

Oxford Climate Policy Blog

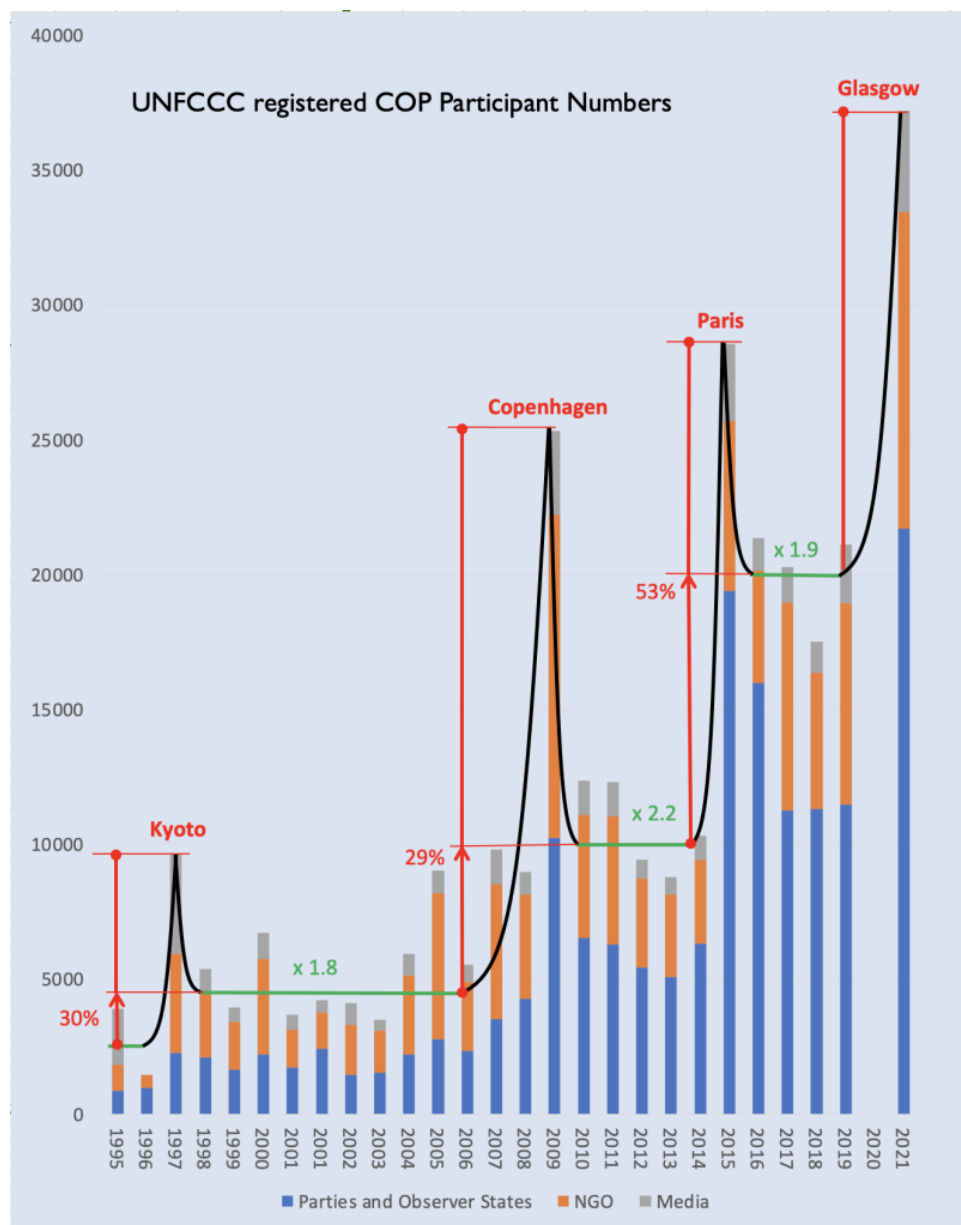
Initiating debates on international climate policy

Enough with the Madness!

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Benito Müller

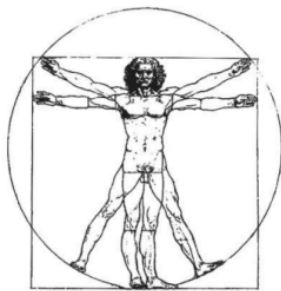
My favourite simile for the negotiation process is that of a roving village of about 5000 people, with an ever increasing number of tourists, which in Glasgow has reached an all-time high of over 30'000.



The figure above is an extension of figure in the Executive Summary of a recent ecbi Policy Report on [Future Arrangement for Intergovernmental Meetings under the UNFCCC](#). This Report proposes that COP sessions (COPs) should be slimmed-down in size considerably to deal with technical matters related to implementation. Political elements, meanwhile, can be dealt with in processes outside the COPs that have already been established to support implementation on the ground – such as the [Climate Action](#) agenda, the [Marrakech Partnership](#), the [Regional Climate Weeks](#), and the technical meetings and workshops that support countries in formulating and implementing policies and measures in support of climate ambition.

To do justice to the increasing importance of High-Level Segments and non-state actor targeted activities, the Report proposes a new dedicated event: an annual high-level **Global Climate Action Week** (GCAW), organized by the UNFCCC Secretariat to be settled in Geneva, the location of one of the UN Headquarters.

The Report concedes there may be occasions “for instance, when Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are submitted or communicated, where *highest*-level participation could be desirable as part of an ‘NDC-submission High-Level Segment’ during the GCAW. This could be done as **Climate Ambition Summits**, such as the [one co-convened on 12 December 2020](#) by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy.”



Quo Vadis COP?

Future Arrangements for Intergovernmental Meetings under the UNFCCC – Settled and Fit for Purpose

To be clear, the numbers used in the above figure are those available in the relevant participant lists, which for Glasgow extended to over 1600 pages! It is not completely clear to what extent these correspond to actual (physical) attendance figures, in particular since in Glasgow, there was also the option of purely virtual attendance.

Keeping this in mind, it does however stand to reason that the [physical presence of 120 world leaders](#) did have an effect on the (physical) participant numbers.

Participation statistics

	<i>States/organizations</i>	<i>Registered participants</i>
Parties	196	21 688
Observer States	1	7
Total Parties + observer States	197	21 695
United Nations Secretariat units and bodies	32	667
Specialized agencies and related organizations	22	539
Intergovernmental organizations	92	1 093
Non-governmental organizations	1 823	11 734
Total observer organizations	1 969	14 033
Media	2 806	3 781
Total participation	4 972	39 509

[COP 26 Participant figures](#)

As someone who attends the COP sessions to meet friends from the roaming village, COP 26 was a doubly frustrating experience: not only was the village swamped with tourists, but it was nigh impossible to recognise anyone in the mass of people due to the covid masks.

When I therefore read that the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#), “invites the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene world leaders in 2023 to consider ambition to 2030”[para. 86] I immediately thought of the Global Climate Change Summits proposed in the ecbi Policy Report! So there is a genuine chance of starting to redress the otherwise unsustainable growth in COP participant numbers if the UN Secretary-General were to convene his summit as part of a Global Climate Action week in Geneva, in partnership with the COP 27 and COP 28 Presidencies as venue for (some if not all of) the ‘Green Zone’ climate action events.