

Paris climate deal is agreed – but is it really good enough?



History has been made in Paris – but perhaps not the kind of history we hoped. The climate summit in Paris may come to be remembered as the moment when the world's leaders let the last hope of limiting warming to 2 °C slip away from us.

The Paris agreement, which covers the period 2020 to 2030, is a better deal than many expected, and if countries stick both to the spirit and the letter of the agreement, it could [give us a good chance](#) of limiting global warming to under 4 °C and perhaps even under 3 °C.

But this is far from certain. The [Kyoto Protocol](#) was hailed as a dramatic turning point when it was agreed in 1997 but most now regard it as a failure.

Many scientists have welcomed the stated aim in the Paris agreement not just of trying to keep warming under 2 °C but endeavouring to limit it to 1.5 °C – a more ambitious goal than expected before the summit. However, they point out that what is in the agreement does not go nearly far enough to achieve these aims. The strongest criticism has come from renowned climate scientist James Hansen.

Worthless

"It's just worthless words. There is no action, just promises," Hansen said today. "As long as fossil fuels appear to be the cheapest fuels out there, they will be continued to be burned."

It has long been clear that what countries were offering to do as part of a deal was not nearly enough to keep us under 2 °C. In the lead-up to Paris, this was not only been acknowledged but stressed by many involved in the process, including UN chief negotiator Christiana Figueres.

This has not changed. "The emissions cuts promised by countries are still wholly insufficient," says Corinne Le Quere of the University of East Anglia, who studies global emissions.

However, the agreement does contain a "ratchet mechanism". Countries will have to say every five years what they are doing tackle climate change review – what will now be called their nationally determined contribution. Each successive NDC "will represent a progression beyond" the country's previous one. This wording did not appear in earlier versions of the agreement, in which the language was weaker.

The idea is that this will ensure countries rapidly "ratchet up" their ambitions. But the gulf between what is being done and what is required is huge, and nothing in the deal compels countries to make much greater efforts required. While the deal is being described as legally binding, countries can withdraw from it without consequences, as Canada did from the Kyoto Protocol.

Now or never

And time has nearly run out for limiting warming to 2 °C. "If we wait until 2020, it will be too late," climate scientist Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre in the UK told *New Scientist* on Friday. "It's a very small window."

As for 1.5 °C, it would take nothing less than "a true world revolution", according to Piers Forster of the University of Leeds. "We need renewable energy, nuclear power, fracking, zero-carbon transport, energy efficiency, housing changes," he said. "Even international aviation and shipping that were excluded from this report will need to be tackled within the next few years."

Few regard this as a realistic prospect, not least because no politician would be prepared to take the drastic and costly measures required. "All the evidence from the past 15 years leads me to conclude that actually delivering 1.5 °C is simply incompatible with democracy," Michael Grubb of University College London told *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday.

But unless such drastic action is taken in the next few years we are headed for a very different world, one in which [seas will rise by more than 5 metres over the coming centuries](#), and one in which droughts, floods and extreme heatwaves will ravage many parts of the world.

There has been much praise for the way the French have organised the summit and handled the negotiations.

The deal in Paris may well have been the best deal possible. But the protesters outside the summit are right when they say it will not save the planet.

"The bureaucrats have a better grasp of what is politically possible, and the protesters of what is physically necessary," says Anderson. "What do you want to bet on, science or politics?"

Nature | Updated

Nations approve historic global climate accord

Agreement forged in Paris aims to hold warming "well below" 2 °C.

- [Jeff Tollefson](#)
- & [Kenneth R. Weiss](#)

12 December 2015

Paris



Francois Mori/AP

French foreign minister Laurent Fabius, chairman of the Paris talks, gives the new accord two thumbs up.

Representatives of 195 countries approved a landmark plan to combat climate change on 12 December. The ambitious global agreement commits most countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while seeking to protect low-lying islands from rising seas and helping poor nations develop their economies without relying on cheap, dirty fossil fuels.

The accord, years in the making, seeks to hold warming "well below" 2 °C above pre-industrial temperatures. Countries' current climate pledges fall short of that goal, but many scientists and governments see the Paris agreement as the last, best hope to set the planet on a course to avoid catastrophic climate change.

"History is written by those who commit, not those who calculate," French president François Hollande told negotiators after the accord was adopted. "Today you have committed."



Nature special: [2015 Paris climate talks](#)

The ambitious [12-page agreement](#) and related addendums contain a multitude of provisions to accelerate the world's transition from fossil fuels to solar, wind, nuclear, hydropower and other clean energy sources.

Nearly every country is asked to do its part to ensure that greenhouse-gas emissions peak, and then begin declining, as soon as possible. Countries will assess their progress towards reducing emissions in 2018, and must revisit their climate pledges every five years beginning in 2020. The aim is that these pledges will become more ambitious over time.

Settling the ledger

To ensure that countries are living up to their commitments, the agreement creates a transparent system for measuring, reporting and verifying emissions, while allowing some

flexibility for countries that have little capacity to do so. The plan allows for an independent technical review, and all but the smallest, poorest countries will have to report their emissions every two years. But negotiators have left many of the details to be debated at the next major climate talks, in 2016.

"On transparency, the agreement is a little bit loosey-goosey," says Michael Oppenheimer, a climate scientist at Princeton University in New Jersey. "It could be turned into something that is very effective, but the delegates kicked the can down the road."

Try watching this video on www.youtube.com

Paris climate talks: An agreement is reached

After two weeks of intense negotiations, nations agreed to a global climate deal. Nature Video reports from the heart of the conference.

Others worry about how to help developing countries build their capacity to monitor emissions. "Transparency and governance are not something you obtain with a decree," says Amougou Armathe, director of Cameroon's newly created National Observatory on Climate Change. He will be responsible for developing and reporting his country's greenhouse-gas inventory, but as of today he has no budget and no employees.

The Paris agreement includes non-binding language that outlines a plan for wealthy nations to increase their climate aid to poorer nations beyond their current commitment of [US\\$100 billion per year by 2020](#). And developing nations pushed successfully for the pact to recognize that vulnerable countries will face damages from [rising seas](#), [raging storms](#) and other impacts of climate change.

The official recognition of damages was a huge achievement, says Mohamed Adow of Christian Aid, an advocacy group based in London. "We now have loss and damage as an integral part of the climate regime."

But the pact explicitly bars poorer nations from seeking compensation or holding wealthy, major polluters liable for these losses.

An arduous journey

Weary negotiators, working on nervous energy and caffeine, approved the "Paris Agreement" a day after their self-imposed deadline — and only after a major push by leaders of the United Nations and the host country.

In a soaring speech, Hollande implored delegates to pass an accord that would send "a message of life" to rebuke the terrorist attacks that killed 130 people in Paris on 13 November.



[A Nature comic examines the 25-year quest for a climate treaty](#)

"I will be delighted, relieved, proud, that it be launched from Paris, because Paris was attacked almost exactly a month ago," he said. "France asks you, calls upon you, to adopt the first universal agreement on climate."

The long road to the Paris agreement [began in Rio de Janeiro in 1992](#), when nations approved a general "framework" to combat climate change that left the details for later agreements. After 20 annual meetings with little progress to curb ever-soaring emissions, representatives arrived in Paris with pledges from 187 countries outlining the steps that each would take to cut its emissions by 2030.

Never before had so many promises been put on the table — but many pledges were hedged with conditions, such as calls for financial aid to build alternative-energy plants, save remaining forests or relocate people living in harm's way. Even if all of the promises were fulfilled, and followed by substantial additional emissions reductions, that would merely [hold warming to 2.7 °C by 2100](#). This is deep into the territory that scientists expect would prompt catastrophic, irreversible climate changes.

Positive reception

Yet the Paris agreement seeks to limit planetary warming to [well below 2° C](#), urging nations to pursue an even stricter target, 1.5 °C. To put this in perspective, the average global temperature [has already risen 1 °C](#) since the start of the Industrial Revolution.



[Is the 2 °C world a fantasy?](#)

Many environmentalists say that the agreement and the goals are strong enough to create momentum and pressure on governments moving forward. "I think we see the key elements that we have always said we need for a good agreement," says Nathaniel Keohane, who heads the global climate programme for the Environmental Defense Fund in New York.

Others say that the Paris accord should prod businesses to pursue clean energy and green growth. "Markets now have the clear signal that they need to unleash the full force of human ingenuity and scale up investments that will generate [low-emissions resilient growth](#)," said UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon. "What was once unthinkable has now become unstoppable."

Climate scientists who gathered in Paris to observe the negotiations were pleased with the accord's ultimate goal, but wanted more details about how nations would achieve significant emissions reductions.

"This does not send a clear signal about the level and timing of emission cuts, and does not provide a useful yardstick against which to measure progress," said Steffen Kallbekken, research director at the Centre for International Climate and Energy Policy (CICERO) in Oslo. Although the Paris plan is not inconsistent with science, he says, it does not reflect the best available research.



The science behind the 2°C limit

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that [holding warming to 2 degrees](#) will likely require cutting emissions 40-70% by 2050, compared to 2010 levels. Achieving the 1.5-degree target would require substantially larger emissions cuts, Kallbekken says — on the order of 70-95% by 2050.

The Paris agreement directs the IPCC to study scenarios for limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, and to deliver a report to nations by 2018 to help them determine how much to strengthen their climate commitments.

The fact that the accord prominently mentions the 1.5 °C target is a huge victory for vulnerable countries, says Saleem Huq, director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

“Coming into Paris, we had all of the rich countries and all of the big developing countries not on our side,” says Huq, an adviser to a coalition of least-developed nations. “In the 14 days that we were here, we managed to get all of them on our side.”

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COP21: Did the Pope save the climate deal?

