



BRIEFING PAPER

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Chile Madrid climate change conference: COP25

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1. Overview

The UN Climate Change Conference 2019 (COP25) took place in Madrid, Spain from 2 to 15 December (having been extended for 2 days from 13 December). It was originally scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile but on 1 November 2019, the UNFCCC accepted a proposal from the Government of Chile to change the venue due to the civil unrest in Chile in October/November 2019.¹ It was consequently rebranded as “Chile Madrid COP25”.

The conference took place under the Presidency of the Government of Chile. The President-Delegate for the conference was Ms Carolina Schmidt Zaldivar, Minister of Environment of Chile. There were around 27,000 delegates in attendance, including representatives from the UK Cabinet Office.²

Building on the outcomes of COP24 in Poland,³ the key aim of COP25 was to finalise the “rulebook” of the Paris Agreement (agreed at COP21 in 2015) by agreeing rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation. However, the talks did not reach consensus or achieve many of the outcomes that were hoped for, instead pushing decisions into 2020’s COP26, to be held in the UK. UN secretary general António Guterres said he was “disappointed” with the results of COP25, tweeting that:

The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation and finance to tackle the climate crises.

But we must not give up, and I will not give up.⁴

2. Key reports

Prior to the conference, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published its annual [Emissions Gap Report 2019](#)⁵ which presented the latest data on the expected gap in 2030 for the 1.5°C and 2°C temperature targets of the [Paris Agreement](#).⁶ The

¹ UN Climate Press release, [Information update on Chile COP25](#), 5 November 2019; Climate Home News, [Chile pulls out of hosting COP25 climate talks amid civil unrest](#), 30 October 2019 [accessed 7 November 2019]

² See: [UNFCCC Provisional list of registered participants](#)

³ See Library Briefing Paper on [Climate change conference \(COP24\): Katowice, Poland](#), 9 January 2019

⁴ [Antonio Guterres twitter](#), posted 15 December 2019

⁵ UNEP, [Emissions Gap Report 2019](#), 26 November 2019 [accessed 19 December 2019]

⁶ See: UNFCCC pages on the [Paris Agreement](#); and Library Briefing Paper on the [Paris Agreement and the Marrakech climate conference](#), 25 November 2016

2 Chile Madrid climate change conference: COP25

“emissions gap” refers to the difference between “where we are likely to be and where we need to be”. The report looked at different scenarios and looked in particular at the potential of the energy transition – particularly in the power, transport and buildings sectors – and efficiency in the use of materials such as iron, steel and cement.

In the lead up to COP25, the headline finding of the UNEP report was that the emissions gap is “large” and even if existing pledges (known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs) are met, emissions in 2030 would be far higher than required to meet the Paris Agreement target:

Dramatic strengthening of the NDCs is needed in 2020. Countries must increase their NDC ambitions threefold to achieve the well below 2°C goal and more than fivefold to achieve the 1.5°C goal.⁷

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) [Provisional Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2019](#) reported that global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases reached record levels in 2018, and continued to increase in 2019.⁸ The WMO reported that 2019 is likely to be the second or third warmest year on record; with ocean heat content reaching record levels in 2019.⁹

Following on from its 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published two further Special Reports in 2019 on:

- The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate;¹⁰ and
- Climate Change and Land.¹¹

Both of these Special Reports were considered at COP25, with the final COP decision text ([Chile Madrid Time for Action](#)) stating that it:

6. Expresses its appreciation and gratitude to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the scientific community for providing the 2019 Special Reports, which reflect the best available science, and encourages Parties to continue to support the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

7. Invites Parties to make use of the information contained in the Special Reports referred to in paragraph 6 above in their discussions under all relevant agenda items of the UNFCCC governing and subsidiary bodies¹²

3. Overview of aims and outcomes

Building on the outcomes of COP24 in Poland¹³, the key aim of COP25 was to finalise the “rulebook” of the Paris Agreement by agreeing rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation (Article 6); and to come to a deal on how to help vulnerable countries cope with climate impacts they can’t adapt to (known as loss and damage). The [initial overview schedule](#) provides detailed information on the various meetings, workshops and events held at COP25.

