



Beginner United Nations Security Council

Climate Change Impacts

Boulder-Fairview Model U.N. Conference – Oct. 12, 2019

J.A. Aiken, Mia Nesis – Boulder H.S., Charlotte Heeley, Gabe Butler, Sara George – Fairview H.S.

Greatest Threat to Humanity? Climate Change, the U.N. Secretary-General Says

Nuclear weapons? Famine? Civil war? No. United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, called climate change “the most systemic threat to humankind” and urged world leaders to “reduce their countries’ greenhouse gas emissions. His warnings came a week after the World Meteorological Organization, a United Nations agency, [reported that a barrage of extreme weather events](#) had made 2017 the costliest year on record for such disasters, with an estimated \$320 billion in losses.

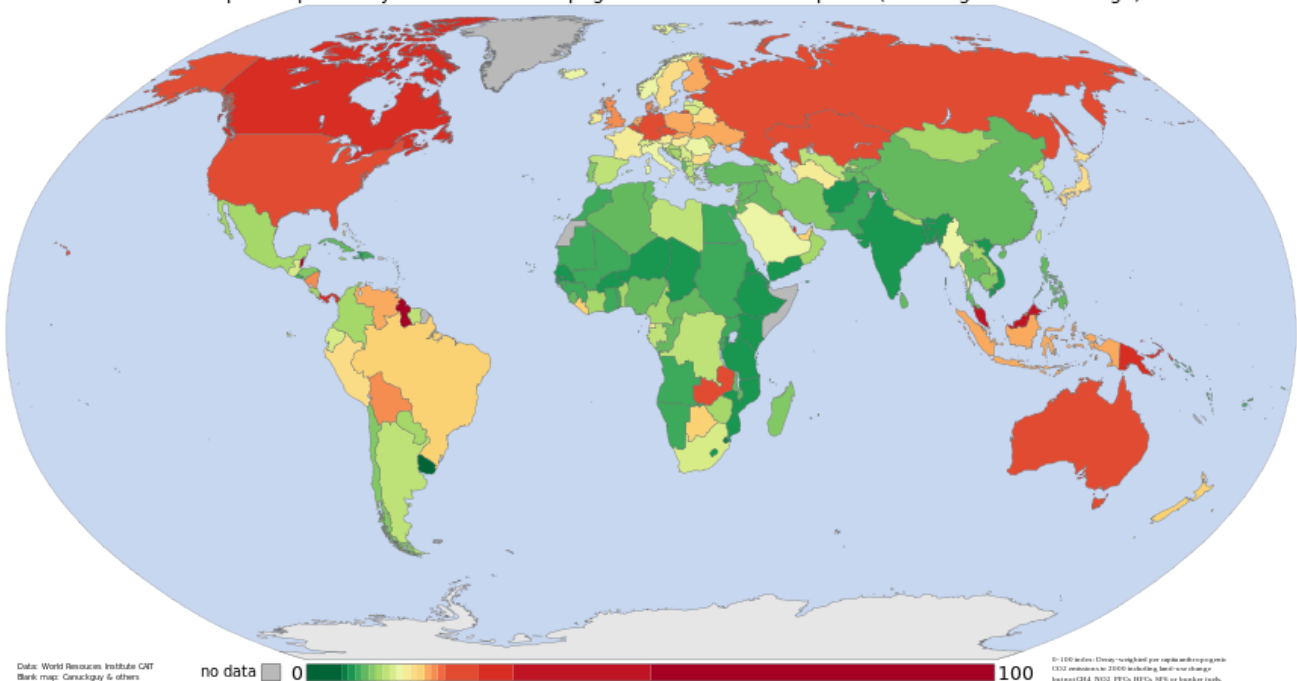
New York Times, March 27, 2018

Climate change, including global warming and increasing numbers of highly destructive storms, are such a threat to humans and the security and stability of many countries, that the most influential and best known organization within the United Nations, the Security Council, plans to discuss and propose actions to reduce these climate based threats. These climate-based changes are considered to be both short and long term threats.

You will be involved in making decision to address climate change as one of the ambassadors or invited guests of the 15 member U.N. Security Council. The current, 2019 member states (countries) are: Belgium, *China, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, *France, Germany, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, *Russian Federation, South Africa, *United Kingdom, and the *United States.
(*Permanent veto states)

The United Nations Security Council deals with issues related to maintaining the security and safety of the international community. The Security Council is the only U.N. council or committee that may initiate economic sanctions (punishment, penalties, reducing or stopping trade, etc.), peacekeeping operations, military actions, or any other direct intervention (actions) in a state (country). When states join the United Nations, they agree to abide by the resolutions passed in the Security Council.

