

COP26 - THE WORLD IS WATCHING

What to look out for at COP26

The world's scientists, activists, indigenous peoples, children and now even a [dinosaur](#) are all telling us that this year is a "make or break" for our planet's climate. And the COP26 climate change conference, which just kicked off in Glasgow, must be a turning point in our pattern of greenhouse gas emissions or we risk – very literally – breaking our climate.

If countries are to limit global temperature rise in line with the Paris Agreement to stave off the worst effects of climate change, they will need to ramp up ambition. According to the latest [Emissions Gap Report](#) by the UN Environment Programme, the current climate commitments by 192 countries of the world put us on a path towards a catastrophic 2.7°C of warming in less than 80 years.

With the global average temperature reaching about 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, the climate crisis has well and truly arrived, and we are all experiencing its impact, no matter where we live. Further delaying climate action will make every single of our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) harder to attain.

Action for our climate and for the SDGs must go hand in hand and cannot be pursued in isolation. Working to realize the synergies between the two can help scale up ambition, commitments and results, and deliver the Goals for people and the planet.

But with tens of thousands of participants, hundreds of speeches, side events, declarations and commitments, the COP26 climate conference can be confusing. How can we tell if national leaders are really delivering bold, large-scale and rapid actions or just talking?

UN DESA has produced an explainer video to help you weed out the empty promises from true climate action. In the run-up to COP 26 and during the conference, keep your eyes peeled for announcements of concrete climate action around three priority areas:

- *Swiftly closing the emissions gap* to keep global temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius through rapid, bold emissions cuts and net-zero commitments.
- *Increasing international finance for adaptation* to at least half the total spent on climate action.
- *Meeting the existing commitment to provide \$100 billion in international climate finance* each year so that developing countries can invest in green technologies, and protect lives and livelihoods against worsening climate impacts.

UN DESA will once again host the [SDG Pavilion](#) at the climate conference to provide interactive space for all interested stakeholders to share their experiences and knowledge and to help accelerate action on the interlinked, universally agreed global visions: the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The full schedule of events and participation details will be made available on the SDG Pavilion website shortly.

Join us in climate action!



EXPERT VOICES



Sustainable transport – where do we go from here?

Responsible for over a quarter of all direct greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels, transport is a key element of the climate action puzzle. As we transition to a zero-emissions future, can we decarbonize

our transport in a way that leaves no one behind? We ask Julie Powell, Sustainable Development Officer at UN DESA.

The landmark second Global Sustainable Transport Conference just wrapped up in Beijing. What did it achieve?

“Sustainable transport—with its objectives of universal access, enhanced safety, reduced environmental and climate impact, improved resilience, and greater efficiency—is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement but has yet to deliver on its full potential.

The Global Sustainable Transport Conference provided a great opportunity to focus attention on the opportunities, challenges, and solutions towards achieving sustainable transport worldwide, bringing together approximately 1,000 participants representing over 130 governments, UN system and other stakeholders.

The Beijing Statement, presented by the Minister of Transport of China at the closing ceremony, contains recommendations to guide implementation for accelerating progress towards sustainable transport worldwide.”

As the COP 26 climate conference kicks off, how can we reduce carbon emissions from global transport without disrupting this vital lifeline for trade and development? Can we have the cake and eat it too?

“In his opening statement at the Conference, UN Secretary-General Guterres stated that transport, which accounts for more than one quarter of global greenhouse gases, is key to getting on track to mitigate climate change. He emphasized that ‘we must decarbonize all means of transport, in order to get to net-zero emissions by 2050.’

Efforts to improve the energy efficiency of all modes of transport and to increase the use of zero-carbon fuels must be deepened and extended without delay over the next decade, as waiting to act would prevent us from reaching climate targets. Technological advances, such as electric vehicles, alternative fuels, as well as increased use of public transport, walking and cycling, are expected to play a major role in reducing overall road transport-related emissions. Relevant approaches, technologies and commitments by various stakeholders exist, but we must now urgently put them into action. Various noteworthy examples were presented at the Conference, including the Air Transport Action Group’s commitment to net-zero aviation by 2050 and the International Road Transport Union’s pledge to decarbonize commercial road transport by 2050.”

What’s the next stop for sustainable transport? What actions should we expect from countries, businesses, and the UN in the near future?

“Sustainable transport has been gaining increasing momentum in global discussions and international forums and we expect this trend to continue, including at COP26 and the high-level meeting on road safety expected next year. The UN will continue to work closely with all partners to come up with sustainable solutions which can accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, including building resilience to future crises and shocks.”

What can our readers do in their daily lives to support sustainable transport?

“We would of course hope and encourage that all users try to use public transport, such as buses and subways, as well as walk and cycle as much as possible. We are aware of the lack of adequate transport systems in many countries and that transport safety, among others, remains a major issue and we are working together with all our UN or non-UN partners to change this situation so that all people can benefit from sustainable transport in the future.”

Learn more about the UN Sustainable Transport Conference [here](#).





4 things you need to know about your toilet

Who really cares about toilets? 3.6 billion people do. Because they don't have one. Today, nearly half the world's population live without access to this important sanitary facility that many of us take for granted. As we are gearing up for World Toilet Day on 19 November, here are four things you should know about your toilet.

1. We should all care more about toilets

If you have one, thank it. Life without a toilet is dirty, dangerous and undignified. Globally, at least two billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces. Every day, over 700 children under the age of five die from diarrhoea linked to unsafe water, sanitation and poor hygiene.

