

**Committee:** Human Rights Council (HRC)

**Issue:** Securing the right to a healthy environment and climate justice for rural communities

**Student Officer:** Dimosthenis Chatziioannou

**Position:** Deputy President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Dimosthenis Chatziioannou, and it is my pleasure to introduce you to the Human Rights Council, in which you will be debating and thoroughly discussing issues during the 7th ACGMUN conference. Over the course of three days, you, as member states, will collaborate with individuals from various countries to gain insight into the hardships of protecting human rights. Through these interactions, you will have the opportunity to craft your own resolutions for addressing these issues in your own countries with the support of other delegates.

I am a 16-year-old student at Anatolia College in Thessaloniki. Outside of MUN, I practice Mixed Martial Arts and many other activities. As a student officer of the committee, I am excited to facilitate productive debates and to hear the creative solutions that will be proposed by the delegates. This is my second time as a student officer and my fourth year of participating in Model UN. Other than that, I will be more than happy to see you all in March!

Regarding the study guide, it focuses on everything you need to review in order to create your own resolutions. I certainly hope it serves its purpose well and helps you throughout the entirety of the conference. One who reads all the information listed below will be ready to tackle this topic and contribute to a fruitful discussion.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me at [dimoschatz23@gmail.com](mailto:dimoschatz23@gmail.com).

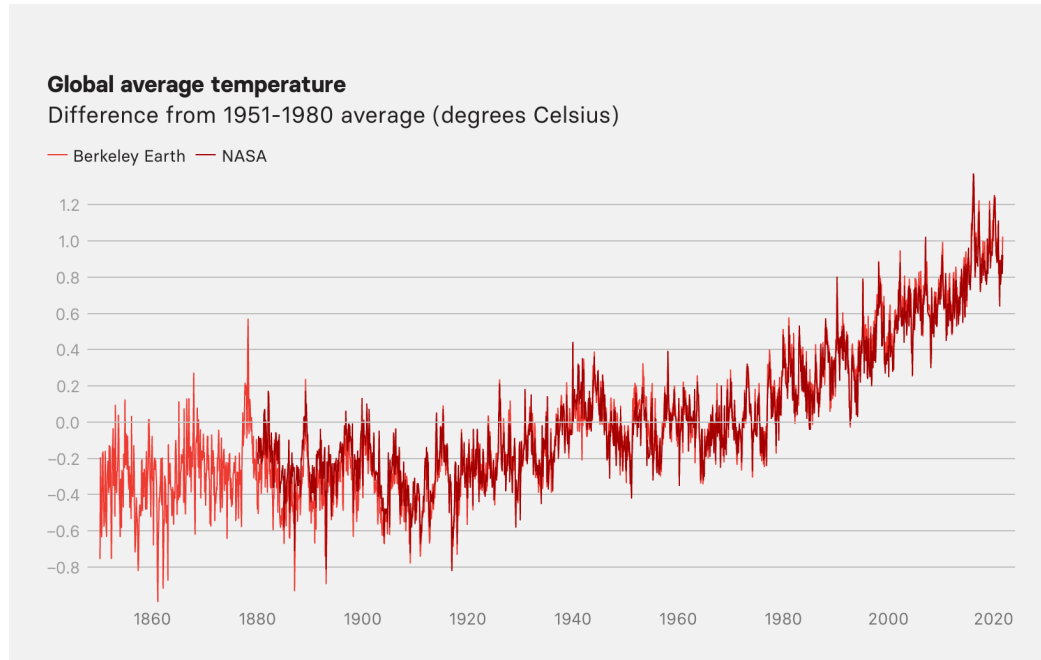
Sincerely,

Dimosthenis Chatziioannou

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Climate change disproportionately impacts rural communities, affecting livelihoods and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Our goal is to explore equitable solutions that address both the immediate impacts and the underlying causes of environmental injustice. Throughout our discussions, we will consider the perspectives of diverse countries and organizations, recognizing the varying capacities and vulnerabilities of rural communities worldwide. By securing the right to a healthy environment, we aim to create sustainable and just solutions for the challenges posed by climate change.

