

# Ban Ki-moon: US has caused serious damage to Paris climate efforts

**Ex-UN secretary general tells the Guardian decision to withdraw hampers global political action**

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Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the Paris agreement has created serious problems for global efforts to tackle climate change, **Ban Ki-moon** has said.

The former UN secretary general said Trump's move was politically damaging to international action to limit carbon emissions and had created difficulties in delivering financial aid from richer to poorer countries to help the latter cope with a warming world.

"United States is a big problem now. I think the United States' decision to withdraw from this Paris agreement really creates a serious problem," Ban said in an interview with the Guardian.

"They [the Trump administration] have given serious damage to the political side. All the countries are very serious and concerned about this [the US declaring its withdrawal from the climate deal]."

Although Trump indicated in a recent interview that the **US may not leave** the global accord, Ban said the remarks were not clear. He said the apparent shift in position may have been the result of **lobbying from European leaders** such as the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

Ban said he hoped Trump would take better advice. "What President Trump has been saying is politically shortsighted and scientifically based on wrong advice; I don't know who advised him," he said.

While Europe has been seen as a champion of global climate talks and international efforts to **rein in temperature rises**, Ban said he was worried this role could be put at risk by political strife.

"I am concerned because of the divisions that are now happening within the EU, not to mention this Brexit, and political difficulties and issues such as refugees," he said.

He said he hoped Macron and Angela Merkel would take on a leadership role and he had pressed the French president on the issue during an hour-long meeting in December.

Ban said Britain had a duty to keep up action on climate change despite Brexit. “They [the UK government] still have a political and moral responsibility on this issue,” he said.

The US saying it would withdraw from the Paris agreement had imperilled the **\$100bn-a-year of climate aid** the world’s richest countries have pledged to the poorest by 2020, Ban said.

“Without the US, we have a lot of difficulties, particularly mobilising financing,” he said, adding that he was particularly concerned about the one-third of funding the US would normally provide to committees administering billions of dollars in climate money.

“Who will make up all this losses which will not be paid by the US? That’s a serious problem now,” he said.

He said the private sector may have to play a greater role than previously envisaged, and he was working with the World Bank president, Jim Yong Kim, the former UN secretary general Kofi Annan and the former UN climate chief Christiana Figueres to address the challenge.

Despite these setbacks to climate action, Ban said he was encouraged that China was still **fully committed to reducing emissions**. “President Xi Jinping clearly mentioned that China is fully onboard, understanding that the climate is changing,” Ban said of a meeting with the Chinese leader in November.

Another promising sign was the We Are Still In campaign, a group of US cities, states and businesses that have pledged to **stick to the Paris targets** regardless of Trump. “This is a groundswell of people,” Ban said.

He said he would dedicate his life beyond the UN to continuing climate change advocacy.

Despite the US’s backtracking, Ban said he remained confident the world could meet the target of **limiting temperature increases** to less than 2C above pre-industrial levels, and the aspiration to keep them under 1.5C. “I am quite optimistic we will make it happen,” he said.

## Donald Trump says US could re-enter Paris climate deal

The US president met with global condemnation when he announced in June 2017 that the US was pulling out of the climate agreement. The landmark treaty was

signed by 195 nations after intense negotiations in 2015, with countries making voluntary pledges to cut carbon emissions in an attempt to restrict an increase in global temperatures to less than 2C this century.

Trump said in the ITV interview that he was a “believer in clean air and clean water” but the Paris agreement would have been a disaster for the US. However, despite initially saying he was “completely out” of the accord, Trump said there could be a way back for the US.

“First of all, it was a terrible deal for the US. If they made a good deal there’s always a chance we’d get back. But it was a terrible deal for the US. It was unfair to the US,” he said.

“I believe in clean air. I believe in crystal-clear, beautiful ... I believe in just having good cleanliness in all. Now, with that being said, if somebody said go back into the Paris accord, it would have to be a completely different deal because we had a horrible deal.

“As usual, they took advantage of the US. We were in a terrible deal. Would I go back in? Yeah, I’d go back in. I like, as you know, I like Emmanuel [Macron]. I would love to, but it’s got to be a good deal for the US.”

Asked if he believed in climate change, Trump said: “There is a cooling, and there’s a heating. I mean look, it used to not be climate change, it used to be global warming. That wasn’t working too well because it was getting too cold all over the place. The ice caps were going to melt, they were going to be gone by now, but now they’re setting records. They’re at a record level.”