

## COP 26 Final Report



From the Environmental Working Group as of November 17, 2021

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Global cooperation (to keep average temperature from exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels) is perhaps the most important ingredient in achieving a stable climate. So, the Environmental Working Group has been closely watching the UN's Climate Summit (COP 26), which wrapped up this past weekend in Glasgow. This is the fourth and final in a series of reports on the climate conference.

- You can see the **first report** by clicking [here](#).
- You can look at the **second report** by clicking [here](#).
- You can see the **third report** by clicking [here](#).

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## Instead of Success: Progress, Omissions, and Uncertainty

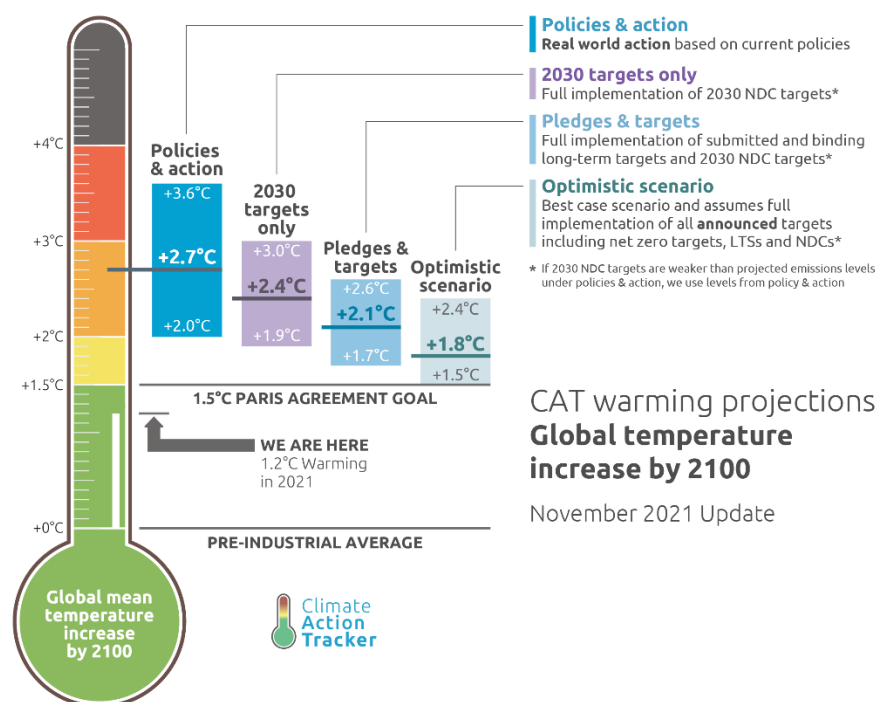
Lots has been reported on the final week of the summit. Borrowing words and ideas from various sources (see credits at the end of the report), it is clear the conference was not successful based on the goals set in advance. But there are allegations of progress. Also, evidence of dramatic omission – was there anything on the table that would have a real chance for impact? Finally, we are left with great uncertainty in terms of what other nations will do in the future. How should that reality affect our decision to pursue bold action on climate?

Ahead of the Glasgow talks, the United Nations had set three criteria for success, and none of them were achieved:

1. Pledges sufficient to cut carbon dioxide emissions in half by 2030,
2. \$100 billion in financial aid from rich nations to poor, and
3. Ensuring that half of that money went to helping the developing world adapt to the worst effects of global warming.

The overarching goal of limiting warming since preindustrial time to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F) will not be achieved without remarkable bold action beyond what has been agreed to in COP 26. Part of the COP 26 agreement calls on governments to return next year (by the end of 2022) with stronger plans to curb their planet-warming emissions.

This graph shows where we are (already at 1.2 °C) in terms of temperature, and where we're probably going.



Credit: Climate Action Tracker <https://climateactiontracker.org/>

Most major economies have now pledged to reach net zero emissions by a certain date, essentially a promise to stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. The United States and European Union said they would do so by 2050, China by 2060. At Glasgow, India joined the chorus, saying it would reach net zero by 2070.

When Climate Action Tracker looked at these additional promises, it [estimated](#) that the world could conceivably limit global warming to 1.8 degrees Celsius by 2100, although, so far, most countries haven't put policies in place to get there.

Our only hope is for nations to go beyond announce targets and implement them. The focus now shifts to next year's meeting, and what commitments that brings. Uncertainty.

### Progress?

Despite the overall failure to achieve goals, there are claims of progress:

- Fossil fuels have never been explicitly mentioned in a global climate agreement before, even though they are the dominant cause of global warming. So this was a breakthrough of sorts. In the end, at the urging of India, which argued that fossil fuels were still needed for its development, "phase out" of coal was changed to "phase down."
- Separately, negotiators in Glasgow announced a major deal on how to regulate the fast-growing global market in carbon offsets, in which one company or country compensates for its own emissions by paying someone else to reduce theirs.
- The United States and China, said they would commit to "enhanced climate actions" to keep global warming to the limits set in the Paris agreement. Most critically, the statement included a commitment to phase down coal. And while we can't yet quantify the impacts of this development, it presumably moves us closer to the 1.5 Celsius goal. This level of U.S.-China cooperation quickly shifted the entire COP 26 narrative and outlook in a more positive direction.
- Importantly, nations are also asked to return one year from now to strengthen their pledges, instead of waiting five years, as was set in the 2015 Paris agreement.

