

Chapter 2:

How are countries taking action?

What your country is doing
and how you can contribute



Youth Leadership in Climate Policy: Turning knowledge and skills into action for climate empowerment

Plan International & Unbounded Associates

What are key events in climate decision making history?



What else is included in the Paris Agreement that you should know about? Two dates in recent history are important for you to know: **1992** and **2015**. In 1992, the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* was adopted at an international meeting called the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The UNFCCC laid the foundation for future climate decision making. It brought together the countries that would eventually adopt the *Paris Agreement* in 2015. The Paris Agreement was adopted at the *21st Conference of the Parties (COP21)* in Paris, France, in 2015.

This included the beginning of countries writing their *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*, which are the main way countries communicate their climate change goals to their citizens and the rest of the world. For a more complete timeline of climate decision making events between 1992 and 2015, visit the UNICEF/ YOUNGO Toolkit resource: [“The Paris Agreement for Young People”](#) (page 10). To learn more about the UNFCCC, COP, and NDCs, visit the table on the next page in Activity 2.1.



Activity 2.1



What are three key terms in climate decision making?

Term	Brief Definition
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, often pronounced "UNF-triple-C")	The UNFCCC refers to 197 countries that accepted a document called the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. This document recognized the problem of climate change, set goals for tackling it, and laid out some important considerations for doing so. The countries who accepted this document became "Parties to the Convention." While the Framework Convention was very important in 1992, it did not include many of the parts of the Paris Agreement.
COP (Conference of the Parties)	<p>COP is how countries who are "Parties to the Convention" (part of the UNFCCC) make decisions. A COP meeting is held in a different city each year, and the first meeting was in 1995 in Berlin, Germany. During COP, countries review what they are doing to address climate change. They also come up with new ideas, like the Paris Agreement, to address climate change more seriously. Before COP each year, many other meetings are held internationally and nationally to help leaders prepare. The Paris Agreement was adopted at the 21st session of the COP (also known as COP21) in Paris, France, in 2015.</p> <p><i>Who hosts COP?</i> Every year a different country hosts COP, and there is a real effort to make sure countries from all regions of the world are represented. Sometimes, a country can host COP, but the actual meeting is held in a different country. For example, COP23 Fiji was held in Germany, and COP25 Chile was held in Spain.</p>
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)	NDCs are one of the most important parts of the Paris Agreement. They are documents that each country must prepare to share their climate change priorities, actions, and goals with other countries. The Paris Agreement requires each country to prepare and share their NDC and update them every five years. NDCs represent the efforts each country must make to achieve mitigation and adaptation for climate change and climate justice.

To learn more about the UNFCCC, COP, NDCs, and more, visit the [UNFCCC's website](#).



What are Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?

Nationally Determined Contributions are the commitments countries make to help address climate change through their own mitigation and adaptation goals, and also how they help other countries achieve their goals. NDCs are communicated on paper and submitted to the UNFCCC. The Paris Agreement tells country leaders to include citizens in the process of creating an NDC, but this does not always happen. That is why you need to know about NDCs, so you can make sure your leaders are creating an NDC in fair, equitable, and just ways.

Activity 2.2

Why is it called a **Nationally Determined Contribution**? Let's break it down:



What's a Contribution?

If you are making a "contribution," you are helping, supporting, or participating in something that's too large for any one person or country to address alone. A contribution can be in many forms, including money, time, action, or resources.



What does it mean to be Nationally Determined?

For something to be "nationally determined," it must be decided and committed to at the country-level, by country leaders. This means other countries cannot make decisions for your country, but they can help support your country by providing knowledge, skills, or resources.

What is a Nationally Determined Contribution?

A nationally determined contribution is a set of priorities, actions, and goals that a country decides on and commits to achieving to help address the global challenge of climate change.



Addressing climate change requires committed action over a long period of time. A country's first NDC cannot predict all the changes in policy, technology, and society that will take place over time. As countries work towards meeting their commitments, they must also update their NDC every five years and submit their latest version to the UNFCCC.



This is laid out in the Paris Agreement, which calls for all countries to report their progress on following their NDCs. It also calls for countries to get together and evaluate their progress. This evaluation process will take place every five years at COP starting in 2023 and is called the “global stocktake.” The global stocktake helps countries understand how much they need to update their actions and goals in future versions of their NDCs, to hopefully reach the Paris Agreement’s goal to stop the climate from warming any more by 2050.

Your country's NDC should include specific priorities, actions, and goals for addressing climate change. It should also say what resources, financing, and support will be needed to get the job done.





Activity 2.3

What are the seven key components of an NDC?



