

Summit on Climate Change



Power Green Growth, Protect the Planet

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The Summit on Climate Change

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a Summit on Climate Change?

At the end of 2007 in Bali, countries agreed to launch new negotiations on a global agreement to address climate change. Their target for concluding the agreement was the 2009 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. To reach that goal, they set up an accelerated schedule for negotiations.

But paving the way for constructive negotiations have proven extraordinarily complex. Countries have now reached a point where political direction from the highest level is needed. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has convened this Summit to focus political attention at the highest level on the need for accelerated action on climate change, and to enable national leaders to provide clear political impetus to official negotiators so they can make rapid and significant progress before Copenhagen. The Summit is premised on the notion that, with sufficient political will, countries can reach an agreed outcome in Copenhagen that is fair, comprehensive, equitable, and satisfies the scientific bottom line for an effective response.

Why should a Head of State or Government attend the Summit?

Climate change is the most fundamental geo-political issue of our time, affecting everything from the health of our economy to the health of our citizens, energy security to development and international security. By definition, it is a Head of State issue requiring immediate prioritization.

Action is required now. To stop climate change from slipping out of control, the need for a fair, effective and comprehensive global climate deal in Copenhagen is unequivocal. Success in Copenhagen can jumpstart a transformation of the global economy, strengthen climate-resilient development, and – most urgently – assist the world's poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

Why do we need a Summit when Climate Change is being discussed at other high-level meetings?

It is true that aspects of climate change have been on the agenda of other high-level meetings, such as the G-8 and the Major Economies Forum. It will also be on the agenda of the G-20 Summit that will be held in Pittsburgh. None of these meetings, however, are as inclusive as the Summit on Climate Change convened by the Secretary-General. It is the only high-level meeting where all countries, from the largest emitters to the most vulnerable, can meet on an equal footing. Climate change is a global problem that demands a global solution. Discussions must involve all countries.

What outcome will the Summit produce?

The Summit will not be a negotiation, but a forum where world leaders can talk directly to each other. There will not be a formal outcome, such as a declaration or communiqué. The Secretary-General will issue a Chair's Summary at the conclusion of the Summit. This Summary will capture the ideas presented during the discussions and in the prerecorded statements from Summit participants, and will represent the expressed political will of leaders to reach a successful outcome at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

What will the Chairman's Summary accomplish?

The Chair's Summary will mobilize political impetus and vision that will provide direction to negotiators. It will send a strong signal that Heads of State and Government believe an agreement in Copenhagen is necessary, and that they will invest the necessary political will and effort into realizing this effort. The Summary itself will not be legally binding.

Will the Summit set goals or targets?

Leaders will not be negotiating goals or targets at the Summit. That is the role of the formal negotiations process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Will the high-level discussions be open to the public?

The opening and closing sessions, where a group of leaders will address the sessions, will be open to the public and will be webcast. Most of the discussions, however, will take place in a series of roundtables — four in the morning and four in the afternoon — where only leaders or representatives at the highest possible level will attend. The goal is to enable focused, candid discussions among leaders that help advance political momentum. The closing session, where the Secretary-General will provide his Summary, will be open. In addition, the Secretary-General will hold a press briefing immediately following the closing session.

Who is chairing the roundtables?

The roundtables will be co-chaired by two Heads of State or Government, usually one from a developing country and the other from a developed country. This is to ensure a balance in the discussions and to allow all concerns to be aired. A list of the roundtable chairs will be provided ahead of the Summit.

More information: www.un.org/climatechange