Countdown

TO COP 26

Discover What's at Stake

And

What We're Fighting For

The Climate Reality Project®

THE WORLD IS WATCHING

We are living through the last years still left to prevent a future of permanent and catastrophic climate change. The planet's future – humanity's future – is in our hands.

That's the inescapable conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis" report, which was released in August 2021.

Our world is warming faster than any point in recorded history – and the report details the many and far-reaching consequences. More and worse drought. Seas rising. Greater extremes in temperatures. Ever-stronger hurricanes. And on and on.

In this moment, **the report amounts to an existential choice – *for global leaders and for the rest of us.***

Act now in the last years we have left, and we have a shot at actually holding warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and averting the worst of the climate crisis.

Fail to act with sufficient urgency and boldness, and well, the result could be truly disastrous for all of humanity.

But buried in the report is also cause for real hope.

Quickly cutting emissions and reaching net zero by mid-century "would have rapid and sustained effects to limit human-caused climate change, compared with scenarios with high or very high GHG emissions."

In other words, if we act fast and act boldly, we can still limit global warming, with profound consequences for the planet and the future we give our children.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

Nearly six years ago in Paris, France, the parties present at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), better known as COP 21, set forth a historic agreement that brought nearly every nation in the world together on a vision to seriously combat the climate crisis. Six years later, and on the heels of a year that saw climate-driven natural disaster after climate-driven natural disaster play out all around the world, there's real hope that nations will step up and meet the moment at COP 26 in Scotland this November by further strengthening the agreement with ambitious new targets that can actually keep global warming to no more than **1.5 degrees Celsius** – and lay out how they'll get there.

Because the stakes have never been higher.

Outside the meeting rooms in Glasgow, how we see and talk about the crisis has fundamentally changed. The inequality fueling protests all around the world is starting to enter the conversation on climate solutions as more and more people realize the only real solution is a whole-society just transition that brings developing nations and poor communities along. Cities are becoming critical players. Natural solutions and oceans are beginning to get the attention they deserve. And women and Indigenous people are finally starting to become recognized as climate leaders and critical voices.

At the same time, demand for action has never been higher. And the science is crystal clear that unprecedented ecological and human tragedy awaits if the world doesn't change course on emissions – fast.

