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LKI *Explainers* examine an agreement or another aspect of Sri Lanka's international relations. They summarise key points and developments, with up-to-date information, facts, and figures.

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## **The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and Sri Lanka**

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This LKI Explainer explains key aspects of the Paris Agreement, which entered into force on [4 November 2016](#).<sup>1</sup> It considers the implications of the Agreement for Sri Lanka’s policymakers in tackling climate change at home.

## Background

On [12 December 2015](#),<sup>2</sup> 195 states adopted the Paris Agreement. Both developed and developing states signed the Agreement for several reasons, including:

- Increasing evidence of global warming; 2016 was [the hottest year on record](#)<sup>3</sup> since 1880 (when records began), and the third record year in a row. [Scientists have observed](#)<sup>4</sup> that if emissions continue to rise at the current rate, global warming will become “catastrophic and irreversible;”
  - Prior to the Paris Agreement, China committed to reducing its CO2 and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. [China is improving the quality of its growth](#)<sup>5</sup> because of pollution and scarce resources; and
  - The [cost of renewable energy is decreasing](#),<sup>6</sup> thereby making low-carbon economies viable in developing and developed states.
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## 1. What are the aims of the Paris Agreement?

The main objectives of the Agreement are to:

1. Hold the increase in average global temperatures to “well below” [2 degrees Celsius](#)<sup>7</sup> above pre-industrial levels, while “pursuing efforts” towards a higher standard – which is to limit the increase in average global temperatures to [1.5 degrees Celsius](#)<sup>8</sup> above pre-industrial levels;
2. Increase the ability of countries to [adapt to the impacts of climate change](#),<sup>9</sup> foster climate resilience, and reduce GHG emissions in a manner that does not threaten food production; and
3. Provide financial resources to [help countries to transition](#)<sup>10</sup> to low GHG emissions and climate-resilient development.

## 2. Adoption, ratification, and entry into force

- Sri Lanka was one of the [195 states that adopted](#)<sup>11</sup> the Paris Agreement, at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris.
- President Maithripala Sirisena [submitted Sri Lanka’s instrument of ratification](#)<sup>12</sup> of the Paris Agreement at the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 September 2016.
- The Paris Agreement [entered into force](#) on 4 November 2016<sup>13</sup> after meeting [twin thresholds](#),<sup>14</sup> (i) ratification by at least 55 states, which (ii) were collectively responsible for 55% of the world’s total GHG emissions. As of 25 August 2017, [160 states](#)<sup>15</sup> have deposited their instruments of ratification.

### 3. States' commitments under the Agreement

- State contributions under the Paris Agreement are *voluntary*, which distinguishes it from other climate change agreements like the Kyoto Protocol, whereby states committed to binding emissions reduction targets.
  - The rationale of this approach is to allow states to design their own contributions, taking into account their development targets and capacities. This is expected to increase the likelihood of their compliance.
- [Prior to the start of 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC \(COP 21\)](#),<sup>16</sup> states submitted their 'Intended Nationally Determined Contributions' (INDCs), showing their intended policies and actions to fulfill the aims of the Paris Agreement. A state's INDCs are then [transformed into 'Nationally Determined Contributions'](#)<sup>17</sup> (NDCs) upon its ratification of the Paris Agreement.
- The Paris Agreement requires ratifying states (i.e. states parties) to [communicate their NDCs every five years](#).<sup>18</sup> Any revisions to these targets must be more ambitious than the existing ones.
- Parties to the Agreement must also make financial contributions to climate change. The accord stipulates that [developed states shall provide financial assistance](#)<sup>19</sup> to developing states, and mobilise climate finance through a wide variety of [sources, instruments, and channels](#).<sup>20</sup> Developing states are also encouraged to provide financial support, on a voluntary basis.
  - In 2009, at COP 15, developed states agreed to [collectively mobilise USD 100 billion a year by 2020](#)<sup>21</sup> to finance the climate change initiatives of developing states.
  - In 2015, at COP 21, it was decided that [developed countries will continue](#)<sup>22</sup> to collectively mobilise USD 100 billion a year by 2020 for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts in developed countries.
- Developed states [have agreed to biennially communicate](#)<sup>23</sup> quantitative and qualitative information on their financial contributions to assist developing country parties to the Agreement.
- States have also agreed to ensure that they provide financing for [both mitigation and adaptation efforts](#),<sup>24</sup> in a balanced manner.

