

The background of the entire graphic is a close-up photograph of autumn leaves, likely maple, scattered across a surface covered in white frost or snow. The leaves are in various shades of yellow, orange, and brown, with some showing detailed vein patterns. The frost is composed of small, intricate ice crystals.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

*A glimpse into the
Bonn climate negotiations,
10 years on from the Paris Agreement*

A photography exhibition by Kiara Worth
Produced by Stephan Ernest
Bonn, Germany
2025

Finding Common Ground

Introduction

In a world facing profound global challenges, multilateralism has never been more essential—yet never more at risk. Ten years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, the global climate negotiations offer an opportunity for diplomacy, cooperation, and collective decision-making. It is not a perfect process, nor a guarantee of success, but it remains one of the few spaces where nations come together to find solutions to challenges that no country can tackle alone.

At its core, multilateralism is built on principles of inclusivity, dialogue, trust, and shared responsibility. It is a process that demands patience, resilience, and, above all, the willingness to find common ground. Within the UN climate negotiations, these ideals are tested daily. Progress is often slow and disagreements are inevitable. Yet, despite these challenges, negotiations continue—because the alternative is inaction. When leadership is courageous, diversity is embraced, and collaboration is prioritised, pathways to solutions begin to emerge.

For nearly three decades, Bonn has been at the heart of global climate diplomacy, serving as the headquarters of UN Climate Change since 1997. The city has provided a space where countries meet, debate, and push forward international climate policy.

The World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB) has played a vital role in this process, fostering the conditions necessary for cooperation and consensus-building. More than just a venue, Bonn has become a symbol of the commitment—however imperfect—to confronting the climate crisis together.

This exhibition, ‘Finding Common Ground’, offers a deeper look at the multilateral process, capturing the moments that define it. Through key themes, it explores the role of Bonn in climate diplomacy, the challenges and responsibilities of leadership, the importance of inclusivity and representation, the role of consultation and collaboration, and the ongoing pursuit of meaningful solutions. It highlights the voices of civil society, the energy of activism, and the quieter moments of reflection that reveal the human side of diplomacy.

In the midst of complex and often frustrating negotiations, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. This exhibition is an invitation to pause and reflect—not just on the urgency of climate action but on the essential role of multilateralism itself. At a time when global cooperation is under threat, this is a reminder that, even in moments of difficulty, progress is possible. When we find common ground, we strengthen our collective ability to shape a more just and sustainable future.

About the Exhibition

About

This exhibition has been put together through a collaboration with UN Climate Change and the City of Bonn.

UN Climate Change is the UN entity tasked with supporting the global response to climate change.

The City of Bonn is committed to becoming climate-neutral by 2035, and to adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change.

All photos have been taken and curated by Dr. Kiara Worth, an avid storyteller and photographer who has been documenting the climate negotiations, among other environment and development-related processes with the UN, for over a decade.

This photography exhibition was produced by Stephan Ernest, a dedicated advocate for climate protection. As a former Public Information and Press Officer for UN Climate Change, he now serves as a Project Manager for the City of Bonn.



All photos were produced on behalf of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB). ENB is a balanced, timely and independent reporting service on UN environment and development negotiations, and is the flagship publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

Attribution for all photos: Photo by IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth

