

# What Experts Say We Need To Do in 2020

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Decades of failure to take action to prevent climate change have resulted in a new task for governments — adapting to climate change.

Last year, global average temperatures were confirmed to be 1.9 degrees Fahrenheit higher than pre-industrial averages. On a given day, a 2-degree change in temperature is barely noticeable; but such a change in the global average temperature has huge consequences that nations are already beginning to feel.

Only last year was a [Global Commission on Adaptation](#) was formed to demonstrate to policymakers that proactive adaptation to climate change is not only necessary but also improves human well-being and makes better economic sense than continuing to deal with the consequences as they come.

## Global Commission on Adaptation

In September 2019, the Commission, led by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Co-Chair Bill Gates, and World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva, published [their report](#). The Global Commission on Adaptation reported on the costs and benefits of adaptation in five significant categories: weather warning systems, infrastructure, dry-land farming, mangrove protection, and water management. They found that adaptive changes to these categories would require a [\\$1.8 trillion investment by 2030](#). But the the yield on that tremendous investment would be \$7.1 trillion in triple dividends.

## Triple Dividends

Triple dividends refers to the more comprehensive returns in a cost-benefit analysis that combine avoided losses, economic benefits, and social/environmental benefits.

For an example of avoided losses, early warning systems save lives and assets worth at least 10 times their cost. Just 24 hours warning of an approaching severe weather event can reduce damamust-do-2020ge by 30 percent. An \$800 million expenditure on such warning systems in developing countries would avoid losses of \$3-16 billion per year.

Mangrove protection is a powerful example of the synergy between climate change prevention and climate change adaptation. Already an environmental goal, [mangrove protection](#) also has an outsized adaptation benefit, too. It provides more than \$80 billion per year in avoided losses from coastal flooding. It provides the economic benefits of mangrove-related fisheries and forestry. And it provides the social/environmental benefits of recreation and protecting 18 million people from displacement by flooding. The triple dividends from mangrove preservation and restoration are up to 10 times the costs.

## Year of Action

According to the Commission, the actions required to adapt to climate change will take years or even decades to implement. But the next 15 months are critical. The Commission championed a set of “[Action Tracks](#)” at the UN [Climate Action Summit](#) in September 2019 with the goal of seeing mobilization in time for the Climate Adaptation Summit in the Netherlands in October 2020. The intervening months make 2020 the “Year of Action” on climate adaptation. Each Action Track identifies a set of projects that the Commission will undertake in partnership with international nonprofits and development agencies.

## Action Tracks

### Finance and Investment

Working with global finance institutions, the Commission will develop climate risk assessment and resource allocation methodologies, such as climate-screening government expenditures and making climate risks more explicit to private investors.

### Food Security and Agriculture

The Commission will work to embed climate change into the 10-year strategy of global agricultural innovation network CGIAR. It will support accelerated implementation of the [CGIAR Two Degree Initiative](#) to help [small-scale food producers](#) around the globe adapt to weather extremes and develop along a low-emissions pathway. Expanding small-scale food producers’ access to insurance, finance, markets, adaptive technologies, and agroecological practices will build resilience.

### Nature-Based Solutions

Harnessing nature’s own power to make people, places, and ecosystems more resilient to climate change is a useful concept. But it is a little less straightforward in implementation. In practice, it means supporting participating nations (Canada appears to be a leader on this front) in the development of environmental policies. And it means supporting cities in those nations that are developing resilience projects.

### Water

The Netherlands is heavily involved in plans on this Action Track to protect freshwater resources. The global Resilient Basins Initiative will support the planning and financing of climate adaptation measures at the watershed level. Urban water resilience is another focus, with the Commission and its partners supporting cities to diagnose water risks and to redesign their [water systems](#) for resilience through diversified supply, reuse, and recycling.

### Resilient Cities

With the Coalition on Urban Transitions, the Commission will develop the business

case for investing in city-level resilience. They will use this to convince governments to increase financing for adaptation projects in developing countries. To ensure that the world's poor are not left behind as cities adapt, they will contribute to a global analysis identifying at-risk communities (including informal settlements). The resulting hot-spot maps will be used to prioritize projects.

## **Locally Led Action**

People on the front lines are often best at developing solutions but lack access to the resources to implement those solutions. The Commission calls for significant increases in funding for local governments, community-based organizations, and others working on adaptation at the local level. They plan to work with national governments and other partners to scale up locally led adaptations.

## **Infrastructure**

Climate resilience needs to be integrated into all infrastructure systems throughout their entire life cycles. The Commission plans to work with its partners to bring sustainable design solutions into the mainstream and to leverage international best practices by tailoring them to local conditions. With international risk and financing organizations, the Commission will expand existing disaster risk finance and insurance programs for infrastructure.

## **Preventing Disasters**

It is too late to prevent the climate change-induced extreme weather events that will occur in the coming years. But it is not too late to prevent them from becoming disasters by leveraging the existing global architecture for disaster risk management. Using the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, The Commission will work to rapidly increase investment in early warning systems; expand forecast-based financing and action in the humanitarian sector; and partner with global relief organizations to strengthen protection systems and disaster management policies.

## **Climate Action**

It is heartening to learn that world leaders are taking climate change adaptation seriously. And it's good to know there are economically viable strategies for shielding people from the worst effects of climate change. But it is hard to imagine that the cost-benefit analysis for avoiding disaster would be less efficient. Let's hope that as governments adapt to longer-term thinking, they also begin to understand the benefits of prevention.

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