

COP26 President Alok Sharma welcomes Nepal's positive action on climate change

- Alok Sharma's first visit to Nepal as COP26 President to see the effects of climate change on the Himalayan region
- He met with Nepal's Prime Minister Oli, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, other government Ministers and officials, community leaders and civil society
- Supporting women's voices in climate action ahead of COP26 was a key part of visit

The COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal this week to observe the effects of global warming on mountainous communities first-hand and learn more about the country's ambitious work to tackle climate change.

During his two day visit, Mr Sharma met Nepalese Prime Minister KP Oli, President Devi Bhandari, government ministers, mountain communities and climate activists, including female climate leaders and young climate champions, to better understand the opportunities and challenges around making climate action happen in Nepal.

Mr Sharma congratulated Prime Minister KP Oli on Nepal's recent commitment to net zero by 2050— a crucial step in the global fight against climate change — and they discussed increasing climate ambition ahead of COP26.

President Bhandari and Mr Sharma spoke about the challenges Nepal faces as a highly climate vulnerable country and an extremely low emitter, and how the UK and Nepal can share their experiences to achieve net zero.

They also spoke about how the UK can help amplify women's voices on climate at the COP26 climate summit which will be held in Glasgow later this year.

The UK is already working with development partners to coordinate a \$7.4 billion Green Recovery Support package that will help Nepal build back greener from Covid-19. The package will help Nepal recover sustainably from the immediate impacts of the pandemic, by investing in clean energy, water and projects such as flood prevention, and tree planting, whilst mobilising support for sustainable job creation in agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President-Designate, said:

As COP26 President it's important to me that I was able to see first-hand the very real impacts of climate change including on the lives of mountain-based communities.

People here are incredibly resilient but it is an injustice that one of the lowest carbon emitters in the region is being hit in

this way.

There is clearly a strong understanding of the urgent need for climate action among women and young people here, and I was glad to hear that sentiment echoed by the Government of Nepal.

Globally we must do more to support those on the frontline of climate change. Seeing the British Gurkha projects in action shows how we can improve lives if we work together.

Nepal negotiates with the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group and has been asked by its Chair, Bhutan, to represent the interests of the Hindu Kush Himalaya's at COP26.

The Himalaya supply 1.6 billion people with fresh water and Nepal alone supplies 400 million.

Annual warming in the Himalayan region is twice the global average and glaciers are retreating by up to 60 metres per year. Mr Sharma saw this when he visited the region and spoke with mountain communities about the impacts of climate change on the Himalaya and retreating glaciers.

Access to water is a pressing issue for some Himalayan communities and Mr Sharma met with people who are building resilience against the effects of climate change with the help of a project run by British Gurkha Nepal.

Minister Sharma also met the British Embassy's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, ex-British Gurkha Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja who is supporting the British Embassy's year long #ActionIsPossible campaign.

The British Ambassador to Nepal, Her Excellency Nicola Pollitt, said:

I am delighted that the COP President Sharma was able to visit Nepal and see first-hand the severe impacts of climate change on the mountains, on biodiversity, on communities and the region. As COP President, he is uniquely placed to deliver clear messages on the need for climate action in the Himalaya to the rest of the world.

Nirmal 'Nimsdai' Purja, British Embassy Kathmandu's Mountains and Climate Change Champion, said:

I've seen the impact of climate change in the mountains. On K2 as well as on Nepal's mountains. On Manaslu, my team and I were able to boil snow for drinking water in 2012. In 2020, there was no snow to boil. We had to carry water all the way up. If we work together, action is possible.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. COP26 President Alok Sharma visited Nepal on 17-18 February 2021.
2. The COP26 summit will take place on 1-12 November 2021 in Glasgow and will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
3. The UK is committed to working with all countries and joining forces with civil society, companies and people on the frontline of climate change to inspire climate action ahead of COP26.