

THE NGO CLIMATE COMPACT

Commitments toward Environmental Action and Sustainability 2020-2022

The “NGO Climate Compact: Commitments toward Environmental Action and Sustainability” represents a pledge by the InterAction community, the largest alliance of U.S.-based international NGOs, to urgently work to address climate change and our recognition that the environment is central to achieving our missions to serve the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people.

Consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), U.N. Paris Agreement on Climate Change, U.N. Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, U.S. Global Change Research Program recommendations, and calls by the broader public movement on climate action and justice, this compact is our promise to advance the global agenda to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and alleviate the effects of climate change on people with the least power and fewest resources.

The purpose of this compact is to make a clear, collective statement about the direction we need to go to address climate change and to codify commitments in four key areas: 1) education and advocacy, 2) cross-sectoral programs, 3) internal operations at headquarters and field offices, and 4) learning.

This compact is an initial, two-year commitment to begin developing joint solutions and taking individual organizational actions to address climate change. To keep up with the rate of change needed and continue to advance this agenda, our community will report annually to InterAction on steps taken to implement the compact’s actions and review these commitments at the end of 2022 to continue to advance this agenda. This approach allows for flexible, phased implementation at the organizational level, taking local context and operational realities into consideration.

We, the CEOs of InterAction Member NGOs, acknowledge the following principles:

- ▶ As indicated by the long-standing scientific study of our planet’s climate system, and most recently verified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and broad consensus among leading scientific experts from around the world, **measurable changes in the Earth’s climate are a result of human behavior**, including but not limited to the burning of fossil fuels and the clearing of land and biodiversity for energy generation, agriculture, heavy industry, and related activities.
- ▶ **The people with the fewest resources and power globally are disproportionately bearing the burden of this crisis and, if left unsupported, will continue to do so.** As the intensity, unpredictability, and frequency of extreme weather events, forced displacement and migration, disruptions in food systems and livelihoods, insidious pandemics, political violence and armed conflict, and poor air quality rapidly increase as a result of climate change, the world’s most vulnerable people are the first and hardest hit. They are also the least responsible for the problem at hand. The effects of climate change will continue to play out according to these existing, unequal distributions of power and resources unless concerted actions are taken. We also recognize that women and girls experience elevated exposure to climate change risks, suggesting that our efforts must be gender-aware.

- ▶ **We must move faster and take bolder action than we ever have before.** With 2030 as the target for our Global Goals, we must make unprecedented changes over the next ten years to help keep the Earth's average temperature increase at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius. According to the IPCC, in some parts of the world, the Earth's temperature has already warmed by more than 2 degrees Celsius. An increase in the average temperature of 2 degrees Celsius or above will have catastrophic results. The IPCC predicts that an increase of 4 degrees Celsius or more would make parts of the Earth largely uninhabitable.
- ▶ **Climate change is directly affecting the work of our organizations across all specializations within the development and humanitarian field.** It is also affecting the networks of partners, donors, staff, and communities that enable our work. With a vast presence in developing and crisis-affected countries, our organizations are already experiencing the consequences of climate change and are grappling with its growing humanitarian impacts. In response, we must act together. Addressing climate change requires cross-sectoral and collective action, not only by environmental organizations but by all organizations focused on improving human wellbeing.
- ▶ Not only is climate change presently affecting the communities that NGOs serve, but it also **threatens previous gains in human development and poverty eradication.**
- ▶ **Protecting and regenerating biodiversity are critical** to decelerating climate change, mitigating its effects on life, and helping affected communities adapt to their new reality.
- ▶ **We have a responsibility to use our voice, power, and moral authority to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate the harm to communities with which we work, increase their resilience and adaptive capacity, and influence others to do the same.** As adults, we also have a distinct obligation to pass on a healthier planet to the children who will inherit it. The future success and reputation of the international development and humanitarian community depends on our collective ability to do so.
- ▶ **Iterative learning is crucial to collectively tackle a problem of this size, scope, and urgency.** We are committed to decisive action while learning alongside the people we serve, peers, and partners because the problem is too urgent and vital to wait.
- ▶ To align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the increase in average global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and to credibly and effectively convince others to follow, **our organization must initiate and accelerate change on multiple fronts now**, regardless of where we are in our development on this issue.

We, the undersigned, commit to taking the following actions by the end of 2022:

Education and Advocacy

- ▶ Improve understanding among our constituents, donors, vendors, corporate partners, and staff of the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity, and how they connect to development and humanitarian issues;
- ▶ Strategically work to make adaptation to and mitigation of climate change public policy priorities within our organization's relevant areas of influence locally, nationally, and internationally;

- ▶ Ensure that the voices of affected communities and the local institutions that serve them are represented in policy decisions.

Programs

- ▶ Strengthen our organizations' technical expertise in the existing approaches, tools, and processes to run climate-aware, environmentally sustainable programs;
- ▶ Begin mainstreaming climate and environmental considerations into all stages of programs to reduce our emissions and any environmental degradation resulting from our work; in the process, maximize the resilience and adaptation of affected communities;
- ▶ Ensure that the voices from those communities, especially women, youth, and other marginalized groups, are informing and benefitting from that process.

Internal Operations

- ▶ Assess the major categories and sources of greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, and waste at our organization's headquarters, country offices, and field offices; consider conducting a baseline study of those aspects using the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol or other widely recognized industry standards;
- ▶ Based on that assessment, propose actions that our organization will take to reduce emissions and waste, and begin implementing them;
- ▶ Start engaging our Board of Directors in an exploration of our organization's relationships to the fossil fuel industry and other industries that generate large-scale negative impacts (e.g., deforestation, pollution) on the environment.

Learning

- ▶ Learn about and debate new approaches, tools, and processes in international development and humanitarian work to address climate change and environmental degradation.