



# Environmental Conventions (Climate Change)

## What are International Environmental Conventions?

An international environmental convention is a **legally binding agreement** negotiated among governments to take action together to combat or mitigate a global environmental threat. Reaching an agreement to take such action among sovereign nations with diverse interests is no small feat.

- However, in recent decades, such agreements have proliferated to address international environmental concerns at the global and regional levels.

## Why is there a Need for these Conventions?

- Ratification and implementation of the Convention and its protocols will, for many Parties, reduce health and environmental impacts **more cost-effectively than unilateral action**.
- It also creates economic benefits as harmonized legislation and standards across borders will introduce a level playing field for industry across countries and **prevent Parties from competing with each other** at the expense of the environment and health.
- Factors that harm human health, affect food security, hinder economic development, contribute to climate change and degrade the environment upon which our very livelihoods depend.
  - The Convention **provides a platform to discuss these interconnections and takes actions to prevent negative impacts**.

## What is United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?

- **UNFCCC** was signed in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the **Earth Summit, the Rido Summit or the Rio Conference**.
  - India is **among the select few countries to have hosted the COP** of all three Rio conventions on climate change (UNFCCC), biodiversity (CBD) and land (**[United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#)**).
- The UNFCCC **entered into force in 1994** and has been ratified by 197 countries.
- It is the parent treaty of the **[2015 Paris Agreement](#)**. It is also the parent treaty of the **[1997 Kyoto Protocol](#)**.
- The UNFCCC **secretariat** (UN Climate Change) is the United Nations entity tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. It is **located in Bonn, Germany**.
- Its objective is **to achieve stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere** at a level that would prevent dangerous repercussions within a time frame so as to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally and enable sustainable development.

## What is Kyoto Protocol?

- The Kyoto Protocol is an **international agreement** linked to the UNFCCC, which commits its parties by setting **internationally binding** emission reduction targets.
- The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in **Kyoto, Japan in 1997** and entered into force in **2005**.
- It recognized that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activity.
- The **detailed rules** for the implementation of the Protocol were **adopted at COP-7 in Marrakesh, in 2001** and are referred to as the **Marrakesh Accords**.

- Kyoto Protocol **Phase-1 (2005-12)** gave the target of cutting down emissions by 5%.
  - **Phase- 2 (2013-20)** gave the target of reducing emissions by at least 18% by the industrialized countries.

## What is Paris Agreement?

- **Paris Agreement** (also known as the **Conference of Parties 21 or COP 21**) is a landmark environmental accord that was **adopted in 2015** to address climate change and its negative impacts.
  - It **replaced the Kyoto Protocol** which was an earlier agreement to deal with climate change.
- It aims to **reduce global GHG emissions** in an effort to limit the global temperature increase in this century to well **below 2°C above pre-industrial levels**, while pursuing means to **limit the increase to 1.5°C by 2100**.
- **It includes:**
  - Addressing the financial losses vulnerable countries face from climate impacts such as extreme weather.
  - Raising money to help developing countries adapt to climate change and transition to clean energy.
  - This part of the deal has been made **non-legally binding** on developed countries.
- Before the conference started, **more than 180 countries had submitted pledges** to cut their carbon emissions (**Intended Nationally Determined Contributions or INDCs**).
  - The INDCs were recognised under the agreement, but are not legally binding.
  - **India also reaffirmed its INDCs commitments** to meeting the goals under the Agreement in order to **combat the climate change**.

## What is United Nations Conference on Environment & Development?

- The UNCED, also known as the '**Earth Summit**', was held in **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, from 3-14 June 1992.
  - This global conference was **held on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Human Environment Conference** in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972.
- The conference highlighted how different social, economic and environmental factors are interdependent and evolve together, and how **success in one sector requires action in other sectors to be sustained over time**.
- The primary objective of the Rio 'Earth Summit' was to **produce a broad agenda and a new blueprint for international action** on environmental and development issues that would help guide international cooperation and development policy in the twenty-first century.
- The summit concluded that the **concept of sustainable development was an attainable goal for all the people** of the world, regardless of whether they were at the local, national, regional or international levels.
- **The results of the Conference were the following documents:**
  - The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
  - The Convention on Biological Diversity
  - The Statement on Forest Principles
  - The Rio Declaration
  - Agenda 21

## What is UN World Summit?

- The **2005 World Summit**, which **took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York**, brought together more than 170 heads of state and government.
  - At the Summit, world leaders **agreed to intervene on a variety of fronts to address major global issues**.
- Governments made strong commitments to achieving the development goals set out in the **Millennium Declaration by 2015**, pledging an additional \$50 billion per year to fight

poverty, determined to find **innovative sources of development finance as well as additional measures to ensure long-term debt sustainability.**

- They also declared themselves firmly **committed to trade liberalisation and pledged to work diligently** to implement the development aspects of the Doha work program.

**[TTP Environmental Conventions \(Biodiversity\)](#)**

**[TTP Environmental Conventions \(Pollutants\)](#)**

**UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)**

**Q. With reference to the Agreement at the UNFCCC Meeting in Paris in 2015, which of the following statements is/are correct? (2016)**

1. The Agreement was signed by all the member countries of the UN and it will go into effect in 2017.
2. The Agreement aims to limit the greenhouse gas emissions so that the rise in average global temperature by the end of this century does not exceed 2°C or even 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
3. Developed countries acknowledged their historical responsibility in global warming and committed to donate \$ 1000 billion a year from 2020 to help developing countries to cope with climate change.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a)** 1 and 3 only
- (b)** 2 only
- (c)** 2 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/environmental-conventions-climate-change>