SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Introduction

Climate Action (SDG 13) aims to address climate change and its impacts through urgent, coordinated measures. It focuses on integrating climate policies into national strategies, enhancing resilience to climate-related hazards, and promoting education and awareness on mitigation and adaptation. This goal responds to escalating risks such as rising temperatures, sea levels, and extreme weather driven by greenhouse gas emissions.

Key Components

SDG 13 focuses on three core areas: mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions), adaptation (enhancing resilience to climate risks), and capacity-building (strengthening education, awareness, and institutional capabilities). It also prioritises climate financing, advancing a green transition through clean energy and technology, and embedding climate measures into national policies.

Mitigation and green transition

- Reduce emissions: Taking urgent action to curb greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.
- Promote low-carbon technologies: Investing in and incentivising the adoption of clean technologies and sustainable practices.
- Implement carbon pricing: Use policies like carbon pricing to make pollution more expensive and fund sustainable solutions.
- End fossil fuel subsidies: Reallocating funds away from polluting industries towards green initiatives.
- Enhance carbon sinks: Promoting sustainable land use and forest management to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

<u>Adaptation and resilience</u>

- Strengthen resilience: Building the capacity of all countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.
- Integrate climate into planning: Incorporating climate change considerations into national policies, strategies, and planning.
- Improve disaster risk reduction: Strengthening preparedness and response to extreme weather events.

Capacity-building and education

- Improve education and awareness: Increasing public and institutional knowledge about climate change, mitigation, and adaptation.
- Promote effective management: Supporting mechanisms for effective climate change planning and management, especially in vulnerable countries.

Finance

- Mobilise funding: Mobilising financial resources to support developing countries in their climate action efforts.
- Address financing gaps: Highlighting and closing gaps in climate financing.

Challenges and Progress

SDG 13 faces major challenges, including rising greenhouse gas emissions, weak policy implementation, and inadequate funding. Despite these obstacles, progress has been made through significant growth in renewable energy—accounting for over 90% of new power capacity in 2024—and improved disaster-related mortality rates. However, persistent gaps remain in governance, climate justice, and investment in resilient infrastructure and adaptation measures.

Challenges

- Rising emissions: Global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, reaching record levels in 2023, which means the world is falling short of its climate goals.
- Weak implementation: While many countries have adopted climate policies, their implementation and enforcement are inconsistent, and commitments are often only on paper.
- Governance gaps: National climate governance is fragmented, with weak legislation and competing political priorities hindering progress on SDG 13 targets.
- Inadequate funding: Financial commitments, especially from developed countries, are insufficient to meet the necessary goals, and private sector engagement is vital to bridge this gap.
- Climate justice: The implementation of climate action often fails to adequately address climate justice, which can worsen existing vulnerabilities and inequities.
- Exceeding 1.5°C: Current trajectories show the world will likely exceed the 1.5° C warming limit, which challenges the core goals of the SDG.

Progress

- Renewable energy: Global investment in clean energy is growing, and in 2024, renewables accounted for over 90% of new power capacity. Globally, renewable energy generated more electricity than coal for the first time in the first half of 2025.

- Disaster reduction: There has been progress in reducing deaths from disasters, with the rate dropping significantly between 2005–2014 and 2014–2023.
- Early warning systems: There is increased focus on developing and implementing early warning systems, which can save lives and property.
- Cost reduction: The cost of electricity from solar power has fallen dramatically over the past decade.

Key actions needed

- Strengthen national governance and implement national policies more consistently.
- Increase financial investment in adaptation and mitigation efforts, and secure commitments from the private sector.
- Integrate climate justice into climate action to protect vulnerable populations.
- Continue to scale up renewable energy and invest in resilient infrastructure.

Targets and Indicators

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	
Target	**Indicator**
13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries	13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population
	13.1.2 Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030
	13.1.3 Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies
13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	13.2.1 Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

	13.2.2 Total greenhouse gas emissions per year
13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning	13.3.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (*a*) national education policies; (*b*) curricula; (*c*) teacher education; and (*d*) student assessment
13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, and fully operationalise the Green Climate Fund through its capitalisation as soon as possible	13.a.1 Amounts provided and mobilised in United States dollars per year in relation to the continued existing collective mobilisation goal of the $100 billion commitment through to 2025
13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities	13.b.1 Number of least developed countries and small island developing States with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

SDG 13 and UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS) 2026-2029

UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), including the 2022–2025 and 2026–2029 frameworks, prioritise SDG 13 by addressing the triple planetary crisis (climate change, nature loss, and pollution). Key strategies include driving rapid, deep decarbonization (halving emissions by 2030), promoting nature-based solutions for adaptation, enhancing climate finance, and accelerating technology transitions.