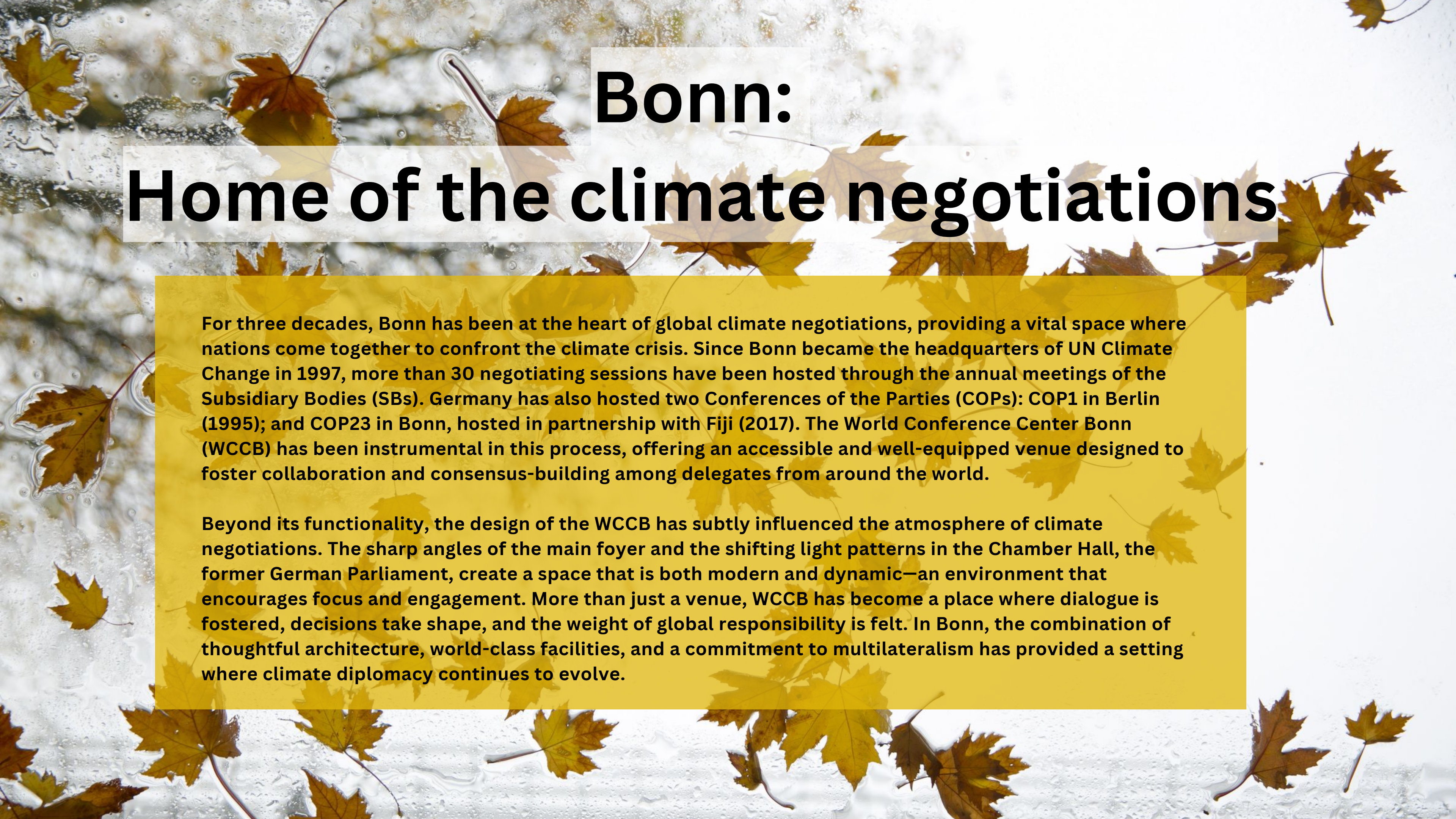
Special Thanks

This exhibition was funded through the support of people from around the world, and was facilitated by using the crowdfunding platform Bonn-Crowd. We would like to thank the Stadtwerke Bonn for providing the platform, and for all the people who made this exhibition possible through their donations.

In particular, special thanks go to:

- LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn for its support and advice during the development of the exhibition;
- WhiteWall for their professional cooperation and printing of the photographs; and
- Branco Translations and Johanna Gremme for proofreading.

The collaborative effort of compiling this exhibition is a testimony to the principles of multilateralism itself - by focusing on our shared values and ideals, common ground can always be found.



Bonn: Home of the climate negotiations

For three decades, Bonn has been at the heart of global climate negotiations, providing a vital space where nations come together to confront the climate crisis. Since Bonn became the headquarters of UN Climate Change in 1997, more than 30 negotiating sessions have been hosted through the annual meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs). Germany has also hosted two Conferences of the Parties (COPs): COP1 in Berlin (1995); and COP23 in Bonn, hosted in partnership with Fiji (2017). The World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB) has been instrumental in this process, offering an accessible and well-equipped venue designed to foster collaboration and consensus-building among delegates from around the world.

Beyond its functionality, the design of the WCCB has subtly influenced the atmosphere of climate negotiations. The sharp angles of the main foyer and the shifting light patterns in the Chamber Hall, the former German Parliament, create a space that is both modern and dynamic—an environment that encourages focus and engagement. More than just a venue, WCCB has become a place where dialogue is fostered, decisions take shape, and the weight of global responsibility is felt. In Bonn, the combination of thoughtful architecture, world-class facilities, and a commitment to multilateralism has provided a setting where climate diplomacy continues to evolve.



