



**United Nations** Climate Change  
Global Climate Action

# Sports for Climate Action Framework

Version 02.0



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## 1. Background

1. Global warming is placing our planet and future generations at risk. Meeting the scale of the challenge requires action by all sectors, including the sport sector to achieve the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Around the world, governments, cities and businesses are taking bold climate action, leading the way towards a healthier and more sustainable future. By employing solutions to global warming each of us will be improving and contributing to public health, promoting social justice, preserving natural resources, creating reliable sources of energy and contributing to the society and economy as a whole.
2. Businesses are now looking to respond to the challenges of climate action in tangible ways. Companies are committing to renewable energy and energy productivity, are setting concrete targets in line with the climate science and cross-sectoral business initiatives are recognizing and addressing the climate impacts of supply chains and resource use on agriculture, land use, transport and water. Collectively climate action by non-state actors can provide building blocks for 21st century businesses models and for delivering the scale needed to transform economies. Yet, there is a universal recognition that more ambitious and effective climate action from all levels of government, the private sector and civil society is needed now to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and avoid the worst effects of climate change.
3. Sports organisations can display climate leadership by engaging actively and collectively in the climate neutrality journey, in turn helping to differentiate from competitors, build brand reputation and engage their sports personnel, employees and members on environmental issues.
4. This can be achieved by taking responsibility for their climate footprint, helping global ambition step-up and incentivising action beyond sports to take meaningful and transformative climate action.

### 1.1. Implications of the Paris Agreement for the sport sector

5. In 2015 the governments of the world came together to determine a new direction for global growth and development. In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, were agreed. Then, in December of the same year, the Paris Climate Change Agreement was adopted, rapidly entering into force in November 2016. The Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals are two visionary agreements which hold great potential to stabilize our climate, proliferate peace and prosperity, and open opportunity for billions of people.
6. The Paris Agreement seeks to accelerate and intensify the actions and investment needed for a sustainable low-carbon future. Its central aim is keeping a global temperature rise this century to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement also aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with climate change impacts. Countries have put forward “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs), with a commitment to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. However, success cannot be achieved by governments alone. All sections of society, from individuals to corporations, must contribute at increasing levels of scale and acceleration.
7. Sport’s impact on our climate is complex and can be difficult to measure depending on the size of the organization and/or event. However, most sports organisations and fans would now acknowledge that sport’s contribution to climate change – through associated travel, energy use, construction, catering, and so on – is considerable. Moreover, sports’ global interest for billions of fans, and the media coverage generated in response, provide a strong platform for the sport sector to play an exemplary role in meeting the challenge of climate change, and inspire and engage large audiences to do the same.



8. Impacts of climate change will vary greatly from region to region and from sport to sport. However, some general implications for the sector can be inferred:
9. Climate change is also impacting on sport. We see this happening in various ways:
  - (a) Damage to playing surfaces due to extreme temperatures, extended periods of drought, flooding, and/or pest species extending their natural range
  - (b) Damage to buildings and other infrastructure due to violent storms
  - (c) Coastal erosion and sea level rise directly affecting sport properties in seaside areas
  - (d) Warmer winters and lack of natural snow threatening ski resorts at lower altitudes
  - (e) Unseasonal rainfall forcing cancellation or abandonment of sport matches
  - (f) Heat waves forcing changes to timing of sport events
  - (g) Increased injuries to players from heat exhaustion and impact injuries from harder playing surfaces
  - (h) More potentially harmful algal blooms limiting direct contact outdoor water sports
  - (i) Sub-standard fan experience where high temperatures create potential health risks and detract from the enjoyment of the event
  - (j) Climate adaption measures being required in the design of new or refurbished sport venues
10. All these impacts have potentially significant financial repercussions in addition to their physical and logistical impacts. These are not projections; they are all real impacts that have happened and continue to happen across sports and throughout the world.

## **1.2. Opportunity for sports sector to become a climate leader**

11. UN Climate Change invites sports organizations and their stakeholders to join a new climate action for sport movement that will set the trajectory and provide the support for sport to play a winning role in achieving global climate change goals.
12. Uniting behind a set of principles, this movement of sports organisations and their communities will work together to get on track for the net zero emission economy of 2050 that global leaders agreed in Paris.
13. In particular, UN Climate Change welcomes the leadership of the International Olympic Committee to contribute to key areas of action under this movement, and invites other governing bodies, sport federations, leagues and clubs, to join the journey to jointly develop climate action agenda in sports, by leading and supporting specific working groups and by bringing their expertise, tools and best practices, into this framework.
14. The activities under Sports for Climate Action have two overarching objectives:
  - (a) Achieving a clear trajectory for the global sports community to combat climate change, through commitments and partnerships in congress with verified standards, including measuring, reducing, and reporting greenhouse gas emissions in line with well below 2 degree scenario as set out in the Paris Agreement;
  - (b) Using sports as a unifying tool to drive climate awareness and action among global citizens.



15. Sports for Climate Action sets out a cooperative framework to both catalyse new and enhance existing environmental commitments. It needs to be open and inclusive initiative seeking to build on other related initiatives and commitments made by participating organisations.