Per capita responsibility for current anthropogenic CO₂ in the atmosphere (including land-use change)



Map of cumulative per capita/person atmospheric CO₂ emissions/pollution/greenhouse gasses by country. Cumulative emissions include land use change, and are measured between the years 1950 and 2000.

Global Warming Basic Information

As of 2019, the Earth had warmed by roughly 2 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880, when records began at a global scale. The warming is greater over land, and even greater in the Arctic, parts of Antarctica, and higher elevations of mountain ranges.

2 degrees F. may sound low, as we experience much larger temperature swings in our day-to-day lives from weather systems and seasons changing. But averaged across the planet and over years, the temperature differences are far smaller – the variation at the surface of the Earth from one year to the next is measured in very small fractions of a degree. So a rise of 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the 1880 is actually high.

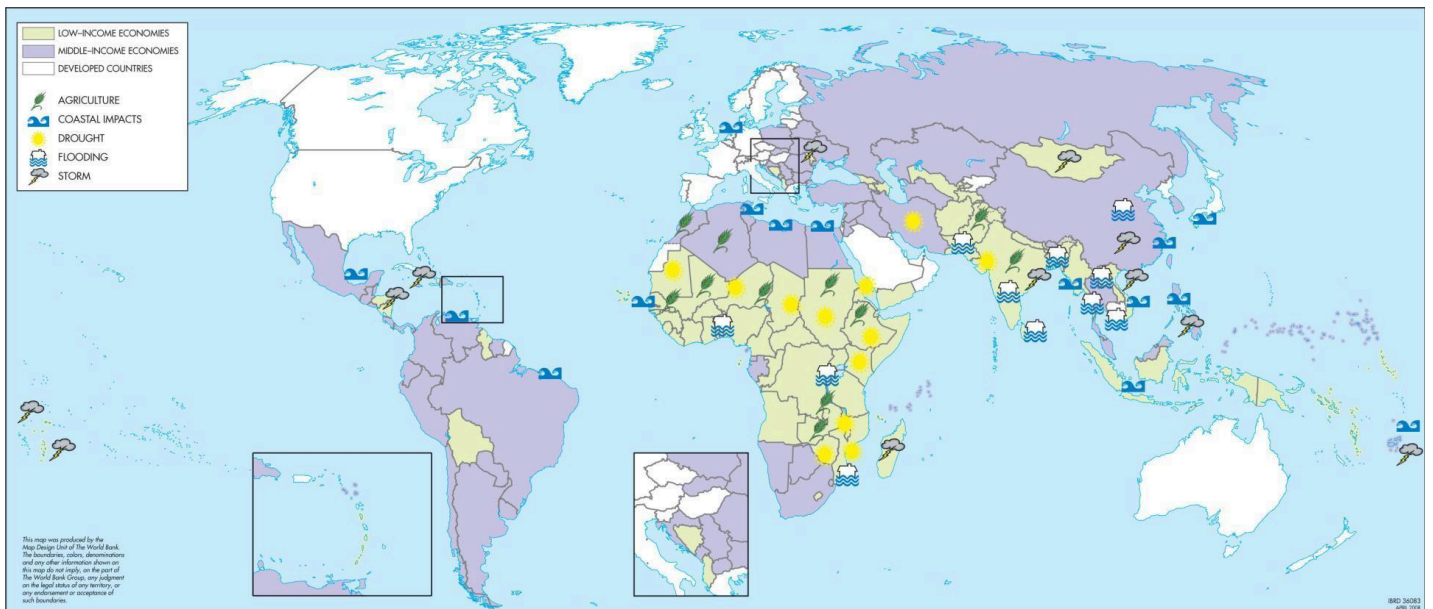
The substantial warming that has already occurred explains why much of the world's land and polar ice is starting to melt and the oceans are rising at an accelerating rate. Scientists believe most and probably all of the warming since 1950 was caused by the human release (emission) of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. If emissions continue unchecked, scientists say global warming may ultimately exceed 8 degrees Fahrenheit, would transform the planet, undermining its capacity (ability) to support a large human population.