Photo: View of the World Conference Center Bonn, 2017

Bonn has been home to UN Climate Change since 1997 and the World Conference Center Bonn, providing world class facilities and equipment, has been home to all the June negotiating sessions since 2015. This is where the journey of climate negotiations begins.

Photo: UN Security at an entrance check-point, 2019.

UN Security ensures a safe environment for delegates to negotiate throughout all the negotiating sessions, promoting compliance with the rules and procedures of the meetings.





Photo: Foyer of World Conference Center Bonn, 2023.

World Conference Center Bonn offers a purpose-built space for climate negotiations, with architecture and natural light that foster dialogue, focus, and collaboration.

Photo: Delegates walk into plenary, 2023.

With a range of meeting rooms and plenary spaces, the World Conference Center Bonn is designed to support the many layers of climate negotiations, facilitating inclusive and effective multilateral engagement.





Photo: Negotiations take place during Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017.

Formerly the German Parliament's plenary chamber, Chamber Hall now hosts climate negotiations, continuing its legacy of open dialogue and multilateral decision-making.

Leadership

Effective leadership is the backbone of a thriving multilateral system, ensuring that nations can work together to tackle the climate crisis. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, three UN Climate Change Executive Secretaries—Christiana Figueres (2010-2016), Patricia Espinosa (2016-2022), and Simon Stiell (2022-present)—have played instrumental roles in fostering collaboration and trust among countries. Their leadership has been pivotal in bridging diverse national interests, maintaining momentum for climate action, and strengthening the global climate governance framework.

While leadership is often viewed through the lens of the UN Climate Change secretariat or world leaders such as presidents and prime ministers, it extends far beyond these roles. Local governments—mayors, municipalities, and city councils—play a critical role in implementing climate action on the ground. Equally, leadership emerges from across stakeholder groups, including Indigenous peoples, women, youth, and civil society representatives, whose contributions shape policies, drive innovation, and ensure that climate solutions reflect the needs and strengths of diverse communities.

By promoting open dialogue, reinforcing shared responsibility, and prioritising collective action over unilateral interests, leaders can shape a more cooperative and resilient multilateral system. Good and effective leadership promotes the importance of diplomacy, compromise, and a unified, long-term vision in tackling the world's most pressing environmental challenges.



Photo: Christiana Figueres thanks delegates as she ends her role as Executive Secretary, 2016.

Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, Christiana Figueres, played a pivotal role in securing the Paris Agreement, guiding countries through complex negotiations with determination, diplomacy, and a spirit of inclusivity.



Photo: Patricia Espinosa speaks during a negotiating session, 2022.

Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa, was instrumental in advancing the implementation of the Paris Agreement, fostering trust among Parties and strengthening the foundations of multilateral climate cooperation.



Photo: UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, President of France Emmanuel Macron, Prime Minister of Fiji Frank Bainimarama, Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres attending Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017

Presidents, prime ministers and heads of state play a pivotal role in advancing climate action—by setting national priorities, mobilising political support, and representing their countries in forging international agreements that drive collective progress.

Photo: Simon Stiell delivers remarks at the opening of the Bonn negotiations, 2023.

Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, Simon Stiell, has prioritized strengthening accountability and accelerating progress on climate finance, championing support for developing countries and urging greater ambition across the multilateral process.



