

COP26 and Guatemala

The British Ambassador in Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, published today an opinion column outlining the importance of the summit for Guatemala. He is also announcing a series of articles and activities in the next couple of weeks to highlight COP26's contributions to key themes from clean energy, youth participation, biodiversity, and impacts of climate change.

The most important conference of our lifetime is underway in the UK. It is a conference that will likely determine what type of world we pass on to future generations.

Success will ensure our children and grandchildren can prosper. Failure could spell disaster for life as we know it. Known as COP-26 for short, the United Nations Climate Conference is one of the last opportunities countries will have to come together and solve mankind's greatest challenge – a challenge for its very survival.

Six years ago the world saw the birth of the Paris Agreement, which was a milestone in global efforts to address climate change. It resulted in a binding agreement, uniting all nations to a common cause.

This cause was to adapt to the effects of climate change, limit the increase in global average temperature to well below two degrees, pursuing efforts towards 1.5, with respect to pre-industrial levels. In Paris, world leaders provided the world with consensus, ambition and hope.

But it was just the beginning. And yesterday the world began to converge on the great city of Glasgow for the COP26 the next and very crucial step on the path to preventing irreversible and catastrophic climate change.

Emissions have continued to rise and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued a red alert for the climate warning that unless we act immediately, the 1.5 degree limit will be out of reach.

Extreme weather can be seen across the world. This summer we have seen devastating floods in central Europe and China, raging wildfires in North America. A year ago, Guatemala was hit by two ferocious hurricanes leaving significant economic and human damage.

The impact of a relatively small temperature increase is already posing challenges to humanity. It does not require a vivid imagination to picture how much more serious the impact of climate change will be if we do not act now.

Guatemala, as a vulnerable country, has a very important voice and its example can lead others to take important steps. Many climate-vulnerable countries are leading the way in reducing emissions.

I witnessed with great enthusiasm a week ago the granting of forest

concessions in Petén and how the Maya Biosphere Reserve is a lung of the world that counteracts global emissions. I am also proud of the efforts that the UK is making to create a greener future.

But to make the difference needed to meet the 1.5 degree temperature limit to be enshrined in the Paris Agreement much more is needed. All countries need to set ambitious emission reduction targets, businesses need to adapt and create new green pathways to success and individuals need to change their lifestyles and leave behind a greener footprint.

COP26 is not a photo shoot. It is not a talking shop. It is a forum where the world's leaders and country delegations must map out a better path. A path leading to the preservation of the world as we know it.

Therefore, I congratulate the Guatemalan delegation that will soon travel to Glasgow to join forces on all these issues. Guatemala has shown important leadership in the fight against climate change through its emission reduction policy, in the protection of forests and also in the preservation of water sources.

All of this is crucial in creating a future, which we can look forward to with more optimism, boost economic growth and create prosperity. We must all do our part because the world will either succeed or fail as one. Moreover, we are almost at the end of the road.

In the next few days, we will see a series of excellent articles in [Prensa Libre](#) addressing the issues of COP26 and its relationship with Guatemala. I invite you to follow and comment on them, and think about how we can together build a more sustainable and prosperous world.