

# The Road to Paris and Beyond

2015 has been a remarkable year in humanity's long journey to seriously addressing climate change. The adoption of the Paris Agreement is a historic moment as it marks the greatest collective undertaking the world has ever committed to in this context.

The adoption of the Paris Agreement has manifested the understanding that climate change is a global problem, which every country must address to the extent possible, with support from those with greater capacity where required. It has set an unprecedented level of clarity for the direction in which the world is moving, with nearer-term offers for climate action from all countries as well as a clear process to collectively increase ambition over time. With this, the adoption has enshrined confidence that global decarbonisation is not only inevitable, but now also irreversible.

This unprecedented global response has been motivated by many significant developments.

From super-storms to droughts and floods, climate change impacts are reaching new records and are increasingly experienced across all parts of the world. 2015 was the hottest year on record, but will likely be eclipsed in the next few years. 10 November 2015 will go down in history as the day the world passed 1°C of anthropogenic global warming.

Thanks to the sustained work of the global climate community, the risks associated with current and projected levels of climate impacts have received increasing traction across sectors. In September 2015 the Bank of England identified climate change as an immediate and systemic threat to the global finance system.

The financial risk of fossil-fuel investments, the affordability of renewable energy and the gradual uptake of electric cars made the fossil-free world tangible to a growing public. Renewable energy has continued its meteoric rise. The plans for wind and solar installations of China and India alone could see global renewable

electricity generation more than double in the next decade. Business models and investment decisions are changing swiftly as a result.

As the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) drew closer, winds of change were also felt across the political landscape. Major powers in the G7 and G20 were working together on the climate issue. Historic laggards turned into climate leaders, and 184 developed and developing countries put forward national climate plans to demonstrate their commitment to action before the Paris summit kicked off.

The European Climate Foundation (ECF) contributed to the international effort that drove these developments via strategic grant making in the international climate diplomacy space and by supporting communications initiatives, which worked side by side with political experts to help ensure the Paris outcome would be more than a one-off deal.

A political strategy and compelling narrative was developed jointly in order to support a successful outcome. The three main benchmarks set to call the results a success were the following:

- Ensuring the world moves together, with meaningful commitments and a constructive approach from all parties as well as the critical recognition that those less able to adapt their societies to climate change will have the strong financial, technical and political support of those with the resources to help.

- Enshrining a clear commitment to build a lasting architecture in the Paris Agreement, a platform on which greater ambition and progress can be built, with a regular review of commitments and a process to increase action to bridge to the 2°C pathway.
- Showing that leaders heed the calls of their people by both phasing out fossil fuels and phasing in renewables. The transition will need to be managed carefully but quickly, and Paris can be a turning point to a healthier, safer, more prosperous and more equitable global society.

Throughout the Paris climate summit, the policy and communications work of the ECF and its international partners was guided by these three elements. Universal in their nature, the elements were successfully applied to, and endorsed by, different geographies and stakeholders. They were fundamental in the conversations the community had with lead negotiators, journalists, business representatives and other stakeholders. Especially useful in building bridges between Europe and the most vulnerable countries, they contributed to the momentum for the inclusion of efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The three priorities developed and pursued by the joint civil society effort are today all integral parts of the Paris Agreement, an outcome that exceeded many expectations. The credibility of the commitments made in Paris however, and the effectiveness of the Agreement, will depend on the decisions, policies and actions on the ground around the world in the months and years to come.

The key focus for the ECF and its partners moving forward will be on ensuring the architecture of the Agreement is further developed and implemented. Civil society has a huge role to play in holding countries accountable to their pledges, in ensuring ambitious domestic actions follow, and in making sure the Agreement enters into force swiftly.

The transformational goals set in Paris in December 2015 call for a swift reassessment of domestic climate action in all countries. Additional efforts will be needed beyond the implementation of current Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and beyond the scope of core climate policy. The work to set up domestic agendas for the first global stocktake in 2018 needs to begin today.

There are major benefits to be reaped from the transition for businesses, citizens and investors, and the ECF is excited to help support these efforts through its philanthropic work.

**ALL ESSAYS AVAILABLE AT: [www.europeanclimate.org](http://www.europeanclimate.org)**

- Transformative Change, Tipping Points and Philanthropic Opportunities
- The Road to Paris and Beyond
- Dieselgate
- Scaling the 4 I's of Energy Efficiency
- Energy Union: The Making-Of
- Assets for a Low-Carbon Society
- Implications of the Paris Agreement for European Governance
- Industrial Innovation for Competitiveness
- Driving Change During Low Oil Prices