

# Climate vulnerable nations appeal for harder UN goal

November 11 2015, by Karl Malakunas

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In this photograph taken on November 11, 2015 and released by United Nations Development Programme and Climate Vulnerable Forum, participants to the climate forum pose for photographs at Malacanang palace in Manila

A coalition of nations most at risk from climate change appealed Wednesday for a crucial UN summit to enshrine a much tougher target on global warming, warning that more than one billion lives were at stake.

Members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum also pledged to do more

themselves to contain global warming, aiming to inspire and challenge powerful countries ahead of the Paris summit starting in less than three weeks.

Following a meeting in the Philippine capital of Manila, the group issued a declaration calling for a Paris accord to cement a target of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.

The 195-nation UN climate group had previously adopted a goal of limiting global warming to 2 C, which scientists say is the threshold to avoid the most catastrophic consequences.

But that would still leave more than one billion people exposed to rising sea levels and other dire impacts of global warming, according to leaders of the Climate Vulnerable Forum.

"Our vulnerable nations are the ground zero in the global struggle against [climate change](#)," Joyceline Goco, a co-chair of the forum from the Philippines, said after the three-day event.

"Meeting here in Manila we shine a light on the grave dangers we face but also our achievements in addressing climate change and the benefits this is bringing us."

Ahead of Paris, pledges by nations to curb the greenhouse [gas emissions](#) that cause [global warming](#) would still see temperatures rise by about 3 C, according to a range of studies.



Saleemul Huq, senior fellow at the Institute for Environment and Development, is seen during an interview with AFP on the sidelines of a climate change forum in Manila on November 10, 2015

Many nations are reluctant to do more because of the short-term economic benefits of relying on fossil fuels for energy, cutting down rainforests or other actions that lead to [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

## **Moral force**

"We are getting a lot of pushback on sticking to the 1.5 degrees from many countries who feel it is unfeasible," Saleemul Huq, chair of the forum's expert advisor's group, told AFP on the sidelines of the Manila meeting.

"But we must stick to it because it is the moral thing to do. Adopting a

two degree long-term goal would be to accept that we are not able to protect the poor people in the poor countries, and we are writing them off."

Until this week the Climate Vulnerable Forum was a grouping of 20 nations, including the Philippines, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Kiribati, Maldives, Rwanda and Barbados.

The group announced on Wednesday it had 23 new members, from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific, representing more than one billion people.

In their declaration, the members pledged to lead by example by continuing to strive to curb their own emissions, even though they have far less resources to do so than developed countries.

They also outlined ways to work together to find solutions, such as with their own financing programmes, rather than just wait for help from developed nations.

Costa Rica, a small Central American nation with a population of fewer than five million people, has even pledged to go carbon neutral by 2021.

"They are looking to use that power of inspiration, and that power of demonstration," Matthew McKinnon, a United Nations Development Programme adviser to the forum, told AFP.

McKinnon cited efforts by forum member Bangladesh to install [solar power](#) to four million homes in recent years, with a target of seven million by 2017.

"If, in a matter of years, you can have 30 to 40 million people with solar power in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in Asia, any country

can do this," he said.

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