



The Commonwealth and Climate Change



The Commonwealth





Message from Secretary - General

The 26th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 26) is taking place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and a period where the world is facing unprecedented multi-faceted challenges that have highlighted the intrinsic link between humans and nature. The recent release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group I contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) provides irrefutable evidence of the immense threats confronting us and also presents an opportunity to take urgent ambitious action towards climate-resilient development.

Climate change is a primary focus for collective action by the Commonwealth, and we have

a long record of commitment to addressing its causes and of supporting our member countries in dealing with its adverse consequences. As a beacon for multilateral cooperation, the Commonwealth plans and acts together on practical interventions and in contributing to the global debate on climate policy. Among our 54 member countries are some of the world's most vulnerable nations, with greatest exposure and least resilience to the effects of climate change. Of the 38 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the world, 25 are Commonwealth members. For them, climate change is already a matter of life and death, rather than merely a potential threat for the future. It is within this context that we look forward to working

together at COP26, in the run up to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and beyond to find ways to raise ambition and greater collaboration to deliver decisive practical action for the wellbeing of all people and planet.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC
Secretary-General of
the Commonwealth

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The Commonwealth has a long history of commitment to addressing climate change and supporting member countries in dealing with its adverse impacts. Collective political will to protect the planet for future generations has been explicit and robust, ever since the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment of 1989, when Commonwealth leaders resolved to act both individually and as a group on a programme of action on the environment and climate change.



In 2015, just before the UN Climate Conference in Paris (COP21) Commonwealth heads of government made a commitment to limit global temperature rise below 2°C, while aiming for 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels. This undertaking was reaffirmed at COP21 and captured in the global agreement known as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

At the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), leaders reiterated their call for urgent action to mitigate climate change, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience, including enhanced participation of young people in climate action.

Real problems, real solutions

The Commonwealth's multidisciplinary work to support member countries on climate change includes programmes on



climate finance, youth, climate law, energy transition and ocean governance. The Commonwealth also contributes to the global climate change discussion by sharing experiences and

highlighting key issues related to small island developing states, least developed countries, and other small and vulnerable countries.

Unlocking Climate Finance

In many Commonwealth countries, the devastating impacts of climate change are clear, sea levels are rising, storms, droughts and heatwaves are increasing in both intensity and frequency, and arable land is turning into desert. Although the international community has pledged billions to address climate change, countries find it extremely difficult to draw from financing mechanisms – such as the Green Climate Fund – for projects to help people adapt to and mitigate against climate change and its impacts.

A pioneering Commonwealth initiative proposed by a Commonwealth Expert Group in 2013 and mandated by CHOGM 2015 with its central hub in Mauritius, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub

(CCFAH) helps Commonwealth small and other vulnerable states access funding for climate projects by embedding highly skilled long term expertise in the form of Commonwealth National and Regional Climate Finance Advisers in relevant government departments.

CCFAH through its unique Hub and Spokes model supports member states to build human and institutional capacity to plan for and access all sources of climate finance required to convert national climate change priorities and targets into action. In this regard CCFAH has assisted 16 countries across the Commonwealth and is expanding its support through Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Advisers for Africa, Caribbean and Asia-Pacific regions.

CCFAH beneficiary countries

Africa	Caribbean	Pacific
Mauritius	Antigua & Barbuda	Fiji
Eswatini	Belize	Solomon Islands
Namibia	Grenada	Tonga
Seychelles	St Lucia	Vanuatu
Zambia	Barbados, Jamaica & Guyana*	Regional Technical Assistance – Commonwealth Regional Climate Finance Adviser, Indo Pacific
Incoming - Regional Technical Assistance	Incoming - Regional Technical Assistance	

* Countries which have previously been supported by a Commonwealth National Climate Finance Adviser.

As of September 2021 CCFAH has helped secure approximately USD 44 million worth of funding, for both mitigation and adaptation actions, with a robust project pipeline worth over USD 750 million. The programme also delivered 71

training initiatives with over 1,475 government officials trained on various aspects of climate finance. The CCFAH receives support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, Australia, the United Kingdom (including through UK Space

Agency and Global Challenges Research Fund), Mauritius and NDC Partnership Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP).



Small States and Vulnerability

Thirty-two of the 54 Commonwealth countries are classified as small states. Often, climate change puts their economies at risk. The Commonwealth is helping small states build their resilience and adapt to climate change. To strengthen disaster risk management, the Commonwealth is developing a Commonwealth Disaster Risk Finance Portal, which is an online tool to help countries navigate an increasingly complex disaster finance landscape. Small states will enjoy quicker and simpler access to financing as a result, helping them understand

and manage natural disaster risks, including those linked to climate change.

Preliminary Commonwealth research shows that small states are losing out on an estimated \$4.1 billion of aid opportunities because their governments do not have the capacity to deal with the complex process of negotiating, receiving and managing development assistance. The Commonwealth is also mobilising international support for a universal definition and common measurement of economic vulnerability, which would include climate shocks. This Universal Vulnerability Index will provide clarity on the exposure of countries to climate change, making it easier to mobilise support.



Ocean and Climate Change

The Commonwealth Blue Charter is an agreement by all 54 member countries to actively co-operate on ocean-related problems and meet commitments for sustainable ocean development.

