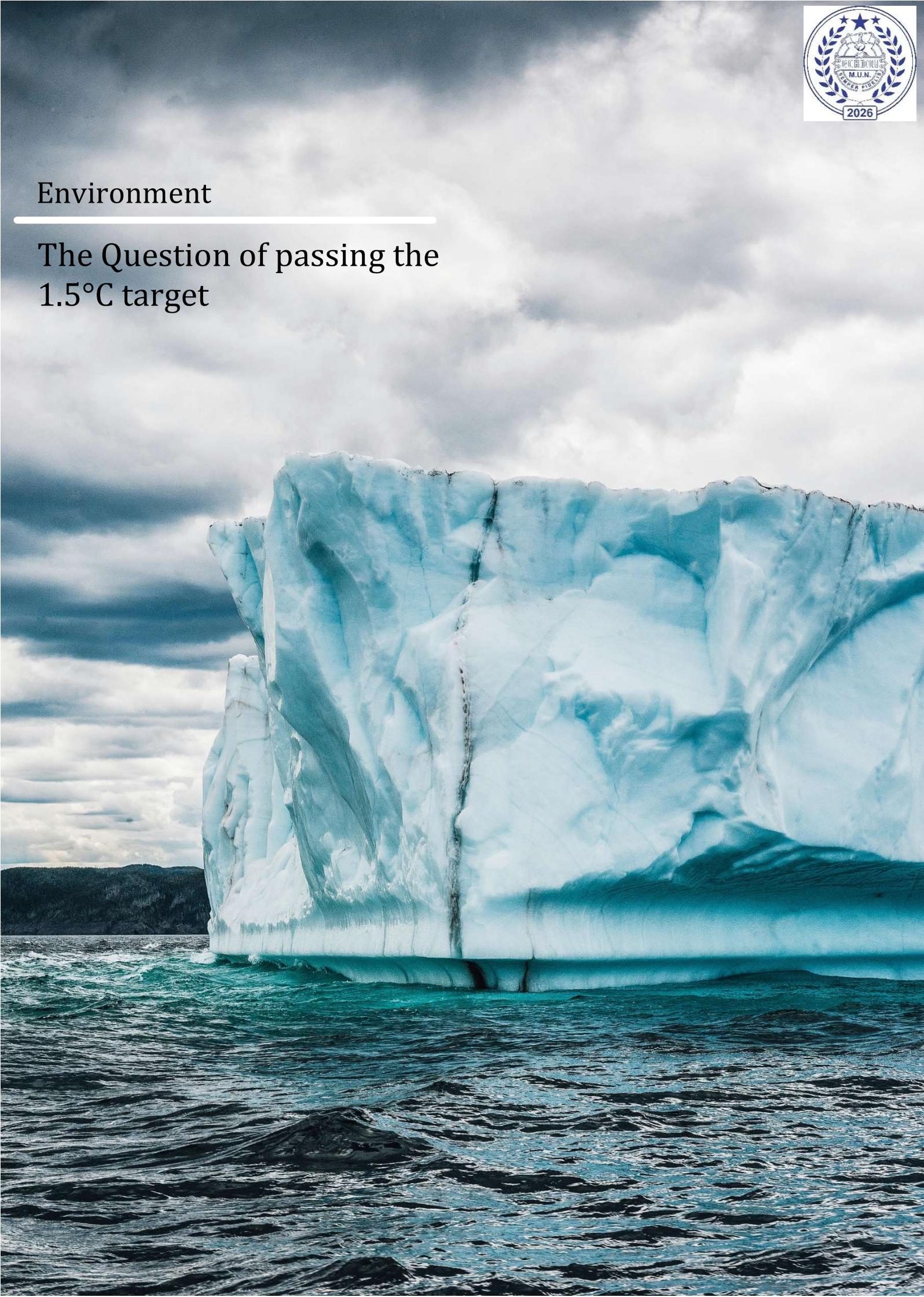




Environment

The Question of passing the 1.5°C target



Committee: Environment

Topic: The Question of passing the 1.5°C target

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Summary

'The 1.5°C target' is the global goal to stop the planet from warming more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels on a 20-year average.

It became internationally recognised in the **Paris Agreement (2015)**, where most nations agreed to try to keep global warming below this limit.

