

Expectations for the Outcome of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Climate Change Convention in Paris: An Alliance2015¹ Briefing

Paris climate deal: the beginning of a new climate era?

“Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems. Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia.”²

Introduction

Historic and current emissions of greenhouse gases are leading to rising temperatures, more intense hurricanes, floods, heat waves and droughts. Since the middle of the 20th century, weather extremes have increasingly affected poor countries, threatening livelihoods, increasing vulnerability and hampering social and economic development. Despite recent major gains in poverty reduction, it is estimated that more than 100 million people could be pushed back into poverty over the next fifteen years by climate change. The poorest regions of the world – Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – will be the hardest hit.³ It has therefore become abundantly clear that without significant mitigation actions, coupled with disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change measures, sustainable development cannot be achieved. The inclusion of urgent action on climate change in the SDGs earlier this year as a key goal for sustainable development reinforces this point.

Climate change related threats:

- Threats to food and nutrition security and collapse of food systems
- Loss of livelihoods, marine and terrestrial ecosystems and species
- Loss of lives and damage to assets due to flooding and lack of adaptive capacities
- Damage to infrastructure and supply systems
- Increased health and mortality risks (heat waves, spread of diseases)
- Reduced agricultural productivity
- Water shortages and increased water stress

No time to delay

There are high expectations for the UN Climate Conference in Paris this year. It is anticipated that after decades of negotiation, the international community will finally acknowledge the urgent need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and commit to a transformation of production and consumption patterns.

But there is no time to delay. Previous chances, such as COP 15 in Copenhagen, have been squandered, and the window of opportunity for meaningful action is closing rapidly. In May 2013, we entered a new danger zone, crossing the threshold of 400 ppm of greenhouse gases in the

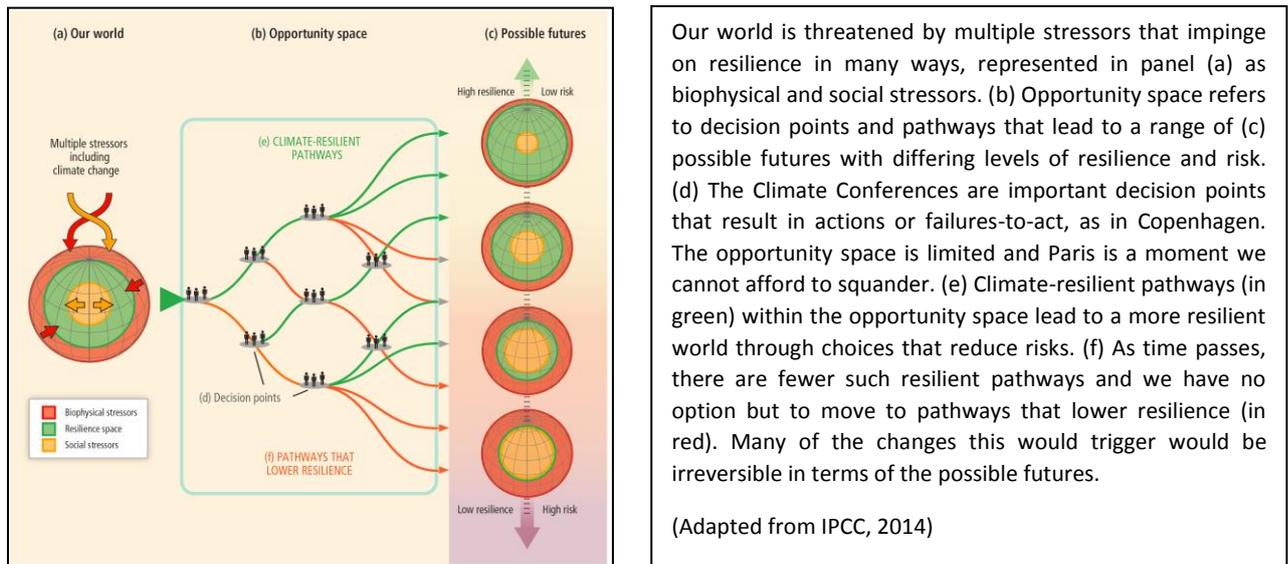
¹ Alliance2015 is a **strategic network of eight European non government organisations** engaged in humanitarian and development activities. Alliance2015 members are [ACTED](#)/France, [Cesvi](#)/Italy, [Concern Worldwide](#)/Ireland, [HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation](#)/Switzerland, [Hivos](#)/The Netherlands, [IBIS](#)/Denmark, [People in Need](#)/Czech Republic and [Welthungerhilfe](#)/Germany.

² IPCC (2014) Synthesis Report

³ World Bank (2015): ‘**Shock Waves**: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty’



atmosphere. The next 10-15 years are critical if we want to avoid the most dangerous effects of climate change.



Source: IPCC AR5, SPM, 2014

A fair and ambitious global treaty

The globally binding treaty expected from the Paris climate summit will replace the Kyoto Protocol. It will enter into force in 2020, becoming the first legal instrument that unites all 195 member states to the UN climate change convention.

The 5th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that in order to respect the UNFCCC commitment of '*stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system*', a complete transformation of worldwide energy production is indispensable. At the very least, the Paris treaty needs to point the way towards a decarbonised world, which means phasing out fossil fuels by the middle of this century.

Human-induced climate change affects the work of Alliance2015 members at multiple levels. It has significant implications for our work on food and nutrition security, education, improved health systems, empowered and resilient communities. We believe that anthropogenic climate change, as a stress multiplier, must be contained. The climate agreement, to be signed in Paris, is a fundamental step towards this.