By Roger Harrabin
BBC environment analyst, Paris

3 hours ago

From the section

Science & Environment



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Simon Mania

Image caption

Did papal pressure convince a president to play nicely?

As world leaders hail what they are calling an historic deal at the climate summit, rumours abound about how the final deadlock was resolved. Exhausted delegates were held up for hours in the final stage of the conference as final glitches were ironed out.

It was a typical last-minute drama in climate talks. The world is gathered to cheer a deal, then a few nations decide to dig in their heels.

This time, the US is one of the deadline delayers; it often is.

The text says developed countries "shall" take the lead in cutting emissions. US lawyers say this will never get through Congress.

"Shall" implies legally binding; the verb should be "should".

It's apparently an oversight, or a translation error. Whatever it is, it creates a moment of opportunity for other big players to find more "errors" to benefit them.



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Reuters

Image caption

One lion on my church: one of the images projected on to St Peter's Basilica, Rome, during the climate talks

US Secretary of State John Kerry is in the thick of it. He's calling someone on his mobile phone, then handing the phone to other delegates - with the

White House presumably at the other end.

Just as "shall" is eventually being softened to "should" in a text revision, other obstacles are being raised in the chase towards the finish line.

First it is Turkey. The UN is asking it to do too much, Turkey complains. The French conference chairman Laurent Fabius promises to hear its plea later. Then Nicaragua will not sign up. It says there is a total mismatch between what the document says is needed to protect the climate, and what it proposes to do about it.

This is true and others nations feel the same. But they are not willing to ruin the deal to make the point.

How was this hurdle overcome? Well, it is rumoured that the Pope had to phone the president of Nicaragua to make a personal plea.



Image copyright
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Image caption

Secretary of semantics? John Kerry finds out that every word counts in Paris

An even more outlandish rumour suggests UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had to promise to visit Nicaragua on 26 December to celebrate Christmas.

Whatever the truth of these rumours, this extraordinary deal was eventually done.

We will have to keep an eye on Mr Ban to see where he will be eating his turkey.

COP21: Paris climate deal is 'best chance to save planet'

53 minutes ago



President Obama: "The historic agreement is a tribute to American leadership"

President Obama: "The historic agreement is a tribute to American leadership"

The climate deal reached in Paris is "the best chance we have to save the one planet we have", US President Barack Obama has said.

He said it could be a "turning point" for the world to take on the challenge of a low-carbon future.

China, the world's biggest polluter, also hailed the deal. But some campaigners said it did not go far enough to protect the planet.

The Paris pact aims to curb global warming to less than 2C (3.6F)

Nearly 200 countries took part in tense negotiations in the French capital over two weeks, striking the first deal to commit all nations to cut emissions.

The agreement - which is partly legally binding and partly voluntary - will come into being in 2020.

'Almost nothing binding'

Describing the agreement as "ambitious", President Obama said: "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one."

"In short, this agreement will mean less of the carbon pollution that threatens our planet and more of the jobs and economic growth driven by low-carbon investments."

However, Mr Obama admitted that the pact was not "perfect".

China's chief negotiator Xie Zhenhua agreed that the Paris plan was not ideal. But he added that "this does not prevent us from marching historical steps forward".

China earlier said rich developed countries needed to offer more financial support to developing countries.

Giza Gaspar Martins, the chairman of the group representing some of the world's poorest countries, said: "It is the best outcome we could have hoped for, not just for the Least Developed Countries, but for all citizens of the world," he said.

But Nick Dearden, director of campaign group Global Justice Now, said: "It's outrageous that the deal that's on the table is being spun as a success when it undermines the rights of the world's most vulnerable communities and has almost nothing binding to ensure a safe and liveable climate for future generations."

Some aspects of the agreement will be legally binding, such as submitting an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal. However, the targets set by nations will not be binding under the deal struck in Paris.

Key points

The measures in the agreement included:

- To peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and achieve a balance between sources and sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- To keep global temperature increase "well below" 2C (3.6F) and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5C
- To review progress every five years
- \$100bn a year in climate finance for developing countries by 2020, with a commitment to further finance in the future.



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Reuters

Image caption

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and French President Hollande join in the celebrations

Analysis: The BBC's Matt McGrath in Paris

The speeches and the clichés at the adoption of the Paris Agreement flowed like good champagne - success after all has many fathers! The main emotion is relief. The influence of the COP president, Laurent Fabius, cannot be overstated. His long diplomatic career gave him a credibility seldom matched in this arena. He used his power well.

The deal that has been agreed, under Mr Fabius, is without parallel in terms of climate change or of the environment. It sets out a clear long-term temperature limit for the planet and a clear way of getting there. There is money for poor countries to adapt, there is a strong review mechanism to increase ambition over time. This is key if the deal is to achieve the aim of keeping warming well below 2C.

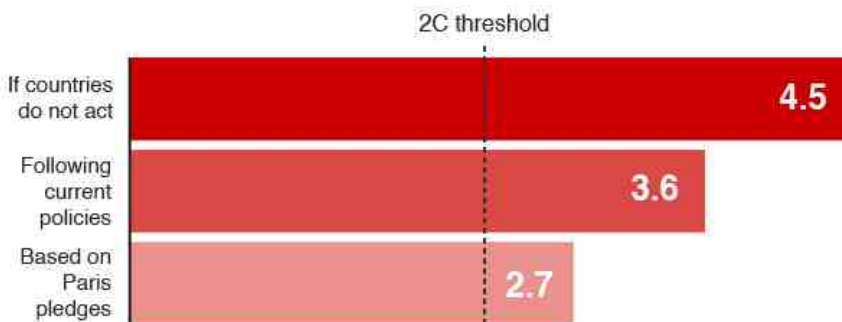
More than anything though the deal signifies a new way for the world to achieve progress - without it costing the Earth. A long term perspective on the way we do sustainability is at the heart of this deal. If it delivers that, it truly will be world changing.

Read more from Matt McGrath

Observers say the attempt to impose emissions targets on countries was one of the main reasons why the Copenhagen talks in 2009 failed. At the time, nations including China, India and South Africa were unwilling to sign up to a condition that they felt could hamper economic growth and development.

The latest negotiations managed to avoid such an impasse by developing a system of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). In these, which form the basis of the Paris agreement goal of keeping global temperature rise "well below" 2C above pre-industrial levels, nations outline their plans on cutting their post-2020 emissions.

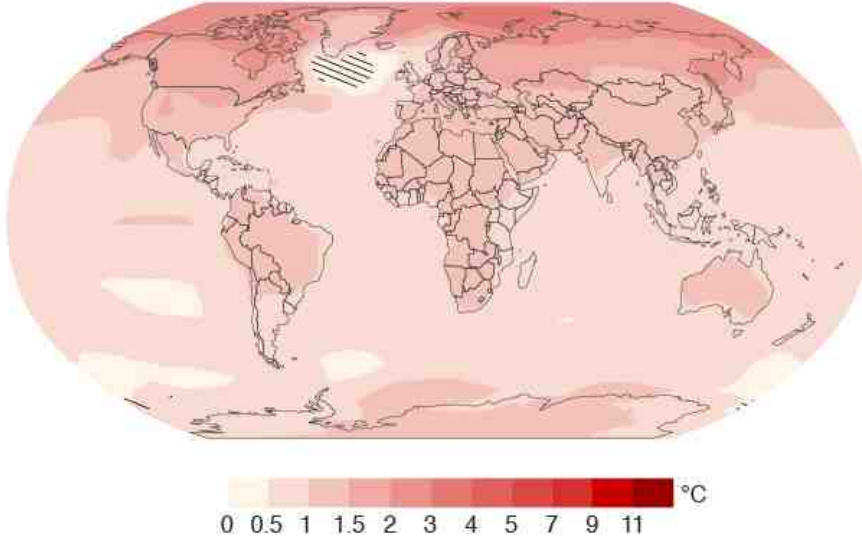
Average warming (C) projected by 2100



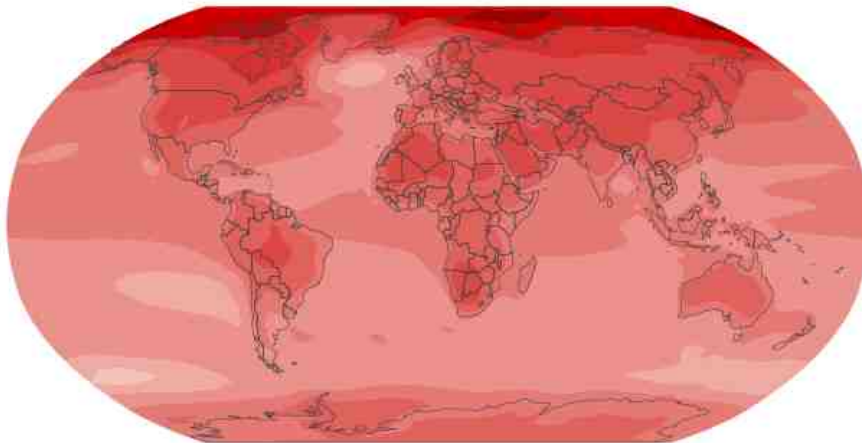
Source: Climate Action Tracker, data compiled by Climate Analytics, ECOFYS, New Climate Institute and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Projected temperature change (1986–2005 to 2081-2100)

If greenhouse gas emissions peak between 2010 to 2020 and then decline substantially (RCP2.6).



If greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise throughout the 21st century (RCP8.5)



Source: International Panel on Climate Change - Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)

UN climate conference 30 Nov - 11 Dec 2015

Global climate deal: In summary

By Helen Briggs
BBC News

5 hours ago

From the section
[Science & Environment](#)



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Image caption

World leaders applauded as the deal was passed through

A global climate agreement has been finalised in Paris. What has been agreed?

