



## WHAT DOES CLIMATE CHANGE MEAN?

The Earth's climate has never been static, and throughout the history of mankind climate changes have taken place, with global climate variations on the Earth due to natural causes or brought on by human actions.

According to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, it is understood to mean, **"a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere"**.<sup>1</sup> In terms of the composition of the atmosphere, the term **"greenhouse effect"** refers to the retention

of the sun's heat in the Earth's atmosphere caused by a layer of atmospheric gases.

"Without these gases, life as we know it would be impossible, as the planet would be too cold. Among these gases are carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, which are released as a result of industry, agriculture and burning fossil fuels. **The industrialised world has caused a 30% increase in the concentration of these gases since the last century, when, without human actions, it was nature's job to balance out emissions.**"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*, 9th May 1992, New York, p.3

<sup>2</sup> *What is climate change and how does it affect us?* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Government of Spain 2018



Recent climate change linked to human activity is also known as “global warming”, and represents the greatest environmental threat faced by mankind. The impacts of this climate change are deeply worrying: the progressive melting of the glaciers, rising sea levels, droughts and extreme weather conditions... In short, **climate change is a global problem with a scope that extends to the environment, politics, the economy and society.**<sup>3</sup>

## HUMAN RIGHT TO A SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT

Climate change and human rights are intrinsically linked. In October 2016, the Panel of Experts on Climate Change and Human Rights was held, organised by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It brought together key players to discuss **measures to fight climate change based on human rights**. The **Paris Agreement was applied (the first universal pact on the climate, which emerged from the Paris Climate Conference (COP21) held in December 2015). In the COP21, Governments agreed to limit the rise in average global temperature to 1.5°C.**

Considering claims from the World Bank that **annual losses caused by natural disasters have risen to 3.8 billion since 1980**, evidently the

main reason that States want to reduce carbon emissions is linked to the economic cost of climate change.

However, the urgent nature of this essential climate action is because previous calls to States to **change their actions “with more prudent care for their environmental consequences”<sup>4</sup>** have not been heeded. These commitments come in response to the protection of the environment as a global human right – a third generation human right, within those entitled “solidarity rights”<sup>5</sup>. Effectively, the right to a suitable environment entails **the right to enjoy a safe environment where people can develop, and in turn, the duty of public authorities to preserve it and to ensure the rational use of natural resources**. It is explicitly recognised in various UN declarations, including the United Nations Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

**Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 aims to meet previously established commitments**, and its five targets<sup>6</sup> call for the adoption of urgent measures to combat climate change and its effects.



<sup>4</sup> *Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment*, United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1972

<sup>5</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals: a transverse tool in the classroom*, FABRE Foundation, p.2-3

<sup>6</sup> More information about the five SDG 13 targets ([link](#))

<sup>3</sup> *Climate Change: The Problem*. Greenpeace Spain



## 2030 IS ALREADY TOO LATE: ACTION IS NEEDED NOW

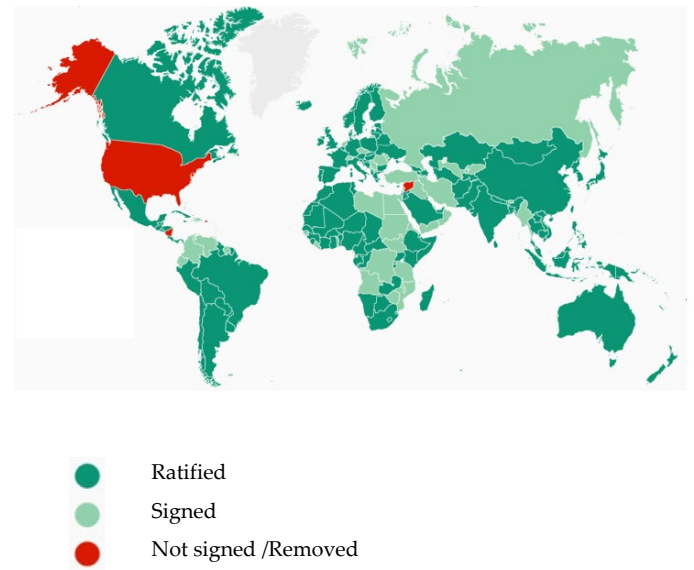
In alignment with the latest UN SDG Report, **global warming continued to advance in 2016, reaching a record of 1.1°C over pre-industrial levels.**

**The expanse of global sea ice shrank to 4.14 million square kilometres in 2016, the second lowest figure in recorded history, and the number of deaths attributed to natural hazards has continued to increase in recent years: between 1990 and 2015, more than 1.6 million people died in internationally reported natural hazards.<sup>7</sup>**

Faced with this alarming situation, **target 13.2 indicates the need to “integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning”.** The international response has been **immediate: the Paris Agreement** has shifted the focus of implementing climate change measures around the world, apart from **Syria and Nicaragua where the plan was not adopted, and in the USA, which pulled out in 2017.**

*Graph I. The map of the Paris Agreement: Countries that ratified or signed the Paris Agreement on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017.*

*Source: UNFCCC, Business Insider.*



Actions to reduce the effects of climate change cannot wait any longer. Furthermore, they must be accompanied by **measures that ensure that the global population is able to adapt to climate-related risks and natural disasters** (target 13.1), paying particular attention to management in lesser-developed countries and the needs of the most vulnerable communities (target 13.b).

<sup>7</sup> SDG Report 2017, UNDP.



## WHO CAN DO WHAT?



### ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Target 13.b calls upon Northern countries to fulfil their engagement to achieve the objective of collectively mobilising US\$100 billion dollars by 2020 to address the needs of Southern countries by adopting specific measures to limit the effects of climate change.



### ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

For target 13.3 to become a reality, Governments must back Education for Development and Global Citizenship, which establishes the need to improve education, awareness and the human capacity to mitigate climate change, to adapt to it, to reduce its effects and to activate early warning systems.



### ON A LOCAL LEVEL

Ecopreneurs for the Climate (ECO4CLIM) is a non-profit making organisation that aims to promote the creation of eco-companies and to increase the impact on society of sustainable companies involved in the fight against climate change. Discover its work in [FABRE Testimony– SDG 13](#).



## AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?

*"There is always an open book for all eyes: nature."* Jean-Jacques Rousseau

### Infant and Primary Pupils

In classroom you follow the 3Rs rule, but why important? What could happen if we don't look at planet? You can explain climate change to your Infant level pupils with this [Happy Learning video](#), and Infant classes you can learn and sing the song: [W to save the planet!](#)

To understand how our everyday actions consequences on the environment, you could watch [cartoon](#). Encourage families to stop using plastic aluminium foil to wrap up snacks, and to use reusable fabric bags instead.

### Secondary and Baccalaureate Students

Set the following scene: your students are going to travel to an island and can take three items with them. What would they take? What do they think the island is like? After brainstorming ideas about paradisiacal beaches, show them the island that they will be travelling to: there are various islands like this in the Atlantic and the Pacific, so they can choose. They are the **islands of rubbish**. Watch this [documentary about plastic islands](#) and do group research to discover how many there are and why they have formed.

To reduce the amount of plastic we use that ends up in our oceans, Greenpeace is collecting signatures asking supermarkets to reduce their plastic packaging. Discover and join the #DesnudalaFruta campaign [here](#).

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