In 2019

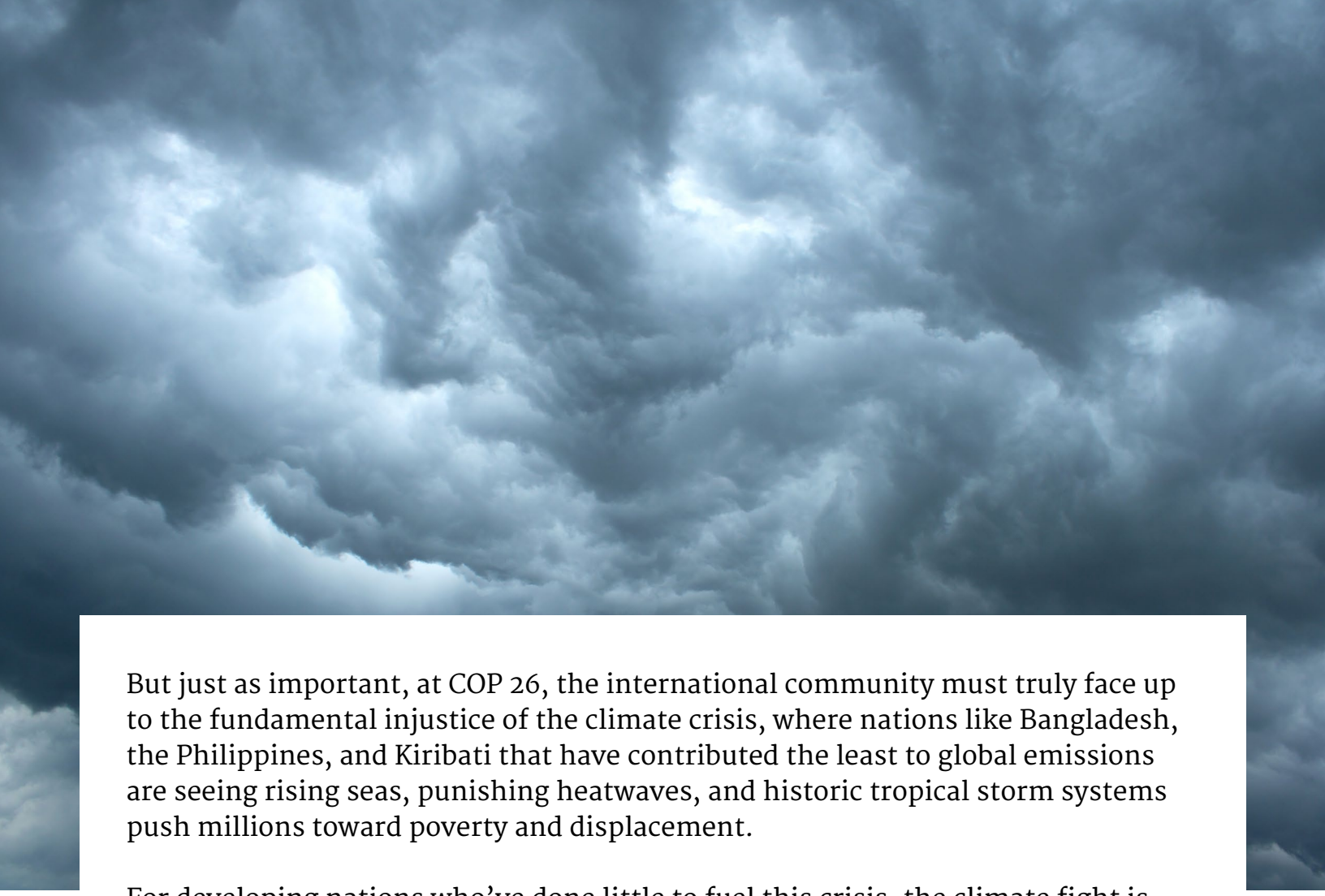
23.9 million people

were internally displaced by weather disasters

THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN A NUTSHELL

Carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels is warming our planet and driving climate disruption.

It's simple: the more carbon pollution in the air, the more the sun's energy gets trapped as heat. Which means things keep getting hotter. These rising global temperatures change natural systems, leading to more and more extreme weather events like droughts, flooding, wildfires, and major hurricanes, alongside numerous other impacts that will affect the health and well-being of every person on the planet.



But just as important, at COP 26, the international community must truly face up to the fundamental injustice of the climate crisis, where nations like Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Kiribati that have contributed the least to global emissions are seeing rising seas, punishing heatwaves, and historic tropical storm systems push millions toward poverty and displacement.

For developing nations who've done little to fuel this crisis, the climate fight is about justice and practical help. In their eyes, industrialized countries have largely created the destruction on their doorstep and so industrialized countries should help end it.

Not only with statements of solidarity, but with **real commitments and real action**.

So, what are we hoping this all adds up to in Glasgow?

Science taking center stage and real commitments to real climate action from countries around the world that put justice and equity at the heart of their solutions.

But if we can't get everyone in the international community to agree on the target we're aiming for (and how to hit it), we're not going to see anything like the massive cooperation we need to turn the global economy around in time to avoid climate catastrophe.

WHAT IS COP?

COP is the commonly used acronym for **Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The UNFCCC is an international treaty for climate action adopted in 1992. There are 197 nations, or "parties," that are part of the UNFCCC.

COP is "the supreme decision-making body of the Convention." Each year, except in exceptional circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNFCCC parties come together for a conference of parties (COP) meeting, also called the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

The first COP meeting was held in Berlin, Germany in March 1995.