Overview

The deal unites all the world's nations in a single agreement on tackling climate change for the first time in history.

Coming to a consensus among nearly 200 countries on the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions is regarded by many observers as an achievement in itself and is being hailed as "historic".

The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 set emission cutting targets for a handful of developed countries, but the US pulled out and others failed to comply.

However, scientists point out that the Paris accord must be stepped up if it is to have any chance of curbing dangerous climate change.

Pledges thus far could see global temperatures rise by as much as 3.7C (6.7F), but the agreement lays out a roadmap for speeding up progress.

What are the key elements?

To keep global temperatures "well below" 2.0C (3.6F) and "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5C

To limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally, beginning at some point between 2050 and 2100

To review each country's contribution to cutting emissions every five years so they scale up to the challenge

For rich countries to help poorer nations by providing "climate finance" to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy.



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Reuters

Image caption

A participant takes a rest during the Paris talks



Image copyright

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Image caption

Campaigners take to the streets of Paris to warn that failure to act to curb temperature rises will cross a red line

What's in and what has been left out?

The goal of preventing what scientists regard as dangerous and irreversible levels of climate change - judged to be reached at around 2C of warming

above pre-industrial times - is central to the agreement.

The world is already nearly halfway there at almost 1C and many countries argued for a tougher target of 1.5C - including leaders of low-lying countries that face unsustainable sea levels rises in a warming world.

The desire for a more ambitious goal has been kept in the agreement - with the promise to "endeavour to limit" global temperatures even more, to 1.5C. Dr Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics, says the objective is "remarkable".

"It is a victory for the most vulnerable countries, the small islands, the least developed countries and all those with the most to lose, who came to Paris and said they didn't want sympathy, they wanted action."

Meanwhile, for the first time, the accord lays out a longer-term plan for reaching a peak in greenhouse emissions "as soon as possible" and achieving a balance between output of man-made greenhouse gases and absorption - by forests or the oceans - "by the second half of this century".

"If agreed and implemented, this means bringing down greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero within a few decades. It is in line with the scientific evidence we presented," says John Schellnhuber, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Some have described the deal as "woolly" because some of the targets were scaled down during the negotiations.

"The Paris Agreement is only one step on a long road, and there are parts of it that frustrate and disappoint me, but it is progress," says Greenpeace International executive director Kumi Naidoo.

"This deal alone won't dig us out the hole we're in, but it makes the sides less steep."

What about money?

Money has been a sticking point throughout the negotiations.

Developing countries say they need financial and technological help to leapfrog fossil fuels and move straight to renewables.

Currently they have been promised US \$100bn (£67bn) a year by 2020 - not as much as many countries would like.

The agreement requires rich nations to maintain a \$100bn a year funding pledge beyond 2020, and to use that figure as a "floor" for further support agreed by 2025.

The deal says wealthy countries should continue to provide financial support for poor nations to cope with climate change and encourages other countries to join in on a voluntary basis.

Dr Ilan Kelman of UCL, London, says the lack of time scales are "worrying".

"The starting point of \$100bn per year is helpful, but remains under 8% of worldwide declared military spending each year."

What happens next?

Only elements of the Paris pact will be legally binding.

The national pledges by countries to cut emissions are voluntary, and arguments over when to revisit the pledges - with the aim of taking tougher action - have been a stumbling block in the talks.

The pact promises to make an assessment of progress in 2018, with further reviews every five years.

As analysts point out, Paris is only the beginning of a shift towards a low-carbon world, and there is much more to do.

"Paris is just the starting gun for the race towards a low-carbon future," says WWF-UK Chief Executive David Nussbaum.

Prof John Shepherd of the National Oceanography Centre, University of Southampton, says the agreement includes some welcome aspirations but few people realise how difficult it will be to achieve the goals.

"Since the only mechanism remains voluntary national caps on emissions, without even any guidance on how stringent those caps would need to be, it is hard to be optimistic that these goals are likely to be achieved."

Has history been made at COP21?

[Matt McGrath](#) Environment correspondent

- 3 hours ago
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)
- 62 comments



I'm not a fan of hyperbole, but it would be churlish to say the adoption of the Paris Agreement was anything other than a globally, historic moment.

This carefully worded document that balances the right of countries to develop with the need to protect the planet is a truly world changing instrument.

It sets out, for the first time, a global approach to a problem of humanity's own making: the recent rapid warming of the Earth that science says is mainly down to the use of fossil fuels.

The deal sets out a firm goal of keeping temperature rises well below 2C, and will strive for 1.5C.

This is no easy task as researchers say that this year 2015, the world has gone through 1C above pre-industrial levels.

It also sets out a means of getting there. It's a little convoluted in terms of language, but that's what you get when you try and get 196 parties to agree to a plan of action.

Critical sentence

The agreement text means that emissions of greenhouse gases will have to peak globally and reduce rapidly thereafter, in accordance with the best possible science.

This phrase is crucial according to observers, meaning that the Paris deal will be guided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And the IPCC say that carbon emissions will have to go to zero by the end of this century.

There is a stonking piece of UN jargon that has been crafted to get around the tricky business of differentiation, the long standing division of the world into developed and developing countries only.

It's called CBDRRCILNDC, which translates as Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, In the Light of Different National Circumstances.

Essentially it means a gradual shift away from the absolute firewall set up in 1992 when the UN Convention was adopted. Over time more countries will take on more cuts.



Image caption China's lead negotiator Xie Zhenhua said the deal would change our way of life
Another sign of this breakdown of differentiation is the adoption of a single system of measuring, reporting and verifying that countries will do what they say under the terms of the agreement.

But it is not all one way. The deal re-iterates the "flexibility" that the developing nations will only come into this system when they are ready to do so.

There is also a separate article on loss and damage. While it doesn't put the rich countries on the hook for compensation or liability, the fact that it is there in the body of the agreement is a big win for the poorer nations.

The finance sections also reflect this give and take. The poorer nations won't have to contribute any cash; the richer ones will have to give more money in the new deal and with greater predictability.

A key part of keeping ambitions high is a reviewing mechanism - and the one agreed is built on the idea of no backsliding on promises. There will be a review of what countries are now proposing in 2018. Countries will have to endure a "global stocktake" in 2023 and two years later make new carbon cutting commitments.

While the deal is toothless when it comes to penalties for missing any targets, the UN is counting on peer pressure to keep countries moving forward. It's worked so far, with 187 countries lodging national climate plans before the end of this meeting. No one wanted to turn up empty handed.

The key thing about this deal may ultimately not be the rules and mechanisms and targets it sets - it's about signals and signs.

"We are sending a critical message to the global marketplace," said US Secretary of State John Kerry at the conclusion of the meeting.

Among the celebrations though were reminders that the hard work on climate change was now only beginning.

South African Minister Edna Molewa channelled the spirit of Nelson Mandela, not for the first time:

"I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb...I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

Sat Dec 12, 2015 2:46pm EST

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World seals landmark climate accord, marking turn from fossil fuels

PARIS | By [Alister Doyle](#) and [Barbara Lewis](#)

The global climate summit in Paris agreed a landmark accord on Saturday, setting the course for a "historic" transformation of the world's fossil fuel-driven economy within decades in a bid to arrest global warming.

The deal comes at the tail end of the hottest year on record and after four years of fraught U.N. talks often pitting the interests of rich nations against poor, and imperiled island states against rising economic powerhouses.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius took just minutes to declare the pact adopted to the standing applause and whistles of delegates from almost 200 nations.

"With a small hammer you can achieve great things," Fabius said as he gavelled the agreement, surprising many observers who were bracing for several hours of discussion following the two weeks of difficult negotiations.

Hailed as the first truly global climate deal, committing both rich and poor nations to reining in rising emissions blamed for warming the planet, it sets out a sweeping long-term goal of eliminating net man-made greenhouse gas output this century.

It also creates a system to encourage nations to step up voluntary domestic efforts to curb emissions, and provides billions more dollars to help poor nations cope with the transition to a greener economy.

Calling it "ambitious and balanced", Fabius said the accord would mark a "historic turning point" in efforts to avert the potentially disastrous consequences of an overheated planet.

U.S. President Barack Obama, for whom a deal in Paris is a legacy-defining achievement, said it was "huge". "Almost every country in the world just signed on to the Paris Agreement on climate change - thanks to American leadership," he said via Twitter.

The final agreement was essentially unchanged from a draft unveiled earlier in the day, including a more ambitious objective of restraining the rise in temperatures to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, a mark scientists fear could be a tipping point for the climate.

Previously, the goal on temperature rise was set at 2 degrees Celsius in 2010.

"This is a win for humanity," said Brazil Minister Environment Izabella Teixeira.

In some ways its success was assured before the summit began: 187 nations have submitted detailed national plans for how they will contain the rise in greenhouse gas emissions, commitments that are the core of the Paris deal.

While leaving each country to pursue those measures on its own, the agreement finally sets a common vision and course of action after years of bickering over how to move forward.

Officials hope a unified stance will be a powerful symbol for world citizens and a potent signal to the executives and investors they're counting on to spend trillions of dollars to replace coal-fired power with solar panels and windmills.

TOO MUCH, OR NOT ENOUGH?

While some climate change activists and U.S. Republicans will likely find fault with the accord - either for failing to take sufficiently drastic action, or for overreacting to an uncertain threat - many of the estimated 30,000 officials, academics and campaigners who set up camp on the outskirts of Paris say they see it as a long overdue turning point.

Six years after the previous climate summit in Copenhagen ended in failure and acrimony, the Paris pact appears to have rebuilt much of the trust required for a concerted global effort to combat climate change, delegates say.