Rural communities, dependent on agriculture, forestry, and natural resources, face unique challenges in the wake of climate change. Increasingly frequent extreme weather events, shifting precipitation patterns, and rising temperatures directly impact their livelihoods, food security, and overall quality of life. Moreover, the vulnerability of rural populations is often exacerbated by limited access to resources, technology, and sustainable practices. The quest for climate justice compels us to explore equitable solutions that recognize and rectify historical and systemic environmental injustices. This involves not only mitigating the impacts of climate change on rural communities but also addressing the root causes that perpetuate environmental degradation and unequal distribution of resources.



**Figure 1:** Graph showing the rise of the global average temperature

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/peteraldhous/climate-change-data-charts-guide-crisis>

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Climate Justice<sup>1</sup>

Refers to the fair and equitable treatment of all people, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation.



**Figure 2:** Main components of climate justice

### Rural Communities:<sup>2</sup>

Refers to populations residing outside urban centers, often engaged in activities such as agriculture, forestry, and fishing. These communities are essential to global food production and are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their dependence on natural resources.

### Environmental Sustainability:<sup>3</sup>

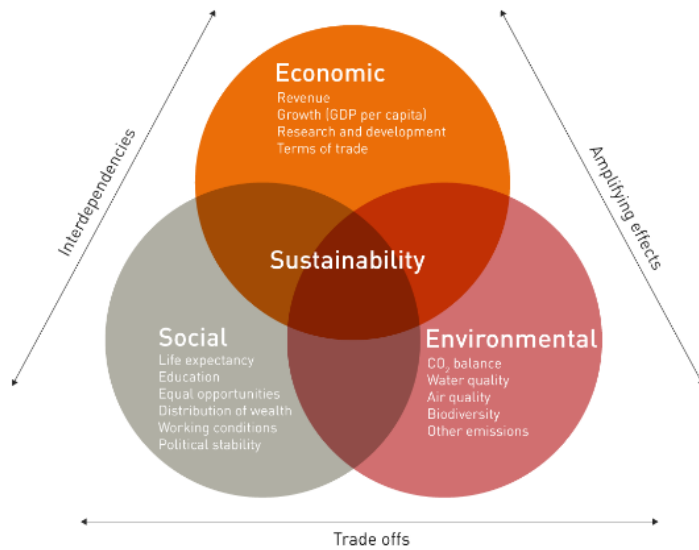
The practice of utilizing resources in a manner that preserves the balance of ecosystems and minimizes harm to the environment. It involves responsible resource management to ensure the longevity of natural systems and the well-being of current and future generations.

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<sup>1</sup> "Climate Justice." MIT Climate Portal, [climate.mit.edu/explainers/climate-justice#:~:text=Climate%20justice%20means%20that%20countries](https://climate.mit.edu/explainers/climate-justice#:~:text=Climate%20justice%20means%20that%20countries).

<sup>2</sup> "What Is a Rural Community?" AARP, [www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2020/what-is-a-rural-community.html](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2020/what-is-a-rural-community.html).

<sup>3</sup> Sphera . "What Is Environmental Sustainability?" Sphera, 19 May 2020, [sphera.com/glossary/what-is-environmental-sustainability/](https://sphera.com/glossary/what-is-environmental-sustainability/).