Core Components of UNEP's SDG 13 Strategy:

- **Mitigation and Decarbonization:** Focusing on shifting toward sustainable production and consumption, adopting low-carbon options, and promoting renewable energy.
- **Adaptation and Resilience:** Strengthening national capacities to adapt to climate-related hazards, building resilience, and protecting ecosystems.
- **Science-Policy Interface:** Providing data on environmental threats, tracking climate finance gaps, and informing policy-making to meet the 1.5°C target.
- **Integrated Approaches:** Linking climate action with biodiversity and pollution strategies to ensure holistic environmental management.

UNEP's strategy aligns with the Paris Agreement, aiming to keep global temperature increases below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C, while supporting vulnerable communities in building resilience.

Relevant linkages with other SDGs

SDG 13 (Climate Action) is foundational to the 2030 Agenda, with over 80% of targets directly linked to climate, making its implementation crucial for achieving other SDGs. It shares strong, positive synergies with SDG 7 (Energy), SDG 11 (Cities), SDG 14 (Oceans), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), while directly impacting poverty reduction (SDG 1) and health (SDG 3).

Key interlinkages include:

- **Energy (SDG 7) & Industry (SDG 9):** Shifting to renewable energy for SDG 7 and enhancing resource-use efficiency in industry (Target 9.4) are critical to achieving climate goals.
- **Poverty (SDG 1) & Inequality (SDG 10):** Climate actions improve resilience, safeguarding the livelihoods of the most vulnerable (SIDS, LDCs) who are disproportionately affected by disasters.
- **Sustainable Cities (SDG 11):** Integrating climate adaptation into urban planning (Target 11.b) is necessary to mitigate damage to human settlements.
- **Life Below Water (SDG 14) & Land (SDG 15):** Protecting marine ecosystems and implementing sustainable forest management act as carbon sinks and promote biodiversity.
- **Health (SDG 3):** Reducing air pollution from climate-related actions directly improves public health and reduces, for example, mortality from cardiovascular diseases.

Key Science Reports for SDG 13

Key scientific reports underpinning Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) are primarily produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). These reports provide the evidence base for limiting global warming to 1.5°C, reducing emissions, and strengthening resilience.

Here are the key scientific reports for SDG 13:

1. IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) - 2021-2023
The IPCC's AR6 is the most comprehensive, up-to-date scientific assessment of climate change, serving as the foundation for SDG 13 progress reporting.

- **Working Group I: The Physical Science Basis (2021):** Confirmed that human activities have unequivocally caused warming of the atmosphere, ocean, and land.
- **Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability (2022):** Highlighted that 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in contexts highly vulnerable to climate change, emphasising that any further delay in action will miss a rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.
- **Working Group III: Mitigation of Climate Change (2022):** Outlined that to limit warming to 1.5°C, global greenhouse gas emissions must peak before 2025 and decline by 43% by 2030.
- **Synthesis Report (2023):** Integrated findings from all working groups, providing direct scientific input to the UN's First Global Stocktake.

2. WMO State of the Global Climate Reports
The World Meteorological Organization provides annual, data-driven reports on climate indicators that directly track SDG 13 targets.

- **2023 & 2024 Updates:** Confirmed 2023 as the warmest year on record, with global temperatures at 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels, and 2024 exceeding this to reach roughly 1.55°C, temporarily breaking the 1.5°C threshold.
- **Key Data Points:** Documented record-high greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean warming, acidification, and sea-level rise.

3. UNEP Emissions Gap Report (Annual)
The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) publishes an annual "Emissions Gap" report, which is essential for tracking Target 13.2 (integrating climate measures into policy).

- **Findings:** The report consistently shows that current national commitments (Nationally Determined Contributions) are insufficient to meet the 1.5°C target, projecting a potential warming of 2.5–2.9°C by the end of the century.

4. UN Secretary-General's SDG Progress Reports (Annual)
The UN Division for Sustainable Development Goals publishes annual reports assessing progress toward all 17 goals, including extensive data on SDG 13.

- **Focus:** Monitors disaster-related deaths (Target 13.1), the adoption of national strategies (Target 13.2), and the mobilisation of $100 billion in climate finance (Target 13.a).

5. Global Climate Litigation Report (UNEP)

- **2023 Status Review:** Highlights the increasing role of courts and legal actions in forcing governments and corporations to strengthen climate action, aligning with the "urgent action" mandate of SDG 13.

Funding SDG 13

Financing SDG 13 (Climate Action) requires an estimated $1.6 trillion to $3.8 trillion annually through 2050 to transition to a low-carbon future, with over $100 billion annually needed for developing nations. Key requirements include mobilising private capital (approx. 70% of total needs), international climate finance, public-private partnerships to de-risk investments, and scaling up mechanisms like green bonds.