The risks are much greater over the long run than over the next few decades, but the emissions that create those risks are happening now. This means the current generation of people is dooming future generations to a more difficult future. Over the coming 25 or 30 years, scientists say, the climate is likely to gradually become warmer, with more extreme heat waves that can kill large numbers of vulnerable people. Rainfall will be heavier in many parts of the world, but the periods between rains will most likely grow hotter and drier. The number of wild fires, hurricanes, typhoons, and other storms may actually fall, but the ones that do occur will draw energy from a hotter ocean surface, and therefore may be more intense. Ocean coastal flooding will grow more frequent and damaging, as is already happening.

Longer term, if emissions continue to rise unchecked, the risks are very serious. Scientists fear climate effects so severe that they might destabilize governments, produce waves of refugees, and melt the polar ice caps, causing the seas to rise high enough to flood most of the world's coastal cities.

All of this could take hundreds or even thousands of years to play out, but experts cannot rule out abrupt changes, such as a collapse of agriculture, that would throw civilization and human activities into chaos much sooner. Bolder efforts to limit emissions would reduce these risks, or at least slow the effects, but it is already too late to eliminate the risks entirely.

Climate Risks are Higher for Poor Countries



Global Warming: Current and Predicted Consequences

- Expanded droughts reducing staple grain crops production and increasing human, heat related deaths
- Regions depending on rain-based agriculture may need irrigation, bringing higher costs and conflict over access to

