

## Keeping 1.5°C Alive: Closing the gap in the 2020s – Key messages

### Top Line

By COP26, nations' decarbonization pledges - the NDCs submitted under the Paris Agreement - are likely to fall well short of what is required to put the world on a pathway to limit global warming to 1.5°C. This report identifies a set of technically and economically feasible actions which can be implemented in the next decade and, if catalysed by discrete agreements at and following COP26, can deliver sufficient GHG emission reductions by 2030 to keep alive the potential to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

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### Key Messages

- The goal of COP26 is to keep 1.5°C of warming within reach, but current pledges towards this goal fall far short: current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) fill just over 10% of the gap between the world's current GHG emissions trajectory, and a pathway consistent with 1.5°C – in 2030 the world faces an "emissions gap" of around 20-23 GtCO<sub>2e</sub> per year.
- The ETC has identified feasible actions across 6 key areas; methane, forestry and soils, coal, road transport, supply side decarbonization and energy & resource efficiency. Taken together these actions close over 90% of the emissions gap to a 1.5°C trajectory.
- These actions are all clearly technically feasible with today's technology, and i) are either close to costless, affordable by rich-developed countries, or could be covered by climate finance in lower-income countries, ii) could deliver significant co-benefits, and crucially, iii) don't require agreement between all negotiating countries, but discrete groups of countries and private sector actors, making tangible progress in all of these areas a realistic objective at and following COP26.
- The ideal outcome of COP26 would therefore be a set of collaboration efforts between leading countries, companies and other actors which – building on the existing NDCs and initiatives already underway – catalyse a process which could close the 'emissions gap' over the next few years, accelerating action to deliver the six categories of additional reductions by 2030.

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### 2-page version

#### ***The need for faster progress in the 2020s***

As the latest IPCC report warns, the world is already experiencing many of the effects of anthropogenic climate change, with current levels of warming 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels.

To avoid severe harm to human welfare, global warming should ideally be limited to 1.5°C and the probability of exceeding 2°C kept very small (e.g. less than 10%). This will require not only reducing carbon dioxide emissions to around zero by mid-century, but reducing them by 40-50% by 2030, while also cutting methane emissions by about 40%. National commitments already made, or likely to be made by COP26, fall well short of this requirement.

#### ***What has changed since Paris? Technologies, costs and scientific understanding***

Since the 2015 Paris Agreement, two key things have become apparent:

- **Technology and cost developments have greatly increased the potential for rapid emission reductions** in the power sector (e.g. wind and solar generation), in road transport (e.g. EVs), and parts of heavy industry (e.g. via electrification or the use of hydrogen);
- **Improved scientific understanding has shown the vital need for forceful action** on deforestation and methane emissions.

Taken together, this highlights that rapid emissions reductions are technically and economically feasible in the 2020s, and highlights areas for priority action for both achieving and going beyond current commitments.

### ***Feasible actions to accelerate emissions reductions in the next decade***

The ETCs has focused on actions that can make a significant impact on emissions by 2030. They are clearly technically feasible with today's technology and meet a mix of three feasibility criteria:

- **Either close to costless, or affordable for rich, developed countries, or if arising in lower income countries, could be covered by climate finance** and transfers from richer nations;
- **Could deliver significant co-benefits**, for example to the local community due to increased air quality or jobs, which would be politically attractive to governments and companies;
- **Could be progressed by a relatively small number of governments and/or companies** without the need for comprehensive internationally negotiated agreements.

We identify feasible actions across 6 key areas; methane, forestry and soils, coal, road transport, supply side decarbonization and energy & resource efficiency. Taken together these actions close over 90% of the emissions gap to keep warming within 1.5°C:

1. **Significant and rapid reductions in methane emissions.** The recent IPCC report highlighted that methane has been responsible for ~40% of the warming the world has experienced to date. Rapid cuts are therefore both important and possible: via regulations and monitoring to reduce methane leakage in fossil fuel production and distribution, and action across the food chain to reduce waste and improve efficiency.
2. **Halting deforestation and beginning reforestation.** A 1.5°C world requires an immediate end to deforestation. Where past initiatives have failed, targeted finance needs to flow to overcome barriers (i.e. from developed countries). Restoration of damaged land and a scale up of tree-planting can ensure the world's land use shifts from being a source of carbon, to a permanent sink.
3. **Decarbonising the power sector – accelerating coal phase-out.** Coal in power generation is the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions, but it is increasingly uneconomic against renewables. An immediate ban on new coal, and a phase out of old coal plants – led by a full phase out in OECD countries by 2030 – can rapidly reduce emissions in this sector.
4. **Accelerating road transport electrification.** Within the next decade, shifting to passenger EVs will be a negative cost transition, delivering savings to consumers rather than additional costs. A global ban on selling fossil fuelled vehicles should therefore be in place by 2035 at the latest, complemented by early action from corporate fleets, and a combination of efficiency and low-carbon fuels in heavy duty vehicles.

5. **Accelerating supply decarbonisation in buildings, heavy transport, and heavy industry** is a transition that will take longer than a decade. Nevertheless, significant action is possible via electrification, low-carbon hydrogen and CCS. Industry agreements (e.g. to buy and sell low-carbon goods) can be established at COP26 to accelerate this transition.
6. **Energy and resource efficiency improvement is an area where progress has slowed**, but replicating best-in-class standards for efficient homes and appliances can be accelerated through a combination of existing and new initiatives at COP26.

### ***Adding it up – closing the gap and actions at COP26***

If implemented in the next decade the technically and economically feasible actions identified in this report could deliver sufficient reductions by 2030 to keep the target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C limit within reach.

The ideal outcome of COP26 would therefore be a set of collaboration efforts and discrete agreements between leading countries, companies and other actors which – building on the existing NDCs and initiatives already underway – would create a high probability that the six categories of additional reductions could be achieved over the next decade. For many of the actions identified in this report, initiatives are already underway which can be strengthened and extended at COP26, including those driven by the COP26 Presidency and the High-Level Champions (e.g. Powering Past Coal Alliance, the Race to Zero, the Bonn Challenge, the IUCN Global Standards for nature-based solutions).

Accelerating actions to deliver the six categories of additional reductions is a challenging but plausible aim for COP26 and beyond. Agreements at and following COP26 can catalyse a process which could close the 'emissions gap' over the next few years, enabling future reinforcement of NDC commitments to reflect the progress made on the actions identified in this report. Thus keeping alive the potential to limit global warming to 1.5°C.