**Figure 3:** Main components of environmental sustainability

**Right to a Healthy Environment:<sup>4</sup>**

Acknowledges the entitlement of individuals and communities to live in an environment that promotes physical and mental well-being. This right encompasses access to clean air, water, and soil, as well as protection from environmental hazards and pollutants.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

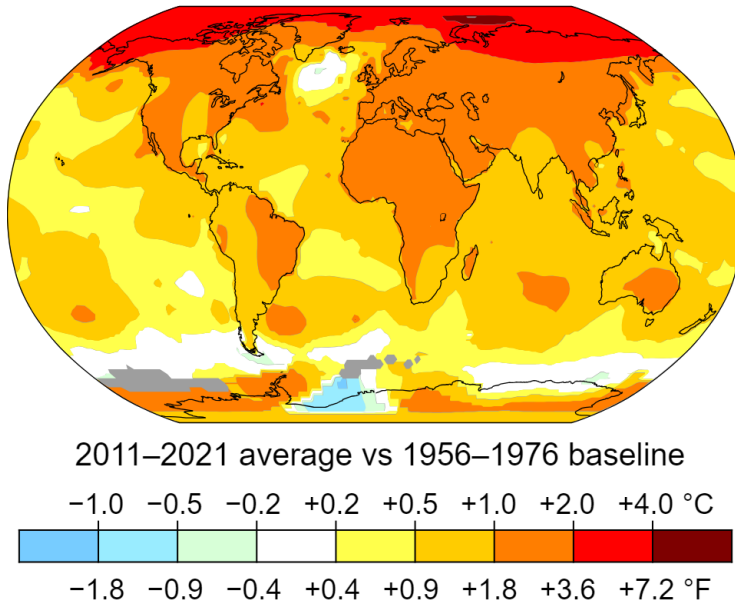
**The global context of climate change**

In recent decades, the Earth's climate has undergone significant changes, driven primarily by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. The rise in greenhouse gas emissions has led to a warming of the planet, resulting in widespread impacts on weather patterns and ecosystems. Observations point to more frequent and severe heat waves, disruptions in precipitation, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires. These changes collectively referred to as climate change, transcend national borders and affect regions across the globe. The

<sup>4</sup> Aguila, Yann. "The Right to a Healthy Environment." IUCN, 29 Oct. 2021, [www.iucn.org/news/world-commission-environmental-law/202110/right-a-healthy-environment](http://www.iucn.org/news/world-commission-environmental-law/202110/right-a-healthy-environment).

consequences of climate change are multifaceted, impacting ecosystems, economies, and, most critically, the well-being of communities.

Temperature change in the last 50 years



Global temperature change

As we grapple with the global implications of climate change, it becomes imperative to recognize its interconnected nature, with the effects of environmental degradation cascading across geographical and societal boundaries. Delegates are encouraged to consider the broader context of climate change as a foundation for our discussions on securing the right to a healthy environment and climate justice for rural communities. Understanding the global scope of this issue is crucial for formulating effective and equitable solutions that address the unique challenges faced by rural populations in the context of a changing climate.

### Impact on rural communities

Climate change presents a distinct set of challenges for rural communities worldwide, significantly influencing their socioeconomic dynamics and overall well-being. These communities, often reliant on agriculture, forestry, and traditional livelihoods, face heightened vulnerability due to the following key impacts:

#### Shifts in Agricultural Patterns:

Changing climate conditions directly affect crop yields and growing seasons, impacting the livelihoods of rural farmers. Altered precipitation patterns and temperature extremes can lead to reduced agricultural productivity and increased uncertainty in food production.

## **Disruptions to Traditional Livelihoods**

Rural communities, deeply connected to their natural surroundings, experience disruptions in traditional livelihoods such as fishing, forestry, and pastoralism. Climate-induced changes in ecosystems can threaten the sustainability of these practices, exacerbating economic challenges.

### **Water Scarcity and Food Security:**

Changes in precipitation patterns, coupled with increased evaporation, contribute to water scarcity in many rural areas. This, in turn, affects agricultural irrigation, livestock, and access to clean water, leading to heightened food insecurity and potential conflicts over scarce resources.