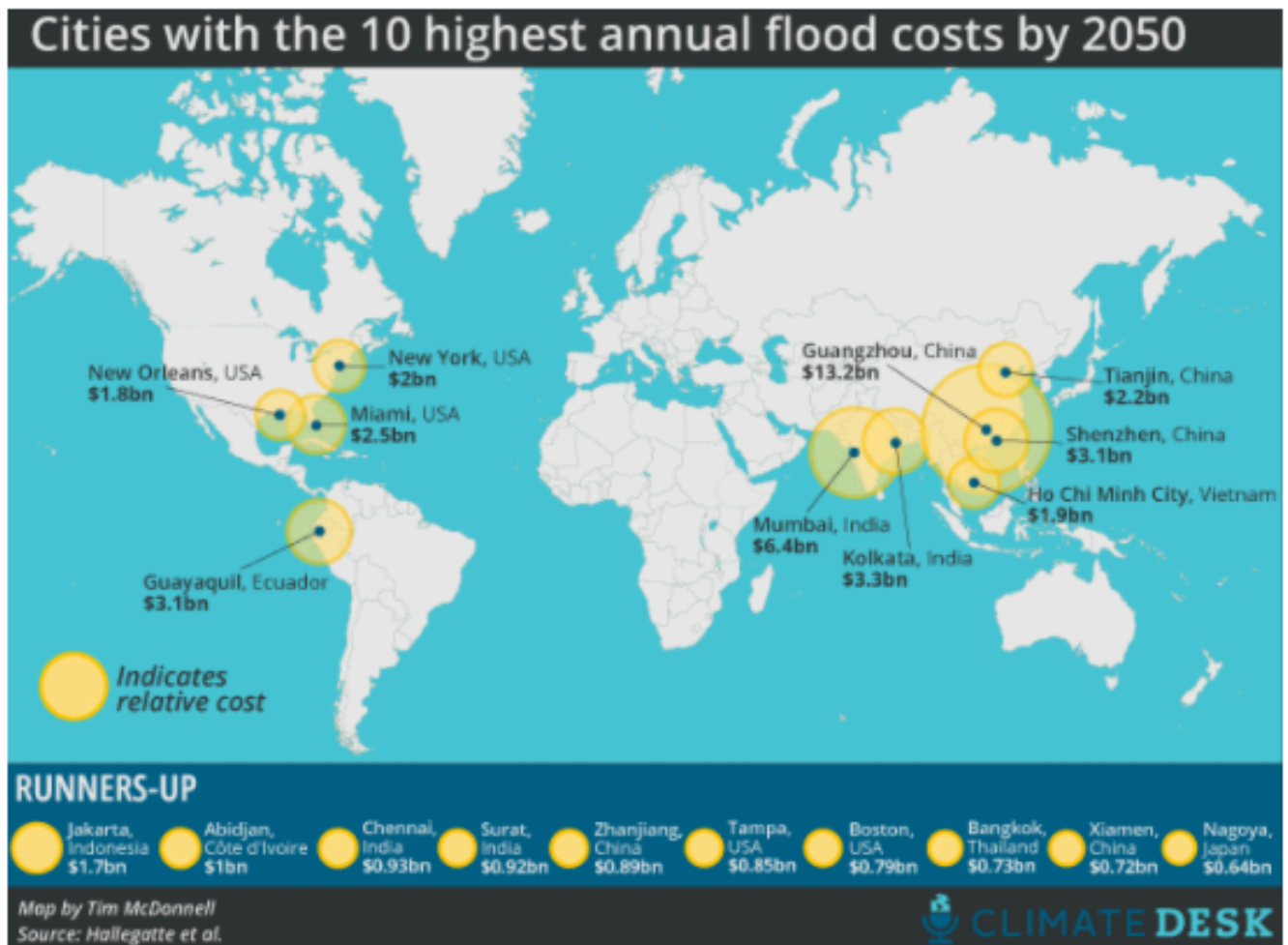
water

- Rising seas flooding farm land – salt water destroying rice and other crops inland near oceans
- More severe wild fires and storms, including hurricanes, typhoons, and flooding
- Rising seas flooding low lying islands – forced migrations from those islands
- Flooding, destruction, and rebuilding of coastal port cities docks, storage, re-fueling, and repair facilities
- Insect varieties and numbers increasing due to warming climate – reducing food crop productions
- Shorter, warmer winters that do not kill disease bearing insects – more humans dying from diseases
- Famines (mass starvations) from droughts and flooding
- Large scale migrations of peoples across country borders to escape famines
- Mistreatment or rejection of migrants fleeing countries experiencing famines to neighboring states/countries
- Political and/or military conflict between states of famine migrants and states receiving migrants
- Conflict between countries over more available natural resources (as in the warming Arctic Ocean)

Predicted Sea Level Rise

The ocean is rising at a rate of about a foot per century. That causes severe effects on coastlines, forcing governments and property owners to spend tens of billions of dollars fighting erosion. But if that rate continued, it would probably be manageable, experts say.

The risk is that the rate will accelerate markedly. If emissions continue unchecked, then the temperature at the Earth's surface could soon resemble a past epoch (long time period) called the [Pliocene](#), when a great deal of ice melted and the ocean rose by something like 80 feet compared to today. A recent study found that burning all the fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) in the ground would fully melt the polar ice sheets, raising the sea level by more than 160 feet over an unknown period. Many coastal experts believe that even if emissions stopped tomorrow, 15 or 20 feet of sea-level rise is already inevitable (very likely to happen). The crucial, most important issue is probably not how much the oceans are going to rise, but how fast. And on that point, scientists are pretty much flying blind. Their best information comes from studying the Earth's history, and it suggests that the rate can on occasion hit a foot sea rise per decade, which can probably be thought of as the worst case. Even if the rise is much slower, many of the world's great cities will flood eventually. Studies suggest that big cuts in emissions could slow the rise, buying crucial time for society to adapt to an altered coastline.



2015 U.N. Paris Climate Accord (Agreement)

In 1997, after two years of negotiations, several countries adopted the Kyoto Protocol (standard set of rules) that legally bound developed countries to achieve emissions reduction goals. The Protocol's first commitment period was from 2008 – 2012. The second commitment period started in 2013 and ends in 2020. 192 of 197 member states (countries) of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change are part of the protocol.

At the United Nations sponsored Paris climate conference in December, 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever, universal, legally binding, global climate deal. The agreement was to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed to achieve a low-carbon future. It set out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by **limiting** global warming to well **below** 2°C (3.6°F) by the middle of the 21st century (around 2050). By May, 2018, all 197 countries in the world and the European Union had signed the agreement, but President Trump pulled the U.S. out of the agreement in June, 2017.

Before and during the Paris climate conference, countries submitted comprehensive, **national climate action plans** (also referred to as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions - INDCs). The targets address climate change, greenhouse emissions reductions, and/or help their country needs to adapt to climate change. The targets however, are **not** yet enough to keep global warming **change below** 2°C /3.6°F., but the agreement begins the effort to achieve this goal. (Current emissions trends are a **3-4°C** warming **increase** by **2050**.)