At the event, the global community takes stock of the progress – or lack thereof – made fighting the climate crisis. Numerous important international climate agreements have come out of the varied conferences, including the Kyoto Protocol, the world's first international treaty requiring the reduction of global warming pollution.

In 2015, COP 21 delivered the **Paris Agreement** – the most ambitious global climate agreement the world has ever seen. The Paris Agreement set an overarching goal to keep warming "well below" 2 degrees Celsius while "pursuing efforts" to keep it under 1.5 degrees, and included each nation offering specific emission reduction targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), that they felt were achievable, even if they have so far been inadequate.

As part of the agreement, each party is supposed to submit new or revised NDCs every five years, ideally raising the stakes and making more ambitious commitments that accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels over time. But every five years isn't fast enough anymore. Nations must find a way to agree on continuously enhancing their NDCs to reflect the urgency of the climate crisis and the reality of solutions at hand.

COP 26, which is scheduled to take place October 31–November 12, 2021, **marks the fifth meeting since the signing of the Paris Agreement.**

1.5 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

1.5 is the most important number at COP 26.

Global average temperature rise of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) risks irreversible humanitarian and ecological catastrophe, according to the IPCC. Two degrees Celsius invites truly unimaginable suffering.

We're at 1.2 degrees C now. **Rapid change is essential.**

It's at about 1.5 degrees C of global warming that there's enough heat to push many of the natural systems that sustain us past a dangerous turning point. And it's staggering just how much every fraction of a degree makes a difference.

Going above 1.5 degrees C of warming puts millions more at risk of potentially life-threatening heatwaves and poverty. It all but wipes out coral reefs that entire ecosystems rely on worldwide. Seas swallow even more of our cities. And that's just for starters.

The IPCC projects that going from 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming to 2 degrees could mean:

- 1.7 billion *more* people experience severe heatwaves at least once every five years.
- Seas rise – on average – *another* 10 centimeters (almost 4 inches).
- Up to several hundred million more people become exposed to climate-related risks and poverty.
- The coral reefs that support marine environments around the world *could decline* as much as 99 percent.
- Global fishery catches *could fall by another* 1.5 million tonnes.

That's why it is imperative that we do everything we can to hold global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius – **lives, livelihoods, and entire ecosystems depend on it.**

RENEWABLE ENERGY 101

Renewable energy is energy generated from ongoing natural processes like wind or sunlight that are not depleted when used. Unlike fossil fuels, these types of energy are theoretically unlimited. In contrast, **fossil fuels like oil and gas are finite resources** formed in the earth over hundreds of millions of years from the remains of plants and animals.

Importantly, renewable energy is clean and doesn't release the carbon pollution driving climate change into the atmosphere. Burning fossil fuels does.

CLIMATE JUSTICE IS A WIN-WIN

(*and the right thing to do*)

All around the world, the people least responsible for the climate crisis are paying the highest price for inaction.

One of the many sad truths of the climate crisis is this: Globally, those suffering the most from climate impacts like sweltering heat, never-ending drought, and ever-more powerful storms are overwhelmingly people of color in poorer nations that contribute little to the GHGs driving climate change.

Indeed, the majority of the 10 countries hit hardest by climate-fueled extreme weather from 1999-2018 are also on the list of the world's least developed nations.

This movement has always stood up for those most affected by climate change. But there's no denying that what that means has changed over the last few years.

Climate justice – the idea that "climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations" and that we must work to correct these heinous wrongs – has become a motivating principle of our ongoing, evolving fight.

Madagascar is Ground Zero for Climate Injustice

Parts of southern Madagascar are experiencing a devastating, drought-driven food security crisis that has left thousands of families foraging for food, "living on raw red cactus fruits, wild leaves and locusts for months now."

The country is in the throes of its worst drought in 40 years.