### **Extreme Weather Events:**

Rural communities are often more exposed to the impacts of extreme weather events, including hurricanes, floods, and droughts. These events can result in loss of life, damage to infrastructure, and disruptions to essential services, further exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

### **Limited Adaptive Capacity:**

The economic and infrastructural constraints of many rural areas limit their capacity to adapt to changing climatic conditions. Lack of access to technology, information, and financial resources hinders the implementation of adaptive measures, leaving communities more susceptible to climate-related risks.

## **Environmental injustice**

A critical dimension of our discussions, underscores the uneven distribution of environmental impacts and benefits, particularly affecting marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. More specifically, historical practices such as industrial pollution and resource extraction have disproportionately harmed these communities. Next, systemic inequalities, including income disparities and limited access to resources, contribute to the vulnerability of many rural communities. However, the consequences extend beyond economic challenges, manifesting in health disparities linked to polluted air, water, and climate-related risks. Additionally, climate change-induced events, such as extreme weather events and sea-level rise, can force involuntary displacements, further exacerbating social inequalities and disrupting traditional ways of life. Then, access to environmental goods, like clean air and water, remains unequal, perpetuating a cycle of environmental and social degradation. Environmental injustice is a global issue, transcending regional boundaries, with the actions of developed nations affecting vulnerable populations globally. The examination of legal and policy frameworks is essential, assessing their

effectiveness in addressing historical injustices and promoting equitable environmental practices to secure the right to a healthy environment for all.



*Analysis and breakdown of environmental justice*

#### **Access to resources and technology:**

In the pursuit of securing the right to a healthy environment and climate justice for rural communities, a nuanced examination of disparities in access to resources and technology reveals profound challenges and opportunities. While many rural communities grapple with limited access to essential resources like water and arable land, the impacts of climate change further compound these challenges. However, a more subtle but equally impactful concern surfaces in the form of a technological gap, hindering the capacity of rural communities to effectively adapt to climate change. Moreover, the scarcity of information technologies presents a significant barrier, impeding the adoption of innovative practices essential for climate resilience. In addressing these challenges, it becomes evident that sustainable agricultural practices are paramount. Additionally, integrating technology for precision farming, water conservation, and soil management emerges as a crucial strategy for enhancing productivity and resilience to climate variability. Yet, another layer of complexity unfolds when considering the transition to renewable energy sources. Rural communities, despite facing challenges in adopting clean energy technologies, hold immense potential to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Furthermore, the importance of timely and accurate climate information cannot be overstated. Access to such information is vital for rural communities to anticipate and respond to climate-related risks.

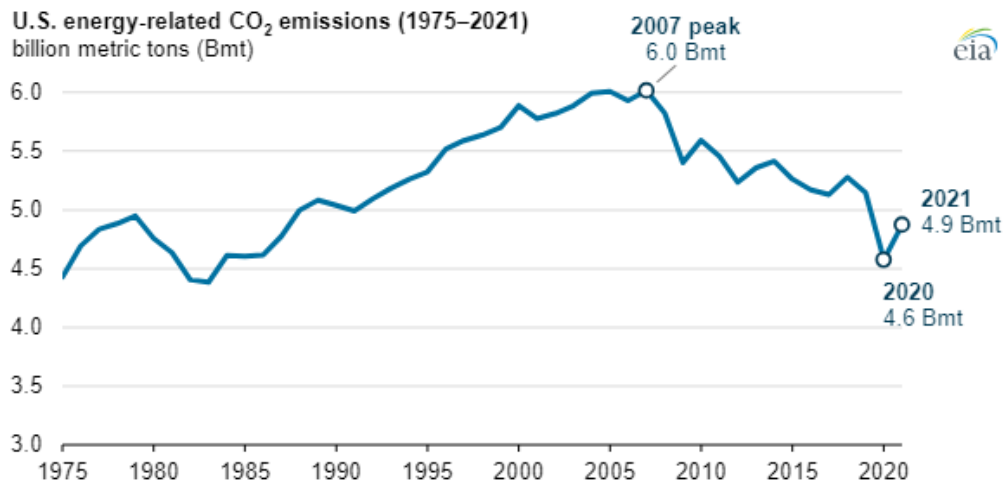
Furthermore, the strengthening of early warning systems becomes imperative, providing communities with the tools to make informed decisions in the face of changing climate conditions. In navigating these multifaceted challenges, a holistic approach involves empowering rural communities through community-based adaptation strategies. This entails blending traditional knowledge with modern technologies, ensuring that adaptation measures are context-specific and culturally sensitive. Plus, fostering international cooperation and technology transfer emerges as a pivotal strategy. This approach not only bridges the technology gap between developed and developing regions but also bolsters the capacity of rural communities to harness sustainable technologies. In conclusion, addressing the disparities in resource access and technology is fundamental for ensuring that rural communities possess the means to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. By exploring innovative solutions and fostering inclusivity, we can pave the way for resilient and sustainable rural communities in the face of evolving environmental challenges.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

