

Key issues for COP27

Twin Crises: Climate and Biodiversity

We live in a world suffering from both a climate and biodiversity crisis. The impacts of climate change were evidenced dramatically in Pakistan's floods this year, where one third of the country was flooded. This is only one example of the threat climate change poses to an estimated 3 billion people in vulnerable areas. The biodiversity crisis, the dramatic loss of living organisms on Earth, is an equally urgent issue, with predictions by scientists that if habitats continue to be lost at the current rate, by the end of the century 40% of all species will be extinct.¹

A Rocha UK believes that God created the world and everything in it (Psalm 24:3-4), and that Christians have a double biblical mandate to look after the environment out of care for God's creation in nature and out of love for people - our local and global neighbours. The climate crisis degrades and destroys nature and is already having catastrophic impacts on people globally, particularly the poor and already vulnerable. Therefore we believe it is right for Christians to address their own impacts on climate change and to call for urgent climate action and climate justice by governments, businesses, and the churches themselves.

The UN Climate Conference COP27 is a critical moment for the world's national governments to scale up action to address the climate crisis in response to the scientific evidence of the need for much greater urgency, the injustice of the impacts on people and countries, and recognising the strong links between the biodiversity and climate crises.

Climate Mitigation: every fraction of a degree of warming matters

The 2015 Paris Agreement committed governments to keep global temperature rise below 2°C and as 'close to 1.5°C as possible', a goal which was further committed to at COP26 in the Glasgow Climate Pact. However, the most recent UN Environment Report found that updated national pledges since COP26 have made very little difference to projected 2030 emissions. In fact, current *policies* in place point to a 2.8°C temperature rise, and implementation of current *pledges* would result in 2.4-2.6°C rise, both by the end of the century.²

Temperature rises of this magnitude would result in catastrophic climate breakdown. Only urgent and systematic transformation of our economies, including energy production and consumption, land management, and food production and diet, can deliver the cuts needed to avoid this. The report found that emissions would need to be cut by 45% by 2030 to keep on track for 1.5°C and by 30% for 2°C. Therefore, it is crucial that countries represented at COP27 increase their ambitions (targets) to cut greenhouse gases, and adopt and implement 'mitigation' policies (policies to reduce emissions) that will actually achieve these higher targets. Already, devastating climate impacts are being felt worldwide, with the flooding in Pakistan in the summer resulting in the displacement of millions and the death of an estimated 2,600 people.³ The UN found that there is now 'no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place', however countries must continue to work to keep as close to 1.5°C as possible. Extreme climate events will only get more frequent and destructive with every fraction of a degree of warming.

Climate Justice: Finance and Loss and Damage

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement all call on financial support from wealthier nations for lower income and more vulnerable countries. This recognises that the

¹ <https://earthjustice.org/features/biodiversity-crisis>

² <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>

³

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/06/pakistan-pm-says-he-should-not-have-to-beg-for-help-after-catastrophic-floods>

burden of climate disasters often falls on countries who have historically contributed the least to global carbon emissions. This finance is needed for mitigation, to help countries make investments to reduce emissions, and to support adaptation to the adverse effects and impacts of climate change.⁴ Wealthy countries at COP26 failed to deliver on a long-standing pledge made in 2009 to provide \$100 billion a year from 2020 of climate financing to lower income countries. This finance is needed urgently by countries at the frontline of the crisis who are facing enormous economic impacts from climate change. For example, the Prime Minister of Pakistan estimated the economic cost of the July and August floods at \$30-\$35bn, a staggering burden for a country responsible for 0.8% of global emissions.⁵

There is also the linked issue of 'loss and damage': the call for compensation for irreversible climate impacts which go beyond what communities can adapt to. Such impacts could include damage to the land and crops, homes or infrastructure, as well as harm to human health, loss of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, and the destruction of biodiversity and habitats.⁶ At the core of this issue is that, as a matter of justice, countries with historically high emissions should take responsibility and pay for the irreversible loss and damage experienced by climate vulnerable and low income countries. There is currently no global climate financing facility to address climate-induced 'loss and damage'. The issue was raised at COP26 and this resulted in the establishment of the Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage. Now as we come to COP27 the UK government must use the opportunity to commit to acting on this urgent issue and support the establishment of an international fund for loss and damage.