Scientists warn that going past 1.5°C would lead to far more dangerous climate impacts, including extreme heat, rising sea levels, stronger storms, and major threats to ecosystems.

Recent data shows the world is already extremely close to this threshold. In 2024, the global average temperature was above 1.5°C for an entire year for the first time, and CO2 levels are the highest they have been in around two million years.

If the world passes the 1.5°C target, it means it has failed to limit global warming, which would have grave consequences for people, the environment, and the future.

Origins of this target:

- The idea of a 1.5°C limit came from scientific research as well as pressure from **small island nations**, who argued that a 2°C limit would threaten their survival.
- It became official at **COP21** with the Paris Agreement.
- The **IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C (2018)** explained why this target is so vital and what happens if we exceed it.



Why passing the target is so important:

Human health and safety is one of the many prominent reasons. Increased frequency of heatwaves, droughts, and floods can be detrimental to human health and safety, with the frequent destruction of property and loss of life worldwide where these issues are worse.



Ecosystems such as coral reefs, Arctic sea ice, and countless vulnerable species face a serious risk of collapse if global temperatures rise beyond 1.5°C. These ecosystems and species would find it extremely difficult to recover, as their habitats would be irreversibly damaged.

Climate change also places a growing financial strain on economies around the world. As extreme weather events become more common and intense, countries are forced to spend increasing amounts of money on disaster response, rebuilding infrastructure, protecting agriculture, and supporting affected communities, which is difficult for LEDCs.

Poorer countries and small island nations are hit the hardest, even though they contribute the least to global emissions. These nations often lack the resources to adapt to rising sea levels, stronger storms, and changing weather patterns, making the impacts of climate change especially unfair and unequal.

Current climate plans and pledges are not strong enough to keep global warming below the 1.5°C limit. Without much faster and more ambitious action, the world is likely to exceed this threshold, making it essential for countries to strengthen their commitments and implement real, immediate change.

Who the topic effects:

- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) - Threatened by sea-level rise, agricultural uncertainty, and loss of aquatic life for food and livelihoods.
- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Limited resources to adapt to the changing conditions and cannot afford the infrastructure repairs.
- Humanity - Food, health, and economic impacts.
- Future generations - who will face long-term consequences which will be even harder, if not impossible, to solve.

Previous attempts to fix the problem:

- The Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, created a global commitment for countries to work together to limit global warming.
- Countries have also developed Nationally Determined Contributions, which outline their individual climate plans and targets.
- IPCC reports provide scientific guidance on how the world can stay below the 1.5°C limit. There has been major growth in renewable energy, with solar, wind, and other clean technologies expanding rapidly.
- Climate finance has been introduced to help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Many nations have also set their own net-zero targets, aiming to balance their emissions by the middle of the century.

Key definitions

1.5°C Target	The goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.
Paris Agreement	2015 climate treaty signed by most countries (Iran, Libya, and Yemen have not yet signed. The US withdrew from the agreement in 2020)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN scientific body assessing science of climate change.)
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contribution (Countries' climate action plans under Paris Agreement)
Mitigation	Reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
Adaptation	Preparing for climate impacts.
SIDS	Small Island Developing States.
Net-zero	Balancing emissions with removals.
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change (primary international treaty and UN body guiding global action against climate change)

Major countries / organisations involved:

- **United States** - Major emitter with global influence.
- **China** - World's largest current emitter.

- **India** - Rapidly developing and increasing emissions.
 - **France** - Host of COP21 and active in climate diplomacy.
 - **Russia** - Major fossil-fuel exporter.
 - **Small Island States (SIDs)** - Strongest supporters of the 1.5°C limit.
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- **IPCC** - Provides scientific evidence for climate change.
 - **UNFCCC** - Runs global climate negotiations.
 - **Green Climate Fund** - Supports climate finance.
 - **Environmental NGOs** - Greenpeace, WWF, etc.

Timeline of key events:

1850 – 1900	Pre-industrial temperature baseline
1980s-2000s	Growing scientific agreement to Climate change
2009	Copenhagen Accord mentions 2°C limit
2015	Paris Agreement adopts 1.5°C target.
2018	IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C.
2024	First full year above 1.5°C.
2025	Renewed debate on whether the target is still achievable.