"Whereas we left Copenhagen scared of what comes next, we'll leave Paris inspired to keep fighting," said David Turnbull, Director at Oil Change International, a research and advocacy organization opposed to fossil fuel production.

Most climate activists reacted positively, encouraged by long-term targets that were more ambitious than they expected, while warning it was only the first step of many.

From the outset, some have criticized the deal for setting too low a bar for success. Scientists warn that the envisaged national emissions cuts will not be enough to keep warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit).

Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the last major climate deal agreed in 1997, the Paris pact will also not be a fully legally binding treaty, something that would almost certainly fail to pass the U.S. Congress.

In the United States, many Republicans will see the pact as a dangerous endeavor that threatens to trade economic prosperity for an uncertain if greener future.

(Reporting By Emmanuel Jarry, Bate Felix, Lesley Wroughton, Nina Chestney, Richard Valdmanis, Valerie Volcovici, Bruce Wallace and David Stanway; Editing by [Jonathan Leff](#) and Clelia Oziel)

Paris climate deal: nearly 200 nations sign in end of fossil fuel era

Two decades of talks have come to this: an ambitious agreement to hold states to emissions targets – but already low-lying countries are worried



Left to right: French president Francois Hollande, French foreign minister Laurent Fabius and UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon as the agreement is announced. Photograph: WITT/Sipa Press/Rex Shutterstock

[Suzanne Goldenberg](#), [John Vidal](#), [Lenore Taylor](#), [Adam Vaughan](#) and [Fiona Harvey](#)

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Last modified on Saturday 12 December 2015 18.42 GMT

Governments have signalled an end to the fossil fuel era, committing for the first time to a universal agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to avoid the most dangerous effects of climate change at crunch UN talks in Paris.

After 20 years of fraught meetings, including the past two weeks spent in an exhibition hall on the outskirts of Paris, negotiators from nearly 200 countries signed on to a deal on Saturday evening that set ambitious goals to limit temperature rise and to hold governments to account for reaching those targets.

François Hollande, the French president, appealed to negotiators to approve the 31-page text, and said countries had a rare chance to make history. "We are at a decisive point in time," he said.

Analysis [Paris climate deal: key points at a glance](#)

The goal of 1.5C is a big leap below the 2C agreed six years ago in Copenhagen. Here's what the agreement means for global emissions and the future of the planet

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France's foreign minister Laurent Fabius, who led the negotiations, said: "It is my deep conviction that we have come up with an ambitious and balanced agreement. Today it is a moment of truth."

Miguel Arias Cañete, the EU's climate commissioner hailed a "historic" deal. "It is solid. We can build on it. The deal is ambitious, balanced and robust," he said.

Six years after the chaotic collapse of the Copenhagen climate summit, the agreement now known as the Paris Outcome for the first time commits rich countries, rising economies and some of the poorest countries to work together to fight climate change.

Under the deal, adopted by consensus, all countries agreed to reduce emissions. Rich countries agreed to raise \$100bn a year by 2020 to help poor countries

transform their economies. The overall agreement is legally binding but some elements, including the pledges to curb emissions by individual countries and the climate finance elements, are not.

Live Paris climate talks: governments adopt historic deal – live

Live coverage from COP21 in Paris, as nearly 200 governments prepare to officially adopt a climate change deal on how to cut carbon emissions post-2020

[Read more](#)

Government and business leaders said the agreement, which set a new goal to by the end of the century, sent a powerful signal to business that the fossil fuel era was coming to an end.

The International Investors Group on Climate Change, a network managing €13 trillion of assets, said the decision would help trigger a shift away from fossil fuels and encourage greater investments in renewable energy

“Investors across Europe will now have the confidence to do much more to address the risks arising from high carbon assets and to seek opportunities linked to the low carbon transition already transforming the world’s energy system and infrastructure,” the group said.

Jennifer Morgan of the environmental think tank the World Resources Institute said the long term goal was “transformational” and “sends signals into the heart of the markets”.

The deal set a high aspirational goal to limit warming below 2C and strive to keep temperatures at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels – a far more ambitious target than expected, and a key demand of vulnerable countries. It incorporates previous commitments from 186 countries to reduce emissions which on their own would only hold warming to between 2.7C and 3C.

But it sets out procedures for review at regular intervals to deepen emissions cuts, with countries aiming to peak global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and then rapidly scale down in the second half of this century.

Critics said the agreement would still condemn hundreds of million of people living in low-lying coastal areas and small islands. But supporters said the negotiations took a significant step forward in getting countries to act together on a global challenge of immense complexity, and in sending a signal to global markets.



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A climate demonstrator in Paris on Saturday. Photograph: Etienne Laurent/EPA

Saturday’s agreement was the product of years of preparation, two weeks of intense negotiations, capped off by three sleepless nights, with Barack Obama and Hollande bashing the phones to bring other leaders on side with the deal.

Analysis Paris climate deal: key points at a glance

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[Read more](#)

Accounts from behind the closed doors of negotiating session described tense exchanges between oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia and a rapidly constituted US- and Europe-backed High Ambition Coalition, which kept up the pressure for a strong temperature goal and regular reviews of emissions-cutting plans.

The French hosts also won praise from negotiators for using a mixture of informal huddles, or indabas, and traditional shuttle diplomacy to bring the deal home.

The text commits countries to peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and to seek a balance between human-caused emissions and removals by carbon sinks.

“This means bringing down greenhouse gas emissions to net zero within a few decades,” John Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, and a climate adviser to the Vatican, said. But he added that countries would have to move aggressively, peaking before 2030 and

eliminating emissions by 2050 through reforestation and technologies such as carbon capture and storage.

For vulnerable countries, the high ambition of the 1.5C goal was offset by the weakening of the agreement when it came to dealing with irreparable damage of climate change.

Negotiators and campaigners said pressure from the US and European Union stripped the agreement of language that would have opened up new sources of funding for small islands and low-lying states that could experience irreversible damage due to climate change.

“The idea of even discussing loss and damage now or in the future was off limits. The Americans told us it would kill the CoP,” said Leisha Beardmore, the chief negotiator for the Seychelles. “They have always been telling us: ‘Don’t even say that’.”

Grand promises of Paris climate deal undermined by squalid retrenchments

George Monbiot



[Read more](#)

Even so, campaign groups were broadly positive about the outcome. Given intense pressure from oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, negotiators managed to craft a text that was far more ambitious than expected.

The universal nature of the agreement was a radical departure from the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 agreement which drew sharp divisions between the obligations of wealthy and developing countries but ultimately failed to lower emissions.

Unlike Kyoto, the agreement reached on Saturday depends on political will, with countries setting their own climate action plans.

Rich countries promised that by 2025 they would set a new goal for climate finance “from a floor of \$100bn per year”, the figure first pledged at the Copenhagen climate talks six years ago. However, the commitment was offered as a non-binding decision that accompanied the binding text.

All the countries agreed on demands from the US and European Union for five-year reviews of their emissions reductions – an exercise that had been resisted by China.

COP21: Climate deal final draft 'agreed' in Paris

17 minutes ago

From the section

Science & Environment



Image copyright

AP

Image caption

Negotiators aimed to clinch a strong and ambitious global climate deal, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said

Organisers of the climate talks in Paris say a final draft text has been agreed after nearly two weeks of intensive negotiations.

An official in the office of French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told the AFP news agency the draft would be presented to ministers at 10:30 GMT.

No details of the proposed agreement have been released so far.

The tentative deal was reached nearly 16 hours after the talks had been scheduled to close.

"We have a text to present," the official said, adding that the draft would be now translated into the UN's six official languages.

Analysts say that this is not a done deal - ratification will only take place if there are no objections raised at Saturday morning's ministerial meeting, and even is unlikely to come before afternoon in the French capital.

Mr Fabius, who has presided over the talks, had said earlier that the "conditions were never better" for a strong and ambitious agreement.

COP21: 'Conditions never better' for climate change deal

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent, BBC News
2 hours ago



Arnaud Bouissou

Laurent Fabius is confident that the agreement will be supported by the plenary

Negotiators in Paris are again working through the night in an effort to secure a new global climate deal.

The French president of the meeting said the "conditions were never better" for a strong and ambitious agreement.

Laurent Fabius said he was confident of presenting the final draft early on Saturday morning.

The document will be assessed by participants before a final plenary meeting of all the parties to approve the deal.

Despite insisting throughout the conference that the deal would be done by Friday evening, Mr Fabius had to concede to the reality that critical issues remained and extra time would be needed.

It's not an empty principle. It's an overarching provision or structure of whole agreement

Gao Feng,, China special representative

Observers were concerned about the slippage, saying there were some concerns now that the time for compromises would run short.

"There has to be a take-it-or-leave-it text on Saturday," said Dr Diarmuid Torney from Dublin City University.

"With the length of time needed for processing and revising the document, whatever is released will be France's pitch for the final agreement," he told BBC News.

COP21 Live: Day 12 as it happened.

Significant progress had been reported on a range of issues in the latest version of the document, with evidence of real compromise between the parties. Countries supported a temperature goal of 2C but agreed to make their best efforts to keep the warming rise to 1.5C. However, the language on cutting emissions in the long term was criticised for significantly watering down ambition.

Despite the advances, the talks seemed stuck on a number of important questions.



Image copyright

Arnaud Bouissou

Image caption

Eager delegates leaf through the latest draft text

The question of demarcation between countries, called differentiation in the talks, was still the root cause of the difficulties.

"It's not an empty principle. It's an overarching provision or structure of whole agreement," said Gao Feng, China's special representative for climate change negotiations.

"So it's not just a one line or phrase in the preamble, or in one single article - but it will be reflected in different articles."

