

Kyoto Protocol (1997) versus Paris Agreement (2015)

Kyoto Protocol (1997)

The **Kyoto Protocol** was adopted in **Kyoto, Japan, on December 11, 1997** under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It entered into force in 2005. Its key feature was that it imposed **legally binding greenhouse gas reduction targets on developed countries**. The agreement was based on the principle that industrialized nations bear greater responsibility for historical emissions.

Key points:

- Applied mainly to developed countries.
- First commitment period: **2008-2012**.
- Required participating industrialized countries to reduce emissions by an average of about **5% below 1990 levels**.
- Did **not** establish a specific global temperature target.

The 1.5°C Goal (Paris Agreement, 2015)

The **1.5°C goal** emerged with the **Paris Agreement**, adopted in 2015. The agreement's objective is to:

Hold the increase in global average temperature to **well below 2°C** above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit warming to **1.5°C**.

The 1.5°C threshold is measured relative to **1850-1900 pre-industrial temperatures**. Scientists concluded that the impacts of climate change become substantially more severe beyond this level of warming.

Kyoto vs. Paris (1.5°C Goal)

Kyoto Protocol	Paris Agreement
Adopted 1997	Adopted 2015

Binding emission targets for developed countries only	Climate commitments from all countries
Focused on emission reductions	Focused on limiting global warming
No explicit temperature target	Pursues 1.5°C and well below 2°C
Ran through commitment periods ending in 2020	Ongoing framework with 5-year updates

Why 1.5°C Matters

The United Nations notes that every fraction of a degree matters. Compared with 2°C of warming, limiting warming to 1.5°C is expected to reduce risks from:

- Heat waves
- Droughts
- Heavy rainfall and flooding
- Sea-level rise
- Ecosystem and species loss

Current Status

The Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target remains the benchmark for international climate policy. Recent UN assessments indicate that keeping warming below 1.5°C without any temporary overshoot has become increasingly difficult, but limiting the amount and duration of any overshoot is still considered important for reducing long-term climate impacts.

In short: **Kyoto was the first major treaty requiring emissions cuts from developed countries, while the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C goal is the broader global objective aimed at limiting the amount of warming itself.**

Source: Microsoft Copilot AI - October 2026