

FAQ 14.1 | Is international cooperation working?

Yes, to an extent. Countries' emissions were in line with their internationally agreed targets: the collective greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation target for Annex I countries in the UNFCCC to return to their 1990 emissions levels by 2000, and their individual targets in the Kyoto Protocol for 2008–12. Numerous studies suggest that participation in the Kyoto Protocol led to substantial reductions in national GHG emissions, as well increased levels of innovation and investment in low-carbon technologies. In this latter respect, the Kyoto Protocol set in motion some of the transformational changes that will be required to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. It is too soon to tell whether the processes and commitments embodied in the Paris Agreement will be effective in achieving its stated goals with respect to limiting temperature rise, adaptation, and financial flows. There is, however, evidence that its entry into force has been a contributing factor to many countries' adopting mid-century targets of net-zero GHG or CO₂ emissions.

FAQ 14.2 | What is the future role of international cooperation in the context of the Paris Agreement?

Continued international cooperation remains critically important both to stimulate countries' enhanced levels of mitigation ambition, and through various means of support to increase the likelihood that they achieve these objectives. The latter is particularly the case in developing countries, where mitigation efforts often rely on bilateral and multilateral cooperation on low-carbon finance, technology support, capacity building, and enhanced South-South cooperation. The Paris Agreement is structured around Nationally Determined Contributions that are subject to an international oversight system, and bolstered through international support. The international oversight system is designed to generate transparency and accountability for individual emissions reduction contributions, and regular moments for stock-taking of these efforts towards global goals. Such enhanced transparency may instil confidence and trust, and foster solidarity among nations, with theory-based arguments that this will lead to greater levels of ambition. Together with other cooperative agreements at the sub-global and sectoral levels, as well as a growing number of transnational networks and initiatives, the implementation of all of these mechanisms is likely to play an important role in making political, economic, and social conditions more favourable to ambitious mitigation efforts in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

FAQ 14.3 | Are there any important gaps in international cooperation, which will need to be filled in order for countries to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, such as holding temperature increase to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts towards 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels?

While international cooperation is contributing to global mitigation efforts, its effects are far from uniform. Cooperation has contributed to setting a global direction of travel, and to falling greenhouse gas emissions in many countries and avoided emissions in others. It remains to be seen whether it can achieve the kind of transformational changes needed to achieve the Paris Agreement's long-term global goals. There appears to be a large potential role for international cooperation to better address sector-specific technical and infrastructure challenges that are associated with such transformational changes. Finalising the rules to pursue voluntary cooperation, such as through international carbon market mechanisms and public climate finance in the implementation of NDCs, without compromising environmental integrity, may play an important role in accelerating mitigation efforts in developing countries. Finally, there is room for international cooperation to more explicitly address transboundary issues associated with carbon dioxide removal and solar radiation management.