Another major difficulty was transparency. Richer countries want a single system of measuring, reporting and verifying the commitments countries make as part of this agreement.

It's said to be crucial to the US, which wants to ensure that China is subject to the same sort of oversight as it is. China and India are not keen on this type of oversight. It is proving a difficult nut to crack.

One positive note came with the announcement that Brazil was willing to join the so-called "high-ambition coalition" of countries including the EU, the US and 79 countries.

The alliance said it would push for an ambitious and legally binding deal with a strong review mechanism.

Global leaders also joined in efforts to move things forward.

US President Barack Obama spoke to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping by phone on Friday, with both leaders saying they were committed to an "ambitious" deal.

"Both leaders agreed that the Paris conference presents a crucial opportunity to galvanise global efforts to meet the climate change challenge," a White House statement said.

"They committed that their negotiating teams in Paris would continue to work closely together and with others to realise the vision of an ambitious climate agreement."

Fri Dec 11, 2015 11:40am EST

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Global climate talks stumble near finish line, Fabius optimistic

PARIS | By David Stanway and [Lesley Wroughton](#)



Efforts to craft a global accord to combat climate change stumbled on Friday with China and many other nations refusing to yield ground, forcing host France to extend the U.N. summit by a day to overcome stubborn divisions.

Despite the delay, many expressed hope the 195 nations meeting in Paris would grasp the strongest agreement yet to bind both rich and poor to curb rising greenhouse gas emissions at the climax of four years of negotiations.

"There are still a couple of very difficult issues that we're working on," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters, saying there had been progress in overnight talks.

Fraught discussions overnight exposed deep divisions on issues including a proposed goal to phase out net greenhouse gas emissions in the second half of the century.

China was among many nations laying out tough demands, resisting calls for early reviews of its plans to curb rising emissions.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius conceded the two-week summit would not end on Friday as planned.

He said a final text, meant to chart a way to far wider use of greener energy such as wind and solar power, would now be presented to nearly 200 nations for review only on Saturday, a day later than planned.

"We are nearly there. I'm optimistic," Fabius told reporters in the early afternoon, flanked by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "I'll present a text tomorrow at 0900 (0300 ET) to the parties that I'm sure will be adopted."

Ban called a 27-page draft text already on the table "a good basis" for a deal to help avert more powerful storms, droughts, and desertification and rising sea levels. "I appeal to all parties to take a final decision for humanity."

RESISTING REVIEWS

Delegates said China opposed calls led by the United States and the European Union for all nations to review and update their national plans for curbing greenhouse gas emissions every five years.

President Xi Jinping has already promised that carbon dioxide emissions from China's rapidly developing economy will start falling from around 2030, and does not want to revisit the target. Delegates said China had also reasserted demands that developed nations do far more to curb greenhouse gas emissions, mostly the result of burning coal, gas and oil.

Gao Feng, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's special representative on climate change, played down differences between China and the United States, saying: "There are no special differences ... A deal is getting closer."

"In fact, we have been pushing all kinds of countries, whether it is the EU or others. We wish they can all be more ambitious," he said.

Many other countries were also holding their ground.

Saudi Arabia said it would resist language in the draft calling for a rise in global temperatures to be limited to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. It fears that could jeopardize oil production.

The draft text, released on Thursday night, also proposes a target of "greenhouse gas emissions neutrality in the second half of the century".

Several climate scientists said the text should focus more clearly on phasing out carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. They also noted the latest draft did not explicitly mention fossil fuels, the main man-made source of carbon dioxide.

RED LINES

"Major countries have entrenched behind their red lines instead of advancing on compromise," said Matthieu Orphelin, spokesman for the Nicolas Hulot Foundation. Hulot is French President Francois Hollande's envoy on climate change.

Delegates said the talks were also split on who should pay for developing nations to move to low-carbon economies and to mitigate the effects of global warming on the climate, agriculture, human habitation and the earth's flora and fauna.

One source said the "night was very hard".

U.N. climate talks almost always run into overtime at the weekend and one senior European official praised Fabius.

"Everybody's to blame - there are no good guys or bad guys. It's going well. The French are allowing everyone to have their say," he said.

Xi spoke with U.S. President Barack Obama by telephone on Friday and said that their countries, the top emitters of greenhouse gases, should step up efforts to reach a climate change deal, Chinese state media reported..

Xi said the two nations "must strengthen coordination with all parties and work together to ensure the Paris climate summit reaches an accord as scheduled", according to state television.

(Reporting By Emmanuel Jarry, [Alister Doyle](#), Nina Chestney, Barbara Lewis and David Stanway; Writing by Alister Doyle and [Jonathan Leff](#); Editing by [Tom Heneghan](#))

COP21: Climate summit inches towards deal

By Matt McGrath Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris

- 2 hours ago
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)



Image caption Delegates worked through the night at the Le Bourget climate centre to produce a final version of the agreement. The final version of a new global climate agreement is expected to be released later, following late-night talks in Paris on outstanding issues.

There is a widespread expectation that the deal will be signed on Friday, though the timings are uncertain.

Delegates worked through Thursday night on a draft version to iron out the key barriers to an agreement.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who is chairing the summit, told negotiators: "I think we will make it."

Participants at COP21 - as the UN conference is called - have been working on a draft text, prepared by the French presidency, since Wednesday.

This was seen as a significant moment after discussions that began in 2011 about a new global agreement that would stake out a long-term strategy for dealing with climate change. Any deal signed here in Paris would come into being in 2020.

Getting shorter

Wednesday's draft document, running to just 29 pages in total, was considerably smaller than previous versions.

The latest version, delivered after consultations throughout Thursday was just 27 pages.

Mr Fabius then led the delegates in discussion through the night.

"We are into the final lap which separates us from a universal, legally binding, ambitious, fair and lasting agreement which the world is waiting for," he told negotiators.

The draft cut the options on the long-term goal of the proposed treaty. The latest version says that temperature rises must be kept "well below 2C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5C".

The number of square brackets, indicating significant disagreement, had been reduced to around 50, a major improvement on Saturday when they ran to more than 900.

Some campaigners were not happy with Thursday's draft, saying it denied "climate justice".

"Rich countries have a responsibility to ensure a fair global deal for everyone, not just themselves, and as we move into these final hours of negotiations poorer countries must not settle for anything less," said Adriano Campolina, from ActionAid.

Other groups though found positives in the latest version.

"The draft has affirmed the need to set quantified funding goals for both climate change mitigation and adaptation for the years after 2020," said Helen Szoke from Oxfam.

"This is a very encouraging development and we strongly urge negotiators to keep this in the final agreement."

Unanswered questions

There are still considerable difficulties about issues including climate finance and the question of demarcation between developed and developing countries.

Image copyright EPA

Image caption EU climate commissioner Miguel Arias Canete urged greater ambition in the final draft. Called "differentiation" in the negotiations, the richer nations want to change the way the world has been divided since 1992, when the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change came into being.

In their view, more emerging economies should take on more of the burden of cutting emissions and providing finance to the very poor nations hit by the impacts of rising temperatures.

The richer countries were also insisting on a single system of verification of promises for all countries.

"We feel that when parties have committed themselves to a national target that reflects their ambitions and abilities, they must be ready to tell the global community what type of progress is being made," said Elina Bardram, the EU's chief negotiator told reporters.

"In order for that conversation to make sense in the real world, we need to have accounting standards and principles that are common to all - otherwise you are simply comparing apples with pears."

The hope was that on Friday the final text of the agreement would be published and a formal gathering of the parties, called a plenary session, would then convene to approve the outcome.

"We have been working for this for four years," said Miguel Arias Canete, the EU climate commissioner.

"We cannot fail now because this is crunch time."

[COP 21: UN climate change conference | Paris](#)

Climate coalition breaks cover in Paris to push for binding and ambitious deal

Alliance representing more than 100 countries, including US, shows developed and developing world can work together, says EU climate chief



Marshall Islands' foreign minister, Tony de Brum, warns that while the coalition wants to become broad, it will not sacrifice its core demand. Photograph: Jacky Naegelen/Reuters

[Karl Mathiesen](#) and [Fiona Harvey](#)

Tuesday 8 December 2015 20:19 GMT Last modified on Tuesday 8 December 2015 22:11 GMT

A coalition representing more than 100 countries, formed in secrecy six months ago, has emerged at key UN talks in Paris to push for a legally binding global and ambitious deal on climate change.

The "high ambition coalition" speaks for the majority of the 195 countries at the [crunch conference](#) and consists of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the US and all of EU member states. But notable exceptions include major developing countries such as China and India.

The group is focusing on at least four key issues. They want an agreement at Paris to be legally binding; to set a clear long-term goal on global warming that is in line with scientific advice; to introduce a mechanism for reviewing countries' emissions commitments every five years; and create a unified system for tracking countries' progress on meeting their carbon goals.

The move is significant because it forms a [major new power at the talks](#) that wants to come to as strong an agreement as possible. Countries are meeting in Paris to forge a new global agreement on climate change, with limits on emissions and finance for poorer countries, to kick in from 2020 when current commitments expire.

The Paris talks, which are now into their final days, are seen as a make-or-break meeting, because if they fail the world will lack effective collective action on global warming.

[French negotiators furiously work the backrooms to secure a climate deal](#)

Miguel Arias Cañete, the EU climate commissioner, said the alliance showed that developed and developing countries could work together with a common interest. "These negotiations are not about them and us. They are about all of us, developed and developing countries, finding common ground and solutions together. We urge other countries to join us. Together we can do it," he said.

"This is an ambition coalition," said Giza Gaspar Martins, chair of the group of the 48 most vulnerable countries to climate change. "This is also a coalition that is open to recognising the difficulties of others, because alone, we can't achieve that high mitigation ambition that we have."

