

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

By Lennart Kiil



The British prime minister John Major speaks at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, where the climate convention was opened for signature.

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An international treaty produced in 1992 at the “Rio Earth Summit”. The purpose of the treaty is to keep the emissions of man-made [greenhouse gases](#), at a level low enough to avoid dangerous climatic consequences.

This original treaty is not considered a legally binding document. It does not contain specific limits on greenhouse gas emissions. It only encourages the countries to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases, and provides the basis for further international action on climate change.

By joining the treaty, the countries agree to take climate considerations into account in a number of matters. This includes reducing emissions from sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport etc. They also agree to share relevant data, and to prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate changes.

To date a total of 192 countries, the so-called parties, have signed the treaty.

Depending on their status, developing or industrialized, the countries have different responsibilities. The treaty contains no restrictions for developing countries.

The parties meet every year at a [Conference of the Parties](#) to discuss the progress made on fulfilling the treaty's goals, and discuss additions to the original treaty. Such additions stand on their own as independent treaties, but are linked to the original treaty. They are called protocols.

In 1997 the [Kyoto Protocol](#), was signed by a number of countries. This addition contains legally binding commitments for the industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The next [Conference of Parties](#) will take place in Durban, South Africa 2011. This coming COP is referred to as [COP-17](#). Here most of the world's nations will try to agree on the protocol that will succeed the Kyoto Protocol.

Visit the UNFCCC official [website](#)

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