



The Commonwealth

A briefing for journalists | October 2021

# Fast Facts: Climate Change

## Overview

The Commonwealth is made up of 54 independent countries working together to pursue shared goals that promote sustainable development, democracy and peace. Our combined population is 2.5 billion, of which about 60 per cent is under the age of 30.

Climate change is a global threat that affects all members. The Commonwealth's 32 small states (including 25 small island developing states or SIDS), as well as 12 least developed countries (LDCs) are particularly vulnerable.

Impacts include changing weather patterns, warmer oceans, sea level rise, coastal erosion and increasingly powerful extreme weather events leading to natural disasters such as drought, landslides, flooding and tropical cyclones.

These directly affect lives and livelihoods, with serious long-term impacts on the socio-economic development of member countries and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Our work

Climate change is a cross-cutting theme for the Commonwealth Secretariat, supported by a number of key initiatives and programmes, such as the:

- Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub
- Commonwealth Blue Charter
- Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda
- CommonSensing Project (supported by a consortium of international partners)
- proposed Call for Action on Living Lands

## Headline facts

The Commonwealth represents **more than a quarter of the parties to the Paris Agreement** and nearly 15 per cent of global carbon emissions [compared to EU's 8.5 per cent].

Within the Commonwealth, **top greenhouse gas emitters** include India, Canada, Australia, South Africa, UK and Pakistan.

**Climate-related disasters have increased over time.** From 1980-1990, there were at least 430 meteorological, climatological and hydrological disasters recorded in the Commonwealth.

From 2010 to 2020, this almost doubled to 815 climate-related disasters, which have killed 47,000 people, affected 671 million and caused US\$189 billion in damages.

**Sea level rise affects 47 out of 54 Commonwealth countries that have a coastline**, including 25 small island developing states - also known as 'Large Ocean States' - where, on average, 96 per cent of territory is ocean and only 4 per cent is land.

For these countries, **ocean action is climate action**. As the world's greatest 'carbon sink', it has absorbed around one third of all human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since the start of the industrial revolution.

The ocean has also stored more than **90 per cent of excess heat** caused by greenhouse gas emissions over the last 50 years.

In 2009, it was agreed that developed countries will mobilise **US\$ 100 billion per year in climate finance** to support developing nations. This is equivalent to about 0.1 percent of the combined annual GDP of advanced economies, or 5 percent of the US\$ 2 trillion the world spends each year on military. About \$79 billion was mobilised towards this goal in 2019.



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## Our key initiatives

### [Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub](#)

The CCFAH helps small and other vulnerable states access funding for climate action, by embedding highly-skilled long term advisers in relevant government departments to support capacity-building and help develop successful funding proposals. As at September 2021, it has assisted 16 countries to secure around US\$44 million in climate finance, with a robust project pipeline worth over US\$ 750 million.

### [IPP Commonsensing Project](#)

This is an innovative project based on a partnership between Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and a consortium of international partners, including the Commonwealth Secretariat. Together they support and build climate resilience and enhance decision-making through the use of satellite remote sensing technology.

### [The Commonwealth Blue Charter](#)

The Blue Charter is a commitment agreed by all 54 member countries to cooperate in actively addressing ocean-related challenges and meeting commitments for sustainable ocean development. It is implemented by 10 dynamic action groups, led by 14 champion countries, focusing on issues such as marine plastic pollution, ocean observations, sustainable blue economy and climate change.

### [Commonwealth Disaster Risk Finance Portal](#)

This online portal helps member countries easily find the right type of financial support to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters. It serves as a “one-stop-shop” where information on international funding earmarked for catastrophes is compiled, streamlined and made easy to navigate.

### [The Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda](#)

This agenda seeks to fast-track an inclusive, just and equitable transition to low-carbon energy systems across the Commonwealth. Countries have been invited to set up action groups focused on three key pillars: Inclusive Energy Transitions; Technology and Innovation; and Enabling Frameworks.

### [Call For Action on Living Lands](#)

This is a proposed initiative currently undergoing consultation with member countries. It focuses on integrating sustainable land use management into climate action, focusing on nature-based solutions. Countries will work together to promote climate-resilient agriculture, soil and water conservation and management, sustainable green cover and biodiversity, and the active engagement of indigenous people.

### [Universal Vulnerability Index](#)

This initiative is currently undergoing consultation with member states. It recognises that GDP is a poor indicator of long-term sustainable development, and an inadequate measure of how much development finance a country needs. Instead, the index assesses how vulnerable or resilient developing countries are to economic, socio-political and environmental shocks, such as climate change, which could then influence how much international finance they can access.