Over the course of the conference, delegates could not agree on various elements including Article 6 and “common timeframes” for climate pledges. On loss and damage,

⁷ UNEP, [Emissions Gap Report 2019](#), 26 November 2019, p.10 [accessed 19 December 2019]

⁸ [WMO Provisional Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2019](#) [accessed 18 December 2019]

⁹ [WMO Provisional Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2019](#) [accessed 18 December 2019]

¹⁰ IPCC, [Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate](#), approved on 24 September 2019

¹¹ IPCC, [Special Report on climate change and land](#), August 2019

¹² Chile Madrid Time for Action, [Proposal by the President, Draft decision -/CP.25](#), 15 December 2019

¹³ See Library Briefing Paper on [Climate change conference \(COP24\): Katowice, Poland](#), 9 January 2019

some progress was made but the call for new, additional and adequate funding from vulnerable nations remained unresolved as developed nations led by the US resisted.

The unresolved issues were pushed back to be signed off in 2020. Some progress was made on other issues. For example, the COP25 President announced that 39 countries had committed to including oceans in their future NDCs¹⁴; and a decision on a new five-year gender action plan intended to “support the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates in the UNFCCC process”.¹⁵ The final COP decision text welcomes the gender action plan.¹⁶

A detailed discussion of the outcomes is provided by a Carbon Brief analysis: [COP25 Key Outcomes agreed at the UN Climate talks in Madrid](#) (15 December 2019).

The documents and decisions agreed by the Parties are available on the [UNFCCC pages on COP25](#).

4. European Green Deal

Towards the end of the conference period focus turned to Brussels with the new European Commission President (Ursula von der Leyen) announcing a new [European Green Deal](#) on 11 December 2019.¹⁷ In relation to international climate change the Commission’s commitments included:

- The Green Deal would form the basis for the long-term strategy that the EU will submit to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in early 2020.
- The Commission will propose the first European ‘Climate Law’ by March 2020. This will enshrine a net zero by 2050 objective (referred to as climate neutrality) in legislation. The Climate Law will also ensure that all EU policies contribute to the climate neutrality objective and that all sectors play their part.
- The EU will continue to ensure that the Paris Agreement remains the indispensable multilateral framework for tackling climate change.

A closing statement by the Finnish Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission on behalf of the EU and its member states at COP25, included the following sentiments:

This COP did not deliver all of what we came here for. Despite all the energy and commitment of our negotiators, we did not reach an agreement on Article 6 and we have to say that we are disappointed. The European Union and its Member States showed flexibility and open-mindedness until the last minute, including showing solidarity with positions of the most vulnerable countries. Yet there are some bridges that we just cannot cross if we are to maintain a credible position with our partners and with our citizens at home.

This very week we presented the European Green Deal, a roadmap to embed climate action into all policies. We committed to climate neutrality by 2050. In this context we cannot support global rules which would undermine environmental integrity and take us back instead of taking us forward.

¹⁴ IISD Reporting services, [Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference](#), 12 December 2019 [accessed 19 December 2019]

¹⁵ UNFCCC, the [Gender Action Plan](#)

¹⁶ Chile Madrid Time for Action, [Proposal by the President, Draft decision -/CP.25](#), 15 December 2019

¹⁷ The European Commission, [Communication on The European Green Deal](#), 11 December 2019. See also: A Clean Planet for all - A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy COM (2018) 773; and Commission summary pages on the [European Green Deal](#)

But, is not the end of the story. Now we need to look forward. Our task is more urgent than ever.¹⁸

5. Looking ahead to COP26

The UK will host the next UN climate change conference (COP26) at the end of 2020, with Italy hosting the pre-COP events. The 2020 summit is scheduled to take place from 9 to 20 November 2020 at Glasgow's Scottish Events Campus. Former energy and clean growth minister Claire O'Neill is the UK nominated President of COP26.