### Omissions

Jane Goodall said in the forward to *Regeneration: ending climate crisis in one generation*, "How bizarre that we, the most intellectual of all species, should be destroying our own home." While COP 26 may have delivered more than past climate summits, the destruction will continue because of the continued use of fossil fuels and continued deforestation.

Sean Munger highlights the omissions by pointing out that we saw nothing about real solutions for global warming, such as:

- immediate and unconditional abolition of fossil fuel subsidies (which envoy John Kerry calls the 'definition of insanity').
- immediate and unconditional moratorium on all future drilling and exploration,
- closure of refineries,
- seizure and expropriation of fossil assets,
- prosecution and punishment of fossil fuel executives,
- nationalization of energy companies, and
- crash programs for renewable energy scale-up.

## Uncertainty

The future is always uncertain. But without commitments to the bold action needed to achieve the 1.5-degree threshold, we just don't have a clue as to how nations (including our own) will act in the coming years. This additional uncertainty makes decision-making especially challenging.

Should we commit to bold and aggressive action, invest, and give up convenience when the rest of the world could fail to take similar action to curb emissions and remove carbon from the air? The answer can be determined by using a decision matrix. The decision matrix shows our choices (alternatives) on the left and what others do (the uncertainties) on the top of the columns.

We can use the information available to determine the outcomes that would result from each alternative given the uncertainty. This should help us identify the outcomes that represent the **best case** and the **worst case**. Once we map it out we can evaluate and decide how to achieve the **best case** while avoiding the **worst case**.

	Others act	Others DO NOT Act
We DO NOT act	Blow thru 1.5°C threshold for global average temperature increase above pre-industrial levels, probably later than if nobody was acting	<b>Worst case</b>  Blow thru threshold of 1.5°C global temperature increase above preindustrial levels by 2040
We take Bold Action	<b>Best case</b> – chance to keep global average temperature below 1.5°C threshold above preindustrial levels  Economic and health benefits of zero emission energy	World will blow thru 1.5°C threshold, probably later than if nobody took action  Economic and health benefits of zero emission energy

The decision matrix has been completed using the information we have about us approaching the 1.5 degree C threshold for global warming.

On the left side we have our two alternatives We DO NOT act or we take Bold action. On the top of the columns, we have the uncertainties – Others taking action and others DO NOT Act.

The outcomes are:

- If we do not take action and others do take action, we will likely end up with the World blowing thru the 1.5°C threshold for global average temperature increase above pre-industrial levels. This will probably happen later than if nobody was taking action
- If we do not take action and others also DO NOT This is **the worst Case**. **We must avoid this outcome**. We would blow thru threshold of 1.5°C global temperature increase above preindustrial levels very quickly – probably by 2040.

- If we take bold and aggressive action, and others do take action, this is the **Best Case**. We could achieve the 1.5 degree C goal and enjoy the economic and health benefits of zero emission energy
- If we take bold and aggressive action, and others DO NOT ACT, we would blow thru 1.5 degree C, probably at a later date. But we would have the economic and health benefits of zero emission energy

Having mapped it out, we can evaluate and decide how we could achieve the best case while avoiding the worst case: we should choose the Bold Action alternative.

The bottom line of the uncertainty assessment is that, despite the disappointments of COP 26, we should remain committed as individuals, businesses, and (local, state and national) governments to bold action to mitigate global warming.

### How to respond? Adapt, Resist, Regeneration

We are already experiencing the effect of global warming, and it is going to get worse. We need to prepare for the hotter, wetter (in some cases drier) and more unpredictable world. One thing is sure: we must adapt. Where to live? How to build? Where to invest? How to insure? How to protect the family from floods, heat waves, drought, hurricanes and tornadoes, wildfires, social breakdown? David Pogue has done some research and presents reasonable ideas in his book, *How to Prepare for Climate Change: a practical guide to surviving the chaos*.

The global, multi-faith, grassroots alliance [GreenFaith](#) is fired up by the shortcomings of COP 26. They say it's time for people of faith to give up on hope as a strategy for climate justice, and instead to embrace resistance. They plan to continue to march and protest to send a powerful message to politicians and business leaders around the world. "We will not stop until we have a world governed by compassion, love, and justice."

Florida Veterans for Common Sense advocates for climate action at various levels. Our global warming report ([Urgency and Action: Drawdown to Reverse Global Warming](#)) offers specific actions in one's own realm, for influencing others and nudging government to act. It's a hands-on, practical guide to climate action.

A new "how to," action book is Paul Hawken's *Regeneration: ending the climate crisis in one generation*. Mother Earth has been providing us lately with home schooling and the first lesson is to stop degeneration. The idea is to pivot 180 degrees to regeneration. The book and its companion [website](#) plot a pathway for action to end the climate crisis.

### Summary

COP 26 has achieved more than any climate summit, but it failed to gain an agreement bold enough to achieve the aim of limiting global average temperatures to the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold. This exacerbates the climate crisis and puts more pressure on global leaders to return next year with more suitable pledges.

This outcome also makes it more urgent for each of us to make plans to adapt to and prepare for increased warming and all the threats this presents.

Also, even though we do not know what other nations will do in terms of acting boldly, it is in our self-interest to take bold action ourselves so we can avoid the worst-case scenario (blowing thru the threshold of 1.5°C global temperature increase above preindustrial levels very quickly – probably by 2040). If we take bold and aggressive action, and others do not act, we would blow thru 1.5 degree C, probably at a later date. But we would have the economic and health benefits of zero emission energy.

Bold action to drawdown global warming is in order. We encourage all citizens to act in their own realms and to urge others, and government at all levels, to do their part.

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