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**The 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework
Convention on Climate Change (COP 21)**

Executive Summary

The 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) was held in Paris, France, from 30th November to 11th December, 2015. For the first time in over 20 years of UN negotiations, the international community came to a historical agreement known as the Paris Agreement, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C.

The Agreement stresses on points relevant to FAO's work:

- Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and the review mechanism
- Food security
- Climate change mitigation
- Adaptation to climate change
- REDD+/Forestry
- Loss and Damage
- Climate finance

The engagement of expert technical institutions such as FAO in supporting the countries will be key contribution in achieving successful implementation of the agreement.



I. Introduction

1. The international political response to climate change began at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, where the ‘Rio Convention’ included the adoption of the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This convention set out a framework for action aimed at stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”
2. The main objective of the annual Conference of Parties (COP) is to review the Convention’s implementation. The first COP took place in Berlin in 1995 and significant meetings since then have included COP3 where the Kyoto Protocol was adopted, COP11 where the Montreal Action Plan was produced, COP15 in Copenhagen where an agreement to Kyoto Protocol was unfortunately not realised and COP17 in Durban where the Green Climate Fund was created.
3. From 30th November to 11th December, 2015, COP21 was held in Paris. For the first time in over 20 years of negotiations, the Conference came to a historical agreement also known as the Paris Agreement, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. Under the leadership of the African Group of Negotiators, African countries successfully advocated for a balanced agreement that addresses both mitigation and adaptation in equal measure.
4. FAO participated as an observer and provided technical advice to its member countries to support their involvement in the negotiations and in meeting and making sure that the linkages between climate change, agriculture and food security are made.
5. The 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UNFCCC is expected to take place from 7-18 November 2016. Morocco has offered to host this COP. FAO will support the Kingdom of Morocco and countries in the preparation and implementation of the event.

II. The Paris Agreement and FAO’s work

6. **Overall ambition:** Parties agreed to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as outlined in Article 2 with the global peak being set “as soon as possible” (Article 4.1).
7. **INDCs and the review mechanism:** The projected impact of the INDCs submitted ahead of Paris falls short of the stated ambition outlined in Article 2. Though there was a strong support of INDC development, 187 out of 196 UNFCCC member states provided INDCs to UNFCCC. With the Paris accord, parties are legally obliged to review their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and submit increasingly ambitious NDCs every 5 years (from 2023) with a view to progressively scaling up the overall level of ambition among Parties (Article 14.1 and 2).
8. **Food security:** Food security concerns are now reflected in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. This is an important symbol, even if it does not directly commit Parties to particular actions. Under Article 2, Parties agreed to adapt to climate change and foster development in a manner that does not threaten food production. This largely reflects the language used in the original Framework Convention signed in 1992.
9. **Mitigation:** Mitigation remains the core objective of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement in order to reach the overall ambition to limit global average temperature increase. There is no possibility to reach the target without the participation of all sectors, including Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use (AFOLU). Common metrics developed by the IPCC for accounting remain the standard.

Parties should strive to include all categories of emissions and removal, and once an activity is included, to continue to include it. Parties should provide an explanation if they decide to exclude a category. Mitigation and (I)NDCs sections are strongly linked. Moreover, mitigation/adaptation ambitions should be addressed jointly (see Article 6 para 8(a)) and foster sustainable development (see Article 6 para 4(a)). Rules, modalities and procedures on Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems still need to be established. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) is requested to develop and recommend such rules, including with regards to non-market approaches.

10. **Adaptation:** a global adaptation goal was decided (Art. 7.1). The Paris accord recognizes the adaptation efforts of the developing countries (Art 7.3). Parties are invited to strengthen cooperation under the Cancun Adaptation framework. UN Agencies are encouraged to support developing countries on enhancing adaptation actions and to report their efforts to UNFCCC. Parties are invited to design National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to be communicated periodically (Art. 7.10 and 11). GCF is requested to expedite finance for NAPs. The mandate of the Adaptation Committee, established in 2012, has been renewed.

11. **REDD+/Forestry:** Parties explicitly recognized the importance of forests under Article 5. The Article states that Parties should conserve and enhance sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gas emissions (including forests), particularly by taking action to implement and support the 'existing framework' developed for this purpose.

12. **Loss and Damage:** Parties recognized the importance of averting, minimizing and addressing climate-related loss and damage under Article 8. Parties agreed to enhance understanding, action and support in this area – including through the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage – but did not establish formal funding streams related to loss and damage.

13. **Climate finance:** Developed country Parties acknowledged the importance of climate finance under Article 9, and in the Decision resolved to scale up financial support with a view to meeting the goal of channelling USD 100 billion in climate finance – as decided in Copenhagen - to developing countries per year by 2020. Over the course of COP 21, developed countries committed substantial additional resources to funding mechanisms such as the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund.

14. **Technology transfer and capacity development:** African countries recognize that capacity building and technology transfer will be crucial to drive low-emission and climate resilient development. A Capacity Building Committee has been established (Article 11), pushed by the African Group, which will help define capacity development needs and actions for developing countries and Africa. Parties, especially noting the importance of technology for the implementation of mitigation and adaptation action under Article 10, and through the Technology Mechanism access, could facilitate technology development and transfer for the benefit of developing countries parties.

15. The full document of the Paris Agreement can be accessed in the UNFCCC website: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

III. Key messages and Follow up

16. COP21 opened the door for more adaptation and mitigation actions in the agriculture sector.
17. Countries must take urgent action including linking co-benefits of adaptation and mitigation to reduce emissions from the agriculture sector in order to limit global warming below 2 degrees C.
18. Funding and political will are needed to support developing countries to implement their plans to combat and adapt to climate change in the agriculture sector.
19. The global agriculture community, including FAO, must step up and engage as a follow up of the Paris agreement to drive action and innovation on issues related to agriculture. This includes:
 - Supporting countries to implement INDCs in agriculture and food systems for better food security and nutrition,
 - Providing adequate technical support to countries' for developing projects for submission to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the GEF to undertake actions on adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.
 - Providing technical support to countries for technologies and capacity need assessments and to develop or integrate climate change into their agriculture related policies