Marshall Islands' foreign minister, Tony de Brum, said the coalition had waited until it could have the most impact to make its work public. "This being the last three days of this meeting, there needs to be bridging. To reach out to those who still have doubts and maybe help convince them that the message that we are putting out is for real and it does make sense and it has the support of a lot more people than may first meet the eye."

[The Mekong river: stories from the heart of the climate crisis](#)

The coalition was first formed over informal drinks on the sidelines of a climate meeting in Paris in July. Pablo Vieira Samper, Colombia's deputy environment minister, said De Brum was the "brilliant mind behind it".

A group of 15 foreign ministers, as well as Cañete, has since met in secrecy at least three times, including one meeting on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in September in a boardroom provided by the Rockefeller family.

On Sunday night, the ministers attended a dinner at a restaurant in central Paris, which was attended by US chief negotiator Todd Stern. The meal lasted until midnight as ministers spoke convivially and at length as they converged on issues on which they have identified common ground.

The group was initially known as "the informal ministerial gathering", but Stern coined the name "the high ambition coalition" in a press conference on Monday.

[Everything you need to know about the Paris climate summit and UN talks](#)

De Brum said the countries would act as a "mosquito fleet", sending envoys to various parties with which they have bilateral ties and "bite them in a nice way". He said he had personally requested meetings with Australia, Poland, Canada and India. None of the partners had yet reached out to the world's biggest polluter, China.

Vieira Samper said: "Our countries, negotiating groups even, might have different views and different needs. But we know that there are certain things that we all want. Of course this is something that's open to anyone who wants to join."

But De Brum warned that while the group wanted to become broad, it would not sacrifice its core demands. "This group is not going to allow this thing to be diluted to the point that it's a watered down agreement with really no teeth. I think that's important. And also that we will not leave anyone behind," said De Brum.

There still appear to be some elements of divergence within the coalition though, with De Brum and Vieira Samper presenting a list of eight "points of convergence". These differed slightly from four points the EU simultaneously made public. The Guardian understands the EU is in accord with all eight coalition demands. Ministers will meet on

Tuesday night to settle on an official statement to be made on Wednesday morning.

[Saudi Arabia accused of trying to wreck Paris climate deal](#)

Some countries, including China and India, are understood to have reservations about potential elements of a deal. India in particular is unhappy with a five-year review of targets, and with plans to include a target of limiting future warming to 1.5C, instead of 2C which scientists say is the limit of safety, beyond which extreme weather could become catastrophic and irreversible.

The US wants some aspects of any deal – such as the emission targets and commitments on financial assistance to the developing world – not to be legally binding, though it may agree to the main architecture of any settlement be binding.

Ministers from the 195 countries at the talks are now working on the draft text of a possible agreement. They are scheduled to finish on Thursday, leaving the mechanics of formalising an agreement under the UN's processes for Friday, last day of the fortnight-long meeting. However, if these talks follow the pattern set at previous meetings, that timetable may slip.

COP21: US joins 'high ambition coalition' for climate deal

By Matt McGrath Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris

- 2 hours ago
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)

Image copyright US State Department

Image caption John Kerry said there was an urgent need to secure a deal in Paris

The United States has joined with the EU and a range of other countries at COP21 in an effort to secure a final agreement.

The so called "high ambition coalition" now comprises well over 100 countries from the rich and developing world.

As well as the US, Norway, Mexico and Colombia have offered their support to the alliance.

Delegates worked through the night on a draft text of the agreement with a further version likely on Thursday.

On Tuesday the European Union joined with 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to push for an "ambitious, durable and legally binding" deal with a strong review every five years.

On Wednesday, the US joined the grouping, which, although it will not be a formal negotiating block, has set out a common position on what the Paris agreement must achieve.

Climate allies

"We will be fighting for some very basic issues," said Tony De Brum, foreign minister of the Marshall Islands.

"Strong recognition of the below 1.5-degree temperature goal, a clear pathway for a low-carbon future, five-yearly updates and a strong package of support for developing countries, including delivery of \$100bn per annum," he said.

US lead negotiator, Todd Stern, echoed the call for the 1.5-degree target to be recognised in the eventual agreement.

"We need beyond the below 2-degree target; we need to have a recognition of 1.5 degrees in the agreement and we need a very strong and balanced transparency article so everybody knows what we are all doing.

"This is our moment and we need to make it count," he said.

Image caption Protestors took their message to the mini Eiffel tower at the Le Bourget conference centre

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, also told the meeting that the "science was screaming at us", and he urged the compromises necessary to make the deal happen in Paris. He announced a doubling of grant-based adaptation funding by 2020 to \$800m.

In the conference, the release of a new text was seen as a significant moment as it marked the first time the French presidency issued a draft of what they believed the agreement could look like.

At just 29 pages, encompassing an agreement and a draft decision, the new document marked a significant step forward in terms of size and in terms of cutting down the options presented to negotiators.

COP president, Laurent Fabius, said that questions of differentiation, finance and long-term ambition were still areas of significant disagreement.

Rich and poor nations alike both had problems with the text.

"Developed countries are not fulfilling their obligations," said Indian minister Prakash Javadekar.

"We cannot yet see the balance that we are all working towards here," said Peter Woolcott, the Australian environment ambassador.

Saudi Arabia accused of trying to wreck Paris climate deal

One of the world's largest oil producers is getting in the way of a deal and making implausible objections, say delegates and campaigners



Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi, minister of petroleum and mineral resources, of Saudi Arabia addressing delegates at COP21 conference in Le Bourget, Paris. Photograph: IISD

[Suzanne Goldenberg in Paris](#)

@suzyji

Tuesday 8 December 2015 15:38 GMT

Last modified on Tuesday 8 December 2015 17:40 GMT

Saudi Arabia stood accused on Tuesday of trying to wreck the Paris climate summit in order to protect its future as one of the world's largest oil producers.

As the talks entered the home stretch, developing country negotiators and campaigners became increasingly vocal in their complaints that the kingdom was getting in the way of a deal.

"They are seeing the writing on the wall," said Wael Hmaidan, director of Climate Action Network, the global campaign group. "The world is changing and it's making them very nervous."

Those concerns about the future for an economy almost entirely dependent on fossil fuels was reflected in the negotiations, other observers said.

"Anything that would increase ambition or fast forward this energy transition that is already taking place is something that they try to block," Hmaidan said.

Saudi Arabia did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Until it was eclipsed by the US, the Saudi kingdom was the world's largest oil producer and currently ranks as the 10th largest polluter, according to Enerdata.

Saudi Arabia has long played a high-profile presence at annual climate summits operating from the luxuriously appointed pavillions of the Gulf Cooperation Council – and over the years has regularly been accused of blocking action on climate change.

In the run-up to the Paris summit, however, the kingdom adopted a more amenable posture. Last month it delivered a plan to fight climate change, pledging a "significant deviation" in emissions, but was the last G20 country to submit its offer to the United Nations, and analysts described the targets as opaque.

Last May, Ali al-Naimi acknowledged the global economy was moving away from fossil fuels – and said that Saudi Arabia was prepared to move with it.

"In Saudi Arabia, we recognise that eventually, one of these days, we are not going to need fossil fuels. I don't know when, in 2040, 2050 or thereafter," he said.

Oil analysts note the kingdom also faces enormous domestic pressure to diversify its electricity supply. Nearly all of Saudi Arabia's domestic electricity supply comes from oil, and keeping the lights on and air conditioners humming is taking up a growing share of production that would otherwise have been sold for export.

Behind the closed doors of negotiating sessions, however, the Saudis have strenuously resisted efforts to enshrine ambitious goals into the text of a Paris agreement.

The Saudis objected even to the mention of 1.5C – a new more ambitious target for limiting warming now endorsed by more than 100 countries including vulnerable low-lying states and big polluters such as the European Union and US.

The kingdom balked at the goal of decarbonising the economy by 2050.

The Saudis have also objected to demands for periodic reviews of climate plans, according to accounts from negotiators and observers. Saudi delegates complain that submitting a climate plan before Paris was difficult enough.

"It is unacceptable for developing countries, like my own, to be asked to participate in this so called ratchet mechanism," the Saudis were reported to have told the session.

"It was tough, we had to go to every ministry, every part of government. We developing countries don't have the capacity to do this every five years. We are too poor, we have too many other priorities. It's unacceptable," a Saudi delegate said.

And although Saudi Arabia ranks as the world's 15th largest economy, it has resisted efforts to grow the Green Climate Fund to help poorer countries cope with global warming – insisting only industrialised countries contribute.

Saudi negotiators have also demanded that if tiny islands like Kiribati be compensated for climate change, they should also be protected from loss of future oil income, and they have sought financial aid to acquire new green energy technology.

By Tuesday, the Saudi obstruction had even begun to rankle with other members of the Arab League, campaign groups said.

Egypt officially embraced the 1.5C goal at the start of the talks. However, Arab countries as a bloc have yet to endorse the more ambitious target – even though countries such as Morocco are hosting next year's UN talks and have been praised as a progressive country on climate change.

"We feel Saudi Arabia is playing a bully role in undermining the position of other Arab countries," Hmaidan said. "It is unfortunate that the Arab group is

the only group opposing 1.5C.”

COP21: Carbon emissions 'to stall or even decline' this year

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris
3 hours ago

From the section
Science & Environment



Image copyright

SPL

Image caption

The burning of coal for power is a large contributor to atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases

Global emissions of carbon dioxide are likely to stall and even decline slightly this year, new data suggests.

Researchers say it is the first time this has happened while the global economy has continued to grow.

The fall-off is due to reduced coal use in China, as well as faster uptake of renewables, the scientists involved in the assessment add.