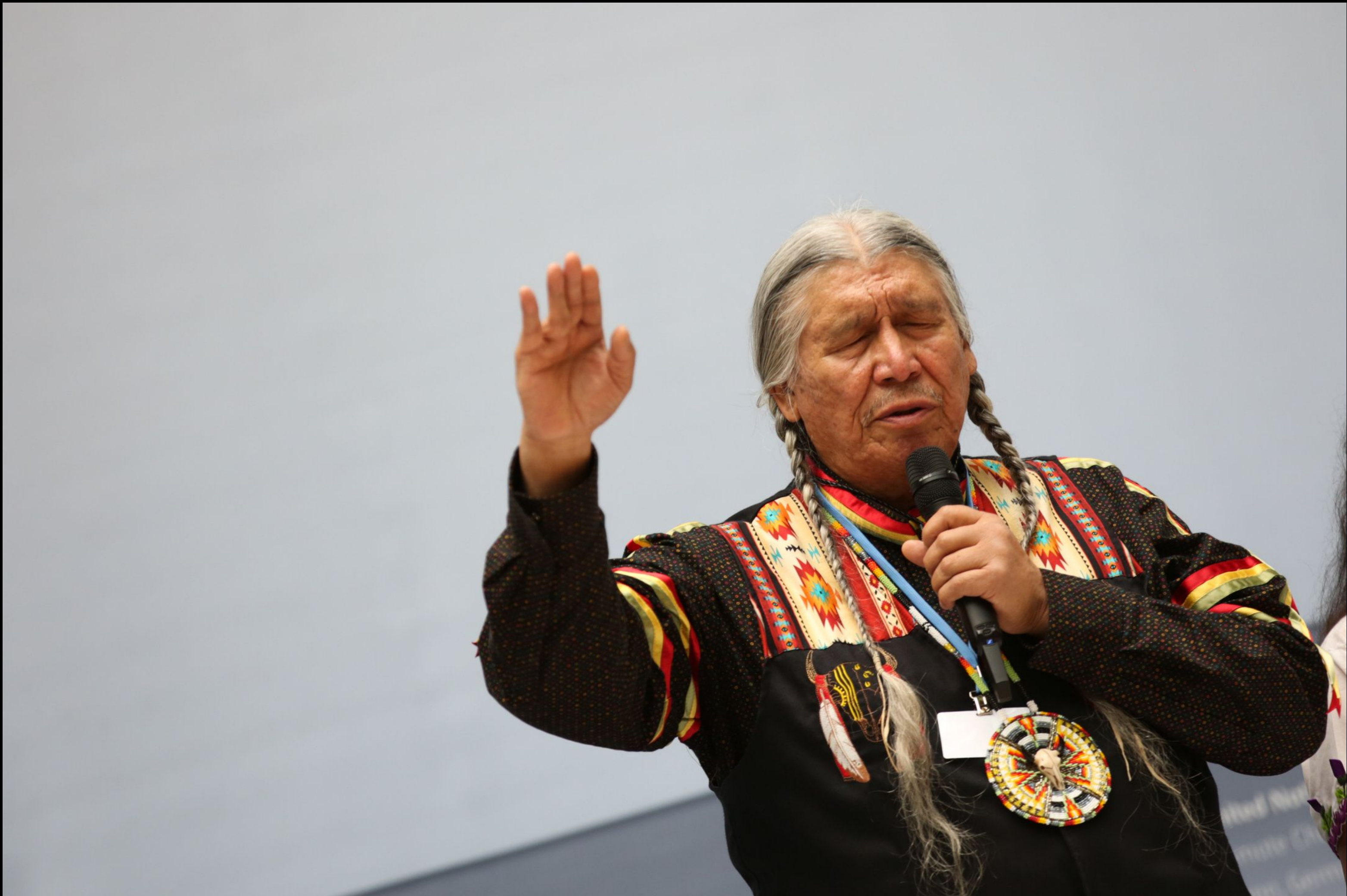


Photo: Mayor of Bonn, Katja Dörner, delivers remarks during a negotiating session, 2024.

While global leadership is essential, climate action is also driven locally through the efforts of cities and mayors, who play a crucial role in implementing sustainable solutions on the ground.

Photo: François
Paulette, Dënesųłiné
Elder from First Nations
People in Canada, offers
a traditional prayer to
open and guide a
negotiating session,
2019

While leadership is often
viewed through the lens
of governments,
indigenous leadership is
essential, offering
unique knowledge and
practices crucial for
climate resilience and
sustainability.



Diversity and Inclusion

Effective multilateralism thrives on diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that decisions are informed by a broad spectrum of perspectives. UN Climate Change is a party-driven process, meaning countries ultimately make the decisions. For this to be legitimate and effective, all countries—regardless of size or capacity—must be meaningfully represented and able to participate in the process. But the voices of other stakeholders are equally important. Climate change disproportionately affects underserved populations, including women, Indigenous peoples, youth, and communities in low-income regions. Their lived experiences provide indispensable insights into the real-world impacts of climate policies, making their participation in negotiations not just a matter of equity but a necessity for crafting comprehensive and effective solutions.

A truly inclusive negotiation process fosters trust, strengthens cooperation, and leads to more just and impactful climate action. When diverse voices are represented—whether through national delegations, civil society organisations, or grassroots movements—the resulting policies are more resilient, innovative, and widely supported. UN Climate Change has worked to ensure that all stakeholders, from government representatives to marginalised communities, have a seat at the table, recognising that no single group has all the answers.

