

COP26 President highlights importance of action on adaptation and to avert climate loss and damage in visit to Ethiopia and Gabon

The COP26 President-Designate, Alok Sharma, has visited Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Libreville, Gabon, to discuss how the UK can work with the countries to address climate change challenges.

In his first overseas visit since becoming full-time COP26 President, Mr Sharma met leaders from government and civil society, stressing the need for urgent climate action ahead of the important UN climate change summit the UK is hosting in November 2021, COP26.

His visit to Addis reaffirmed the UK–Ethiopia [climate partnership signed by the UK Foreign Secretary](#), during his recent visit, which will step-up cooperation ahead of COP26.

Following high-level talks with Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, and other senior ministers, Mr Sharma launched Ethiopia's 'Enfluencers' (Ethiopia, Environment, Earth, Education and Entertainment) Network, a group of young environmental activists and influencers who are working to raise awareness and build support for climate action.

In Gabon, Mr Sharma held high-level talks with President Ali Bongo and other senior ministers.

He met a number of conservation NGOs and visited an arboretum and a timber processing plant where he learnt about Gabon's success in, and future plans for, sustainable forest governance and industrialisation, as well as the Gabonese Space and Earth Observation Agency through which the country monitors deforestation.

The visit underlines the UK's commitment to championing adaptation and action to avert, minimise and address loss and damage from climate change to protect vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change. This follows the launch of the [Adaptation Action Coalition](#), a new international coalition which will turn international political commitments made through the United Nations Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience into on-the-ground support for vulnerable communities.

Speaking at the end of his visit, COP26 President, Alok Sharma, said:

Globally, we must go further and faster to protect people from the worst impacts of climate change, and climate vulnerable countries should be at the heart of that process.

I have been impressed by the ambition and determination I have seen on this visit, particularly from inspiring young people in Ethiopia. I will continue to work closely with my friends in Ethiopia and Gabon, and hope that both countries will continue to show leadership on climate action, which has such a vital role to play in the COP26 process.

British Ambassador to Ethiopia, Alastair McPhail, said:

I'm glad that COP26 President Alok Sharma has recognised Ethiopia's importance in the fight against climate change, in choosing it as the site of his first overseas visit in the role full-time.

Ethiopia is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world but it is also a country with an admirable and ambitious green agenda.

British Ambassador to Gabon, Rowan Laxton, said:

Climate change remains a global concern that requires concerted efforts, and this visit has underlined the UK's support for Gabon in the fight against climate change, whilst showcasing some of the important work already being done here to protect people and planet. In the run-up to COP26 we will continue working with Gabon to build on this momentum.

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. In Ethiopia, Mr Sharma also met Minister of Agriculture, Oumar Hussein; Minister of Finance, Ahmed Shide; Mr Mensur Dessie and Mr Abdeta Debella from the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission, and Mr Gebru Jember to discuss Ethiopia's negotiating priorities for COP26; and Ambassador Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.
2. In Gabon, Mr Sharma also met Foreign Minister Pacôme Moubelet-Boubeya, and Environment Minister, Professor Lee White.
3. This year, the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26, in Glasgow with our partners, Italy. This will provide an opportunity for the world to come together and commit to urgent action.
4. As hosts of COP26, the UK will lead by example during this unprecedented time. Guided by science, the UK will invest in a green recovery which creates sustainable jobs and addresses the urgent and linked challenges of public health, climate change, and biodiversity loss.
5. 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 action ahead of COP26.