But they expect the stall to be temporary and for emissions to grow again as emerging economies develop.

According to **the study**, published in the journal Nature Climate Change and presented here at COP21 in Paris, emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels and industry are likely to have fallen 0.6% in 2015.

They increased by around the same amount in 2014.

It could begin to look like a peak in emissions after Paris if the agreement is very strong

Prof Corinne Le Quere, University of East Anglia

Since 2000, global emissions have grown annually by 2-3%. The slowdown has occurred while the global economy has grown by 3% in both 2014 and 2015.

"We're expecting a stalling in emissions, possibly even a little decrease," said Prof Corinne Le Quere from the University of East Anglia, UK, who led the data analysis.

"The main cause is from decreased coal use in China. It's restructuring its economy, but there is also a contribution from the very fast growth in renewable energy worldwide, and this is the most interesting part: can we actually grow renewable energy enough to offset the coal use elsewhere?"

No peaking

China continued to be the world leader in emissions, according to the report, responsible for 27% of the global total. With its economy slowing, coal use has declined just as concerns have grown over air pollution issues in urban areas. There has also been a rapid take-up in renewables.

However, Prof Le Quere said that despite this year's figures, the global peak of emissions use was not yet in sight.

"As the emerging economies are mostly based on coal, as they grow we are expecting a restart in the emissions," she told BBC News.

"And in the industrial economies like in the UK, where emissions are going down, the decrease is relatively modest, mostly 1-2%. We would be looking for a much faster decrease than that to offset the growth in the developing countries."



Image copyright

Getty Images

Image caption

The UN secretary general seems to see the funny side of things at the opening of the ministerial session at COP21

India was the fourth largest emitter overall in 2014, with its emissions now matching those of China's in 1990.

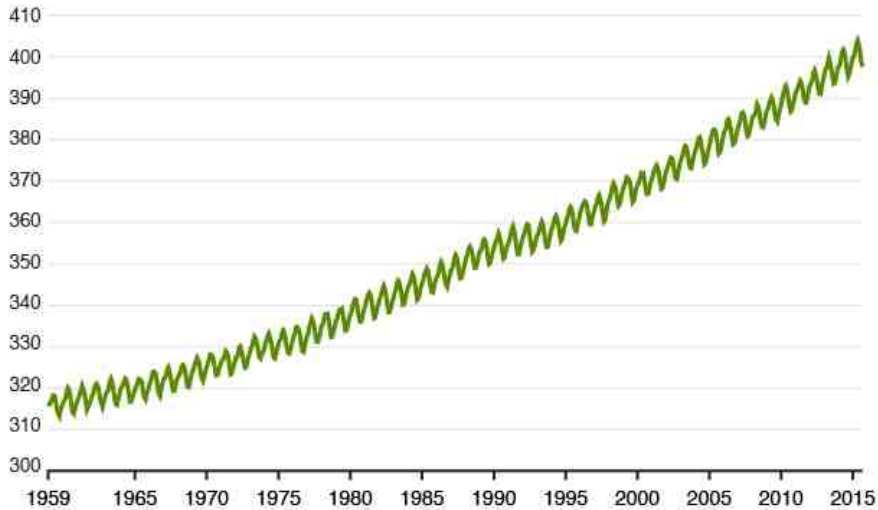
India's growth in 2014 was offset by a similar decline in the European Union, which experienced an unusually warm winter combined with a sustained long-term decline in carbon output.

But the rapid growth in Indian emissions is causing some concern for researchers.

"The learning curve took China about 20 years to achieve this current level of efficiency," said Prof Dabo Guan, also from the University of East Anglia.

"If everything moves to India without significant energy structure improvements then emissions will significantly grow. We have already seen the Indian emissions take off in the last couple of years."

Monthly average CO2 concentration (parts per million)



Source: Scripps CO2 Program, data from the Mauna Loa Observatory

Image caption

Annual emissions add to the concentration of CO2 already in the atmosphere, which continues to rise

The study has been published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

The scientists involved believe that while the slowdown in emissions is welcome, albeit temporary, it could be a snapshot of the future if a deal can be done here in Paris.

Prof Le Quere told the BBC: "To deal with climate change we need emissions to go to zero - and we are now talking about zero growth and not zero emissions - so we are still a long, long way from that."

"It could begin to look like a peak in emissions after Paris if the agreement is very strong."

COP21: Climate delegates agree draft deal text

By Matt McGrath Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris

- 6 hours ago
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)
-



Image copyright AP

Delegates at a UN climate conference in Paris have approved a draft text they hope will form the basis of an agreement to curb global carbon emissions.

The 48-page document will be discussed by ministers on Monday.

They will try to arrive at a comprehensive settlement by the end of next week.

The French climate ambassador warned that major political differences still needed to be resolved.

Delegates from 195 countries worked through the night at the conference centre in Le Bourget, conscious of a midday Saturday deadline imposed by the French presidency of

this meeting.

[The weighty document](#) will now go forward to ministers who will have to take the many political decisions still required, if the text is to be turned into a long-term agreement.

"Nothing has been decided and nothing will be left behind," said French climate ambassador Laurence Tubiana.

"This text marks the will of all to reach an agreement. We are not at the end of the route. Major political issues are yet to be resolved," she warned.

Tricky decisions

Many delegates were relieved that they had at least reached this point, as it marks a critical point after four years of negotiations.

The document lays out a range of options for ministers on what the long-term goal of the deal should be, as well as the scale and the methods of raising climate finance for poorer nations.

Among the many tricky issues they will have to deal with is differentiation: many countries are reluctant to change the way that nations are divided into developed and developing, based on where they were in 1992, when the UN Convention was signed.

Many richer countries want this to change, and want a greater number of emerging economies to take on emissions reduction targets and become climate finance donors.

South Africa's climate ambassador struck a note of warning on this issue.



Image copyright EPA

Image caption On Friday, mayors from around the world took part in an event as part of the COP21 summit

"The Paris outcome must be under the convention and in accordance with its principles and provisions and must not rewrite or re-interpret its decisions," said Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko, who speaks on behalf of more than 130 developing nations.

Negotiators had hoped to be much further forward at the end of the week. They started out with a 50-page document and by Friday had reduced it to 36 pages of text.

"We now need to summon the political will needed to make the hard decisions required for an effective and durable agreement that protects the most vulnerable among us," said Thoriq Ibrahim of the Maldives and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States.

Many countries had reservations about the Friday document, so what has now been agreed contains these concerns added as an annex - pushing the document to 48 pages.

There are worries that far too much has been left to ministers to agree, and that in an effort to reach a deal, too many compromises will be made.

"We're hoping that in the rush to the end, ministers do not trade ambition for expediency, and remain true to the science," warned Tasneem Essop from WWF.

COP21: Progress reported on key issue of loss and damage

By Matt McGrath Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris

- 5 December 2015
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)



Image copyright Getty Images

Image caption Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines in 2013

Negotiators are edging towards a compromise on one of the most divisive issues between countries at the COP21 climate change talks in Paris.

"Loss and damage" is the idea that compensation should be paid to vulnerable states for climate-related events that they cannot adapt to.

The issue has provoked heated arguments and walkouts at previous conferences.

But here in Paris, negotiators from the US and small island states are said to be "closer" to an agreement.

For small island states and some of the least developed countries, the question of loss and damage has become one of the most important aspects of the climate negotiations in recent years.

While the vulnerable countries believe there are many impacts of climate change that they can adapt to, they have been seeking a mechanism that would compensate them for those events that they cannot cope with.

I think we are closer now, I have seen language that might even suggest that, I think, that there is a solution.

Senator James Fletcher, Environment Minister, St Lucia

They argue that in the future, the human influence on the climate is likely to lead to more extreme storms and rising sea levels. As such, the developed nations bear a responsibility for the losses and damages that might be caused.

The very idea is anathema to the US and the European Union, among others. They are concerned that if liability and compensation were linked to this, it could become a massive legal and financial headache.

At COP19 in Warsaw in 2013, discussions over the issue [broke down leading to a walkout by the poorer countries](#).

The issue has continued to rumble since then, despite the setting up of a [Warsaw International Mechanism](#) on loss and damage.

Positive steps

Poorer countries have come to COP21 looking to have loss and damage inserted in the legally binding text of the main agreement.

In an effort to find a compromise, the US has been meeting with the AOSIS group, representing 44 small island states.

Speaking to the BBC after a bilateral meeting on Friday, St Lucia's environment minister Senator James Fletcher said that he had been "heartened" by the discussions.

"I believe there is language, and I've been speaking to both the US legal people and our legal people, and urging them to come up with language that I believe will address this.

"I think we are closer now. I have seen language that might even suggest that, I think, that there is a solution. But it's not left to me."

There have been hints at previous climate meetings this year that the parties were edging towards a compromise. In September at a gathering in Bonn, the US was said to concede that the Warsaw Mechanism should be extended and made permanent. They would also "respond to the concerns of developing countries".

Speaking at a news conference in Paris on Friday, US lead negotiator Todd Stern said that compensation and liability was a "line we can't cross" but also indicated that progress was being made.

"We are working in a very co-operative and constructive way right with both the islands and the G77 on developing an outcome and a solution here, there are many players in this but we have been very engaged on this issue.

"The President met with leaders of five islands when he was here and from the President on down the US is quite focussed on this issue and I think we will land it."

Trade-off

The constructive spirit seems to be leading to a trade-off where the issue of loss and damage will be inserted in the main body of the agreement but the language will rule out issues of compensation.

"I think we can come up with something that allays the fears of the EU and US where liability and compensation is concerned without us giving up any rights that we currently enjoy under existing international agreements," Senator Fletcher said.