Promoting diversity and inclusivity in climate negotiations is not just an ethical obligation but a strategic imperative. Encouraging a wider range of perspectives leads to better outcomes, enhances legitimacy, and reinforces the principles of fairness and collective responsibility. To achieve effective multilateralism, we must actively champion diversity, ensuring that climate action is shaped by those who are most affected and those who hold the solutions.



Photo: Delegates from Fiji perform a traditional ceremony at the opening of Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017.

While government representatives are essential, true inclusivity in climate negotiations requires the voices of small island developing states, least developed countries, and landlocked developing countries. Their perspectives are critical, as these nations are often on the frontlines of climate impacts and play a key role in shaping equitable solutions that address the needs of the most vulnerable.

Photo: An Indigenous peoples representative holds informal discussions with delegates between sessions, 2024.

Indigenous peoples are vital to the climate negotiations, as their traditional knowledge and deep connection to the land provide essential insights for sustainable solutions and the protection of biodiversity, thus adding great value to policy development.





Photo: Youth representatives deliver remarks during a negotiating session, 2022.

Youth play a crucial role in climate negotiations, bringing fresh perspectives, urgency, and a demand for bold action, ensuring that future generations are central to the decisions being made today.

Photo: Women NGO representatives raise awareness about the need to tackle gender inequality, 2022.

Gender inequality has significant impacts on the ability to tackle climate change. Women are not only among the most affected by climate change, but are also key to shaping effective solutions. Their leadership in negotiations ensures that climate action is inclusive, resilient, and addresses the needs of the most vulnerable communities.





Photo: A delegate waits in a meeting room for a session to begin, 2024.

The participation of these diverse groups underscores an important message: in climate negotiations, everyone matters. Each voice brings vital perspectives, helping to ensure that climate solutions are equitable and effective for all.

Consultation and Collaboration

At the heart of multilateralism lies the process of negotiation itself. Whether in plenary halls or behind closed doors in meeting rooms, the essential work of delegates is to engage in meaningful dialogue—listening to diverse perspectives, identifying shared objectives, and forging the common ground that forms the foundation of global policy.

Consultation and collaboration are the driving forces behind effective multilateralism, enabling nations to navigate complex global challenges with greater unity and purpose. Consultation fosters open dialogue, allowing countries to understand different viewpoints, build trust, and ensure that all voices—especially those from vulnerable communities—are heard. This inclusivity not only strengthens legitimacy but also reduces tensions and paves the way for consensus-driven solutions.

Collaboration can transform dialogue into action by bringing together resources, expertise, and commitments to implement solutions that are more ambitious, equitable, and sustainable than unilateral efforts. When consultation and collaboration are embraced as guiding principles, multilateralism becomes more resilient, adaptive, and effective in shaping a just and sustainable future for all.



Photo: Delegates attend a negotiating session to discuss one of the items on the agenda, 2023.

Given the complexity of climate negotiations, agenda items are broken down into smaller groups to enable more focused discussion. These sessions aim to uphold the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and mutual respect, creating space for voices to be heard and concerns to be considered. While challenging, meaningful consultation is essential to building trust and achieving balanced and effective outcomes.



Photo: A delegate shares remarks during a session, 2022.

At the heart of consultation and collaboration is the exchange of perspectives. Sharing experiences, concerns, and ideas helps build understanding, bridge differences, and lay the groundwork for more inclusive and effective climate solutions.



Photo: Delegates from different countries debate the negotiating text during a session, 2019.

True consultation brings together diverse perspectives, acknowledging that countries often hold differing—and sometimes opposing—views on climate action. It is through open, respectful dialogue and collaboration that these varied viewpoints can be addressed, allowing all parties to engage and find a way forward.

Photo: Delegates attend a negotiating session focused on carbon markets, 2023.

Consultation and collaboration is hard work. It requires long hours, multiple sessions, and the patience to navigate an enormous body of complex issues, as well as cultural and linguistic differences. It is through this sustained effort that meaningful progress can be made, as diverse viewpoints are considered and a way forward is carefully shaped.





Photo: Delegates attend a 'world café' to informally share ideas, 2023.

Consultation and collaboration can only succeed through gathering information, sharing perspectives, and exchanging ideas. Climate negotiations create diverse settings to ensure as many voices and contributions as possible are heard, aiming to shape solutions that are inclusive and comprehensive.



Photo: A delegate listens to the discussions during a session, 2023.

