

UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2020

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report 2020 finds that while nations have advanced in planning, huge gaps remain in finance for developing countries and bringing adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real protection against climate impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise. The fifth edition of the UNEP Adaptation Gap Report, launched in a high-level online press event on 14 January 2021, looks at progress in planning for, financing and implementing adaptation with a focus on nature-based solutions.



The Paris Agreement requires all its signatories to plan and implement adaptation measures through national adaptation plans, studies, monitoring of climate change effects and investment in a green future. The Adaptation Gap Report finds that such action is lagging far behind. It finds that while nations have advanced in planning and implementation, huge gaps remain, particularly in finance for developing countries and bringing adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real reductions in climate risks.

Adaptation means reducing countries' and communities' vulnerability to climate change by increasing their ability to absorb impacts and remain resilient, and it is a vital component of the Paris Agreement. The agreement requires all signatories to plan and implement adaptation measures through national adaptation plans, studies, monitoring climate change effects and investment in a green future.

There is no doubt that adaptation makes economic sense. The Global Commission on Adaptation in 2019 estimated that a USD 1.8 trillion investment in adaptation measures would bring a return of USD 7.1 trillion in avoided costs and other benefits. Achieving the 2°C target of the Paris Agreement could limit losses in global annual growth to up to 1.6 per cent, compared to 2.2 per cent for 3°C.

2020 was not only the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was also the year of intensifying climate change: high temperatures, floods, droughts, storms, wildfires and even locust plagues. Even more worryingly, the world is heading for at least a 3°C temperature rise this century. Nations must urgently step-up action to adapt to the new climate reality or face serious costs, damages and losses.



Urgent global action is required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet the Paris Agreement goals of limiting warming to ‘well below 2°C’ and striving for 1.5°C above pre industrial levels to limit the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and ecosystems. The report emphasizes the role of nature-based solutions and locally-appropriate actions that address societal challenges, such as climate change, and provide human well-being and biodiversity benefits by protecting, sustainably managing and restoring natural or modified ecosystems.

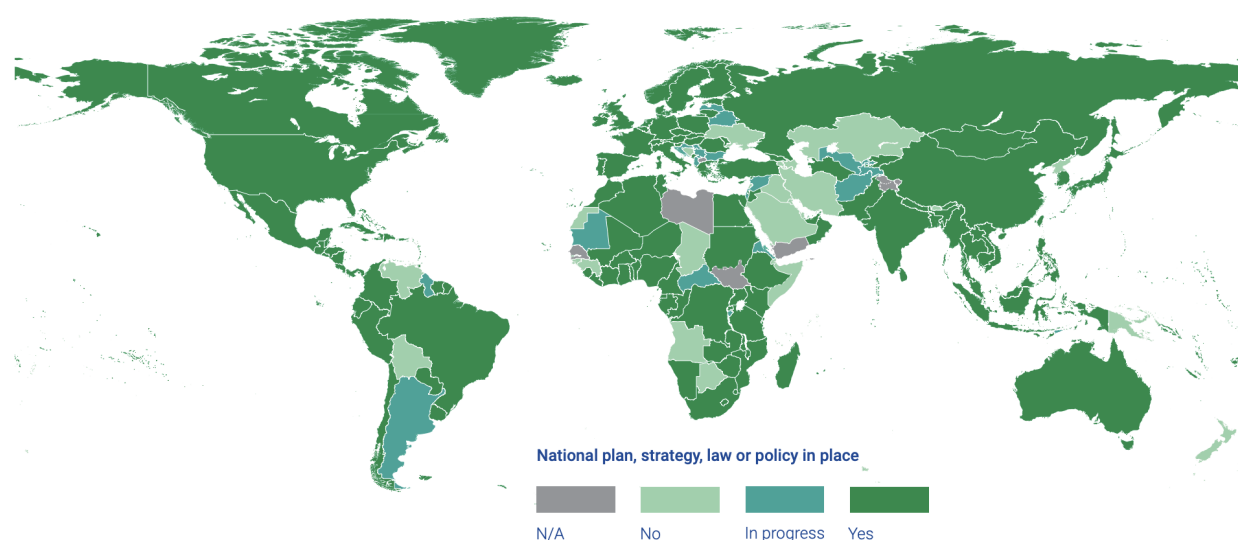
The report looks at where the world stands in planning, financing and implementing adaptation actions. It finds that while nations have advanced in planning, more financing is needed to scale up adaptation projects so they can help protect against climate

impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise. Public and private finance for adaptation must be stepped up urgently, along with faster implementation.

While COVID-19 and its economic fallout has seen adaptation fall down the political agenda, at the same time, pandemic recovery and stimulus packages could lead to a more climate resilient and low-emission recovery if implemented well. The Adaptation Gap Report 2020 celebrates the global progress that has been made on adaptation over the last decade. But further ambition and action, backed by finance, is urgently needed.

Outlook on the global progress of adaptation

Figure ES.1 Status of adaptation planning worldwide



Overall, there is robust evidence that progress has been made on greater engagement in national-level adaptation worldwide over the course of the last decade but further ambition is needed. Climate adaptation is now fully part of climate policy action across the world with widespread adoption and continued development of national, subnational and sectoral adaptation planning instruments. However, the effectiveness and adequacy of planning, finance and implementation differ depending on national circumstances and climate risk profiles and will require greater effort. Early signs of deeper transformation towards more climate-resilient and sustainable financial systems and investments are emerging but require stronger, long term commitments and action.

Despite encouraging trends, the scale of adaptation progress at the national level is insufficient and tracking progress remains a challenge. There is a real risk that adaptation costs will increase faster than adaptation oriented finance. There is inconclusive evidence to indicate whether national-level adaptation planning is being sufficiently mainstreamed into sectoral and subnational planning to address growing risks. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation, which is widely recognized as being key to tracking and assessing progress in adaptation, is inadequate and in urgent need of further development and implementation. Lastly, national-level data only provide limited indications of current and future levels of risk reduction in connection with trends in adaptation planning, finance and implementation.

These gaps urgently need to be narrowed as recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports warn of increasing climate risk levels, even under emission scenarios curtailing end-of century global warming to 1.5–2°C above pre-industrial temperatures (figure ES.8).

Figure ES.8 Conceptual visualization of progress in adaptation at the national level against different climate risk scenarios

