

UN Approaches to Climate Change: Global Classrooms: London Climate Change Conference



Understanding Climate Change:

Start by reading through the guide at this website: watch all the videos as you go through to get a full picture: <http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/climatechange>.
Read the Background Guide: Then read the Climate Change Background Guide on the www.mmun.org.uk website.

There are 4 themes, called Building Blocks, that shape how the UN tackles Climate Change. You will need to understand these and research them in relation to the region your committee is focusing on:

- 1. Mitigation:** acting to reduce climate change by for example reducing emissions
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/gateway/themes/mitigation>
- 2. Adaptation:** acting to tolerate or adapt the consequences of global warming
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/gateway/themes/adaptation>
- 3. Technology:** creating green/environmentally friendly ways of developing
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/gateway/themes/technology>
- 4. Finance:** who is responsible for funding tackling climate change
<http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/gateway/themes/financing>

Climate Change Mitigation:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report 2007 confirms that climate change is an evident global phenomenon which is attributable to human activities. The continuous increase of energy use since the Industrial Revolution resulted in accretion of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Among the six major greenhouse gases* regulated under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, it is carbon dioxide (CO₂) that affects the Earth's radiation balance the most. To prevent or slow down the adverse consequences of climate change, scientists recommend all states to reduce 19 giga-tons of CO₂ emissions by 2020.

In the context of climate change, mitigation refers to actions taken to reduce the net emissions of greenhouse gases. This includes actions such as policy changes or crafting new policies for CO₂ abatement, technological changes, or reduction of deforestation. Although the Parties to the Convention agree that mitigation actions are imperative, commitment levels of both developed and developing countries prove insufficient. To stabilize the global average temperature rise below 2°C, states must come to an agreement on the post-Kyoto regime and pledge necessary mitigation commitments. Aside from a treaty-based approach, "green growth" is also being debated on whether emission reductions and growth can be achieved simultaneously.

The six major GHGs are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Climate Change Adaptation:

Mitigation actions will not fully prevent the consequences of climate change. Droughts, floods, and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and tsunamis are occurring ever more frequently. As a result more people will face health problems, spread of diseases such as malaria, and insufficient food and water supply. Rising sea levels may lead to partial or complete inundation of small island developing states like Tuvalu and low-lying coastal areas and some of these adverse effects will impact the survival of those most vulnerable and unprepared.

Adaptation to impacts of climate change requires changes at the local, national, and international level, integrating adaptation into policies and development planning at all levels. Individual and institutional capacity-building and training are needed and also education and public awareness on adaptation is important. Sustained funding for adaptation actions is vital as developing countries lack financial and human resources. The UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol recognize that the international community must cooperate on adaptation that challenges all Parties and reduce vulnerability and build resilience especially with prior focus on developing countries that are most vulnerable.

Climate Change technologies and finance:

For developing countries, financial assistance is vital to taking enhanced and effective mitigation and adaptation actions. The Convention recognizes the need for developed countries to financially assist developing countries and has established a financial mechanism. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is in charge of the operation of the financial mechanism with the guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties (COP). At the 16th COP in Cancun, the establishment of the Green Climate Fund was decided. Developed countries can also provide investment and funding through various sources such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Official Developmental Assistance (ODA), commercial lending and equity investment. Despite the establishment of various funds, there has been ongoing doubt on its effectiveness and transparency of the financial assistance from the developed countries. Moreover, mobilising meaningful and adequate amount of funding from developed countries is another issue at hand.

In addition to providing funds, the developed country Parties have also agreed on promoting, facilitating and financing the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies and sharing know-how to other Parties, in particular to developing countries (Convention Article 4.5). However, technology transfer is deterred by intellectual property right (IPR), one of the key obstacles, and the high cost of technology also remains an obstacle to the effective implementation of technology in low-income countries.

Committee Topics:

IPCC on G20 countries 1 & 2:

Mitigation, adaptation, technology & finance, particularly for the biggest CO₂ emitters

IPCC Africa 1 & 2:

Mitigation, adaptation, technology & finance, particularly for the African region

IPCC Asia 1 & 2:

Mitigation, adaptation, technology & finance, particularly for the Asia region

IPCC Latin America 1 & 2:

Mitigation, adaptation, technology & finance, particularly for the Latin America region

IPCC Pacific Islands & Low-lying Countries 1:

Mitigation, adaptation, technology & finance, particularly for Pacific Islands and low-lying countries