All told, over 1.14 million people in the region are considered food insecure, and desperately need emergency food and nutrition assistance. And sadly, southern Madagascar is expected to grow even hotter and experience more frequent drought as our climate continues to warm.

The average person in Madagascar emits just 0.1 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO2e) per year. The average American? 15.7 MtCO2e. Every year.

Does that seem fair to you?

It's injustice, pure and simple. ***And it's got to stop.***

The work to build an equitable, inclusive, and *successful* climate movement is only possible if we continue to fight for the health, safety, opportunity, and basic human rights of ***all*** people. And the citizens of emerging economies have every right to the same quality of life they see in developed nations.

So, how do we help them get there without subjecting the planet to another wave of fossil-fueled development?

Many developing nations are increasingly meeting their energy needs with renewable energy that's as affordable and reliable as it is clean, effectively "leapfrogging" traditional energy sources like coal and natural gas. This is incredible development – one we should wildly encourage and work to grow exponentially, all over the world – but at this moment, in this crisis, it's also a Band-Aid on a wound that requires stiches.

Climate Reality's 10 international branches – in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Europe, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico and Latin America, the Philippines, and South Africa – organize activists to raise awareness of climate injustice and fight for the solutions that can make a difference in their country or region.

Good thing a path forward is baked right into the Paris Agreement.

China is the world leader in renewable energy, with (far) more installed than any other country on the planet.

"Article 9 of the Paris Agreement stipulates that developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention," according to the UNFCCC. "Other Parties are encouraged to provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily."

$100 billion each year in climate aid between 2020 and 2025, in fact.

Providing this aid and making sure emerging economies are able to both mitigate and adapt to climate change without turning to fossil fuels is essential to keeping temperature rise in check – and people safer for generations to come.

The 1.5-degree Celsius target of the Paris Agreement is unreachable without it.

However, we aren't currently meeting that pledge, and much of the money that has been provided has put nations further into debt. It is essential that the full amount be provided, and an agreement is reached on post-2025 amounts, not just for equity but also for trust-building so that we can tackle this crisis head-on, together.

WE HAVE THE SOLUTIONS

(But Big Polluters aren't going down without a fight)

With the world growing warmer and each year breaking new heat records, urgent action to end the climate crisis cannot wait. It's our responsibility to do everything we can to prevent the worst of it.

Luckily, we have the technologies necessary to slash emissions in half by 2030 and keep the world on track for a 1.5-degree Celsius warmer future in our hands today. But we also have well-funded opposition to climate action: Big Polluters unwilling to put people over profit, global leaders more interested in applause and the performance of power than in the tough work of actually governing, and more.

Today, **solar power** is everywhere – from home roofs to Ikea superstores to the Nevada and Moroccan deserts. And thank goodness. It's a win-win solution to the climate crisis that creates jobs, saves money, and helps cut the carbon pollution changing our planet.

Built on an area of more than 3,000 hectares, the size of 3,500 football fields, the Noor-Ouarzazate energy complex in Morocco is a concentrated solar farm that produces a whopping 580 megawatts. That's enough electricity to power a city the size of Prague, and crucially, is saving the planet from over 760,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

To date, it's the largest concentrated solar farm in the world.

Plus, when it comes to energy, solar might be the closest thing to free money out there – the sun provides more energy in an hour than all of humanity uses in a year. And we haven't even begun to touch its full potential.

At the same time, **wind energy** systems keep growing everywhere from Copenhagen to California to China. **Geothermal energy** too can be found almost anywhere, though it's certainly more readily accessible in some places than others.

And that's just to start.

Energy efficiency. Weatherization. Recycling. Regenerative agriculture. Marine energy. Reforestation. Carbon-capture technologies. Walking or biking more. Better battery storage.

The list of ways we can reduce our global consumption of fossil fuels while transitioning toward a global economy powered fully by renewable energies is long and exhaustive.

We know what we need to do. We just need the willpower to see it through.