Listening is at the heart of consultation and collaboration. By actively hearing different viewpoints and understanding diverse concerns, negotiations can build the trust and mutual respect necessary to craft well-rounded and impactful solutions.

Finding Solutions

Challenges frequently arise in the climate negotiations as nations work to reconcile differing priorities. Effective problem-solving is essential, requiring not just diplomacy but also creativity, adaptability, and a willingness to listen.

A defining hallmark of climate negotiations is the ‘huddle’—an intense, often spontaneous gathering where negotiators cluster in large groups to resolve contentious issues. These huddles allow delegates to engage in direct, face-to-face discussions, listening intently, challenging assumptions, and searching for compromises that can move the process forward. It is in these moments of concentrated dialogue that some of the most pivotal breakthroughs occur, demonstrating that progress hinges not just on speaking, but on truly hearing others.

By fostering open dialogue, creative problem-solving, and a commitment to understanding diverse viewpoints, collaborative efforts help bridge divides and strengthen agreements. Ultimately, this can lead to more resilient, inclusive, and effective climate policies—ones that reflect the complexity of the challenge and the collective responsibility of the global community.



Photo: In the centre of the huddle, heads of delegation from the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, the EU, and Switzerland, try to find a way forward during the negotiations, 2017.

The 'huddle' is a defining moment in negotiations, where countries come together at the last minute to hash out compromises on the most contentious issues. In these high-pressure moments, intense dialogue and a willingness to find common ground can lead to breakthrough solutions.

Photo: Delegates read the latest draft of negotiating text during one of the Bonn sessions, 2017.

At the end of the day, climate negotiations must culminate in 'text'—the foundation of global policy that will guide national actions in addressing climate change. This negotiated text sets the framework for future commitments, ensuring that agreed-upon solutions are translated into concrete, actionable steps.





Photo: A facilitator listens to delegates during a huddle in Chamber Hall, 2022.

Reaching agreement is incredibly difficult. It demands strong facilitation, creative thinking, and problem-solving, as well as the willingness to compromise. Only through these efforts can diverse interests be reconciled to find a path forward.

Photo: Country delegates discuss the latest draft of negotiating text, 2017.

The text may seem simple, but its implications for national policy are vast. Delegates carefully scrutinise every word and line, ensuring that the agreements can be applied to their national contexts and drive meaningful action on climate change.





Photo: Representatives from G77/China huddle informally in the corridors before a negotiating session, 2023.

Regional groups, such as the G77/China pictured here, often coordinate and consult in the corridors to ensure their interests are represented in the negotiations. The G77/China represent over 70% of the global population, and their perspectives are essential to ensuring that the final text addresses the needs and concerns of the majority of the world's people.

Photo: Representatives from Least Developed Countries speak during the negotiations, 2017.

Least Developed Countries are often the most vulnerable to climate change, facing severe impacts despite contributing the least to the crisis. Their coordination is crucial in negotiations to ensure that their unique challenges are addressed and that the outcomes are fair and inclusive for those who need it most.



Inspiring Activism

While country delegates are ultimately responsible for making decisions in the climate negotiations, civil society is an integral force in shaping both the dialogue and outcomes. Civil society organisations—including non-governmental organisations, Indigenous groups, youth activists, scientists, and community representatives—bring critical perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked, ensuring that negotiations reflect the concerns and realities of people on the frontlines of climate change.

These groups play a vital role in raising awareness, amplifying marginalised voices, and mobilising public pressure to push for more ambitious and equitable policies. Through advocacy, research, and direct engagement with negotiators, civil society injects urgency into the process, reminding decision-makers of what is truly at stake. Their presence adds transparency and accountability, challenging governments to uphold commitments and to ensure that climate action remains rooted in justice, equity, and scientific evidence.

Beyond advocacy, civil society serves as a bridge between negotiations and the real-world impacts of climate change. By sharing powerful stories, lived experiences, and innovative grassroots solutions, they bring a human face to the process, reinforcing the moral and practical necessity of bold climate action. In doing so, civil society helps to shape a more inclusive, responsive, and effective multilateral system—one that truly serves the needs of all people and the planet.



Photo: Youth delegates hold a demonstration outside the entrance to the venue during Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017.

At the heart of climate change negotiations is mitigation—reducing reliance on fossil fuels and transitioning to a sustainable future. Civil society plays a crucial role in reminding delegates of this urgent focus, often demonstrating during negotiations. Their voices are essential in holding decision-makers accountable and advocating for the most effective solutions.

