

Climate Change Jargon Buster

Climate change mitigation (legal definition [here](#))

Climate change mitigation consists of actions that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by removing their sources (e.g. finding clean sources of electricity) or enhancing the sinks which store them (e.g. oceans, forests and soil). See this term in the news - [Climate mitigation can support growth in developing countries](#)

Climate change adaptation (legal definition [here](#))

Climate change adaptation means adjusting to actual or expected future climate. Adaptation helps reduce the negative consequences of climate change and take advantages of new opportunities. See this term in the news - [Airlines' concerns grow of global tax support](#)

Mitigation hierarchy (definition [here](#) (p.10))

In relation to climate change, mitigation hierarchy means that an organisation first strives to reduce its GHG emissions and only then offsets unavoidable residual GHG emissions. The highest climate ambition requires an organisation to revise this approach over time with a view to reducing more and offsetting less. The mitigation hierarchy is also used in biodiversity to outline a set of sequential steps (avoid – minimise – restore - offset) to help development projects reduce their environmental impact and prevent biodiversity loss. See this term in the news - [EU plans certification scheme for carbon dioxide removals](#)

Residual emissions (legal definition [here](#))

Residual GHG emissions are those that are left after an organisation has striven to first reduce its GHG emissions in line with mitigation hierarchy. To achieve net zero GHG emissions, an organisation must offset its residual emissions through a variety of means, such as purchasing carbon credits. See this term in the news - [International Energy Agency commits to become net zero by 2024](#)

Carbon offsetting (legal definition [here](#))

Carbon offsetting is a way an organisation compensates its GHG emissions by purchasing the equivalent volume of third party's carbon credits, which are independently verified emissions reductions. These payments contribute to projects which aim to mitigate global GHG emissions. See this term in the news - [Murdoch plans environmental push](#)

Carbon insetting (legal definition [here](#))

Carbon insetting is a way an organisation offset its GHG emissions through a carbon offset project which is directly related to its business. This can be related through geography, production or commodity. See this term in the news - [Nestlé to spend €3bn in 5 years on climate measures](#)

Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions (legal definition [here](#))

Scopes 1, 2 and 3 is a way of categorising the different kinds of GHG emissions that an organisation generates in its own operations, based on the accounting standard called "GHG Protocol". Scope 1 covers GHG emissions that an organisation generates directly from assets under its ownership or control. Scope 2 covers GHG emissions an organisation generates indirectly from using electricity made by another company. Scope 3 covers GHG emissions that are an indirect consequence of the organisation's activities, which are not classified as Scope 2 emissions and occur up and down the organisation's value chain. See this term in the news - [Companies grapple with Scope 3 emissions climate challenge](#)

Carbon footprint (legal definition [here](#))

A carbon footprint is the total GHG emissions caused by an individual, event, organisation, service, country or product, expressed as carbon dioxide equivalent. See this term in the news - [Brussels unveils sweeping plan to reduce Europe's carbon footprint](#)

Carbon dioxide equivalent (legal definition [here](#))

Carbon dioxide equivalent is a scientific measuring unit used to compare the emissions from various GHGs based upon their Global Warming Potential (GWP) and express carbon footprint that consists of different GHGs as a single number. GWP means the ability of the GHG to trap extra heat in the atmosphere over time. The carbon dioxide equivalent index expresses the warming effect of a certain amount of a GHGs over a set period of time (usually 100 years). See this term in the news - [Letter: CO₂ data should reflect population size too](#)

Embodied carbon (legal definition [here](#))

Embodied carbon means the total GHGs produced during the manufacturing of building materials and the construction processes throughout the whole lifecycle of a building or project. This includes GHG emissions caused by extraction, manufacture, transportation and assembly of every element in an asset (cradle-to-factory-and-use). In some cases, it may also include emissions caused by maintenance, replacement, deconstruction, disposal and end-of-life aspects of the goods (cradle-to-grave). See this term in the news - [The dirty secret of so-called 'fossil-fuel free' buildings](#)

Net zero target (legal definition [here](#))

A net zero target is a commitment to reach a situation where the amount of GHGs emitted by country or organisation is equal to the amount of GHGs which are either removed or offset. Net zero target differs from an aim to become carbon neutral in that committing to a net zero target involves taking clear steps to reduce GHGs. Net zero targets are usually set by reference to a historic baseline and a specific date by which the target is to be achieved. See this term in the news - [FTSE 100 bosses urged by UK government to set net zero targets](#)

Carbon neutral (legal definition [here](#))

An organisation is described as carbon neutral if the amount of GHG emissions produced by its activities is the same as the amount it offsets or removes from the atmosphere. See this term in the news - [China's carbon pledge revives hopes of a climate game change](#)

Carbon/ Net negative (legal definition [here](#))

An organisation is described as carbon/ net negative if it offsets or removes from the atmosphere a larger amount of GHG emissions than it generates. See this term in the news - [Microsoft pledges to be carbon negative by 2030](#)

Carbon budget (legal definition [here](#))

A carbon budget provides a cap on the total GHG emissions for a set period of time. It is typically used as a tool by countries to manage and reduce their carbon footprints. See this term in the news - [Path to net zero put heavy burden on UK consumers](#)

Climate justice (more details [here](#))

Climate justice is a term used to frame climate change as an ethical, social and political issue, rather than a purely environmental issue. The term acknowledges that climate change can have different social, economic and public health impacts on underprivileged populations and the youth. Climate justice demands that solutions to climate change should create a fairer, more just and more equal world. See this term in the news - [Constitutional court strikes down German climate law](#)

Greenwashing (more details [here](#))

Greenwashing is a form of disinformation spread by an organisation without supporting evidence to persuade the public that the organisation's products, aims and policies are environmentally responsible. Companies engage in this marketing strategy because being seen as ethical drives profitability. See this term in the news - [PwC advised DWS on sustainability while investigating greenwashing claims](#)

Paris Agreement (full text [here](#))

The 2015 Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. See this term in the news - [Climate funds often fall short of Paris goals](#)

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) (more details [here](#))

The signatory countries of the Paris Agreement submit NDCs – the efforts they commit to make to reduce national GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change – and update these every five years. The Paris Agreement requires that NDCs become progressively more ambitious over time. See this term in the news - [Climate change: what is the UK's NDC and why is it important?](#)

For more details on climate change terms, please see [The Chancery Lane Project's Glossary](#), [Race to Zero Lexicon](#), [The Chancery Lane Project's Offset Explainer](#), [Foundations for Science-based Net-Zero Target Setting in the Corporate Sector](#), [The SBTi Net-Zero Corporate Manual](#)