Alliance2015 recommendations

Mitigation

131 countries have so far submitted their national emission reduction and adaptation contributions, called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). On the basis of these, even in the best case scenario of full implementation, the world is still heading towards a world that is almost 3 degrees Celsius warmer by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial levels. This is 1 degree Celsius higher than the threshold agreed by the international community at COP 16, and 1.5 degrees higher than that demanded by highly vulnerable island nations in the South Pacific. This scenario would have catastrophic consequences for ecosystems and livelihoods.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the Paris treaty finds a way to close the emission gap between the agreed and needed commitments. The INDCs submitted should serve as minimal goals

and all parties need to increase ambitions after the agreement has been signed. The commitments must be reviewed and adapted every five years based on scientific evidence. Before the treaty enters into force, additional efforts are needed to increase climate protection between 2015 and 2020.

Alliance2015 members demand from EU member nations (and Switzerland) at Paris

- A long-term goal, rooted in the treaty that supports a phasing out of fossil fuels by 2050, including a transformation of energy systems.
- A commitment to increase greenhouse gas emission reductions from 20% to 30% by 2020, and 55% by 2030 (based on 1990 figures) and, in the case of Switzerland, a reduction of at least 60% by 2030.
- The provision of a binding legal framework including a review process every five years to adapt reduction commitments of states to the requirements.
- A European fossil fuel phase-out plan and legal initiatives to increase energy transformation towards renewables.

Adaptation

Climate change is already having a significant effect on development and poverty reduction efforts, as it is marginalised people living in marginal locations and poor countries who are most at risk. Poverty reduction and development work must now take into account a changing climate and support communities with targeted measures to cope with climate variability and climate shocks.

Climate change impacts today result from greenhouse gas emissions of industrialised countries over the past 150 years. Because of this historic responsibility, reflected in the UN convention on climate change, industrialised countries carry a legal and moral responsibility to support developing countries through financial and technological support. International adaptation finance needs to target the most vulnerable people and regions. Industrialised countries should not neglect to do this even if the Paris treaty moves towards a shared responsibility.

Alliance2015 members demand from EU member nations (and Switzerland) at Paris

- Agreement on a global adaptation goal to ensure resilience for all and flexible support to National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).
- Support for immediate adaptation measures (before 2020) through assistance to the NAP process.
- Fulfilment of commitments to international climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund.

Loss and damage and climate change-induced migration

Climate change-induced damages and loss are already being experienced, for example in the salination of groundwater, loss of agricultural lands and coastal erosion. For a fair climate treaty, 'loss and damage' needs to be dealt with as a specific priority. The issue has been recognised by the UNFCCC since 2013 in the form of the Warsaw Mechanism and needs to be enhanced. Risk assessment and risk management approaches are lacking in many developing countries and need both technical and financial assistance. Insurance systems against harvest losses, announced during the G7 summit, may be workable in certain settings but are only a part of the solution.

The work programme of the Warsaw Mechanism also addresses the issue of climate change-induced migration. The Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that during the past 7 years about 22.5 million people lost their homes due to climate or weather induced disasters each year. Most of the displacements are local and they add to the challenge faced by the already stretched political,

economic and social systems in these countries. Under the leadership of Norway and Switzerland, the Nansen Initiative aims to develop a protection agenda for such displaced people in the context of natural disasters.

Alliance2015 members demand from EU member nations (and Switzerland) at Paris

- Progress on the loss and damage mechanism in the Paris treaty.
- An adequate elaboration of the Warsaw Mechanism to address the needs of vulnerable people.
- Financial allocations for climate-induced loss and damage.
- Provision of political and financial support to the Nansen Initiative.

Emissions from agriculture

Agriculture can contribute significantly to reducing greenhouse gases. For most developing and emerging economies, agriculture plays a key role in poverty reduction and economic development while also being highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. The integration of agriculture into climate policies has been controversial. We believe that climate policies should not undermine poverty reduction objectives. Climate sensitive agricultural policies can contribute substantially to food security and poverty reduction. Many of these are founded on well-established sustainable agricultural practices. Industrialised and emerging economies, as the main polluters, should take on specific commitments toward emission reduction in agricultural systems.

Alliance2015 members demand from EU member nations (and Switzerland) at Paris

- A treaty that recognises the multiple contributions of sustainable agriculture and smallholder production systems.
- Action to ensure that industrialised and emerging economies make their emissions within the agricultural sector transparent and initiate mitigation measures.
- Support from industrialised countries, in the form of finance and trade policies, that help poor countries adapt to climate change and reduce poverty.
- Agreement that food and nutrition security take precedence over fodder and biomass production for purposes other than food.

Transparent and reliable climate finance

Lack of adequate financing will rob the climate treaty of its ambitions. Nations need to show leadership, provide finances and take risks in order to incentivise the transformation towards renewable energy and energy efficiency. In addition, poor countries need support for adaptation measures. These commitments are already outlined in the UN climate convention. These commitments are fulfilled through bilateral support and through contributions to multilateral funds such as the Green Climate or Adaptation Funds. In 2009 industrialised countries agreed to increase finances to these each year, so that by 2020 an amount of USD 100 billion is annually available from public and private sources. At present the Green Climate Fund has about USD 10 billion.

Alliance2015 members demand from EU member nations (and Switzerland) at Paris

- A plan to ensure that USD 100 billion is available by 2020 annually which is additional to development finances.
- A clear and shared commitment for new and additional financing for mitigation and adaptation measures for the poorest countries. Agreement that at least 50% of climate financing will be allocated to adaptation.
- A plan for the replenishment of the funds on a regular basis.