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Govt increases contribution to global climate target



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Prime Minister (/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/prime-minister)

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New Zealand will significantly increase its contribution to the global effort to tackle climate change by reducing net greenhouse emissions by 50 percent by 2030, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Climate Change Minister James Shaw announced today on the eve of the United Nations climate conference in Glasgow.

Under the Paris Agreement each country adopts an international target known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). This sets out the contribution the country will make towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. The updated NDC announced today is expressed as a target to reduce net emissions by 50 per cent below gross 2005 levels by 2030. This equates to a 41 per cent reduction on 2005 levels using what is known as an 'emissions budget' approach.

New Zealand's new NDC is consistent with the recommendations of the independent Climate Change Commission and will make a significant contribution towards international efforts to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

"New Zealand's enhanced contribution to the global effort to fight climate change now represents our fair share, and is in line with what's needed if we are to avoid the worst impacts of global warming on Aotearoa New Zealand," Jacinda Ardern said.

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“Climate change is a priority for the Government because it’s a threat to our economy, our environment and our everyday lives. Lifting our commitment is an investment in a stable climate that will benefit us all in the future.

“The improved NDC comes off the back of our increased investment in climate aid, especially in the Pacific and represents a big step up in New Zealand’s role in tackling climate change.

“While we are a small contributor to global emissions, as a country surrounded by oceans and an economy reliant on our land we are not immune to the impact of climate change, so it’s critical we pull our weight.

“The increased NDC is a big step towards ensuring New Zealand is doing everything it can to help tackle global climate change.

“Our new contribution complements the work the Government continues to do to build a prosperous, low carbon economy for New Zealand. This work is laying the foundations for decades of economic growth in a way that creates thousands of jobs and supports our recovery from COVID-19,” Jacinda Ardern said.

Earlier this year the independent Climate Change Commission advised the Government that the NDC lodged by the previous Government in 2016 was not consistent with global efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre industrial levels - a limit that is acknowledged the world over as the best chance we have of managing the climate crisis.

“Two years ago we put the 1.5°C global warming limit into our Zero Carbon Act. Today we’re upping our commitment to help keep the world on track to meeting it,” Minister of Climate Change James Shaw said.

“This decade is make or break for the planet. To stand a chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, the science shows we now have about eight years left to almost halve global greenhouse gas emissions. That’s eight years for countries to make the necessary plans, put in place policies, implement them, and ultimately deliver the cuts.

“I am confident we can do it and in doing so open the door to a thriving world that is cleaner, healthier, and more equitable,” James Shaw said.

Over the last 12 months countries all over the world have been coming forward with more ambitious targets to keep the world on track towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement. Today, New Zealand joins them.

“The improved target we are announcing today brings New Zealand up to speed with other countries’ commitments. It is a huge improvement from where we were before.

“The Paris Agreement recognises that while countries need to take action at home, they can also work with other nations to cut emissions. That is why New Zealand’s new NDC goes beyond the domestic emissions budgets Cabinet has agreed to in principle.

“To meet our new NDC the first priority will be to reduce emissions at home – and to do so in a fair and equitable way. This will be driven by the Emissions Reduction Plan we will publish next year.

“We will then add to this by working to reduce emissions in other parts of the world. The priority here will be to support developing countries in the Asia-Pacific to meet their Sustainable Development Goals.

“What we see from other countries is that once emissions start to come down, it is possible to pick up the pace of change, while also cutting costs and creating new opportunities. We fully expect the same to happen in New Zealand. And so, as we start to work with other countries and cut our own emissions, I hope we can raise the bar for our NDC again in the future,” James Shaw said.

Further Information

Under the Paris Agreement, countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to keep global temperatures well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit temperature increases to no more than 1.5°C.

Every country that signed up to the agreement committed to setting targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, known as a nationally determined contribution (NDC). New Zealand’s first NDC, which has been increased today, covers the period 2021 - 2030.

In May this year, the Climate Change Commission provided its final advice to the Government, which said New Zealand’s previous NDC (which was lodged in 2016) was incompatible with limiting warming to 1.5°C. The Commission recommended a new NDC should be much more than 36 per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2030.

The updated NDC announced today is expressed as a target to reduce net emissions 50 per cent below gross 2005 levels by 2030. This equates to a 41 per cent reduction on 2005 levels using what is known as an ‘emissions budget’ approach.

New Zealand’s updated NDC has been expressed as a point-year target today to align with how most other countries report their NDC’s. This aids transparency and comparability. To date, only a small number of countries, including New Zealand, Australia, and Switzerland, report their NDCs as an ‘emissions budget.’

Despite expressing the new NDC as a ‘point in time’ target, New Zealand’s NDC will still be managed as a multi-year emissions budget. This means New Zealand will be accountable for all emissions produced in the years of the target period (2021 – 2030).

The Government continues to believe this provides greater certainty in emissions pathways. The budget-based approach is better for the climate, as it is not only emissions in 2030 that impact climate outcomes. Managing the NDC through an emissions budget means progress towards our target will be measured by comparing emissions for all the years of the target period (2021-2030) and not by isolating emissions in a single year (2030).

The provisional emissions budget for the new NDC is 571 Mt, a significant decrease on the 2016 NDC budget (623Mt).



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