

Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



What is Goal 13?

Goal 13 is Climate Action. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the influences on the climate of planet Earth have been increasingly caused by anthropogenic factors (man-made), apart from natural factors. This change in climate was and still is mainly caused by greenhouse gases, which include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), methane, and mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂), and which have increased almost 50% in the years following 1990. The high quantity of gases on Earth results in global warming, making the temperature of the planet rise. SDG 13 focuses on tackling this urgent issue by mitigation and adaptation measures, making efforts to not only decrease the effects of the current situation, but also to assure the prevention of future disasters and a proper process of change for nations to be prepared for the inevitable changes in the environment. Addressing goal 13 is crucial in order to strengthen the resilience of all countries affected by climate change, but especially those in developing and vulnerable areas.

What Are The Targets?

- Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
- Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
- Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
- Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

Means of Implementation

For the proper implementation of the targets set in Goal 13, there needs to be major institutional and technological change, including technology transfer to developing countries which do not have the tools to become resilient to global warming and all the effects that it brings. Partnership between nations both from the Global South and the Global North is necessary for the successful implementation of this goal. Each and every State will be affected by climate change in some way. Therefore, the principle of equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), stated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has to be followed and considered for future collaborations. It is a central part of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

In the Paris Agreement, produced at COP21 to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that took place in France in December 2015, all the clauses specified are directly related to implementation means for this Sustainable Development Goal. The Paris Agreement recognizes the importance of predictable and adequate financial resources, as well as transparency in the communication of financing for sustainable development. SDG #13 recognizes that the UNFCCC is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

Finally, one of the most important factors for a great implementation of the targets set in Goal 13 is the review and careful analysis of progress. The Paris Agreement demands the review of countries' progresses every five years, which means that nations need to improve their NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions), showing a progression over time.



Is This Possible?

The implementation of Goal 13 requires strict and ambitious actions. Fortunately, the chances are in favor of a sustainable future regarding Earth's climate, especially because of the recent Paris Agreement. After failed attempts such as the Kyoto Protocol, this new universal, global and legally-binding agreement has a positive perspective.

Ultimately, states will need to make sure they are making sufficient effort to cooperate and properly implement the Paris Agreement. One of the main goals of the agreement is to keep the temperature rise of planet Earth to 2 degrees Centigrade, aiming for 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) presented before COP21 by states party to the UNFCCC lead to a cap of 55Gt of GHG emissions in the next 15 years. Nevertheless, in order to keep the warming of the planet under 2 degrees Centigrade, the required cap on emissions of greenhouse gases is no more than 40Gt.

In conclusion, efforts need to be made in the next few years for the implementation of SDG 13, one of the pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the factors that were agreed upon by the 195 states plus the EU party to the UNFCCC, such as cooperation, transparency, commitment and communication, it is definitely possible to tackle climate change in this century, making considerable progress in meeting the necessary cuts in emissions to limit warming before the year 2030.

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