

You've probably heard of COP - the big climate conference that takes place every year. Sometimes it 1 _____ for breakthrough deals or new pledges to boost climate action, sometimes for controversies or worries about slow progress. Beyond the media reactions, what is COP really all about?

COP30 in Belém comes 33 years after the Rio Summit that established the first international treaty to combat human-caused climate change, and a decade after the Paris Agreement that seeks to enhance global climate action. This year 2 _____ on Brazil as countries meet to assess progress and 3 _____ of global climate action.

Here are five things you should know about COPs.

1. COP is the 4 _____ of global climate action

Climate change is a global challenge that requires global action. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 198 countries come together every year at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to assess progress and agree on collective next steps.

These countries negotiate decisions that guide international climate policy and cooperation. At the end of a COP, the member countries, or Parties, adopt decisions reflecting the direction of future global climate action.

Every year, a different country hosts and presides over the COP. The presidency can influence priorities by setting the agenda and guiding negotiations. At COP30 in Brazil, discussions are expected to 5 _____ on forest protection, climate finance and support for climate-vulnerable regions in addition to advancing global efforts to cut emissions and strengthen resilience.

So, COP is a 6 _____ global forum where the entire world comes together to address climate change and agree on the next steps.

2. COP has brought 30 years of real results

The COP process began over 30 years ago at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where 154 states signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). For the first time, governments agreed to work together to limit the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and protect the climate, while stimulating climate research and sustainable development.

The first COP was in Berlin in 1995, presided by Angela Merkel, then German Minister for the Environment. Since then, countries have been meeting every year in the COP format.

COP decisions are made by consensus, meaning nearly every country in the world must agree. This ensures broad support and protects the interests of developing and climate-vulnerable nations.

Landmark agreements include:

1997 Kyoto Protocol — first legally binding emissions targets for industrialised countries

2015 Paris Agreement — all Parties commit to limit warming below 2°C (compared to pre-industrial levels) and pursue 1.5°C

Over three decades, COP decisions have shaped national laws, clean energy investments and climate programmes across the world. While progress can be gradual and negotiations complex, COP remains the only global platform where all countries work together to respond to the climate crisis, and it continues to drive real-world action.

3. The Paris Agreement was 7 _____ at COP21 - and it's working

The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015, is the world's landmark climate treaty. In the legally binding agreement, all Parties agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5°C by the end of this century.

Science is clear that global temperature rise is nearing, and may temporarily exceed, 1.5°C in the coming years. The latest UN synthesis report confirms that current national commitments are not yet sufficient to 8 _____, underlining the urgency for stronger and faster climate action from all major emitters.

Under the Paris Agreement, each country must submit a national climate plan every five years, called a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). These plans guide domestic climate policy and send long-term signals to businesses and investors, which are essential for a stable and fair transition.

The next round of NDCs is due this year. In Belém, the Parties will assess the gap between today's plans and what is needed to meet the Paris goals, but also what it will take to 9 _____. The European Union has agreed its updated NDC and submitted it before the beginning of COP30 with a target to reduce emissions by between 66.25% and 72.5% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels.

Since 2015, climate ambition and investment have accelerated globally. Projections of future warming by 2100 10 _____ sharply, from well above 4°C to around 2.3–2.5°C based on current policies and commitments, according to the latest UNEP Gap Report. This shows clear progress, but not yet enough.

4. Fairness is 11 _____ the COP process

Climate change affects everyone, but not equally, and not everyone has the same resources to deal with it. That's why the COP process includes the principles that all countries act, but those with greater capacity do more. This principle of fairness is called 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' and was already integrated in the founding treaties of international climate policy.

Climate finance is key. At COP29, countries including the EU agreed to triple support to developing countries, from USD 100 to USD 300 billion per year. Brazil is now working with the previous presidency on the Baku to Belém Roadmap, to help mobilise USD 1.3 trillion a year in public and private climate finance by 2035.

The EU, its Member States and the European Investment Bank are together the biggest contributor of public climate finance to developing economies. In 2024, they contributed €31.7 billion in public climate finance and helped mobilise €11 billion in private finance.

As the global economy evolves, more countries are able to contribute, helping to ensure support 12 _____, and keeping fairness 13 _____ global climate cooperation.

5. At COP, Europe can 14 _____ 15 _____

The EU comes to COP30 as one of the world's most committed climate actors. The EU has already cut its greenhouse gas emissions by over 37% since 1990, including a 2.5% drop in 2024, while the economy has grown by 71%. The EU has also agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2040, compared to 1990 levels.

The EU is 16 _____ to reach its 55% emissions reduction target by 2030 and be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. As a 17 _____ in cutting emissions, the EU aims to 18 _____ at the COP to accelerate global climate action.

At COP28 in Dubai, the EU19 _____ to a 20 _____ to triple renewable energy capacity and double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030.

A key part of the EU's success has been its Emissions Trading System (ETS) — the world's largest carbon market. Since 2005, the ETS has put a limit on emissions from industry and power generation and allowed companies to trade allowances within that cap. This creates a clear 21 _____ to cut emissions while 22 _____ billions of euros in funding, which is reinvested in

developing clean technologies and climate and energy projects that contribute to the clean transition.

Emissions from sectors covered by the EU ETS are now around 48% lower than in 2005 levels and well on track to reach the 2030 target of -62%. Many other countries and regions are now adopting carbon markets, and at COP30 the EU will work with partners to expand carbon pricing globally.

Europe's message in Belém is simple: ambition works. You can cut emissions, grow your economy, invest in innovation and fairness, and 23 _____.

COP is the global climate opportunity

COP is the 24 _____ of international climate diplomacy, where the world comes together to find consensus on how best to tackle the climate crisis.

In more than thirty years, countries have agreed on important 25 _____, from Rio, to Kyoto, to Paris. The Paris Agreement has 26 _____, accelerating the real-world energy transition and 27 _____ of implementation.

At a moment when the green transition may feel 28 _____, but climate impacts are intensifying, COP30 in Belém is a crucial opportunity to 29 _____ and strengthen global ambition.