1. Mitigation

This includes your country's priorities for reducing the negative impacts of climate change, the actions for doing this, and the specific goals that your country will seek to achieve.

Example: The government of Bangladesh aims to reduce 2.4 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 by decreasing and eventually stopping the use of harmful chemicals often found in cooling systems like air conditioners and refrigerators.



2. Adaptation

This includes your country's priorities for changing its ways of working and living to adjust to a changing climate, the actions for doing this, and the specific goals your country will seek to achieve.

Example: Climate change has made it hard for farmers to rely on their crops to grow and produce as much food as they used to. In response, the government of Rwanda will help its agricultural sector adapt by developing special crops that can grow in a changing climate, and livestock like cows, goats, and chickens that can better adapt to different climates, too.



3. Financial Support

This includes the amount of money your country will need to achieve its adaptation and mitigation goals, both from national funds and other countries willing to support your country's efforts.

Example: Between 2014-2016, about one-third of Vietnam's budget for climate change action came from loans and grants from other countries. The government of Vietnam has asked countries to continue supporting its NDC goals by investing in mitigation and adaptation activities in the country.

To learn more about how countries can access financing to support their NDCs, visit [The Green Climate Fund's website](#).



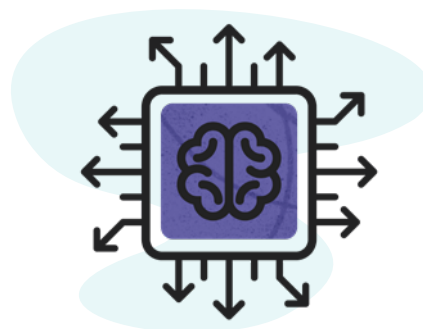
Activity 2.3



4. Technology Transfer

This includes the materials, resources, and knowledge related to technology that your country will need to achieve its goals. It also includes the need for countries to share resources and information to help one another achieve their goals.

Example: If the Kingdom of Tonga wants to use less oil and coal for energy, it will need to start using more energy from the sun and wind. The government says it needs to build more solar and wind energy plants, which will require technology to build, operate, and maintain.



5. Capacity Building

This includes the skills, knowledge, and capacities that your country's people – from factory workers to middle school teachers to farmers to government officials – will need to build to achieve its goals.

Example: The government of Papua New Guinea aims to train 63,000 farmers (1 out of 5 of these farmers will be women) to use agricultural technology and practices that adapt to climate change.



6. Transparency

This includes your country's plan for sharing its NDC decision making processes and the progress made to fulfilling its goals in clear and accessible ways. Knowing what decisions your country is making and what progress they are making is necessary for you to speak up for what's important to you and hold your country leaders accountable.

Example: The government of Mexico has stated in its NDC the importance of developing clear ways to measure and report its progress to make sure the public can access and trust the information it reports.





Activity 2.3



7. Conditionality

This includes your country's ability to achieve its goals with or without financial or technical support from other countries or other circumstances being in place. This means that your country must say which goals are unconditional, i.e., independent from any other circumstance, and which goals are conditional, i.e., dependent on other circumstances to be achieved, such as receiving help from other countries.

Example: The government of Nepal says that its unconditional targets will cost an estimated 3.4 billion US dollars, and it does not need additional resources to achieve them. Nepal's conditional targets are estimated to cost 25 billion US dollars, and depend on international financial support, technology transfer, and capacity building to be achieved.

To read the full NDCs that these examples were taken from, visit the UNFCCC's NDC register website. You can also search for your country's NDC [on this website](#).



Definitions adapted from the European Capacity Building Initiative: [Pocket Guide To NDCS Under The UNFCCC](#) (2018)

Bringing all these components of an NDC together, your country's NDC should be three things:

- **Ambitious**, so that your country is truly determined and committed to making big changes to reduce and eventually stop all greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Transparent**, so that national and international stakeholders, including you, can engage in climate decision making, track your country's progress, and ensure its meeting its stated goals.
- **Equitable**, so that the actions and goals laid out in your country's NDC do not intentionally or unintentionally harm some groups more than others, and so that your country is contributing its fair share to addressing this global issue. This includes the need for all NDCs to consider the rights of girls and women, Indigenous groups, and climate refugees in their plans. To learn more about how NDCs can be gender equitable, visit the [Gender Climate Tracker](#) from WEDO.



What goes into your country's NDC?



Sharing what you believe should be included in your country's NDC is a direct way you can influence national and international climate decision making. This can promote your own long-term wellbeing, as well as the future of your community, country, and the planet!

