders are expected to make an agreement on this at the European Council meeting on the 10th/11th December, in time to announce the decision at the Summit. The European Parliament has recommended a new target of 60% but it is more likely the EU leaders will approve the European Commission recommendation of 55%.

In September [China surprised the UN General assembly](#) by committing to a net zero by 2060 target, and to peak emissions before 2030. It is unlikely (though possible) that China will be ready to announce its NDC on the 12th December as it is still developing its critical 14th Five Year economic plan, to be released early next year.

Following China’s announcement, both Japan and South Korea have come forward with net zero by 2050 pledges setting a new political momentum on climate change. On Tuesday, [analysts with Climate Action Tracker revealed](#) that if all these pledges are met, the world is likely to see around 2.1°C of global warming by the end of the century; a few months ago, before these pledges and the election of Mr Biden, the figure was around 2.7°C.

Many least developed and vulnerable countries are expected to announce enhanced NDCs at the summit. The ‘[Midnight Climate Survival](#)’ campaign from the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), an international partnership representing the 48 countries most vulnerable to climate change, calls on every country to come forward with an enhanced climate commitment to the Paris Agreement by the end of 2020, as governments requested of each other in the Agreement itself.

UK Commitment at the Ambition Summit – what to look for

Alok Sharma has committed to releasing the UK NDC at or just before the Ambition Summit. In addition, the UK will also present its own domestic [Adaptation Communication](#).

Most focus will be on the [headline target](#) for emissions reduction by 2030 (against a 1990 baseline).

The statutory adviser, the Climate Change Committee (CCC), is providing advice to Government on this and is expected to publish it on 9th December alongside its advice on the [6th Carbon Budget](#). However, Government do not have to wait for its advice to be published and could reveal their decision earlier than 9th.

There has been speculation that the CCC will recommend an emissions reduction target in the range of 65% to 68%. Environment and development campaigners say real climate leadership would need this target to go beyond 70%, while some UK businesses argue [a strong target would be beneficial for the UK economy](#). Many are looking to the UK to set best practice on the integrity of this target, with issues such as whether it will include international aviation and shipping, and if there will be a role for carbon markets outside of the EU emissions trading scheme. It will also be crucial for Government to explain the basis on which the target is calculated, because revisions to historical

emissions estimate, updated information on the relative potencies of different greenhouse gases, and withdrawal from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme at the end of this year each affect the target by several percentage points (explainer [here](#)).

The UK has already submitted a Long-Term Strategy (LTS) under the Paris Agreement. But it dates from 2018, before the UK had a net zero by 2050 emissions reduction target. The Government has committed to publishing a comprehensive net zero strategy in 2021 which will become the basis for a revised LTS.

What will the UK NDC look like?

The NDC will have 3 components

- One-page **Cover note** including a high-level overview of the NDC
- NDC **Headline target** economy wide emissions reductions
- **ICTU** (Information to communicate clarity, transparency and understanding)

The ICTU component will demonstrate the UK commitment to transparency to ensure best practice and public availability of information to tracking progress towards achieving the NDC target. This will include: the scope of the emissions; carbon accounting methods and assumption; and the domestic institutional arrangements.

The Paris Agreement also requests that industrialised countries' NDCs voluntarily include commitments that support developing countries achieve their own Paris commitments. It is unclear whether the UK will include this information.

Adaptation Communication

Alongside the NDC the UK will present its first **Adaptation Communication** (AComm). This will largely present how the UK will prepare for domestic adaptation, responding to and preparing for the impacts of climate change, highlighting good practice, and learning from others. This will be based on existing policies and practices. It will also include the UK's commitment to support and finance international issues, including capacity building, and will assert the UK's continued stance that 50% of international climate finance should go towards adaptation. This will be updated next summer after further advice from the CCC.

One aim of COP26 is to develop an adaptation goal to complement the NDC for mitigation. The AComm is viewed as a step towards that.