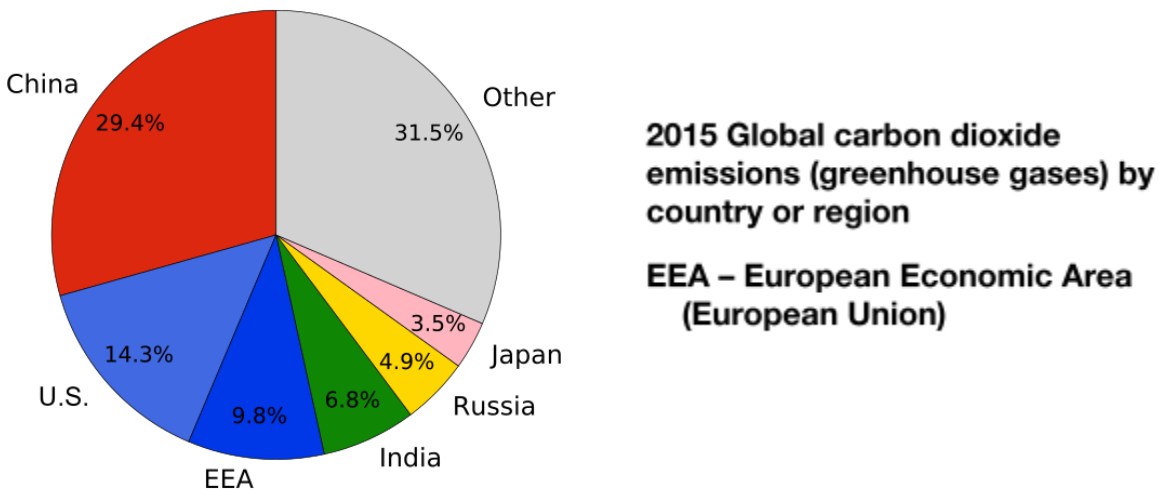
National governments and the European Union agree to: 1. come together every 5 years (starting in 2020) to **set more ambitious targets** as required by science, 2. **report** to each other and the public on how well they are doing to implement their targets, and 3. track progress towards the long-term goal through a robust (difficult, but well organized) **transparency** and **accountability** system. 4. **Developed countries** governments also should provide continued and increasing international **support** (starting at \$100 billion per year) for climate change prevention and adaptation **to developing countries**.

You can find the main goals of different countries' national climate action plans (also referred to as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions - INDCs) at CAIT Climate Data Explorer:

<http://cait.wri.org/indc/#/map>

For example, Canada proposes to cut greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 30% from 2005 levels by 2030. Click on the country on the map you want to learn about.

The Paris Climate Agreement also recognizes the role of cities, regional organizations, the private sector (businesses and industry), and others in addressing climate change to **reduce emissions, build resilience** (abilities to adapt to climate change) and **decrease vulnerability** (possibility of being harmed or hurt) to negative effects of climate change, and support and promote regional and international **cooperation**.



An important map with data that shows how regions and countries are doing so far to meet their goals is: www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/06/climate/world-emissions-goals-far-off-course.html

Topics and Issues

The United Nations states that “climate change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. With drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.

On September 23, 2019, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres convened a Climate Summit to bring together world leaders, with both political and from the private sector to support the multilateral process of accelerating climate action. The Summit focused on key sectors that can make the most difference in climate change – heavy industry, nature-based solutions, cities, energy, resilience, and climate finance.

World leaders will give updates on the progress they have made in combating climate change, as well as what they intend to do before the 2020 U.N. Climate Conference – where commitments will be renewed and possibly increased.

Why do Some People Question the Science of Climate Change?

Most of the attacks on climate science are coming from people who do not like the policies that have been proposed to fight global warming. Instead of discussing and negotiating those policies and trying to make them more subject to free-market principles, they have taken the approach of blocking them by trying to undermine the science.

About 97% of scientists who research issues related to climate change and global warming agree that it is taking place and is mostly human caused. Before their research findings will be accepted and published in scientific journals, their data and research methods are rigorously reviewed, and challenged by several different committees of other scientists (peer review). Revisions must be made when necessary and required by those groups of respected, fellow scientists before the article of data and conclusions will be published in the scientific journal.

The ideological (political and/or economic based) position of climate change denial has been propped up and supported by money from fossil-fuel interests, which have paid to create organizations, fund conferences, and publicly

challenge scientific data. The scientific arguments made by these groups usually involve cherry-picking data, such as focusing on short-term blips in the temperature record or in sea ice, while ignoring the long-term trends. An example is when looking online at photographs of glaciers and the rapid decline of the glacial ice fields over time, climate change deniers sometimes will claim the photos are “doctored” or manipulated – and that glaciers really have not been melting and declining in size.