Photo: Artwork on display during Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017.

Civil society also harnesses the power of art and symbols to drive home the urgency of climate action. Visual imagery can capture the fears, concerns, and realities of the climate crisis in ways words often cannot, creating a powerful, emotional connection that resonates with both delegates and the public, pushing for action in ways that are hard to ignore.





Photo: Civil society groups raise awareness about the need for including loss and damage in the negotiations, 2022.

Loss and damage refers to the irreversible impacts of climate change, including the loss of lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems, that cannot be avoided through mitigation or adaptation. Civil society groups from the Global South often demonstrate during negotiations to remind delegates that addressing loss and damage is not only critical for those most affected, but also a matter of equity and climate justice.

Photo: Artwork on display during Fiji/Bonn COP23, 2017.

Civil society plays an important role in highlighting the geopolitical issues that intersect with the climate crisis, often using symbols and visual messaging to express what others cannot say. This emphasises that climate action is not just an environmental concern but a deeply interconnected global challenge. Their voices help both delegates and the broader public grasp the severity of decisions and the far-reaching consequences of inaction.





Photo: Civil society groups call for greater funding commitments for climate action, particularly for developing countries, 2023.

At the heart of civil society's concerns is the urgent need for dedicated funding and financing to support climate action. Without significant investment, particularly in adaptation and mitigation efforts in the Global South, meaningful progress will remain out of reach. Civil society plays a central role in raising awareness about this issue, advocating for the redirection of resources away from fossil fuel subsidies and toward the financing essential to tackle the climate crisis equitably and effectively.

Transparency

Transparency is a cornerstone of effective multilateralism. It builds trust among parties, strengthens accountability, and ensures that decisions are understood and supported beyond the negotiating rooms. Elements such as real-time interpretation and translation services are vital for enabling inclusive participation, allowing delegates to engage fully regardless of language. Equally important is the role of the press and independent reporting services, which provide impartial coverage and help the public follow complex negotiations with clarity and accuracy.

Ensuring that information is accessible—through timely publication of official documents, public sessions, and open communication channels—creates a more open and equitable process. Transparency not only enables greater scrutiny but also empowers civil society, researchers, and the general public to contribute meaningfully. In this way, it supports more informed decision-making and strengthens the legitimacy of multilateral outcomes.



Photo: Translation headsets available outside plenary, 2023.

Simultaneous and instant interpretation during negotiations . This ensures that all participants, regardless of language, can engage equally in the discussions, facilitating an inclusive and fair dialogue in all of the UN's official languages

Photo: Media interviews are conducted during the negotiating session, 2023.

The media plays a vital role in enhancing transparency by providing coverage on the proceedings, increasing awareness, and deepening public understanding of the issues. It is essential, however, that media outlets remain responsible and truthful in the messages they convey, ensuring that the complexity and urgency of the climate crisis are communicated accurately and effectively to a global audience.





Photo: A delegate refers to the Earth Negotiations Bulletin during a session, 2018.

Internal communication is crucial to ensure that all delegations, large or small, stay informed and engaged throughout the negotiations. Publications like the Earth Negotiations Bulletin provide unbiased and accurate reporting, offering timely updates to ensure that every delegation has access to the same information, empowering them to make well-informed decisions in real time.

Photo: Delegates attend an informative poster session to learn about climate action being done around the world, 2023.

A key component of transparency is access to diverse and credible information. Efforts are made throughout the negotiations to ensure delegates can engage with this information through various channels—be it communications, poster sessions, or direct engagement with one another.



Bearing Witness to Humanity

Beyond the formal negotiations, the climate negotiations offer an opportunity for reflection—on the urgency of our task, the interconnectedness of our struggles, and, most of all, the beauty of humanity. While policy discussions and diplomatic exchanges take centre stage, it is often the quieter, in-between moments that leave the deepest impressions. A shared moment between delegates, an impassioned conversation in the corridors, a moment of personal reflection—these fleeting yet powerful moments remind us of the resilience, hope, and commonality of our human family.

Though beauty is often overlooked in the high-stakes world of climate diplomacy, it plays a subtle yet essential role. It reminds us of our shared humanity, of the cultures and communities we represent, and of the world we are striving to protect. In these moments of reflection, we are reminded that beyond numbers and policies, we are working for something deeply human—a future where diversity, resilience, and hope continue to flourish.



Photo: A delegate checks the day's schedule, 2019.