### **United States of America (USA)**

The US stands as a pivotal player in the global discourse on climate change, both due to its historical greenhouse gas emissions and its influential role in shaping international climate policies. Initiatives like the Paris Agreement withdrawal and re-entry highlight its oscillating approach to climate change. At the domestic level, the USA grapples with the intricate interplay between urban and rural dynamics, necessitating a closer look at how federal, state, and local initiatives address the distinct challenges faced by rural communities. At last, federal investments in rural renewable energy projects and the promotion of sustainability in agriculture brings the US ahead of other countries who might face issues with their politics, technological development and more.

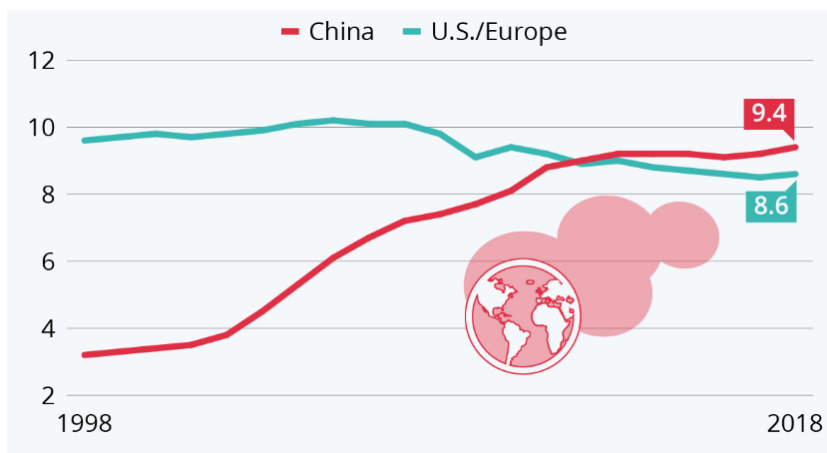




USA's emission over the years

### People's Republic of China (PRC)

China, being the current leading emitter of greenhouse gasses, has a major role when it comes to climate change. Additionally, the rapid urbanization process followed by China's government, tends to ignore rural areas which suffer from environmental degradation and inadequate infrastructure. Lastly, the implementation of the "Rural Vitalization" strategy seeks to integrate rural development into the broader context of national greening policies and reinforce China's role as a key player in global climate change.



China's increase on emissions over the years

### India

India, with its substantial rural population and vulnerability to climate impacts, is a key player in climate discussions. The nation's commitment to sustainable development is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by rural communities. Examining India's policies on renewable energy, agriculture, and climate adaptation provides a comprehensive view of its efforts to secure a healthy environment for rural

populations. Specifically, the rural populations of farmers in India are prone to dangers from climate change and extreme climate events. India's challenge throughout the years has been to balance environmental sustainability with economic development and providing clean energy options to rural households.

