

Policy pointers

All countries must urgently make deep carbon emissions cuts in line with 1.5°C pathways that reflect their fair share of global efforts to tackle climate change.

Developed countries must fulfil their commitment to provide US\$100 billion a year by 2020, as well as increasing it to reflect the actual needs of developing countries — particularly the Least Developed Countries.

The UN Climate Action Summit in 2019 is an opportunity for all countries to showcase their plans and demonstrate real commitment to the Paris Agreement goals.

All countries must greatly scale up their commitments to cut emissions in their Nationally Determined Contributions in early 2020.

Time to redress the globally unjust cost of climate change

Climate change has global impacts, but hits poor and vulnerable communities first and worst. The 47 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are at a disproportionately high risk of adverse consequences with global warming of 1.5°C and beyond. LDCs contribute the least to global warming. But over the last 50 years, 69% of worldwide deaths caused by climate-related disasters were in LDCs. Now, a rapid global response is urgently needed. All countries must do their fair share to rapidly reduce emissions and provide adequate support to the poorest and most vulnerable. Significantly more climate finance needs to be provided by developed countries. Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce emissions must become vastly more ambitious, based on each country's level of responsibility for causing climate change and its capacity to address the global crisis.

Climate change impacts are severe and global in reach. It is causing extreme weather events to hit with greater intensity and frequency. Sea levels are rising and increasing ocean acidification is damaging our marine ecosystems. Meanwhile, land degradation is harming food security and biodiversity. But the damage climate change causes and the challenges it brings are not experienced equally. Over one billion people live in LDCs — and they face a disproportionately high risk of adverse consequences with global warming of 1.5°C and beyond.¹

Human activity has already caused about 1°C of warming above pre-industrial levels. If it continues at this rate, the world will be 1.5°C hotter than pre-industrial levels by 2040. Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C stated that: 'Warming of 1.5°C is not considered 'safe' for most nations, communities, ecosystems and sectors, and poses significant risks to natural and human

systems'. The report emphasises that the effects of this level of global warming will be 'catastrophic and irreversible'.²

We have long known that emitting greenhouse gases is causing global warming and its devastating effects. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in 1992. But since then, greenhouse gas levels have continued to climb — and show no sign of peaking.

Clearly, current efforts to cut emissions are inadequate. Countries must pledge to go further. Under the Paris Agreement, countries determine their own emissions reduction targets and the measures they will take to support the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals. A country's pledge — known as its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) — is meant to be as ambitious as possible and represent the country's fair share of the global effort, based on its level of

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responsibility for causing climate change and its respective capabilities to address the crisis.³ Yet even if every country fully implemented its current NDC, global average temperatures are still expected to rise to 3°C by the end of the century.⁴ This lack of global ambition to reduce emissions has grave consequences, with impacts grossly exceeding vulnerable countries' ability to cope.

Inequalities in emissions and the carbon budget

Annual global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by more than half in the next decade to have just a 66% chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.⁵ The limited carbon budget remaining (the maximum amount of CO₂ we can emit to achieve this goal) must be fairly shared among all countries. But developed countries must take the lead in combating climate change and its adverse effects, as they have agreed to do through the Convention.⁶ As the IPCC report states, 'The benefits from industrialisation have been unevenly distributed and those who benefited most historically also have contributed most to the current climate problem and so bear greater responsibility'.²

In contrast, LDCs have played hardly any role in causing climate change. On average, a person living in an LDC emits 0.319 tonnes of CO₂ a year. This is significantly less than the global average of 4.981 tonnes — and dwarfed by that of people in high-income countries, who average 10.926 tonnes.⁷ As a group, LDCs emit less than 1% of global CO₂ emissions per year.⁷ And when the cumulative emissions that have caused the 1°C of warming to date are considered, the proportion contributed by LDCs is even smaller: since 1850, LDCs are responsible for just 0.44% of CO₂ emissions.⁸

Why LDCs are most vulnerable

Climate change brings numerous challenges to LDCs:

- Loss and damage caused by the physical impacts of climate change
- High costs of adapting to climate change to avert and minimise its impacts
- The challenge of developing and lifting people out of poverty within a limited carbon budget.

We can ramp up mitigation efforts to decrease global emissions. We can take all possible steps to adapt to climate change. But much of the

loss and damage it causes will still be unavoidable. It is already happening and cannot be entirely undone. It has taken a massive toll on LDCs, whose economies are already small. But the cost is worse than just economic damage. Lives are being lost.