The significance of COP26 was explained by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) as follows:

COP26 will take place five years after the landmark Paris Agreement was reached at COP21, and is essentially when the Paris Agreement comes into effect; as such, it will be the most significant UN climate summit since Paris in 2015.¹⁹

Claire O'Neill has stated the following:

#COP26 is incredibly important. We will be looking to everybody to raise their #ambition, prioritise measurable #ClimateAction and commit to #greenhouse gas reduction and #naturebasedsolutions.²⁰

Following the general election, the Committee on Climate Change wrote to the Prime Minister referring to "a unique opportunity to define the 2020s as the decade of delivery":

Your Government's actions in the coming year will define the UK response to the climate crisis. As host of next year's UN Climate Summit in Glasgow, the steps we take in the next 12 months will also have a lasting global impact. In this Parliament, the UK must get on track to delivering Net Zero emissions, and adapt to the climate-related changes we are experiencing. We have a unique opportunity to define the 2020s as the decade of delivery against legally-binding targets set by Parliament – meeting the ambitions of the Conservative election manifesto.²¹

There are a number of international events leading up to COP26, including:

- 21-24 Jan – World Economic Forum (Davos-Klosters, Switzerland)
- 1-11 Jun – UNFCCC Intersessional (Bonn, Germany)
- 10-12 Jun – G7 Summit (USA)
- 22-27 Jun - Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) (Kigali, Rwanda)
- Date TBC – BRICS Summit (Russia)
- Date TBC – EU/China Summit, under German EU presidency, second half of 2020 (Leipzig, Germany)
- 15-30 Sep – UN General Assembly/ Climate Week (New York, USA)
- Date TBC - Pre-COP events (Italy)
- 4-10 Oct - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Summit (COP15) (Kunming, China)
- 21-22 Nov – G20 Summit (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

¹⁸ European Commission, [Statement](#), 15 December 2019

¹⁹ Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, [UK to host 2020 UN climate summit](#), COP26 [accessed 18 December 2019]

²⁰ [Claire O'Neill twitter](#), 16 December 2019

²¹ Committee on Climate Change, [CCC writes to the new Prime Minister](#), 18 December 2019

- 3 Nov - 2020 US presidential election²²

6. United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

The United States issued a notification to the UN on its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on 4 November 2019.²³ This follows a June 2017 statement by President Trump on the decision to withdraw because of “the unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses and taxpayers by U.S pledges made under the [Paris] Agreement”.²⁴ 2019 could therefore be the last year that the US participates in the COP process.

The withdrawal will take effect one year from the delivery of the notification, subject to the outcome of the 2020 U.S presidential election as U.S Democrats have condemned the decision, stating that:

President Trump’s shockingly-reckless decision to formally pull the United States out of the Paris Climate Agreement is yet another disastrous anti-science, anti-government decision that sells out our planet and our children’s future.²⁵

There is a [We Are Still In](#) movement in the US comprising hundreds of local governments, businesses and organisations pledging to cut emissions and move to renewable energy.²⁶

7. Further reading

- UNFCCC [pages on COP 25](#)
- BBC News, [Climate change: five things we’ve learned from Madrid talks](#), 16 December 2019
- Carbon brief, [COP25 key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Madrid](#), 15 December 2019
- European Commission, [A European Green Deal](#)
- Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit [Briefings on UN Climate Summit 2020](#)

²² Quoted from ECIU briefing: [UK to host 2020 UN climate summit](#), COP26 [accessed 18 December 2019]

²³ U.S Department of State, [Press statement on the U.S Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement](#), 4 November 2019

²⁴ U.S Department of State, [Press statement on the U.S Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement](#), 4 November 2019

²⁵ Democratic Speaker of the House, [Nancy Pelosi Statement on Announcement of Trump’s Formal Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement](#), 4 November 2019 [accessed 7 November 2019]

²⁶ BBC News, [Paris climate accords: US notifies UN of intention to withdraw](#), 5 November 2019 [accessed 7 November 2019] and [We Are Still In webpages](#)

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