Now that you have a better sense of what goes into an NDC, you can begin brainstorming what should be included in your country's NDC. You will start by answering some questions about your country's key characteristics. This will help you better clarify your country's NDC priorities, actions, and goals.

You might not know how to respond to all these questions on your own, and that's okay. You might be able to respond to some of the questions for the area of the country you live in, but not your whole country. That's also okay. You are not expected to include everything about your country, just to start thinking about your country in new ways. You can use the internet to help you, and also ask your friends, family, teachers, and community members for their ideas.



Activity 2.4



What do you need to know about your country to make an NDC?

A. Natural landmarks and important sites



What are some important natural areas in your country?

Examples: Coastline, rivers, lakes, forests, deserts, mountains, etc.

Who lives in, on, or near these areas? Which communities take care of them, and/or depend on them for their livelihood?

Examples: Indigenous communities, national park rangers, farmers, fisherman, racial, ethnic, or religious groups, etc.

How has climate change and/or human activity affected these natural areas?

Examples: Drought, rising sea levels, pollution, fewer trees, loss of plants and animals, etc.

What would happen if these natural areas were lost forever, or if they were damaged badly by climate change?

Examples: Major changes to people's way of life, climate refugees, no more access to resources like food, water, etc.



Activity 2.4



B. Business and jobs.



What activities in your country create the most greenhouse gas emissions?

Examples: Factories that produce things, companies that build things, people driving cars, etc.

Where are these activities located in your country?

Examples: In big cities, near natural resources, along the coast, etc.

Which group(s) make up the workforce of these activities?

Examples: Government workers, immigrant workers, private employees, etc.

What group(s) control these activities and benefit the most from them?

Examples: The government, private companies, international companies, etc.



Activity 2.4



C. Sources of energy



What is your country's main source(s) of energy?

Examples: Coal, natural gas, oil, nuclear power, water, solar, wind, etc.

What kind(s) of transportation do citizens in your country use the most? This is likely to be different based on region.

Examples: Car, bicycle, motorbike, public bus, train, walking, etc.

Where does the food people in your country eat come from? This is likely to be different based on region.

Examples: Small stores, private farming, local markets, large grocery stores, etc.



Activity 2.4



D. Climate and weather



What kinds of weather does your country experience throughout the year?

Examples: hot most of the year with a rainy season, four different seasons, two different seasons, etc.

How has climate change affected your country's weather patterns?

Examples: Made weather more severe, made weather more unpredictable, etc.

What types of weather events are the most common in your country?

Examples: Monsoon, drought, hurricane, floods, wildfire, etc.

Which communities are most affected by changes in weather patterns?

Examples: Indigenous communities, communities living by the ocean, left out communities, rural communities, racial, ethnic, or religious communities, etc.

Which economic sectors and/or industries are the most affected by changes in weather patterns?

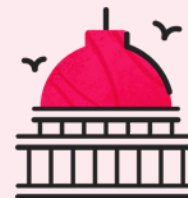
Examples: health sector, education sector, transportation sector, tourism sector, energy sector, etc.



Activity 2.4



E. People and power



Which group(s) hold the most power in your country? This could be in terms of money, politics, or influence in society.

Examples: Government officials, company owners, gender, racial, ethnic, or religious groups, etc.

How are the groups with the most power in your country affected by climate change?

Examples: Benefit from activities that contribute to climate change, their way of life is affected positively/negatively, etc.

Which group(s) hold the least power in your country? This could be in terms of money, politics, or influence in society.

Examples: Immigrants, refugees, Indigenous people, gender, racial, ethnic, or religious groups, etc.

How are the groups with the least power in your country affected by climate change?

Examples: unable to work, homes destroyed, injury or death, etc.



Activity 2.4



F. People's ability to adapt



How much do you think people in your country know about climate change in your country?

Examples: Everyone knows about climate change, only people who are well-educated know, only people with TV or radio know, people don't know about climate policy, etc.

Do you think the people in your country are willing to take action to address climate change? Including changing their behaviours, lifestyles, and work?

Examples: Everyone is willing to take action, only people who are negatively affected want to take action, only people who know about climate change want to take action, etc.

What skills and abilities do people in your country need to adapt to climate change and respond to its effects?

Examples: more education, more training, more resources and technology, more time, etc.



Activity 2.4



G. Anything else?



Drafting and sharing your version of your country's NDC

Now that you've thought about your country and some of its key characteristics, think back to the seven components of an NDC you read in Activity 2.3. Remember the need for your country's NDC to be ambitious, transparent, and equitable. You can also reflect on the Problem and Solution Trees you completed in Activity 1.5 of Chapter 1.