Financing Requirements for SDG 13:

- **Massive Investment Volume:** Roughly $125 trillion is required globally to decarbonise the economy by 2050, with $32 trillion needed by 2030.
- **Private Finance Mobilisation:** Public funds are insufficient; about 70% of the necessary investment must come from private sources.
- **International Support:** Developed countries have committed to mobilising $100 billion annually for developing nations, though this target has historically been missed.
- **Targeted Areas:** Funds are needed for mitigation (reducing emissions), adaptation (resilience to climate hazards), and addressing loss and damage.
- **Innovative Mechanisms:** Expanded use of green bonds, Sustainability Linked Loans, and ESG-aligned investments is crucial.
- **Financial Architecture Reform:** Long-term reforms are needed to strengthen the international financial system to better support developing nations.

Specific Funding Needs for Developing Countries:
Developing countries will need approximately $1.1 trillion in climate finance by 2025, rising to$1.8 trillion by 2030, according to projections.

SDG 13 and the Just Transition

SDG 13 (Climate Action) facilitates a just transition by promoting decarbonization that creates sustainable "green jobs" while ensuring social equity. It drives the shift from fossil fuels to renewables, supports vulnerable communities through climate resilience, and mandates financial mechanisms to fund fair, low-carbon economic development.

How SDG 13 Drives a Just Transition:

- **Green Job Creation and Economic Diversification:** SDG 13 fosters the creation of 65 million new, sustainable jobs by 2030, particularly in renewable energy, and encourages economic diversification to replace old, polluting industries.
- **Social Equity and Inclusion:** The goal focuses on protecting the most vulnerable populations—including workers in high-carbon sectors—ensuring they are not left behind during the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- **Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** It emphasises strengthening the adaptive capacity of communities against climate-related disasters (floods, droughts), which helps safeguard livelihoods and reduces inequality.

- **Policy Integration and Support:** By encouraging the inclusion of climate action in national policies, SDG 13 ensures a systematic approach to reducing emissions while providing resources for education and capacity building.
- **Financial and Technical Support:** SDG 13 highlights the need for funding (including the $100 billion annual commitment for developing nations) to support technology transfer and infrastructure improvements necessary for a fair transition.

SDG 13 functions as a core catalyst for a "just" transition by ensuring that climate change actions, such as shifting away from fossil fuels, are designed to be equitable, supporting both the environment and the workforce.

UNFCCC and Partnerships and Commitments

The UNFCCC is the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,** an international treaty signed in 1992 that serves as the basis for global climate change cooperation. Its main goal is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. The UNFCCC provides a framework for future agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, which set more specific targets.

- **Framework for action:** It establishes the basic legal framework and principles for international climate action, with 198 parties (197 states and the European Union).
- **Basis for further treaties:** The UNFCCC is the parent treaty for more specific agreements like the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris Agreement.
- **Ultimate goal:** To stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that prevents dangerous human interference with the climate, allowing ecosystems to adapt naturally and enabling sustainable development.
- **Key decision-making body:** The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the main decision-making body for the UNFCCC, where countries meet to assess progress and make decisions on climate action.
- **Secretariat:** The UNFCCC secretariat is the UN entity that supports the global response to climate change and is based in Bonn, Germany.

Climate Change Partnerships and Commitments

UNFCCC partnerships are voluntary collaborations between the secretariat and non-Party stakeholders—including the private sector, civil society, and academia—to advance shared climate objectives. Party commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate impacts, and providing support, with obligations varying by classification (Annex I, Annex II, or Non-Annex I).

UNFCCC Partnerships

Purpose: To support the UNFCCC's mandates and the goals of the Paris Agreement by engaging with external stakeholders to implement climate action.

Types of Partners: Include the nine major groups from Agenda 21, Intergovernmental organisations, and other non-Party stakeholders.

Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Change

The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Change is under the Climate High-Level Champion and supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement by enabling collaboration between governments and non-Party stakeholders such as cities, regions, businesses, investors, and civil society, including youth, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to act on climate change. The MPGCA's mission is to strengthen collaboration between actors to lower emissions and increase resilience against climate impacts, promoting higher ambition to collectively strive for the 1.5 °C temperature goal and a climate-neutral and resilient world.

On 4 May 2017, the champions published a proposed approach, draft work programme (739 kB) and an impact and priority tracker (789 kB). During SB46, the champions consulted with Parties and observers on these documents. Based on these consultations, the champions revised and published their approach for the Marrakech Partnership (347kB).

In response to the mandate given by Parties at COP 25 to explore how to improve the work under the Marrakech Partnership for enhancing ambition and after a thorough process to gather feedback from Parties and non-Party stakeholders, the champions have developed a 5-year plan of the improved Marrakech Partnership for enhancing ambition, which was welcomed by Parties at COP 26 as part of the Glasgow Climate Pact. The Improved Marrakech Partnership for Enhancing Ambition 2021-2025 outlines the vision, mandate, core functions and tools, and updated structures intended to increase the scale and impact of the Marrakech Partnership work through 2025.

