



# SIERRA STUDENT COALITION INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY BRIEF



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## Adaptation and Mitigation

### Overview

Adaptation and Mitigation are two major focuses of the UNFCCC that recognize that the world must take action to rapidly adapt to the current impacts of climate change while simultaneously mitigating emissions to prevent future severe impacts of climate change. Specifically, Adaptation refers to adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. It refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change. Mitigation involves human interventions to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases by sources or enhance their removal from the atmosphere by “sinks”. The fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledged that achieving less than 2 degrees Celsius in warming below pre-industrial levels requires urgent action on both mitigation and adaptation.

### Adaptation

- The goal of adaptation is to build “resilient” communities. Resilient can mean policies, governance, resource management, infrastructure on a national and local level that help communities cope with the direct and indirect impacts of climate change.
- There are many workstreams, groups, and committees which address adaptation including: Nairobi Work Program, National Adaptation Plans, National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Adaptation Committee, LDC Expert Group, and Loss and Damage Executive Committee.
- The adaptation process under the UNFCCC includes observation, assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation.
- The IPCC’s fifth assessment report acknowledged a disparity between adaptation needs and available financing and implementation plans.

### Mitigation

- Cancun Agreements adopted by the Parties in 2010 agreed to hold the increase in the global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels. To reach this goal, 90 Parties made conditional and unconditional pledges to reduce emissions by 2020.
- The IPCC projects that business as usual will lead to 4 degrees Celsius warming, or more.
- Parties can mitigate global climate change by reducing GHG emissions or by enhancing sinks and reservoirs.
- A “sink” refers to forests, vegetation or soils that can reabsorb CO<sub>2</sub>.
  - REDD[+] is an example of a controversial “sink” which creates financial value for the carbon stored in forests to offer incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands.



## 2015 Outlook

Building resilient societies and economies will be key to coping with climate change. Many nations and communities are already doing this but far greater action and ambition will be needed to cost effectively manage the risks and impacts of extreme weather events now and into the future. From an equity perspective, this requires developed nations to pledge strong financial contributes to help developing adapt as well as enabling reliable clean energy technology transfers to help developing nations mitigate risk while alleviating poverty and continuing sustainable economic growth.

## Resources

Adaptation: <http://unfccc.int/adaptation/items/4159.php>

Mitigation: <http://unfccc.int/focus/mitigation/items/7169.php>

IPCC Fifth Assessment Report Summary for Policy Makers: [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_SPM.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_SPM.pdf)

REDD[+]: <http://www.un-redd.org/AboutREDD/tabid/102614/Default.aspx>

Climate Resilience <http://www.rtcc.org/2014/11/10/what-does-it-mean-to-be-climate-resilient/#sthash.i1m767np.dpuf>