2. Public health depends on toilets

When some people in a community do not have safe toilets, everyone's health is threatened. Poor sanitation contaminates drinking-water sources, rivers, beaches and food crops, spreading deadly diseases among the wider population.

3. Toilets drive improvements in gender equality and in society as a whole

Toilets protect women and girls' dignity, safety and health, especially during menstruation and pregnancy. For every \$1 invested in basic sanitation up to \$5 is returned in saved medical costs and increased productivity, and jobs are created along the entire service chain.

4. There will be no sustainable future without toilets

Governments must work four times faster and ensure toilets for all by 2030, in line with the promise of Sustainable Development Goal 6 to 'ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.'

We urgently need massive investment and innovation to quadruple progress along the 'sanitation chain', from toilets to the transport, collection and treatment of human waste. The public and private sectors must work with unserved communities to create sustainable sanitation systems that work for them.

Learn more and find ways to show you care: <http://www.worldtoiletday.org>





Impacting climate as a young innovator

By Xiangkun (Elvis) Cao, Founder of C2X and MIT Climate & Sustainability Consortium Impact Fellow

From a kid in a small village in China to Forbes 30 under 30

Born and growing up in a remote countryside in China in the early 90's, I have witnessed first-hand the environmental burden of unregulated swine wastewater pouring into the rivers in my village. Later, I learned from a middle school chemistry class that human civilization faces another environmental challenge, even greater than pollution: global climate change, and that scientists have been tirelessly exploring technological solutions. [That idea was the spark](#) – I went on to receive five academic degrees, including two Bachelor's, two Master's, and a Ph.D. degree in China, Canada, and the United States, even though [neither of my parents ever graduated from high school](#). All this with a single focus in my mind – helping the world fight the climate crisis. During my Ph.D. study at Cornell University, I landed on the [Forbes 30 under 30 in Energy for North America](#) for a reactor

project to convert carbon dioxide, the waste product from industrial facilities that is largely responsible for global warming, into sustainable fuels and feedstocks.

Reimagining our carbon liability as an opportunity

Trained as an engineer through my past education, I gradually developed the notion that, with the way our system is constructed, unless someone stands to use technological solutions to make money from waste CO₂ emissions, it's challenging to get anyone to do anything about climate change. Throughout my Ph.D. at Cornell, I had the opportunity to witness the reactor project I worked on scaled up from a [proof-of-concept prototype](#) in our lab at Ithaca, NY, to [real-world deployment](#) in the \$20M Carbon XPRIZE finals at Gillette, WY. By upscaling carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) technologies, there's potential to create a profitable business while mitigating global climate change.

The nexus of technology, business, and policy

Having realized a vital issue with the conversation around climate is that there is little mention of the economic benefits, I founded the [C2X](#) initiative, aiming to change the narrative surrounding large-scale sustainability operations and to redefine CO₂ as a resource, not a liability. With this initiative, I engaged various stakeholders in the climate sector and empowered the youth and the public to talk about CCUS and climate actions.

As Phil De Luna and I recently wrote in [Matter](#), "policy helps spur markets, business is the engine for action, and technology is the catalyst for change." I believe innovation happens at the nexus of technology, business, and policy. Earlier this year, I participated in the [UN DESA Global Policy Dialogues for Climate Action](#), and served as a [UN Technical Working Group Member on Energy Transition](#) to co-develop an action-oriented [global roadmap](#) on global energy sector decarbonization strategies. These experiences also enabled me to see public engagement as an efficient way to inform policymaking. Recently, I also engaged business leaders on CCUS and sustainability. Because of my effort in C2X, I was selected into the World Energy Council's [Future Energy Leaders Programme \(FEL-100\)](#), which is "designed to help shape, inspire and grow energy leaders of tomorrow."

Maximizing the impact of youth actions by meaningful partnership

As a young person working to impact climate, I recall various moments of self-doubt and despair at the rate of climate change. In those difficult times, I found building meaningful partnerships with external organizations helped me overcome these challenges and forge ahead to make an impact in the climate sector. C2X recently joined the [Young Changemaker on Sustainable WASH Solutions Programme](#) to receive mentorship from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Young Champions of the Earth Competition Programme to receive support from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). We also received funding and mentorship from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) through their [Youth Innovation Challenge](#). Personally, I also joined the MIT Climate & Sustainability Consortium (MCSC) as its [Impact Fellow](#), with the mission to transcend academia and industry to enable near-term change for a more sustainable future, at the intersection of [MIT Climate and Sustainability Consortium](#) and [member companies](#).

The clock is ticking for urgent climate actions

I was born when atmospheric CO₂ concentration was at [355 parts per million](#) (ppm). Today, it has reached over 413 ppm and is showing no signs of stopping. While "the Greta effect" has shown [youth actions can make a great impact](#), even more meaningful climate actions of youth, by youth, for youth are needed more than ever. After all, it will be us, young people, who will have to live with the consequences of global climate change for the rest of our lives. The clock is ticking, and youth needs to act now.

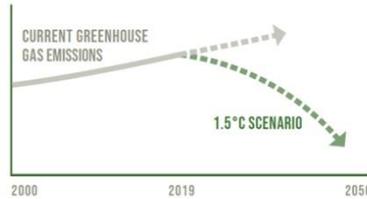
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SDG 13 IN NUMBERS



RISING
GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS
REQUIRE SHIFTING ECONOMIES
TOWARDS CARBON NEUTRALITY



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