### **Brazil**

Brazil, a major global player in agriculture and environmental conservation, faces unique challenges in balancing rural development with environmental protection. Understanding Brazil's initiatives related to sustainable agriculture, deforestation, and rural livelihoods provides crucial insights into the nation's role in climate justice for rural communities. Another driving factor for Brazil's development is to preserve its vast natural resources along with the protection and careful use of the Amazon rainforest. The country's climate has changed throughout the years with altered rain patterns causing issues for the country's agriculture.

### **European Union (EU):**

The European Union, known for its progressive climate policies, plays a significant role in international climate negotiations. Internally, the EU addresses rural challenges through policies promoting sustainable agriculture, renewable energy adoption, and rural development. Additionally, several rural development programs within the European Union aim to enhance the vitality of rural areas through focusing on diversification, innovation and the transition to a fully green economy.

### **Green Climate Fund (GCF):**

The Green Climate Fund is instrumental in supporting climate-related projects in developing countries. Understanding the GCF's funding mechanisms, project priorities, and contributions to climate resilience offers insights into its role in promoting climate justice, with a focus on the specific needs of rural communities.

### **.Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a key scientific body providing assessments on climate change impacts. Examining the IPCC's reports and findings contributes to a deeper understanding of the scientific basis for global climate policies and the implications for rural communities.

### **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN):**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature is central to environmental conservation and justice. Exploring IUCN's initiatives related to biodiversity, sustainable land use, and conservation practices provides insights into its

contributions to global climate justice, particularly regarding the preservation of natural resources vital for rural communities.

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA):**

NASA, with its focus on climate research and data, contributes significantly to understanding climate change. Examining NASA's satellite observations and research initiatives provides valuable insights into the scientific understanding of climate impacts, benefiting global discussions on climate justice, including those relevant to rural areas.

**TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

Date	Description of event
United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference)  (1972 June 5-16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first major conference on international environmental issues, led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</li> </ul>
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro)  (1992 June 3-14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The official acknowledgement of climate change as a problem, saw the creation of the UNFCCC, a treaty to begin addressing the problem of climate change.</li> </ul>
Kyoto Protocol Enters into Force  (2005 February 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Kyoto protocol, a treaty that commits its parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enters into legal effect. Pressured industrialized countries and economies to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance to individual targets.</li> </ul>

<p>Paris Agreement Adopted (COP21)  (2015 December 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. The Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.</li> </ul>
<p>Global Climate Action and COP26  (2020 November 1-13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parties negotiated and built upon the Paris Agreement, with a significant focus on Article 6, which addresses carbon markets and non-market approaches along with the completion of the Paris Agreement Rulebook. Underscored the need for financial support for climate action in developing countries.</li> </ul>

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### 1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

**Resolution number: A/RES/48/189**

**Year: 1992**

The UNFCCC, initiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 9 May 1992 and entering into force on 21 March 1994, established a legal framework to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. It focuses on a broad and balanced approach to climate policy, facilitating negotiations among countries to establish specific commitments and providing a platform for ongoing international cooperation. As a foundational treaty, the UNFCCC has succeeded in elevating climate change on the international agenda and fostering multilateral engagement, leading to subsequent treaties like the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Despite its success as a framework for dialogue, the voluntary nature of commitments

has posed challenges in achieving the significant emission reductions necessary to mitigate climate change effectively.

## 2. Kyoto Protocol

**Resolution number: Decision 1/CP.3**

**Year: 2005**

The Kyoto Protocol, as a supplementary agreement to the UNFCCC, introduced legally binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, recognizing their primary responsibility for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the Earth's atmosphere. It operationalized the UNFCCC by introducing emissions trading, clean development mechanisms, and joint implementation to stimulate green investment and help parties meet their emission targets economically. The Protocol was innovative in introducing market mechanisms for emissions reductions. However, its effectiveness was limited by the absence of commitments from developing countries and the withdrawal of the United States. While it fostered some progress and paved the way for market-based solutions to emissions reductions, its overall impact on global emissions was modest.