### 4. Critiques of the Paris Agreement

- The Paris Agreement does not explicitly state that the [INDCs or NDCs of states must include emissions reductions](#).<sup>25</sup> This leaves room for states to avoid emissions reductions in their commitments.
- The Paris Agreement does not mention easing the production and use of fossil fuels, or transitioning to clean or renewable energy. [Activists have argued](#)<sup>26</sup> that this omission could delay the transition away from fossil fuels, which is imperative to achieving the goals of the Agreement.
- The Paris Agreement does not explicitly reiterate the agreement at COP 15 in 2009, that developed states will mobilise USD 100 billion a year by 2020. It is only mentioned in [related documents](#)<sup>27</sup> and [the UNFCCC climate finance webpage](#).<sup>28</sup>

- Commentators have highlighted that the Paris Agreement also [fails to specifically address](#)<sup>29</sup> the effects of climate change on marginalised and vulnerable groups of people, including the poor and elderly.
- Some have criticised the accord as costly and ineffective. For instance, [conservative think tanks in the US have argued](#)<sup>30</sup> that the Paris Agreement will cost America jobs, slow economic growth, and only lead to a miniscule reduction in global temperature (provided every state party fulfills its contributions to the Agreement).

## 5. The Paris Agreement post-Trump

- In June 2017, US President, Donald Trump, announced that the [US will withdraw](#)<sup>31</sup> from the Paris Agreement, and indicated that the [US would seek to renegotiate](#)<sup>32</sup> the Paris Agreement or enter into a new climate change deal.
- The announcement caused widespread concern, especially since the US is one of the [world's largest](#)<sup>33</sup> GHG emitters, [a key source of funding](#)<sup>34</sup> to achieve the Agreement's objectives, and has been a [global leader](#)<sup>35</sup> in climate change initiatives. Specific concerns included:
  - The Obama administration had [pledged USD 3 billion to address climate change in developing countries](#),<sup>36</sup> but it [disbursed only USD 1 billion](#)<sup>37</sup> of that pledge.
  - In addition to funding, [transfers of technological expertise](#)<sup>38</sup> are essential to achieving the aims of the Paris Agreement. The withdrawal of the US could mean minimal US support in terms of climate-smart technology transfers.
- The US will join Nicaragua and Syria as the only states of the 197 member states of the UNFCCC that have not joined the Paris Agreement.
  - Nicaragua did not join the Agreement because [it argues that the Agreement is not ambitious enough](#),<sup>39</sup> and Syria was unable to join the agreement due to its [longstanding internal conflict](#).<sup>40</sup>

## 6. International responses to US withdrawal from the Agreement

- The withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement has created an opportunity for [China and the EU to show leadership](#)<sup>41</sup> in climate change, alone and together.

### China

- At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2017, prior to US withdrawal, President Xi Jinping of China [emphasised the importance of protecting the environment](#)<sup>42</sup> while pursuing economic and social goals. He [stated that](#),<sup>43</sup> “the Paris Agreement is a hard-won achievement ... all signatories should stick to it rather than walk away.”
- [China has encouraged developed states](#)<sup>44</sup> to contribute more financing to combat climate change. It also established its own climate change fund in September 2015: the “[China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund](#).”<sup>45</sup>
- China has pledged [USD 3.1 billion](#)<sup>46</sup> (USD 100 million more than pledged by the Obama administration) to support developing states in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## European Union

- EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, [Miguel Arias Cañete, has remarked](#)<sup>47</sup> that  
*“The EU and China are joining forces to forge ahead on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and accelerate the global transition to clean energy...in these turbulent times, shared climate leadership is needed more than ever.”*
- The EU has stated that the [US would not be able to renegotiate](#)<sup>48</sup> the terms of the Paris Agreement. To achieve the aims of the Agreement, the EU has pledged to continue working with business leaders and the Governors of individual states of the US.
- On 1 June 2017, Italy, France, and Germany [released a joint statement](#)<sup>49</sup> expressing their disapproval of the US’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The UK also [expressed its disapproval](#)<sup>50</sup> of US withdrawal from the Agreement.

## India

- [India has reiterated](#)<sup>51</sup> its commitment to the Agreement, and [New Delhi refuted](#)<sup>52</sup> President Trump’s statement that India’s participation in the Paris Agreement is contingent on receiving “[billions and billions and billions of dollars](#)”<sup>53</sup> in foreign aid from developed countries.

## 7. Sources of funding for state commitments under the Agreement

- The [Paris Agreement stipulates](#)<sup>54</sup> that [the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, including its operating entities](#),<sup>55</sup> shall serve as the financial mechanism of the Paris Agreement. These include:
  - The Green Climate Fund (GCF), established in 2010 [with pledged funding of USD 10.3 billion](#),<sup>56</sup> and
  - The Global Environment Facility (GEF), established in 1992 [with funding of USD 4.43 billion](#).<sup>57</sup>
- Other climate finance mechanisms that can facilitate the aims of the Paris Agreement, include the [Adaptation Fund](#) (USD 355.8 million),<sup>58</sup> [Climate Investment Funds](#) (USD 8.3 billion),<sup>59</sup> [China South – South Climate Cooperation Fund](#) (USD 3.1 billion),<sup>60</sup> development banks, such as the [Asian Development Bank](#),<sup>61</sup> and private sector development assistance.

