

Aline Reynolds

International Climate Change Policy After Paris

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Memo #2: Key Aspects of the Paris Agreement In Relation to the Kyoto Protocol

The Paris Agreement, a climate treaty that has yet to be ratified, is the latest global accord aimed at lowering emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) that, in recent times, have trapped heat in the earth's atmosphere to bring on global warming. The Paris Agreement differs from the Kyoto Protocol, the world's first international climate treaty to specify emissions reduction obligations, in the way that it pursues this goal. Notably, the Paris Agreement distinguishes itself by requiring GHG reduction commitments of all participating nations and not just developed countries; by underscoring the need for transparency in meeting the treaty's objectives; by containing strong compliance mechanisms; and by offering robust and specific financial and technical assistance to developing nations.

A key and unique component of the Paris treaty is that it requires the participating nations, collectively known as the Conference of the Parties (COP), to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), or periodic documents that convey these countries' respective GHG reductions obligations. The emissions targets stipulated in these documents are discretionary, in that each of the participating nations determine them according to its respective capabilities and intentions. The nations are expected to put forth new NDCs every five years that, according to the Agreement, are supposed to constitute "ambitious efforts" and a "progression over time."<sup>i</sup> The Paris treaty also establishes a global stocktake provision, which involves a collective determination of the global progress made in achieving the Agreement's "long-term" goals.<sup>ii</sup> Apart from minimizing the anticipated global