## 2. Sports for Climate Action Principles

16. The Sports for Climate Action Initiative aims to provide sports organizations with a forum where organizations can pursue climate action in a consistent and mutually supportive fashion by learning from each other, disseminating good practices, lessons learned, developing new tools, and collaborating on areas of mutual interest.
17. The Principles of Sports for Climate Action Initiative will serve to mainstream climate action and will outline actions that, at a minimum, meet fundamental responsibilities in the areas of environmental sustainability and combatting climate change. By incorporating the five principles into strategies, policies and procedures, and by vocalising them to the sports community, organisations are upholding their basic responsibilities to people and planet, but also setting the stage for wider diffusion of the message and long-term success beyond the context of sport.
18. The participants in the Sports for Climate Action Initiative will commit to adhere to the following five principles:
  - (a) **Principle 1: Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility;**
  - (b) **Principle 2: Reduce overall climate impact;**
  - (c) **Principle 3: Educate for climate action;**
  - (d) **Principle 4: Promote sustainable and responsible consumption;**
  - (e) **Principle 5: Advocate for climate action through communication.**
19. Sports organizations are invited to sign up to the Sports for Climate Action principles, regardless of their current stage in their environmental endeavours and work collaboratively to identify and spotlight climate solutions. There is a requirement to demonstrate ongoing progress, over time, after commitment to these principles is established.

### **Principle 1: Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility**

20. The objective of this principle is to move beyond ad-hoc environmental practices to a comprehensive incorporation of climate change and its impacts into business strategy for operations, events, procurement, infrastructure and communications.
21. As a minimum, sport organisations should bring themselves up to the standards of good practice by; establishing responsibility for sustainability at the board level by defining sustainability strategies and implementing robust approaches to reducing their climate impact, and by considering internal and external issues that influence the climate impact of the organization now and in the future.

### **Principle 2: Reduce overall climate impact**

22. The objective of this principle is to encourage sports organizations to prepare a strategy for achieving climate neutrality for their organizations and their events. No matter what size of organisation or sporting event, everyone has a climate impact and everyone can take action to reduce it. The following series of key steps represent best practice in taking action to minimise



and eventually neutralise your climate impacts. They offer a practical approach to achieve the greatest positive impact in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

## **2.1. Measure and understand**

23. The starting point should be to gather information on your current activities to enable you to calculate a baseline climate footprint. This provides a robust, quantitative measure of your organisation's (or event's) GHG emissions.
24. This measurement is necessary to evaluate the overall climate impacts of your organisation or project, and to understand which activities contribute most to these impacts.
25. Understanding the most significant impacts is essential for guiding decision-makers to take actions that will reduce your GHG emissions. The top priority should be to focus on activities that have the highest contribution to your climate footprint. This will help you to select the most cost-effective actions with the highest reduction potential.

## **2.2. Take Action**

26. Actions to mitigate your climate impacts would normally follow a hierarchal approach:
  - (a) Avoid – actions designed to eliminate GHG emissions occurring in the first place.
  - (b) Reduce – actions designed to lower the climate impact of your current activities. This may entail using resources in a more efficient way and thereby reducing the overall need, and associated costs, for such resources
  - (c) Substitute/replace – actions designed to improve efficiency. This may be achieved by switching to more efficient and “cleaner” equipment, fuels, materials or processes.
  - (d) Compensate – actions designed to compensate for some or all of your remaining, unavoidable impacts, typically by investing in emission reductions in other projects through UNFCCC recognised mechanisms.
  - (e) Report – provide a credible account of your climate footprint and the climate actions you have undertaken in order to share knowledge and lessons learned.

### **Principle 3: Educate for climate action**

27. The objective of this principle is to bring together, diffuse and spotlight existing guidelines, resources, tools and expertise and collectively address potential knowledge gaps. It aims to enable knowledge sharing capacities to optimize the impact of collective effort on climate action. This principle can provide a forum for sport organisations to understand climate change issues in a global and regionally relevant context and incorporate lessons into their strategy.

### **Principle 4: Promote sustainable and responsible consumption**

28. The objective of this principle encourages sports organizations and sports events organizers to adopt sustainable procurement policies to motivate providers to develop cleaner options. Communication campaigns toward fans and other stakeholders could be built, to promote the use of greener, sustainable options. This also applies to giving preference to sustainable means of transport, being one of the major sources of GHG emissions in sports, thereby supporting global transition to low carbon transport.



**Principle 5: Advocate for climate action through communication**

29. The objective of this principle refers to consistently promote awareness about climate change by mobilising resources to support action on climate change, such as:
- (a) Broadcasting channels;
  - (b) Social media;
  - (c) Athletes as role models and climate ambassadors;
  - (d) Showcasing sustainable actions at events, at club grounds and at iconic venues;
  - (e) Association/federation networks;
  - (f) Sport clubs memberships and team fans.