Amid the intensity and pace of the negotiations, brief moments of calm can be found. In these still moments, the beauty of the venue and the quiet determination of those within it intersect, reminding us of the shared humanity at the heart of this global effort.

Photo: A delegate listens during a session, 2017.

The climate negotiations bring the world together in a rare and powerful way. With representatives from nearly every country on Earth, they offer a chance to witness the incredible diversity—and shared purpose—of our global human family.





Photo: A delegate rests in the corridors between negotiating sessions, 2022.

At its core, climate change is a deeply human issue. Amid the intensity of negotiations, delegates often take a quiet moment to reconnect with their communities back home—a reminder of who they represent, and why this work matters.

Photo: Delegates sit together on the steps of the foyer in the World Conference Center Bonn, 2023.

While most negotiations unfold in formal meeting rooms and plenary halls, some of the most meaningful exchanges happen in between—brief moments where delegates connect on a personal level, share ideas, and build the trust needed to move forward together.





Photo: A delegate takes a moment during the negotiations, 2023.

The climate negotiations are intense—filled with complex information, competing priorities, and constant movement. In the midst of it all, brief moments of quiet allow delegates to pause, reflect, and gather their thoughts—small but essential spaces to consolidate thinking and reconnect with the purpose behind the process.

Photo: Harry Vruels,
Chair of the Subsidiary
Body for Scientific and
Technological Advice,
prepares for the final
stages of negotiations,
2024.

It's easy to see the
negotiations as a
meeting of
governments, but every
country is comprised of
individuals. This is a
human process, driven
by people from all walks
of life, working for
something far greater
than policy: the survival
and well-being of our
shared human future.



Decision-making

The multilateral process ultimately culminates in decision-making—the moment where negotiations transform into decisions, shaping global policies and defining the path forward. These decisions are more than just agreements; they are the framework upon which collective action is built, guiding nations toward shared solutions for a more sustainable and equitable future. Each decision, no matter how small, is a step toward progress, reinforcing the responsibility that nations bear in confronting the climate crisis.

However, even as agreements are reached and texts are finalised, the work is far from over. Stronger decisions will always be needed, and the search for better solutions will continue. As individual sessions conclude, challenges will remain, and negotiations will continue. With each new round of talks, there are fresh opportunities for collaboration and progress. The urgency of climate action does not end when the meetings do—it is an ongoing effort that requires sustained commitment and leadership.



Photo: Delegates attend the closing plenary of a Bonn session, 2023.

At their core, the climate negotiations are about decision-making—bringing together the many days of dialogue, debate, and deliberation into the plenary, where countries work to consolidate their positions and adopt outcomes that will shape global climate action.

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DIRECTOR ISCP

COORDINATOR

CHAIR OF THE SBI

CHAIR OF THE SBSTA

COORDI

Photo: UN Climate Change Secretariat discuss the way forward during closing plenary, 2023.

In the final moments of decision-making, challenges often arise. It is in these crucial instances that the UN Climate Change Secretariat plays a vital role—helping to navigate complex dynamics, maintain process integrity, and guide parties toward a constructive outcome.



Photo: UN Climate Change Executive Secretary and his team discuss the text during closing plenary, 2023.

In the final stretch, every word matters. The UN Climate Change Executive Secretary often steps in to consider the broader implications of the text, working to help countries find agreement on language they can stand behind and adopt together.



Photo: A delegate watches the proceedings from the gallery, 2024.

The final moments of each meeting are often filled with intensity and anticipation. While decisions are made by country representatives on the floor, delegates and observers watch closely from the gallery, hoping to witness the adoption of outcomes that reflect their efforts and priorities.

Photo: Delegates applaud the decisions made during closing plenary, 2023.

Despite the many challenges and complexities, delegates often find a way to reach consensus on even the most difficult issues. When they do, the plenary erupts in applause—a collective acknowledgment of the hard work, compromise, and progress made.





Photo: Decisions are gavelled into adoption, 2024.

UN Climate Change operates on the principle of consensus, meaning every country must agree for a decision to be adopted. When consensus is reached, the gavel signals the official adoption, marking the moment when action can begin to bring those agreements to life.

Photo: UN Security
walks through the empty
venue at the end of a
Bonn session, 2023.

While many decisions
are made, countless
others remain, and the
work is never truly
finished. As one session
finishes, another begins,
offering fresh
opportunities for
collaboration and
progress.