However, no matter that the world's leading climate scientists have reaffirmed "with high confidence the AR5 finding that there is a near-linear relationship between cumulative anthropogenic CO2 emissions and the global warming they cause," well-funded opposition to changing the energy status quo remains.

Virtually every building in Iceland is heated with hot spring water, and the country gets **more than 50 percent** of its primary energy from geothermal sources.

Fossil fuel interests are even using the same strategies that the cigarette industry once used to deceive the public and protect their profits. It's not easy to shape public opinion when the facts are against you. So, the industry began attacking the facts, creating an alternate universe where decades of rising CO2 and rising temperatures had nothing to do with each other, were part of the planet's natural heating and cooling cycles, and scientists who claimed otherwise were alarmists not to be trusted.

These funded, contrarian voices are then given space in our media landscape to make false statements and espouse talking points meant to create doubt in the minds of anyone without a PhD in climatology. Outlets comply, fearing being seen as partisan, and suddenly, a subject on which the entire scientific community is in overwhelming agreement looks far less settled – further promoting the myth of disagreement.

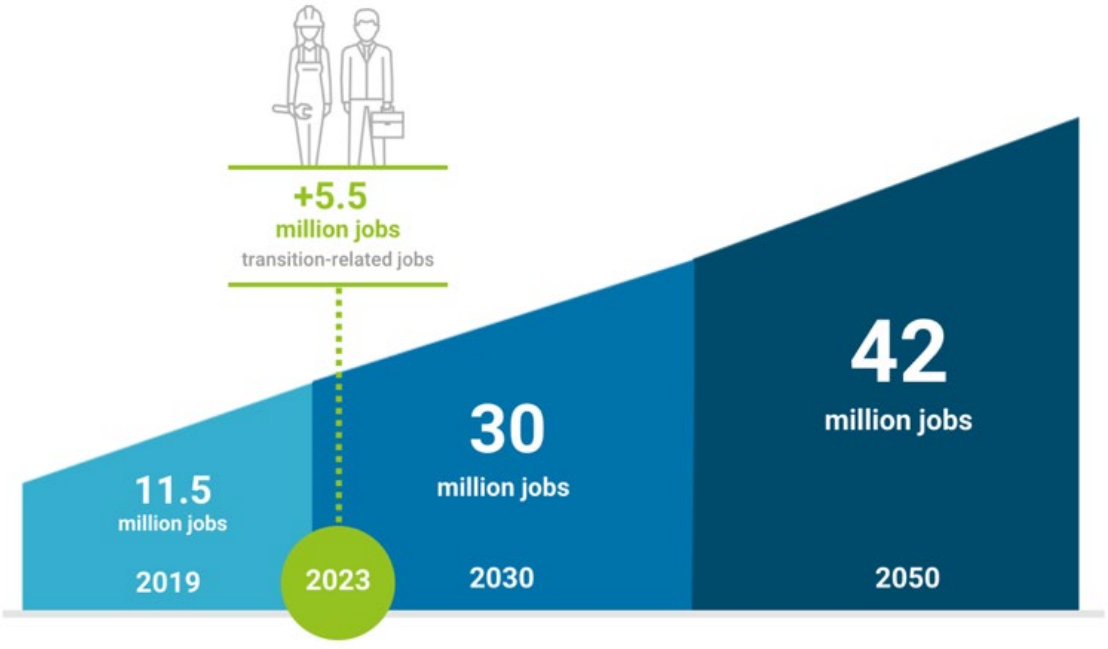
Smart tactics, huh? **But you know better.** *And so do more and more people every day.*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RENEWABLES

Renewable Energy Is Reliable.
No sun? No wind? No problem. The right combination of renewables along with modern grid and energy storage technologies can provide around-the-clock power in many cases, regardless of conditions. Plus, shifting the grid from relying on a few dirty power plants to many renewable sources diversify our energy resources, making the entire system more resilient and dependable.