The most extreme version of climate denialism is to [claim](#) that scientists are engaged in a worldwide hoax to fool the public so that the government can gain greater control over people’s lives. As the arguments have become more strained, many oil, natural gas, and coal companies have begun to distance themselves publicly from climate denialism, but some are still helping to finance the campaigns of politicians who support such views.

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change/>

<http://www.ipcc.ch/>

<http://www.unenvironment.org/>

<http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/232/climate/climate-summit-global-warming.html?searchResultPosition=2>

<http://cait.wri.org/indc/#/map>

“11 ways the Paris climate deal is working in the real world.” Climate Home News, May 14, 2018.

www.climatechangenews.com/2018/05/14/11-ways-paris-climate-deal-working-real-world/

“At U.N., 175 Nations sign landmark accord on global warming”. LA Times, April 22, 2016.

www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-sej-climate-change-20160422-story.html

“CAIT Climate Data Explorer”. World Resources Institute, country climate change targets updated regularly.

<http://cait.wri.org/indc/#/map>

“CAIT Climate Data Explorer: Dashboard”. World Resources Institute, list and description of 197 country climate goals

<http://cait.wri.org/indc/#/>

“Climate Hot Map”. Union of Concerned Scientists. <http://www.climatehotmap.org>

What are the impacts of climate change in different regions of the world? Go to “list hot spots” upper left hand corner. Click on a region. Click on examples from photos.

Possible solutions? “Solutions” at top in green. “Solutions to Global Warming” Click on regions for regional solutions.

“INDCs” (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions). Climate Home News, various recent articles.

www.climatechangenews.com/category/indcs/

“Short Answers to Hard Questions about Climate Change”. New York Times, July 6, 2017.

www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/11/28/science/what-is-climate-change.html

“So What is Exactly in the Paris Climate Accord?”. National Public Radio, June 1, 2017.

www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/01/531048986/so-what-exactly-is-in-the-paris-climate-accord

“11 Key themes as countries take stock of Paris Agreement progress”. Climate Home News, Jan. 5, 2018.

www.climatechangenews.com/2018/05/01/11-key-themes-countries-take-stock-paris-agreement-progress

U.N. Security Council Authorized Actions

The United Nations Security Council deals with issues related to maintaining the security and safety of the international community. The Security Council is the only U.N. council or committee that may initiate economic sanctions, peacekeeping operations, military actions, or any other direct intervention in a state (country). When states join the United Nations, they agree to abide by the resolutions passed in the Security Council.

The Security Council’s has a wide range of options to insure international security. They include:

- Acquire additional information about a conflict or potential conflict
- Request information from other U.N. related agencies - for example the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Human Rights Council (HRC), etc.

- Investigate the presence of banned weapons or weapons of mass destruction
- Request states or parties provide information about war crimes or attempts at genocide in disputed territories or states
- Investigate possible violations of international humanitarian law
- Call for an immediate cease-fire between combatants in a conflict (civil war or war between states/countries)
- Call for negotiations, suggest a peace plan, and/or provide a trained peace negotiator/diplomat
- Invite the logical, regional transnational organization (ie., African Union, League of Arab States, European Union, NATO, ASEAN, OAS) to provide expertise, negotiators, peace keepers, aid workers, financial or military assistance
- Impose a no fly zone patrolled by a regional military alliance
- Impose a trade embargo on one or several states or parties in the dispute
- Authorize a naval blockade by a regional military alliance
- Establish a U.N. peacekeeping force – lightly armed to preserve a peace agreement
- Establish “safe areas” for refugees and provide relief services to refugees fleeing the conflict, with the assistance of various international aid organizations
- Authorize military force against one or both parties in the dispute or conflict, reflecting the U.N. “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine
- Establish an international criminal tribunal to try persons responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the disputed area
- Establish a compensation commission to give money to the victims of the conflict
- Call upon the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission to work with international non-government organizations (NGOs) to help rebuild war torn states and territories

Student Delegates on the U.N. Security Council

You should accurately represent your country’s attitude towards climate change and global warming, and consider the impacts climate change is having or will have on your country’s security and safety, food supply, and possible migrations impacts. You should clearly and accurately state your country’s current efforts and technologies regarding the mitigation (slowing) of climate change impacts and actions your country has taken to adapt to changing climate conditions. You should be courteous, diplomatic, and cooperate with the other student Security Council members.