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/topics/introduction-to-climate-finance>

⁵

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/12/pakistan-floods-impact-years-crops-farms>

⁶

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-is-climate-change-loss-and-damage/>

Climate and nature: deploying 'climate solutions' in the natural world

Nature itself can contribute to addressing climate change and there is increasing interest in harnessing this potential. 'Nature-based solutions' (Nbs) to climate change can build resilience in nature, communities, and food systems. Nature stores biological carbon within ecosystems, such as forests, mangroves, soils, grasslands, and wetlands. Thus, stopping the destruction of these ecosystems and restoring them at scale will contribute to climate mitigation efforts. Investing in thriving and more connected ecosystems will also contribute to adaptation for both people and nature. Restored habitat, for example, can enable species to move and adapt in response to the changing climate. Tree planting can protect human communities from climate impacts, by moderating rising heat in urban areas, protect coastal areas from rising sea levels and storm surges, and increase drought resistance in rangelands.⁷

However, there are potential dangers with nature-based solutions which must be avoided. There is a risk that countries and companies use carbon offsetting schemes to delay and distract from the need to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions necessary to meet mitigation targets. Secondly, Nbs may open the door to mass land grabbing, affecting primarily Global South and Indigenous and other rural communities because of the scale of land needed to meet the increasing demand for offsetting.⁸ Any Nbs must be implemented in a way that works for communities at the front lines of the climate crisis. Finally, when implemented poorly, Nbs can both worsen the climate crisis and have serious negative impacts upon nature, for example by replacing native forests and

⁷ <https://www.arocha.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Nature-based-Solutions-to-climate-change-A-Rocha-worldwide-family-position-October-2021.pdf>

⁸ https://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/COP27-Whats-at-stake-regarding-false-solutions_ONLINE.pdf

naturally occurring habitats with non-nature forest monoculture. Therefore, as countries examine nature based solutions to the climate crisis on Biodiversity Day at COP27 (Wednesday 16th November) it's important for world leaders to

commit to avoiding the risks as well as harnessing the opportunities of Nbs.

Asks of the UK government:

- The UK government must put in place policies to keep to the UK's fair share of the global carbon budget which provides the best chance of staying below 1.5°C of warming (as defined by the IPCC). A review by the Mitigation Work Programme at COP27 of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) must focus on elimination of fossil fuels, investment in green energy, technology, and nature-based solutions, among other strategies, to keep as close as possible to the 1.5°C degree goal.
- World leaders at COP27 must fulfil the promise of climate finance and establish an international mechanism for addressing loss and damage as an urgent matter of justice.
- Climate action should include maximising the restoration and expansion of ecosystems to enhance biodiversity and natural carbon sinks, coupled with due care to avoid the risks. We call on the UK government to fulfil their international commitments including [the Leaders Pledge for Nature](#) with the goal of reversing global biodiversity loss by 2030.

How can individuals act on these issues?

- Write to your MP asking them to put urgent climate action at the heart of domestic and international policy making to keep global temperatures as close to 1.5°C as possible, to address climate justice, and to protect and restore biodiversity.
- Call on your local and national representatives to speak up for climate and nature by supporting the [Climate and Nature Declaration](#) from the Zero Hour campaign.

Key definitions

COP27: COP stands for Conference of the Parties (to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change), and the meeting happening in November will be the 27th time this group has convened, hence 'COP27'. It's where countries negotiate the global response to the climate crisis and look at the progress made against agreed targets. COP27 will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt 6 - 18 November 2022.

Nature based solutions: Nature-based Solutions (Nbs) are approaches that work with and enhance nature on land and sea, providing benefits for both human wellbeing and biodiversity, to address societal challenges including climate change. Nature-based Solutions to climate change can both avoid greenhouse gas emissions and enhance carbon sinks on land and in the sea as well as build resilience and aid adaptation to climate change for both nature and people.

Loss and damage: 'Loss and damage' is a term used in UN climate talks to refer to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to.⁹

Mitigation: Climate change mitigation means avoiding and reducing emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to prevent the planet from warming to more extreme temperatures.¹⁰

Adaptation: Climate change adaptation means altering our behaviour, systems, and—in some cases—ways of life to protect our families, our economies, and the environment in which we live from the impacts of climate change.¹¹

NDCs: Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of its long-term goals. NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.¹²

For further information contact: Hannah Eves (Policy Coordinator) at hannah.eves@arocha.org or Tamsin Morris (Media Officer) at tamsin.morris@arocha.org

⁹ <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/climate-change/loss-and-damage-fags>

¹⁰ <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-s-the-difference-between-climate-change-mitigation-and-adaptation>

¹¹ <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-s-the-difference-between-climate-change-mitigation-and-adaptation>

¹² <https://unfccc.int/ndc-information/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>