## 3. Paris Agreement (COP21)

**Resolution number: FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1**

**Year: 2015**

The Paris Agreement is a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts for a 1.5°C target. It is innovative in its approach to climate action, requiring all countries to submit national climate action plans, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are to be updated every five years with increasing ambition. It also includes mechanisms for financial and technical support to developing countries and a transparency framework for monitoring and reporting progress. The Paris Agreement represents a paradigm shift in climate change efforts with its inclusive approach, bringing together both developed and developing countries under a common framework. Its effectiveness is yet to be fully determined, as it relies on the political will of the countries and the actual implementation of their NDCs. The enhanced transparency framework is critical for building mutual trust and confidence and for promoting effective implementation. However, many nations are currently not on course to meet their initial NDCs, which signals a need for increased ambition and action.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Across the globe countries have made progress in embracing energy technologies. These efforts not aim to promote energy independence and decrease reliance on fuels but also drive economic growth by creating local job opportunities in the thriving renewable energy sector. The rise of wind and geothermal energy projects has resulted in job creation. Stimulated technological advancements within local economies. On a level collaboration through customized agreements has proven to be crucial. Such agreements, tailored to fit the interests and priorities of each country involved offer a flexible approach to cooperation compared to multilateral treaties. They have played a role in facilitating the transfer of technology and knowledge exchange between nations. For instance developed countries have partnered with developing nations to provide them with technology and infrastructure for transitioning towards energy sources ultimately contributing to global emission reduction. Regional alliances have also played a part in strengthening climate resilience. By enhancing capacities, for disaster response and adaptation these alliances effectively address environmental challenges. They enable resource pooling, sharing of practices as well as coordination of context specific policies and measures considering the climatic and socio economic conditions of each region. Such regional initiatives carry importance as they allow neighboring nations, who frequently experience climate related challenges to collaborate in constructing robust infrastructures and communities. This ultimately strengthens the region's capacity to adapt as a whole.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### 1. Integrated Rural Development Programs:

Vital in addressing the complex challenges that rural communities face due to climate change, these programs can be designed to build climate resilient infrastructure. Through the integration of sustainable agricultural practices, such initiatives can enhance food security while maintaining ecological balance. Moreover, access to clean and renewable energy sources like solar or wind power in rural areas not only provides sustainable energy but also contributes to reducing the carbon footprint. A holistic approach encompasses not just environmental benefits but also aims to improve the social dynamics and economic opportunities within these communities, fostering a sustainable and inclusive model of development. However, the challenge lies in securing the necessary funding and maintaining a participatory approach that involves local communities in the planning and execution of these programs.

## 2. Community-Led Climate Adaptation Projects:

These projects can be tailored to protect and enhance local ecosystems, which in turn provide natural services and resilience. For example, reforestation projects using indigenous tree species can restore degraded lands and create carbon sinks, while also preserving biodiversity. Revitalizing traditional water conservation practices, such as rainwater harvesting and terracing, can help manage water resources more efficiently. Community-led initiatives must navigate the balance between traditional practices and modern requirements, ensuring that innovations are socially acceptable and technically feasible within the community context.

## 3. Financial Mechanisms for Rural Resilience:

Financial instruments might include the development of green bonds targeted towards rural development projects or the establishment of climate funds that prioritize initiatives with clear climate resilience benefits. Governmental fiscal policies could provide tax incentives for businesses that implement sustainable practices or produce climate-resilient crops. A significant challenge in this area is ensuring equitable access to these financial resources, particularly for marginalized and smallholder farmers who may lack the collateral or financial literacy to navigate complex financial systems.

## 4. Collaborative Regional Initiatives:

Regional initiatives could include the development of shared early warning systems for extreme weather events, which would allow for timely preparation and response across borders. Another example is the cooperative management of cross-border natural resources, which requires harmonizing policies and practices to ensure sustainable use and conservation. Such initiatives should address the political complexities of regional cooperation, where differing national interests and levels of development can pose challenges to cohesive action.

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