Can you combine the core problems, actions, causes, and affects you brainstormed in Chapter 1 with the information you compiled about your country in this Chapter? With all this information, you are ready to brainstorm priorities, actions, and goals for your country to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In this final activity of Chapter 2, you will create an outline for what you believe should be in your country's NDC and prepare to share your ideas in a way that's most engaging and exciting for you.

Activity 2.5

What should your country's NDC include?



Now you will prepare a final product to share with your friends, family, community, or government officials, communicating what should be included in your country's NDC. Choose a final product that will be the most fun for you to create.



For example, you can write a speech or a letter, draw a picture that expresses what you want to say, prepare a theater, or dance performance, make a short movie or presentation on the computer, or whatever else makes sense for you!

Whatever way you choose to share your ideas, start by answering the questions on the following pages to organize your thoughts.



Activity 2.5



Part 1:

What should your country's mitigation goals be to stop greenhouse gas emissions by 2050? These can include ACE-related goals. List 3-5 goals and include one example of how you will know each goal has been achieved.

Example: By 2050, my country will only have electric cars and no gas-burning cars. There will be a national inspection of cars each year to make sure this is happening...

Activity 2.5



Part 2:

What should be your country's adaptation goals to stop greenhouse gas emissions by 2050? These can include ACE-related goals. List 3-5 and include one example of how you will know each goal has been achieved.

Example: By 2050, climate change will be a required subject in school, and every person in primary school will have learned about climate change and how to adapt to its effects. There will be a national test about climate change in Grade 6...

Activity 2.5



Part 3:

What actions will your country need to take to achieve these goals? Which actions are short term, and which are long term? What groups and people will complete these actions?

Example: To achieve my mitigation goals, my country's automobile industry will first start making electric cars more affordable and available. Then my country's energy sector will start making energy from the sun and wind to charge the electric cars and make gasoline more expensive. Later, my country's government will give people some money back if they buy an electric car...

Activity 2.5



Part 4:

What financial, technological, and human resources will your country need to achieve its mitigation and adaptation goals? Are some of your country's goals conditional (i.e., dependent) on receiving international support?

Example: To achieve my adaptation goals, my country will need primary teachers trained to teach about climate change, and textbooks and materials for students to use. We will need international support from climate change experts to help develop materials about climate change and design trainings for teachers...

Activity 2.5



Part 5:

How should your country make sure that the process for creating its NDC and the progress it makes to achieving its NDC goals is transparent, clear, and easily accessible?

Example: My country will hold meetings every month in different cities and towns for people to share their ideas for our NDC. The NDC reports on progress will be available on our government website for anyone to download in any language they want...

Activity 2.5



Part 6:

What strategies should your country use, and what actions should it take to make sure its NDC will not harm or exclude certain groups, especially those that are particularly marginalized or vulnerable?

Example: My country will hold specific meetings with groups like climate refugees, Indigenous people, and women farmers to make sure their needs are being heard and included in our NDC...

Activity 2.5



Reflection:

How will your country's NDC affect groups, sectors, and natural habitats and resources in your country differently?

Example: My country's NDC will require people to change their way of living and companies to change their way of working. It will help to protect natural resources, animals, and plants in my country...

Chapter 2 Reflection



NDCs communicate what your country will do to contribute to the global issue of climate change. There is also another document, called the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), that your country can make to communicate its unique, specific, and changing adaptation needs. Your country's NAP is submitted to the UNFCCC just like its NDC. While we don't have time in this Workbook to cover NAPs fully, you can see if your country has submitted a NAP on the [UNFCCC's website](#). You can also do your own research and brainstorming to think of what should be included in your country's NAP, just like you did for your country's NDC in this Chapter.

Now that you've prepared a version of your country's NDC that you believe in, you can visit the [UNFCCC's NDC register](#) to see if your country has submitted an NDC and compare your version with the official document.

If your country has submitted an NDC, does it meet the seven key components of an NDC you learned about in Activity 2.3? Do you feel that it is ambitious, transparent, and equitable enough? How does it compare in priorities, actions, and goals to the NDC you just wrote?

If your country has not yet submitted or updated their NDC, consider exploring whether they have a plan to submit one, or if there are organizations in your country putting pressure on your country leaders to prepare or update their NDC.

Examples of international organizations that are putting pressure on countries to address climate change are: [350.org](#), [earthday.org](#), and [teach4theplanet.org](#). You can also look up organizations in your country to see what they are doing. If this is something you want to get involved in, you already have the knowledge and ideas to contribute!

For your final reflection activity of Chapter 2, return to the **Recurring Reflection Activity** at the end of the Overview and follow the directions for the Chapter 2 reflection.