Renewable Energy Is Affordable
Renewable energy is the smarter choice for the planet – and your wallet. Around the world, many kinds of renewables are already as cheap or cheaper than fossil fuels. If you consider the hidden costs of dirty energy, like the public health impacts of air pollution, it's not even a contest.

Renewable Energy Creates Jobs
Renewable energy is a rapidly growing global industry, employing millions of people around the world. Solar panel installer and wind turbine technician are projected to be the fastest growing jobs in the United States through 2026. And according to IRENA, "Intensified energy transition investment could increase jobs in renewables to almost 30 million globally by 2030. Energy efficiency jobs could reach 29 million, while grids and energy system flexibility jobs could expand to 12 million."



ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY

There's no getting around it: The changes we're talking about here are an investment. In infrastructure. In cities and communities. In scaling up existing technologies and investing in new ones. In efficiency measures. And so much more.

But this investment — in a safe, healthy, sustainable, and just future — is also one that could pay impressive dividends for people of every social class, color, gender, and creed all around the world.

It has the potential to lift us all up together.

But it's also going to be *a lot* of work.

We have to get loud – *right now*, in this key moment of opportunity – and together demand the **real** changes that can save us from the worst degrees of warming. And importantly, we must hold our leaders accountable for getting us there.

People who seek any type of office often say many, *many* things – and make promises they don't keep. But that's not going to cut it.

Not this time.

Ambition is our only choice.

The planet depends on it.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

To secure a safe, sustainable future for the planet and everyone who lives on it – now and for generations to come – we demand the following from global leaders… at COP 26 and beyond:

1. **Concrete Plans for Actual and Immediate Reductions of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**
   Decarbonization plans must prioritize real emissions reductions over carbon offsets, which too often prove to be smoke and mirrors. These emissions reductions plans must begin immediately and have end goals to reach a global reduction of at least 45% below 2010 levels by 2030 and virtually zero emissions well before 2050. The 2021 International Energy Agency report said it best: "There is no need for investment in new fossil fuel supply in our net zero pathway." Polices put forth by businesses, governments, cities, and other large institutions must have a clear path toward a managed decline of greenhouse gas emissions via a just and equitable transition. Any actions taken to reduce and eliminate GHG emissions should respect human rights, Indigenous sovereignty, and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, as set out by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2. **A Just Transition from Coal and Gas to Clean Energy.**
   Coal remains the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and gas has major short-term warming potential. We cannot allow proliferation of coal or gas to continue into the coming years. All governments must immediately set a date to close coal and gas operations, and we must agree upon a date to end coal and gas worldwide while prioritizing just transition plans for workers and communities.

3. **Wealthy, Polluting Countries Must Provide Financial Support.**
   The nations historically responsible for polluting our common atmosphere should contribute the most financial and technical assistance toward democratized clean energy and adaptation projects. Developed countries must at minimum fulfill their pledge to jointly give a cumulative USD 500 billion through 2025 to help vulnerable nations meet their own climate targets and adapt to the ever-increasing negative impacts of the climate crisis. Financing of new fossil fuel projects and explorations must cease immediately.

Learn more and

TAKE ACTION NOW:

24™ Hours of Reality™

LET'S GET REAL

The Climate Reality Project®

Founded and chaired by former US Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore, The Climate Reality Project is dedicated to catalyzing a global solution to the climate crisis by making urgent action a necessity across every sector of society.

Today, climate change is standing in the way of a healthy tomorrow for all of us. But we know that practical solutions are right in front of us. We can create a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future by making a planet-wide shift from dirty fossil fuels to clean, reliable, and affordable renewable energy.

At Climate Reality, we combine digital media initiatives, global organizing events, and peer-to-peer outreach programs to share this good news with people everywhere and build overwhelming popular support for policies that accelerate the global transition to a clean energy economy. To learn more, visit www.climaterealityproject.org.