LDCs are highly dependent on the natural environment for their food and livelihoods. More than 60% of employment in LDCs is in agriculture.⁹ They are particularly at risk from temperature increases and variability in precipitation patterns, especially extremes such as droughts, storms and flooding. The IPCC confirms that climate change exacerbates land degradation processes, while warming, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of extreme events have affected food security.¹⁰

But not only are LDCs among the most exposed to climate change impacts, they also have the least capacity to withstand and address the effects. The UN classifies countries as 'least developed' according to three criteria. One is a gross national income per capita of less than US\$1,025.¹¹ Over 36% of people in LDCs live in poverty, on less than US\$1.90 a day.⁹

As a result, LDCs are more vulnerable to climate extremes, which are increasing in intensity and frequency. Over the last 50 years, 69% of all deaths caused by extreme weather — including droughts, wildfires, floods, landslides, extreme temperatures and storms — occurred in LDCs. A vastly disproportionate percentage of people in LDCs die due to climate-related disasters compared to those in wealthier countries (Figure 1).¹²

In just the first half of 2019, drought, floods, landslides and storms have killed over 1,200 people in LDCs and affected almost 11 million more (Table 1).¹² Looking at similar events between January 2015 and July 2019, over 8,500 people have been killed in LDCs, with nearly 105 million more affected.¹² Added to the devastation and the loss of life are vast economic costs. Only 20% of LDC climate disasters in the last five years have had their costs estimated, at a total US\$7.2 billion. But although a fraction of the true cost, it is still a significant burden to LDCs.¹² The 2016 storms in Haiti, for example, caused US\$2 billion in damage, more than 25% of the country's GDP. The 2017 floods in Nepal and the 2015 drought in Ethiopia both had a total cost of more than 2% of each country's GDP in those years (with reported costs of US\$595 million and US\$1.4 billion, respectively).^{7,12}

Support climate action in LDCs

The impacts of climate change on LDCs are compounded by the unprecedented challenge of lifting people out of poverty within a limited carbon budget. Currently, only 45% of people in LDCs have access to electricity.⁹ Increasing access is key to their development. But there is no room for unfettered extraction and consumption of fossil fuels in the remaining carbon budget. This highlights the importance of initiatives like the LDC Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development (LDC REEEI), which aims, among other things, to achieve 100% access to sufficient, affordable, modern and renewable energy by all citizens in LDCs by 2030.¹³ Its vision is that renewable energy will become a source of income for many and a way to empower communities, breaking dependencies on other countries and big firms.

As a group, LDCs have initiated and driven two other initiatives for climate action. The LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC) aims to build capacity and climate change knowledge and expertise within LDCs by fostering a South–South collaborative network across LDC universities. The LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) aims to improve the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of adaptation efforts, and support climate-resilient development that decreases vulnerability and enables communities to flourish.

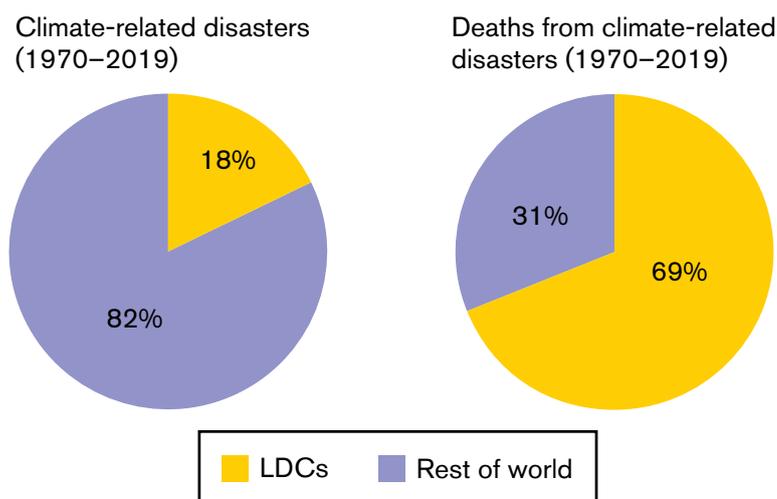
At a national level, LDCs are taking climate action seriously: every fraction of a degree of warming matters. They have set ambitious targets for emissions reductions in their own NDCs. Of the 47 LDCs, 43 have ratified the Paris Agreement and submitted an NDC. Of those, 35 include targets to reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.¹⁴

For these initiatives to succeed and for LDCs to fulfil their NDCs (which include plans for adaptation and addressing loss and damage, as well as reducing/avoiding emissions), much greater support is needed from the international community, through technology transfer, capacity building and finance. While several potential funding sources exist, the most important for LDCs is international public climate finance. Replenishing multilateral climate funds is critical — and those funds must support actions in LDCs, led by LDCs.

Climate finance is crucial

The high climate costs that LDCs face are largely as a result of the actions of other countries. Recognising this, in Cancun in 2010,

Figure 1. Pie charts showing proportion of disasters and deaths from disaster



While only 18% of climate-related disasters occurred in LDCs in the last 50 years, 69% of worldwide deaths caused by such disasters during that period were in LDCs, even though only 13% of the world's population live there.

developed country Parties to the UNFCCC committed to jointly mobilising US\$100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries in tackling climate

Table 1. 2019 climate disasters in LDCs (drought, storms, floods and landslides)

Country	Number of deaths	Number affected
Afghanistan	155	129,661
Angola	30	5,330
Bangladesh	76	5,028,061
Burundi*	10	
The Comoros	8	345,311
Haiti	8	3,108
Malawi	67	886,655
Mali	15	507
Mozambique	671	705,600
Myanmar*		6,200
Nepal	119	82,541
Somalia*		1,500,000
South Sudan	3	65,352
The Sudan*		6,198
United Republic of Tanzania	5	2,005,000
Uganda	84	132,553
Yemen	8	80,000
Zambia*	4	
Total	1,263	10,982,077

