



The Commonwealth and Climate Change



The Commonwealth





Message from Secretary - General

The UN Climate Action Summit 2019 and the 25th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 25) are taking place against the backdrop of the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, which highlights the immense threats confronting us and also presents options for pathways towards achieving 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 53 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, 24 are Commonwealth members. For them, climate change is already a matter of life and death, inflicting massively negative present impact rather than merely having potential as a threat for the future.

It is within this context that we look and work together for the meetings in New York and the negotiations in Santiago, Chile to be concluded in ways that will lift ever higher expectations of what can be achieved, and lead to closer and more coordinated collaboration among all stakeholders to deliver decisive practical action for the wellbeing of all people and of our planet.

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

The Commonwealth and Climate Change

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 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

and least developed countries. Among new areas of work now being carried forward by the Commonwealth Secretariat is the 'Common Earth' initiative to pioneer regenerative models for sustainable development.

Unlocking Climate Finance

In many Commonwealth countries, sea levels are on the rise, storms 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 climate change and mitigate its effects.

A pioneering Commonwealth initiative proposed by a Commonwealth Expert Group in 2013 and mandated by CHOGM 2015 with its hub in Mauritius, the Climate Finance Access Hub (CFAH) helps Commonwealth small and vulnerable states access funding for climate projects by placing highly-skilled climate advisors in ministries, building the capacity of governments to formulate sound climate strategies and then secure the resources they need to put them into action.

Advisors have taken up long-term positions in government environmental departments and agencies and also in regional bodies such as the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre in Belize. They have created

a pan-Commonwealth network that is being managed by a Hub in Mauritius.

The CFAH receives support from Australia, the United Kingdom, and Mauritius. To date, it has provided assistance to ten countries across the Commonwealth: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica, Namibia, Mauritius, eSwatini, Tonga, Vanuatu, Guyana and Saint Lucia. Seychelles, Fiji and Solomon Islands are also in line to receive technical assistance soon.

The CFAH has already mobilised approximately \$27.3 million in climate finance, with more than \$500 million in the pipeline for around 50 projects in total, focused on both mitigation and adaptation.



Small States and Vulnerability

Thirty-one of the 53 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 53 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. So far, 12 countries have stepped forward to be champions on nine topics they have identified as priorities. Fiji champions the action group on ocean and climate change. This group will work with existing

The Commonwealth Blue Charter

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

networks to improve ocean health through climate action. It will also explore financial mechanisms to enable a 'blue carbon' approach – restoring the ability of coastal

ecosystems to store carbon in mangroves, coastal swamps and seagrass.



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

The first #Prep4COP Climate Advocacy Workshop for the Caribbean region is planned for November 2019. These trained youth climate leaders have joined National Governments as Parties to the COP Climate Policy Negotiations and in COP22, COP23 and COP24 these climate youth leaders:

- **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.

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 a guided assessment of laws on climate adaptation and mitigation. A live pilot version is now online including an assessment tool for framework climate laws and energy laws. Modules on agriculture and urban planning law are under development. Member countries are invited to submit expressions of interest in piloting of the toolkit.

Contact Information

For more information on climate change-related programmes of the Commonwealth Secretariat, please contact:

climatechange@commonwealth.int

Commonwealth Secretariat

Marlborough House, Pall Mall

London SW1Y 5HX

United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org



The Commonwealth