

Brazil agrees to cut Amazon deforestation and boost renewables

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Hopes are for a more forested future (*Image: Nelson Luiz Wendell/Getty*)

Brazilian and US presidents Dilma Rousseff and Barack Obama have agreed to work more closely on curbing deforestation of the Amazon and boosting renewable energy. The [announcement](#) was made yesterday, during a visit by Rousseff to the US.

"We have the commitment to come to a zero deforestation, or a zero illegal deforestation, rate between now and 2030," Rousseff told a press conference in Washington DC. "And we also wish to turn the page and engage in a clear-cut reforestation-oriented policy."

Officials said Brazil plans to restore 12 million hectares of forest by 2030.

The two countries also each agreed to raise their contribution of electricity from renewable sources to 20 per cent by 2030. The pledge does not include hydroelectricity, which already supplies most of Brazil's power.

Brazil has already made huge steps in cutting the rate of forest loss, says Doug Boucher of the US-based Union of Concerned Scientists.

Despite [recent wobbles](#), rates of Amazon deforestation remain only a quarter of what they were a decade ago, he says. He puts this down to better law enforcement – particularly with regard to cattle ranches and soy farms, which cause the most damage.

[As a result of the progress so far](#), Brazil has become a global leader in reducing carbon emissions, says Paulo Moutinho of the Amazon Environmental Research Institute in Belém.

The announcement of the new collaboration comes ahead of December's UN climate summit in Paris, France, and the two presidents said they would work towards an ambitious international agreement at the summit on curbing climate change.

They added that Brazil has cut its emissions by around 41 per cent compared with 2005, and the US by about 10 per cent.

China climate change

plan unveiled

By Helen Briggs

BBC Environment correspondent

30 June 2015

From the section

Science & Environment



China - the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases - has announced details of its climate action plan.

The office of Premier Li Keqiang said that emissions "will peak by around 2030" and China would work hard to achieve the target even earlier.

The statement echoes China's declaration last November following a US-China summit.

China's pledge comes ahead of talks late this year in Paris to seek a new global deal on climate change.

The statement, released following a meeting in Paris

between Li and French President Francois Hollande, said China aimed to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 60-65% by 2030, from 2005 levels.

The carbon intensity target builds on a previous plan to cut carbon intensity by 40-45% by 2020.

China also aimed to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy consumption to about 20% by 2030, the statement added.

Beijing previously set a goal of getting around 15% of its energy from clean sources by 2020.

Analysis by the BBC's science editor, David Shukman

This is a significant moment in international climate negotiations. For years China argued that it was too poor and underdeveloped to even consider accepting any obligations to curb its greenhouse gases.

Now we're witnessing the world's largest emitter playing by the UN's rules and promising even deeper cuts than those suggested some months back. For diplomats and ministers hoping to see a meaningful deal at the climate summit in Paris at the end of the year, this will be a welcome step.

The size of cuts, and the timescale, will of course be judged by many as too little and too late. But for anyone who endured the collapse of talks at the Copenhagen summit six years ago, China is playing

a very different and far more constructive game. Will it actually make any difference to global warming? Scientists always say it does not matter to the atmosphere where the emissions come from and China's will continue to rise for the next 15 years or so, and on their already gargantuan scale. And today's announcement does not mean that Chinese use of fossil fuels is coming to an end any time soon. On the same day that China has announced this climate plan it also began construction of a massive pipeline that will bring it a lot of gas from Russia.

National plans

All countries involved in UN climate talks must submit national plans for cutting emissions ahead of the key Paris talks.

China joins several other countries, including the EU, US and Mexico, that have already committed their plans for tackling climate change, formally known by the UN as INDCs (intended nationally determined contribution).

With China's announcement, the world's biggest polluters - China, the US and the EU - have now all detailed their climate plans ahead of the global climate conference.

Commenting on the statement, Li Shuo, climate

analyst for Greenpeace China, said for success in Paris, all players - including China and the EU - needed to up their game.

"Today's pledge must be seen as only the starting point for much more ambitious actions.

"It does not fully reflect the significant energy transition that is already taking place in China.

"Given the dramatic fall in coal consumption, robust renewable energy uptake, and the urgent need to address air pollution, we believe the country can go well beyond what it has proposed today."

Energy transition

China's new climate plan sends a strong message to other countries to do more on climate ahead of this year's negotiations for a new global climate deal, said WWF.

Samantha Smith, global climate leader at WWF, said China was the first major developing country emitter to set a total emissions peak target.

"In doing so, China has committed to both global climate security and to a transformational energy transition at home," she said.

"We emphasise the importance of the fact that China has made commitments beyond its responsibility as a developing country. But we hope that China will continue to find ways to reduce its emissions, which will in turn drive global markets for renewable energy

and energy efficiency."

On Monday, at talks in Brussels with EU leaders, the Chinese Premier said the country was seeking a fair, global system to tackle climate change.

China will work with the international community to seek a "fair, reasonable, win-win" global climate governance system, Li said.

US and Brazil set energy goals in sign of improving ties

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From the section
US & Canada



President Rousseff cancelled a visit to Washington in 2013

after claims the US had spied on her

The US and Brazil have unveiled ambitious energy goals in a sign of growing co-operation after a spying scandal damaged ties two years ago.

US President Barack Obama and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff announced plans to up the amount of energy they use from renewable sources by 2030. Ms Rousseff cancelled a trip to Washington in 2013 after claims the US had been listening to her phone calls.

Speaking on Tuesday, she said she had faith that such monitoring had stopped.

"The US government have stated on several occasions that they would no longer engage in intrusive acts of spying on friendly countries," Ms Rousseff told reporters after meeting Mr Obama at the White House.

"I believe President Obama," she said, adding that he would ring her if he wanted to know anything.

The leaders of the two biggest economies in the Americas said they were pledging to generate 20% of domestic electricity from renewable resources by 2030.

"These are very ambitious goals, a near tripling for the United States and more than double Brazil's current output," President Obama said at a joint news

conference.



US Vice-President Joe Biden tweeted his support after meeting with Ms Rousseff on Tuesday

Their announcement comes ahead of crucial climate talks at a **UN summit in Paris** in December.

President Rousseff, 67, said her government had also pledged to eliminate illegal deforestation in the Amazon and to reforest swathes of degraded land. But that commitment will be met with scepticism by some environmentalists amid signs that Amazon deforestation is again on the increase.

Analysis: Wyre Davies, BBC News, Rio de Janeiro

It makes all the sense in the world for the US and Brazil to put the embarrassing NSA spying row of 2013 behind them.

Dilma Rousseff is struggling to keep a grip on the

reins of power in Brazil amid **the massive corruption scandal at Petrobras**.

But the one thing that will save her is for the impressive economic and social gains of the last decade to continue and in that US companies have a big role to play.

Billions of dollars worth of contracts to build infrastructure projects across Brazil were recently announced and, as the biggest inward investor in Brazil, US firms are well placed to snap up much of that business.

However, as President Rousseff acknowledged, Brazil also has to reduce its famously protective and bureaucratic barriers to outsiders if those opportunities are to be fully realized.

For the US too, this is a relationship worth developing. US diplomats will have watched nervously of late as China increased its economic muscle and political influence in the region via loans and credit guarantees.