alpenkonvention • convention alpine
convenzione delle alpi • alpska konvencija

Glossary of key terms

Adaptation: Adaptation is an adjustment in natural or human systems in reaction to a new or changing environment. In the climate change context, adaptation refers to the category of actions taken by private or public persons that can prevent or reduce the negative impacts of climate change and/or build on the positive impacts. For example, improving infrastructure maintenance to avoid natural hazards is a human adaptation response to permafrost melting.

Adaptive capacity: the general ability of institutions, systems and individuals to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences.

Biodiversity: is a contraction of two words biological and diversity, referring to the diversity of life on earth. It is defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources and the ecological complexes of which they are part. Biodiversity includes diversity within species, between species and between ecosystems.

Carbon Capture or Carbon Sequestration: The ability of forests or other natural systems to "sink" or store carbon, thereby preventing it from being collected in the atmosphere as GHG. Forests absorb carbon when they break down CO2 during photosynthesis. (Source: The Pacific Forest Trust)

Carbon-neutral/ Climate-neutral: Being **carbon neutral**, or having a **net zero carbon footprint**, refers to the ideal objective of achieving net zero carbon emissions in human activities by balancing a measured amount of carbon dioxide (CO_2) released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset. The **carbon neutral concept** may be extended to include other greenhouse gases (GHG) measured in terms of their carbon dioxide equivalence –the impact a GHG has on the atmosphere expressed in the equivalent amount of CO_2. The term **climate neutral** is thus used to reflect the fact that not only CO_2 emissions are driving climate change, and encompasses other greenhouse gases. However, it must be said that the definition is also subject to many variations.

Climate: The average weather for a particular region and time period.

Climate change: The long-term fluctuations in temperature, precipitation, wind, and all other aspects of the Earth's climate. It is also defined by the United Nations Convention on Climate Change as "change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods." (Source: Greenfacts Glossary)

Co2 – Carbon Dioxide

Ecosystem Services: refer to the multitude of resources and benefic processes that are supplied by natural ecosystems and which profit to human life and activities (for example they include products such as clean drinking water, food, and processes such as the regulation of climate or the nutrient cycles).

ECCP- European Climate Change Program: The goal of the first ECCP (2000-2004) was to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol. The second ECCP (2005-ongoing), was launched as a major stakeholder experience, and aims to finds further cost-effective options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in synergy with the EU's 'Lisbon strategy' for increasing economic growth and job creation.

Global Warming: the overall trend to a warmer climate for the planet. According to the IPCC, the Earth's atmosphere has warmed up by 0,74°C in the last 100 years. Most climate change scientists think increase GHG emissions during this period led to the enhanced greenhouse effect which has in turn led to global warming.

GHG: Green House Gases

GreenHouse Gases: Greenhouse gases are those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and emit radiation. This property causes the greenhouse effect. Include water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. (Source: IPCC Glossary)

Green House emissions: The release of substances that can be transformed into GHG and/or direct release of GHG in the atmosphere.

Fossil Fuel: A general term for buried combustible geologic deposits of organic materials, formed from decayed plants and animals that have been converted to crude oil, coal, natural gas, or heavy oils by exposure to heat and pressure in the Earth's crust over hundreds of millions of years. (Source: US EPA Glossary of Climate Change terms)

IPCC: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the scientific body established by the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization to collect and synthesize the world's best research on climate change. Their more recent work is the Fourth Assessment Report, which won the Nobel Prize. All reports, including the executive summary for policymakers can be found at www.ipcc.ch.

Mitigation: In the context of climate change, mitigation refers to those measures that seek to avoid, reduce or delay global warming by reducing GHG Emissions. For example, improving the isolation of a house is one way to mitigate climate change. (Source: Wikipedia)

Permafrost: The layer of permanently frozen soil or bedrock that underlies the surface of the earth in certain regions of the world, in which the temperature has been below freezing continuously from a few to a several thousands of years.

Renewable energy: energy generated from natural resources—such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal heat—which are renewable (naturally replenished), i.e. renewed on an ongoing basis through natural processes. Examples include the wind, the sun, wood, flowing water, or relatively warm ground, air or water temperatures.

Soft mobility: refers to a new approach to mobility, multiplying initiatives to reduce the use of private vehicles, CO2 emissions and to improve the environment. In the Tourism sector, it may relate to car free arrival, departure and car-free holiday.