See more about the champions here.

UNFCCC Commitments

- **For Parties (Countries):**
    - **Annex I Parties:** Include industrialised countries and economies in transition. They are committed to taking the lead in reducing emissions and providing financial resources and technology transfer to developing countries.

    - **Annex II Parties:** Are a subset of Annex I Parties (OECD members) with a specific commitment to provide financial resources to developing countries and help them adapt to climate change.
    - **Non-Annex I Parties:** Mostly developing countries that commit to submitting their own climate action plans and working toward global goals, with special consideration for those most vulnerable to climate change.

- **For Non-Party Stakeholders:**
    - While not legally binding like the commitments of Parties, the partnerships involve commitments from non-Party stakeholders to contribute expertise, resources, or innovative solutions to support climate action.
- **Overall Goal:** To keep global warming "well below 2 °C" and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.

Examples of SDG 13 partnerships

There are over 2200 partnerships on the SDG database here. SDG 13 multistakeholder partnerships that focus on climate action through diverse collaborations:

1. Public-private partnerships for renewable energy: Governments and private companies collaborate to develop and implement large-scale renewable energy projects, such as wind farms or solar power plants, to transition away from fossil fuels.
2. Academia-community initiatives for climate adaptation: Universities partner with local communities to conduct climate vulnerability assessments and develop localised adaptation plans, ensuring solutions are practical and relevant to the people living in affected areas.
3. NGO-corporate alliances for sustainable supply chains: Non-governmental organisations work with corporations to improve the sustainability of their supply chains, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation.
4. Multi-stakeholder platforms for climate finance: A consortium of governments, international organisations, and private investors creates a fund to finance climate projects, with a focus on developing countries that are most vulnerable to climate change.
5. Government-NGO-private sector collaborations for early warning systems: Governments, technology companies, and NGOs work together to develop and deploy early warning systems for climate-related disasters like floods, droughts, and storms.

6. Civil society and local government partnerships for climate education: Local governments and civil society organisations co-create educational programs to raise awareness and build capacity on climate change mitigation and adaptation at the community level.
7. International organisation-private sector-NGO collaborations for blue carbon initiatives: Partnerships between international bodies, private sector entities, and NGOs restore and protect coastal ecosystems like mangroves and seagrass beds, which act as natural carbon sinks.
8. Public-private partnerships for sustainable infrastructure: Governments and private construction and engineering firms collaborate on building climate-resilient infrastructure, such as sea walls, improved water management systems, and public transportation networks.
9. Cross-sector partnerships for climate-smart agriculture: Farmers, agribusinesses, researchers, and governments work together to promote climate-smart agricultural practices that reduce emissions, improve soil health, and increase resilience to extreme weather.
10. Multi-stakeholder platforms for climate technology transfer: Partnerships are formed to facilitate the transfer of climate-friendly technologies from developed to developing countries, including technology sharing, training, and capacity building.

Key events for Climate Change in preparation for the 2027 High-level Review of the SDGs

June 8—18, 2026: UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB 64), the conference will serve as a mid-year meeting to advance climate negotiations and focus on areas like developing indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation and discussing the second Global Stocktake, which is expected to take place between 2026 and 2028.

2026 (date to be agreed) Pre-COP Events: The Pacific region will host the pre-COP event.

November 2026: COP 31 in Antalya, Türkiye, negotiation, Australia will be the President for the negotiations.

June 7-17, 2027: UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB 66), the Bonn conference will serve as a mid-year meeting to advance climate negotiations.

Stakeholders

The UNFCCC calls the nine Major Groups from Agenda 21 constituencies. At the time of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee establishing the UNFCCC, there were

two constituencies: the business and industry NGOs (BINGO) and the environmental NGOs (ENGO).

Other constituencies have since been formed and recognised. Firstly, the local government and municipal authorities (LGMA) at COP 1 in 1995, then the indigenous people's organisations (IPO) at COP 7 in 2001, the research and independent NGOs (RINGO) at COP 9 in 2003, the Farmers constituency joined in 2006, the trade union NGOs (TUNGO) before COP 14/CMP 4 in 2008. Women and Gender and youth NGOs (YOUNGO) became full constituencies shortly before COP 17/CMP 7 in 2011.

- **BINGO**: Business and industry NGOs
- **ENGO**: Environmental NGOs
- **Farmers**: Farmers and agricultural NGOs
- **IPO**: Indigenous people's organisations
- **LGMA**: Local government and municipal authorities
- **RINGO**: Research and independent NGOs
- **TUNGO**: Trade union NGOs
- **WGC**: Women and Gender constituency
- **YOUNGO**: Youth NGOs