"Responding to the climate challenge requires collective action from all countries, cities, businesses, and private citizens. Among these concerted efforts, advanced economies have formally agreed to jointly mobilize USD 100 billion per year by 2020, from a variety of sources, to address the pressing mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries."

- Green Climate Fund

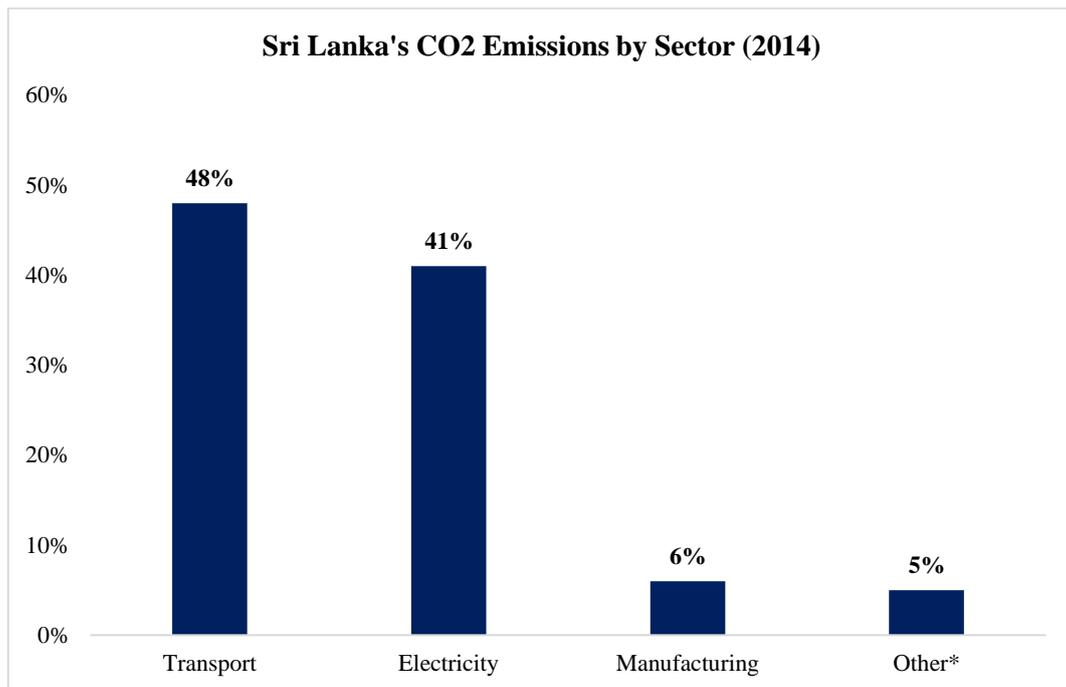
[www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/resource-mobilization](http://www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/resource-mobilization)

## 8. Implications of the Paris Agreement for Sri Lanka

- According to 2012 figures, Sri Lanka accounts for [less than 1% of global GHG emissions](#).<sup>62</sup> Transport and electricity are the two sectors largely responsible for emissions in Sri Lanka. Figure 1 provides a sectoral overview of the country’s CO2 emissions.

- Despite being a low emitter, Sri Lanka is vulnerable to climate change. In 2017 alone, the country experienced severe climate-related disasters in the form of [droughts](#)<sup>63</sup> and [floods](#).<sup>64</sup> The consequences of these disasters included food and water shortages, and the loss of life.
- It is therefore in [Sri Lanka's economic and security interest](#)<sup>65</sup> to tackle climate change, especially via (i) climate finance from developed countries, (ii) climate-smart investment, and (iii) geopolitical relations.

**Figure 1**



\*'Other' includes, for example, emissions from residential buildings, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and public services.

\*\*Data for 2015-2017 is currently unavailable.

Source: World Development Indicators, last updated on 08/02/2017

### Climate finance

- The GCF approved a grant of [USD 38 million](#)<sup>66</sup> to finance a climate adaptation project (Project FP016) in Sri Lanka. This project aims to strengthen farmers' resilience to climate variability and extreme events, by establishing an integrated approach to water management.
- The GEF has approved grants of approximately [USD 259 million](#),<sup>67</sup> to finance 47 climate change projects in Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lanka could utilise other mechanisms to improve access to climate finance. These include the Commonwealth's "[Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub](#),"<sup>68</sup> based in Mauritius and launched in [September 2016](#).<sup>69</sup>

### CLIMATE FINANCE

"Climate finance involves flows of funds from developed to developing nations to help poorer countries to cut their emissions and adapt to climate change."

- Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

- The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub prioritises [assistance to small states and developing states](#)<sup>70</sup> in the Commonwealth. Recipient states would receive climate finance advisers for one to two years at a time, to assist host ministries to identify and apply for funding.
- The Sri Lankan government could explicitly recognise “climate finance” in policy documents (like states such as [Kenya](#),<sup>71</sup> [Singapore](#),<sup>72</sup> and [Australia](#)<sup>73</sup> have done), by including it in the [National Climate Change Policy of Sri Lanka](#)<sup>74</sup> and [National Adaptation Plan](#).<sup>75</sup>
  - It is insufficient to only state the country’s need for financial assistance for climate change in policy documents. Climate finance is an additional and more specific type of funding for developing states than official development assistance (ODA). Climate finance and ODA [may overlap, but tackle two different developmental issues](#);<sup>76</sup> climate change and poverty.
  - Therefore, Sri Lanka should recognise climate finance as a separate need and source of funding to address its development challenges.
- Sri Lanka should ensure that either its [Climate Change Secretariat](#),<sup>77</sup> or another relevant organisation, monitors climate finance. This would help reveal whether Sri Lanka is maximising and tapping into all available sources of climate finance.
  - [El Salvador’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is coordinating](#)<sup>78</sup> efforts to create a climate finance tracking system, which would monitor funds flowing through and outside government systems.
  - Its Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also [mapping climate finance, and maintaining a climate finance database](#)<sup>79</sup> to ensure national entities are aware of climate finance opportunities.

### Climate-smart investment

- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group has estimated that the Paris Agreement will create climate-smart investment opportunities worth [USD 23 trillion](#)<sup>80</sup> in emerging markets by 2030.
- Sri Lanka is not mentioned in the [IFC’s analysis](#)<sup>81</sup> of states ready for climate-smart investment. By contrast, the IFC has stated that China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam have an investment potential of [USD 16 trillion](#)<sup>82</sup> in green buildings; and India and Bangladesh of [USD 2.2 trillion](#)<sup>83</sup> in climate-resilient infrastructure. Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the IFC’s analysis.



- Sri Lanka should reframe climate change as an issue of economic development, rather than as only an environmental issue. One way to do this is to move ministerial responsibility for climate change [out of the 'Ministry of Environment'](#)<sup>84</sup> to a portfolio like National Policies and Economic Affairs, to signal that climate change projects are central to the country's economic development.
  - [Colombia](#)<sup>85</sup> (a country noted by the IFC with potential for climate-smart investment), shifted the responsibility for its climate change policy from the Ministry of Environment to the National Planning Department, to better integrate climate change issues into development planning.
- Similarly, Sri Lanka should plan and market its 'Megapolis' project in the Western Region, and other national development plans, in ways that attract climate-smart investment.

### Geopolitical relations

- In the face of US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, China has committed to honouring its own commitment to the Agreement.
- There is an opportunity for Sri Lanka to recognise China's leadership on climate change, and thereby advance relations with China beyond issues of trade, investment and tourism.
- China and India are [expected to exceed their targets](#)<sup>86</sup> under the Agreement, and are no longer viewed as obstacles to climate change efforts.
- China and India have both succeeded in [reducing the cost of renewable energy](#)<sup>87</sup> technology through heavy investments in solar and wind, and are [shifting away](#)<sup>88</sup> from the use of coal.
- China and India are also turning to sustainable transportation: the sale of

Figure 2: Snapshot of IFC Analysis



electric vehicles in China [increased by 70%](#)<sup>89</sup> in 2015 because of government incentives, and India aims to [sell only electric cars](#)<sup>90</sup> in the country by 2030.

- These developments may present opportunities for Sri Lanka to work with both emerging powers, in strengthening its own climate change efforts.

## 9. Conclusion: summary of policy recommendations for Sri Lanka

- Include “*climate finance*” in state policies like the National Climate Change Policy of Sri Lanka and National Adaptation Plan, to make climate finance a central objective of policymakers.
- Engage the *Commonwealth Climate Finance Hub* to gain technical expertise of the sources and mechanisms of climate finance, so Sri Lanka can maximise climate-related funding.
- Reframe climate change as an issue of economic development instead of the environment, and thereby foster policies and plans that *attract climate-smart investment*.
- Recognise China for its leadership in climate change, and work with both China and India in efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

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