

SUSTAINABILITY

Fashion labels look to COP26 for climate change actions, solutions

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Kering is at the forefront of sustainable luxury. Image courtesy of Kering

By NORA HOWE

As world leaders gather at the [2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP26\)](#), the solutions discussed to cut global carbon emissions will affect the luxury sector, particularly fashion.

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According to environmental organization [Stand.earth](#), fashion is responsible for 5 to 8 percent of climate emissions each year from the use of harmful fossil fuels to power manufacturing and supply chains, which means the industry has a massive role in whether the goals set at COP26 will be achieved. Over the past 18 months, businesses have taken solid steps toward sustainability, but COP26 will likely increase pressure on the industry to adopt more specific solutions beyond supply chain reform.

"There is no viable pathway to net zero emissions that does not involve protecting and restoring nature on an unprecedented scale," said Alok Sharma, president-designate of COP, in a statement.

"If we are serious about holding temperature rises to 1.5 degrees and adapting to the impacts of climate change, we must change the way we look after our land and seas and how we grow our food," he said. "This is also important if we want to protect and restore the world's biodiversity, upon which all life depends.

"At COP26, we will work with partners to take forward action on protecting and restoring forests and critical ecosystems, and we will champion the transition towards sustainable, resilient and nature positive agriculture."

COP26 goals

The climate summit began in Glasgow on Oct. 31, with world leaders, government officials and scientists holding discussions on climate change and solutions the world must adopt to save the planet.

While the 2015 Paris Agreement set a momentous precedent for climate change ([see story](#)), its commitments have not come close to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, and the window for achieving this is closing.

If the world continues based on these targets, warming would reach above 3 degrees by 2100 and bring more catastrophic flooding, forest fires, extreme weather and destruction of species.

The two-week conference is based on four goals: securing global net zero by mid-century and keeping 1.5 degrees within reach; adapting to protect communities and natural habits; mobilizing finance; and working together to deliver solutions.

To mark the beginning of @COP26, @followwestwood has released her Letters to the Earth' film. Vivienne advocates for a land-based economy, by re-wilding; aiming to open up the land corridors for wild-life. Watch the film via <https://t.co/3iyC9hml6t> pic.twitter.com/99kLCIXwxK
BFC (@BFC) November 2, 2021

The U.N. is asking that countries, and their private and public sectors, come forward with 2030 emissions reduction targets that align with its goals, including phasing out the use of coal in manufacturing and supply chains, ending deforestation, accelerating the use of electric vehicles and investing in renewable energy sources.

Additionally, COP26 leaders suggest working together to enable and encourage counties affected by climate change to protect and restore ecosystems, build defenses and resilient infrastructure to avoid the loss or destruction of homes and livelihoods.

To deliver on these initial goals, the conference aims to remind countries of their promises to mobilize at least \$100 billion in climate finance per year by 2030.

The U.N. believes international financial institutions must play their part to release the trillions of dollars in private and public sector finance required to secure global net zero.

Ultimately, companies must be transparent about the risks and opportunities that climate change and the shift to a net zero economy pose to their businesses.

Working together is crucial to achieving these goals, and at COP26, global leaders must collaborate on finalizing the Paris Rulebook, the rules that make the Paris Agreement operational and communicate between governments, businesses and civilians to tackle the climate crisis.

On Nov. 2, more than 100 world leaders committed to ending deforestation by 2030, and the European Union pledged \$1.1 billion to help protect forests around the world, \$290 million of which will be dedicated to the Congo Basin pledge.

A major point of discussion throughout the conference will be whether wealthier countries should pay for damage caused by climate change.



In March 2021, LVMH partnered with UNESCO on a biodiversity strategy and project to combat deforestation in the Amazon. Image credit: LVMH

The Biden administration promised to cut methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030, and launched a new clean energy initiative, "First Movers Coalition," in partnership with the World Economic Forum. The platform aims to build private sector demand to increase innovation in clean energy technology to combat climate change.

Luxury footprint

With fashion's significant impact on the environment and communities around the world, businesses have started making commitments to adopting more sustainable practices, from renewable sourcing to collaborations with intergovernmental organizations like the U.N.

Earlier this year, French luxury conglomerate Kering joined [lablaco's 2021 Circular Fashion Summit](#) (CFS) as an innovation partner, showcasing the group's commitment to sustainability and innovation.

Circular Fashion Summit is a global collective action summit in virtual reality, which took place Oct. 1-3, 2021, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030. As part of this year's innovation hub, the global luxury group featured a selection of startups working on new circular and sustainable materials from their in-house startup incubator, to pilot and bring them to market by committing to CFS goal n2.

Through startups and academia, Kering also develops new sourcing solutions and innovative raw materials with an emphasis on disruptive innovation, using biotechnologies and circular economy principles, such as using recycled fibers to create new garments ([see story](#)).

In 2019, a coalition of 32 fashion companies are joining forces to tackle environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity restoration and ocean protection, seeking to scale up their individual efforts with common objectives.

Led by luxury group Kering, under the mandate of France's President Emmanuel Macron, the Fashion Pact launched during the G7 meeting in August 2019. While each of the pact participants has their own environmental initiatives, the project aims to leverage strength in numbers to enact change through the private sector ([see story](#)).

Membership of the Fashion Pact has now grown to more than 60 brands.

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