The Charter of the Commonwealth provides the underlying principles for the Blue Charter, ensuring that the Commonwealth takes a fair, equitable, inclusive and sustainable approach to ocean economic development and protection.

Blue Charter Action Groups are led by 'champion' countries. Sixteen countries are champions on ten topics they have identified as priorities. Fiji champions the action group on ocean and climate change. This group will work with existing networks to improve ocean health through climate action. It will

The Commonwealth Blue Charter

Blue Charter Action Groups	Champion Countries
1. Coral reef protection and restoration	Australia, Belize, Mauritius
2. Mangrove ecosystems and livelihood	Sri Lanka
3. Marine plastics ('Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance')	UK, Vanuatu
4. Marine protected areas	Barbados, Seychelles
5. Ocean acidification	New Zealand
6. Ocean and climate change	Fiji
7. Ocean observation	Canada
8. Sustainable aquaculture	Cyprus
9. Sustainable blue economy	Kenya, Antigua & Barbuda
10. Sustainable coastal fisheries	Kiribati, Maldives

also explore financial mechanisms to enable a 'blue carbon' approach – restoring the ability of coastal ecosystems to store carbon in

mangroves, seagrass and other coastal ecosystems. In addition, the Commonwealth is continuing research and advocacy on the

effectiveness of adaptation measures to address sea level rise and the sharing of durable, sustainable solutions.

Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions (CSET) Agenda

With the rest of the world, Commonwealth countries are facing challenges from global warming caused by the increased emissions of greenhouse gases, two thirds of which emanate from the production and use of energy. Many developing member countries also have a significant energy access gap and expanding energy access is a priority for sustainable development. Recognition continues to grow of the need for new levels of ambition in current efforts to decarbonise and transform the global energy system.



The Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions (CSET) Agenda is a platform for collaborative action amongst member countries towards acceleration of the transition to low carbon energy systems and the achievement of SDG7. It is anchored on three key pillars – Inclusive Transitions, Technology and Innovation and Enabling Frameworks.

Despite significant clean energy resource potential, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are characterized by their heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels that result in some of the highest electricity costs in the world and significant supply chain challenges. Together with partners Sustainable Energy for All, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed a Toolkit to assist SIDS develop business cases and



strategies to facilitate investment in clean energy projects in the power sector.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has published an exciting children's book series on the global transformation of energy systems. Developed and commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat and written by children's book author Allan Drummond, these books present the concepts of

sustainable and inclusive energy in a digestible and engaging format and encourage young readers to find out how they can be part of the change in the way the world produces and uses energy. Targeted at readers aged 7 – 12, the books are available for distribution and can also be downloaded from **thecommonwealth.org/oceans-and-natural-resources**



Engaging Youth

The Commonwealth works in partnership with young people to address climate change through the Commonwealth Youth Climate Network, which builds the capacity of young people to tackle climate change and convene policy and advocacy spaces to mainstream youth led solutions in climate policy and practice.

In addition, the Commonwealth has launched a policy toolkit to help governments boost green and blue growth through youth entrepreneurship. The first of its kind, the toolkit was developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Raising youth voices for climate action

Members of the Commonwealth Youth Climate Network advocate within governments and international agencies to ensure that succeeding generations are spared from the harshest effects of climate change. The Network empowers young people to translate climate change programmes into effective policies that have a measurable impact on youth well-being.



CYCN has launched a SIDS and climate advocacy toolkit and convened climate advocacy workshops dubbed #Prep4COP in SIDS in Seychelles and Mauritius and Fiji in the Pacific where over 100 young climate advocates have received training on:

- Effective Climate Communications
- Resource Mobilisation for Climate projects
- UNFCCC and COP Climate Processes
- Climate Advocacy and Campaigns

In previous COP meetings, these youth leaders have:

- **Convened** an intergenerational climate dialogue between the Commonwealth Secretary-General and young climate leaders that will focus on youth and the Paris Agreement implementation process.
- **Coordinated** Policy advocacy workshops co-hosted by the CYCN and YOUNGO (the official youth entity of the COP24) focusing on climate change education, training and public awareness (Article 12 of the Paris Agreement) plus Action for Climate Empowerment.
- **Participated** in Partner Organisations Climate Events including at COP24 the UNDP-World Bank Invest4Climate platform that brought philanthropists and business leaders together in a discussion about innovative climate finance mechanisms.

An aerial photograph of Earth from space, showing a vast expanse of blue oceans and white, fluffy clouds. A prominent diagonal white line runs from the top left towards the bottom right, bisecting the image. The sky transitions from a pale blue near the horizon to a deeper blue at the top.

Law and Climate Change

Countries need effective legal frameworks to implement the Paris Agreement. The Law and Climate Change Toolkit supports them with a global resource on climate change law.

Developed by the Commonwealth in partnership with the UN (UNEP and UNFCCC), the Toolkit provides policymakers and legislators worldwide with an online and open global resource on climate change law in order to help countries put in place the legal frameworks necessary for effective domestic implementation of the Paris Agreement and their nationally determined contributions. The Toolkit is organised by thematic modules, including overall climate change frameworks, urban development, energy, and agriculture and forestry.

At COP26, the Commonwealth will present the toolkit's latest module, on energy law, at Climate Law and Governance Day.

Contact occjr@commonwealth.int for more information.

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