### **3. Modalities of Work**

30. The UN Climate Change is committed to facilitate and coordinate, within its resources and mandates, and as part of its work on Global Climate Action, the work undertaken by signatories to Sports for Climate Action.
31. The Sports for Climate Action Initiative does not constitute a new formal initiative or registered organization, but work is carried out by the signatories with facilitation from the UN Climate Change secretariat.
32. Signatories to the Sports for Climate Action are committed to support the implementation of the principles contained in its Framework, both by pursuing the principles within their own organizations, by leading the work for a specific principle, and by working collectively with other signatories.

#### **3.1. Delivery of Sports for Climate Action**

33. Delivery of the Sports for Climate Action Initiative is through working groups, each having a focus on one of the principles in the Sports for Climate Action Framework.
34. Working groups will convene to develop activities, processes and, if necessary, come up with joint resources to carry out work under each principle. This among others, means mapping existing tools and resources, developing approaches for how good practices can be scaled up and applied consistently, including by agreeing on methodologies or minimum criteria for reporting and recognition of climate action by sports organizations.
35. Sport Organisations who sign up to the principles defined in this Sports for Climate Action Framework will be invited to lead and/or contribute to the working group of their choice and support the development of associated activities falling under that specific working group, in collaboration with the UN Climate Change secretariat. Sport Organizations signing up to the Sports for Climate Action Initiative may contribute to the work of one or several working groups of their choice<sup>1</sup>.
36. Substantive direction of the work for each principle is to be decided by consensus among the organizations that are part of that working group, and reflected in a time-bound working plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Signatories are required to apply the principles defined in this framework. Participation in the working groups is optional, but very much encouraged.



37. Working group activities requiring resources for their implementation shall be budgeted for by the participating organizations, either through own sources of funding or through joint fund raising.
38. Any products or outputs resulting from the work of participating organizations will be free of copyright and publicly accessible.
39. No participating signatory may represent, or make statements on behalf of the other signatories of the Sports for Climate Action Initiative, unless this has been agreed by all Signatories.
40. The participation of signatories in the working groups will be recognized by the UN Climate Change secretariat in relevant communications and events. Such participation may also be reflected in the signatories' own communications, by stating that they are a signatory to the Sports for Climate Action as part of the sports sector response to UN Climate Change global climate action.
41. Signatories of the Sports for Climate Action are not entitled to use the name or logo of the UN Climate Change without the express permission by the UN Climate Change secretariat in writing.
42. The UN Climate Change secretariat and the signatories of the Sports for Climate Action Initiative may not use the name, brand or logo of any of the other signatories without express permission.
43. The UN Climate change will deploy its existing Global Climate Action platforms such as [NAZCA](#), [Climate Neutral Now](#), and the [Momentum for Change](#) initiative to inspire action, track progress and/or highlight success and provide recognition.
44. The UN Climate Change secretariat will facilitate the work by:
  - (a) Supporting the delivery of the working groups goals as per UN Climate Change's existing resources and mandates;
  - (b) Maintaining a list of signatories and their participation in working groups;
  - (c) Facilitating regular online calls and meetings as may be necessary among signatories;
  - (d) Organizing an annual face-to-face meeting with all signatories to take stock of progress; share lessons learned, and discuss and agree on work to be done in the next year. Leads of the working groups will be invited to host the meeting on a rotational basis and attendees will bear their own costs of attendance;
  - (e) Coordinating external communication activities by the signatories;
  - (f) Presenting and explaining the work of the signatories to other entities and organizations, as needed, to facilitate delivery of work by the signatories.
45. The International Olympic Committee will facilitate the work by:
  - (a) Creating and publishing joint guidelines together with the UN Climate Change to support and facilitate the signatories in understanding and implementing the guiding principles.
46. In order to ensure the quality and credibility of the work of the signatories of the Sports for Climate Action Initiative, the UN Climate Change secretariat, based on consultations with signatories, may exclude an organization from the list of signatories if its sincerity in participation or ability to participate is a cause for concern.
47. The Signatories of the Sports for Climate Action Initiative shall take into due account all regulations applicable to them that relate to antitrust or anticompetitive behaviours and shall refrain from any such behaviours during or in relation to their participation in the Sports for Climate Action meetings, events and related activities.



## 4. Sports for Climate Action Declaration

Recognizing that:

- the Paris Agreement represents a global response to the scientific consensus that human activity is causing global average temperatures to rise at unprecedented rates;
- the goals agreed in the Paris Agreement translate to reaching climate neutrality in the second half of the twenty-first century. Sports organizations need to take an active part in contributing to the realization of these goals.
- delivering on the climate agenda also contributes to the broader Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development,
- all sports organisations, regardless of size or geography, have opportunities to take actions that will result in a measurable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions;
- actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions are consistent have multiple synergies and co-benefits with, among other things, expanding economic opportunity and securing livelihoods, using resources more efficiently, driving economic competitiveness and innovation, strengthening environmental, social and economic resilience in the face of increasing climate impacts;
- sports have a unique power to inspire a wider societal change that embraces a low-carbon future and keeps the planet safe for future generations.

We, the signatories to the Sports for Climate Action Initiative support the goals of the Paris Agreement in limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and affirm our commitment on behalf of our organizations to:

1. Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility;
2. Reduce overall climate impact;
3. Educate for climate action;
4. Promote sustainable and responsible consumption;
5. Advocate for climate action through communication.