

EXPLAINED

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Smoke rises from a coal-powered steel plant at Hehal village near Ranchi, in Jharkhand. | Photo Credit: AP

The story so far: Leaders from around 200 countries will gather in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh from November 6-18 for the [27th round of the Conference of Parties, or COP27](#), to deliberate on a global response to the increasing threat of [climate change](#). The annual summit comes at a crucial juncture against the backdrop of global inflation, energy, food and supply chain crises, fuelled by an ongoing [war in Ukraine](#) and exacerbated by extreme weather events, with data showing that the [world is not doing enough](#). At COP27, negotiations are likely to focus on efforts to decarbonise, finance climate action measures and other issues related to food security, energy and biodiversity.

The participants at COPs are signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, adopted 30 years ago. At present, the UNFCCC has 198 members. The first COP was held in 1995 in Berlin. Since then, a few COPs have stood out with historic agreements. For instance, the Kyoto Protocol, adopted at COP3 in 1997, committed industrialised economies to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. COP21, another significant conference, ended with the 2015 Paris Agreement in which member countries agreed to keep global warming below 2°C, ideally no more than 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels. The previous summit, hosted by Glasgow, ended with the Glasgow Climate Pact that called for the 'phasing down' of unabated coal power.

COP27 will seek to strengthen a global response and deliberate if wealthy nations emitting carbon dioxide should compensate for the loss to developing countries with a lower carbon footprint. Broadly, the summit seeks to "accelerate global climate action through emissions reduction, scaled-up adaptation efforts and enhanced flows of appropriate finance" through its four priority areas of mitigation, adaptation, finance and collaboration. As per the presidential vision statement, COP27 will be about moving from negotiations and planning to the implementation of promises and pledges made. Experts say the conference could emerge as an "in-between COP," since climate change goals have either passed or are not due soon, giving COP27 a platform to push forward issues that developed economies pass over.

The world has changed since the last COP in Glasgow. Extreme weather events and scientific reports are a stark reminder of the devastating impact of human pressure on the climate and the inefficiency of existing plans. These reports, likely to leave an impact on political agenda and environmental diplomacy, have built momentum for the Egypt summit.

A recent UN report has warned that "efforts remain insufficient" to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, as per the Paris Agreement. The UN Climate Change report says the world is failing to act with urgency to curb greenhouse gas emissions despite the planet witnessing climate-enhanced heatwaves, storms and floods after just 1.2°C of warming. Even if the countries meet their pledges, we are on track for around 2.5°C of warming, which will be disastrous. The findings are based on an analysis of the latest Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), or country-specific action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts. The report adds that emissions compared to 2010 levels need to fall 45% by 2030 to meet the Paris deal's goal.

This year's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) assessment report](#) stated that climate change has produced irreversible losses to natural ecosystems and has warned of

severe consequences to food supply, human health and biodiversity loss if carbon emissions from human activity are not sharply reduced. As per the report, 3-14% of all species on earth face a very high risk of extinction at even 1.5°C, with devastating losses at higher temperatures in the current situation. It adds that limiting warming to around 1.5°C requires global greenhouse gas emissions to peak before 2025 and be reduced by 43% by 2030. Coal-fired power plants operating without technology to capture and store carbon would need to be shuttered by 2050, a warning relevant to India which operates roughly 10% of global capacity.

The [World Resources Institute](#) also paints a grim picture in its report. It suggests that the world needs to curb emissions six times faster by 2030 than the current trajectory to meet the 1.5°C target. Of the 40 indicators examined, none is on track to reach the 2030 target. “Unabated coal-based electricity generation, although declining worldwide, continues to expand across some regions, while unabated fossil gas-based electricity, is still rising globally,” it notes.

Mitigation measures to keep temperatures below 2°C and the need for climate change adaptation mentioned in these reports are likely to come up for discussion at the COP27. “Raising ambition and urgent implementation is indispensable for addressing the climate crisis. This includes cutting and removing emissions faster and a wider scope of economic sectors, to protect us from more severe adverse climate impacts and devastating loss and damage,” COP27 President-designate Sameh Shoukry has said. He believes that the 27th summit will be the world’s watershed moment on climate action.

India is one of the 197 countries that has promised to limit the increase to no more than 1.5°C by 2030. It is also working on a long-term roadmap to achieve its target of net zero emissions by 2070. [Prime Minister Narendra Modi had committed at the Glasgow summit](#) that the country would get its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030, meet half of its energy requirement from renewable sources and reduce carbon emissions. India is the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world. Though India updated its climate pledges in line with commitments made at the previous summit, experts have slammed New Delhi for not setting ambitious targets. The [Climate Action Tracker](#), an independent analysis that tracks government climate action classifies India’s action as “highly insufficient”. It says India’s continued support to the coal industry undermines a green recovery. India had previously come under intense criticism over its stand to “phase down” coal power, instead of phasing it out, at COP26. “While stronger on paper, India will already achieve these targets with its current level of climate action and the new targets will not drive further emissions reductions,” the tracker notes.

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The country is, however, expected to play a key role at COP27. A government official told *Associated Press* that a key issue for India at the summit will be financing both — adapting to climate change and limiting fossil fuel emissions. The official said the country wants the \$100 billion-a-year pledge of climate funds for developing countries, a promise that remains unfulfilled.

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