*Data are incomplete

Source: CRED-EMDAT database¹²

change.¹⁵ However, the cost for LDCs alone — aside from other developing countries — to fund their mitigation and adaptation measures has been estimated at US\$93 billion per year in total, based on the plans outlined in LDCs' NDCs.¹⁶

Clearly, the US\$100 billion per year commitment is inadequate. Even so, developed country Parties have yet to meet this commitment. The UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance reported that finance flows from Annex II Parties (long-term developed countries) to non-Annex I Parties (developing countries, including LDCs) totalled only US\$38 billion in 2016.¹⁷ However, Oxfam suggests that the true amount of climate-specific assistance provided was just US\$16–21 billion.¹⁸

In addition, climate finance is not reaching where it is most needed. LDCs only receive 24% of bilateral flows of climate finance and 21% of finance approved by multilateral climate funds.¹⁷ And an estimated less than 10% of climate finance is channelled to local levels, where it can be used more effectively to deliver sustainable results with lasting impact.¹⁹ With fewer resources, countries like the LDCs may struggle to access the climate finance that is available. Improving disbursement processes of funds will help ensure finance is easily accessible to those that need it.

Now, with the 'by 2020' deadline agreed in Cancun only months away, there is a clear need for developed-country Parties to vastly — and rapidly — scale up the levels of climate finance

they provide to developing countries, and to ensure it reaches those that need it most and those best placed to maximise its lasting benefits.

We need a rapid global response

For wealthy, high-emitting countries, rapid domestic emissions reductions and providing climate finance must go hand in hand. For many countries, contributing their fair share of the global response to climate change requires more than making deep cuts to domestic emissions. It also involves providing financial support to poor countries so they can do the same, to ensure no one is left behind.

The time to act is now. Governments — particularly those of developed countries — must demonstrate that they are serious about achieving the Paris Agreement's goals. There are two pivotal moments approaching: the Climate Action Summit in New York in September 2019 and the key 2020 deadline for submitting or updating NDCs for the first implementation cycle. Both are an opportunity for governments to showcase their plans and commitments that are in line with 1.5°C pathways and reflect their fair share of the global effort.

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Notes

¹ IPCC (2018) Global Warming of 1.5°C: Summary for Policymakers. https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf / ² IPCC (2018) Special report: Global Warming of 1.5°C. www.ipcc.ch/sr15 / ³ United Nations (2015). Paris Agreement, Article 4.3. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf. Each Party's successive NDC will represent a progression beyond the Party's then current NDC and reflect its highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances. / ⁴ Climate Action Tracker (2018) Warming projections global update. <http://bit.ly/2lrzDaP> / ⁵ UN Environment (2018) Emissions Gap Report 2018. www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2018. In 2017, total annual greenhouse gas emissions were 53.5 GtCO₂e. To have a 66% chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C, they must be 24 GtCO₂e in 2030. / ⁶ United Nations (1992) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article 3.1. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> / ⁷ World Bank Group, World Bank Open Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/> / ⁸ Climate Equity Reference Calculator. <https://calculator.climateequityreference.org/> / ⁹ UNCTAD (2018) Statistical tables on the least developed countries. <http://bit.ly/2kqlzNp> / ¹⁰ IPCC (2019) Climate Change and Land: Summary for Policymakers. <http://bit.ly/2jVHgp0> / ¹¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Analysis. LDC Identification Criteria & Indicators. <https://bit.ly/2JgoAY1> / ¹² Based on data from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters International Disaster Database (CREED-EMDAT). www.emdat.be / ¹³ LDC Group on Climate Change (2019) The Least Developed Countries Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative for Sustainable Development. <http://bit.ly/2lyelli> / ¹⁴ UNCTAD (2017) The Least Developed Countries report 2017: transformational energy access. https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ldcr2017_en.pdf / ¹⁵ Decision 1/CP.16 (the Cancun Agreements), Paragraph 98, from UNFCCC COP16. <http://bit.ly/2lUsVdA> / ¹⁶ Rai, N, Soanes, M, Norton, A, Anderson, S, Steele, P, Tenzing, J and MacGregor, J (2015) A fair climate deal in Paris means adequate finance to deliver INDCs in LDCs. IIED, London. pubs.iied.org/17333IIED / ¹⁷ UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance (2018) 2018 Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows Technical Report. <https://bit.ly/30vrdOY> / ¹⁸ Oxfam (2018) Climate Finance Shadow Report 2018: Assessing progress towards the \$100 billion commitment. www.oxfam.org/en/research/climate-finance-shadow-report-2018 / ¹⁹ Soanes, M, Rai, N, Steele, P, Shakya, C and MacGregor, J (2017) Delivering real change: getting international climate finance to the local level. IIED, London. pubs.iied.org/10178IIED