Meanwhile, the Philippines Commission on Human Rights has announced that it will launch an investigation into 50 large fossil fuel companies to see if they should be held responsible for the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events. The action is being supported by Greenpeace, Amnesty International and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

At the Le Bourget conference centre, negotiators were working into the night to try and agree the text of the agreement that can go forward to ministers next week.

The latest version has seen the document slim down to 36 pages from a previous 50. The progress has been welcomed but as the French president of the conference Laurent Fabius commented: "We aren't there yet."

Uruguay makes dramatic shift to nearly 95% electricity from clean energy

In less than 10 years the country has slashed its carbon footprint and lowered electricity costs, without government subsidies. Delegates at the Paris summit can learn much from its success



Renewables now provide 94.5% of Uruguay's electricity. Photograph: Mariana Greif Etchebehere/Bloomberg/Getty Images
[Jonathan Watts](#) in Montevideo

Thursday 3 December 2015 10.57 GMT Last modified on Thursday 3 December 2015 17.54 GMT

As the [world gathers in Paris](#) for the daunting task of switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy, one small country on the other side of the Atlantic is making that transition look childishly simple and affordable.

In less than 10 years, [Uruguay](#) has slashed its carbon footprint without government subsidies or higher consumer costs, according to the national director of energy, Ramón Méndez.

In fact, he says that now that renewables provide 94.5% of the country's electricity, prices are lower than in the past relative to inflation. There are also fewer power cuts because a diverse energy mix means greater resilience to droughts.

It was a very different story just 15 years ago. Back at the turn of the century oil accounted for 27% of Uruguay's imports and a new pipeline was just about to begin supplying gas from Argentina.

[Which countries are doing the most to stop dangerous global warming?](#)

Now the biggest item on import balance sheet is wind turbines, which fill the country's ports on their way to installation.

Biomass and solar power have also been ramped up. Adding to existing hydropower, this means that renewables now account for 55% of the country's overall energy mix (including transport fuel) compared with a global average share of 12%.

Despite its relatively small population of just 3.4 million, Uruguay has earned a remarkable amount of global kudos in recent years. It [enacted groundbreaking marijuana](#)

[legalisation](#), pioneered stringent tobacco control, and introduced some of the most liberal policies in Latin America on abortion and same-sex marriage.

Now, it is being recognised for progress on decarbonising its economy. It has been praised by the World Bank and the Economic commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the WWF last year named Uruguay among its “[Green Energy Leaders](#)”, proclaiming: “The country is defining global trends in renewable energy investment.”

Cementing that reputation, Méndez – who also heads climate policy – has gone to this week’s UN talks with one of the world’s most ambitious national pledges: an 88% cut in carbon emissions by 2017 compared with the average for 2009-13.



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Ramón Méndez, Uruguay’s director of energy: ‘What we’ve learned is that renewables is just a financial business.’ Photograph: Jeon Heon-Kyun/EPA

There are no technological miracles involved, nuclear power is entirely absent from the mix, and no new hydroelectric power has been added for more than two decades. Instead, he says, the key to success is rather dull but encouragingly replicable: clear decision-making, a supportive regulatory environment and a strong partnership between the public and private sector.

As a result, energy investment – mostly for renewables, but also liquid gas – in Uruguay over the past five years has surged to \$7bn, or 15% of the country’s annual GDP. That is five times the average in Latin America and three times the global share recommended by climate economist Nicholas Stern.

“What we’ve learned is that renewables is just a financial business,” Méndez says. “The construction and maintenance costs are low, so as long as you give investors a secure environment, it is a very attractive.”

The effects are apparent on Route 5 from Montevideo to the north. In less than 200 miles, you pass three agroindustrial plants running on biofuel and three windfarms. The biggest of them is the 115MW Peralta plant built and run by the German company, Enercon.

Its huge turbines – each 108 metres tall – tower over grasslands full of cattle and rhea birds.

Along with reliable wind – at an average of about 8mph – the main attraction for foreign investors like Enercon is a fixed price for 20 years that is guaranteed by the state utility. Because maintenance costs are low (just 10 staff) and stable, this guarantees a profit.

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[A 60-second guide to why the Paris climate summit will succeed](#)

As a result, foreign firms are lining up to secure windfarm contracts. The competition is pushing down bids, cutting electricity generating costs by more than 30% over the past three years. Christian Schaefer, supervising technician at Enercon said his company was hoping to expand and another German company Nordex is already building an even bigger plant further north along route five. Trucks carrying turbines, towers and blades are now a common sight on the country’s roads.

Compared to most other small countries with high proportions of renewables, the mix is diverse. While Paraguay, Bhutan and Lesotho rely almost solely on hydro and Iceland on geothermal, Uruguay has a spread that makes it more resilient to changes in the climate.

Windfarms such as [Peralta](#) now feed into hydro power plants so that dams can maintain their reservoirs longer after rainy seasons. According to Méndez, this has reduced vulnerability to drought by 70% – no small benefit considering a dry year used to cost the country nearly 2% of GDP.

This is not the only benefit for the economy. “For three years we haven’t imported a single kilowatt hour,” Méndez says. “We used to be reliant on electricity imports from Argentina, but now we export to them. Last summer, we sold a third of our power generation to them.”

There is still a lot to do. The transport sector still depends on oil (which accounts for 45% of the total energy mix). But industry – mostly agricultural processing – is now powered predominantly by biomass cogeneration plants.



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Workers connect wind turbines to the grid. Photograph: Joerg Boethling/Alamy

Méndez attributed Uruguay’s success to three key factors: credibility (a stable democracy that has never defaulted on its debts so it is attractive for long-term investments); helpful natural conditions (good wind, decent solar radiation and lots of biomass from agriculture); and strong public companies (which are a reliable partner for private firms and can work with the state to create an attractive operating environment).

While not every country in the world can replicate this model, he said Uruguay had proved that renewables can reduce generation costs, can meet well over 90% of electricity demand without the back-up of coal or nuclear power plants, and the public and private sectors can work together effectively in this field.

[The Paris climate summit at a glance](#)

But, perhaps, the biggest lesson that Uruguay can provide to the [delegates in Paris](#) is the importance of strong decision-making. As has been the case at countless UN climate conferences, Uruguay was once paralysed by a seemingly endless and rancorous debate about energy policy.

All that changed when the government finally agreed on a long-term plan that drew cross-party support.

“We had to go through a crisis to reach this point. We spent 15 years in a bad place,” Méndez said. “But in 2008, we launched a long-term energy policy that covered

everything ... Finally we had clarity."

That new direction made possible the rapid transition that is now reaping rewards.

Small nations, renewable giants

Uruguay gets 94.5% of its electricity from renewables. In addition to old hydropower plants, a hefty investment in wind, biomass and solar in recent years has raised the share of these sources in the total energy mix to 55%, compared with a global average of 12%, and about 20% in Europe.

Costa Rica went a [record 94 consecutive days](#) earlier this year without using fossil fuel for electricity, thanks to a mix of about 78% hydropower, 12% geothermal and 10% wind. The government has set a target of 100% renewable energy by 2021. But transport remains dirty.

Iceland has the advantage of being a nation of volcanoes, which has allowed it to tap geothermal sources of 85% of its heating and – with the assistance of hydropower – 100% of its electricity. This has made it the world's largest green energy producer per capita.

Paraguay has one huge hydropower dam at Itaipu, which supplies 90% of the country's electricity.

Lesotho gets 100% of its electricity from a cascade of dams that have enough spare capacity to export power to South Africa.

Bhutan's abundant hydropower resources generate a surplus of electricity that accounts for more than 40% of the country's export earnings. But over-reliance on one source can be a problem. In the dry season, it has to import power from India.

COP21: India signals willingness to cut coal for climate cash

9 hours ago

From the section

Science & Environment



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Getty Images

Image caption

India is set to become one of the world's biggest producers of coal by 2020

A senior Indian negotiator says his country will cut back its use of coal, if sufficient cash for renewables emerges from a Paris deal.

Dr Ajay Mathur said coal would be restricted if there was help to pay for "more expensive" green energy.

India is expected to become the world's biggest importer of coal by 2020 as it seeks to expand electrification.

Other nations welcomed the statement, saying that it enhanced the chances of a new agreement.

India's national climate plan, submitted ahead of this meeting, suggests a significant role for coal going forward.

According to the document, coal "will continue to dominate power generation in future".

Mine a month

The country is planning on expanding its production of coal to 1.5 billion tonnes of the fuel by 2020. That would require the equivalent of opening one new coal mine every month until the end of this decade.

India's need for coal is driven by the huge numbers who do not have electricity, estimated to be around 300 million people.

In these negotiations the government has adopted a hard line, saying that the need to develop using fossil fuels trumps the needs of the climate.

In recent days, the Indian Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar told BBC News that his country had every right to continue using as much coal as it needed.

"We are increasing our renewable targets tenfold in the next 15 years but we will require coal because it is the need of the hour for my people to grow."

But on Wednesday, Dr Mathur, a senior negotiator in the Indian delegation, adopted a much more conciliatory line.

He argues that the cost of solar, which has declined by 75% in 4 years, is still double the cost of coal.



Image copyright

Getty Images

image caption

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is welcomed to COP21 by French President Francois Hollande

If cash was provided to make the capital investments in renewables cheaper, India would use more sun and wind, and less coal.

"We look forward to an agreement that enables financial support from the countries that have developed on the backs of cheap energy, to those who have to meet their energy with more expensive but low carbon energy," Dr Mathur said.

When asked if the amount of coal that India consumed would reduce if more money was available from a Paris deal, he replied: "Absolutely.

"We are very clear that solar and wind is our first commitment, hydro and nuclear all of these non-carbon sources are what we will develop to the largest extent we can.

"What cannot be met by these will be met by coal."

The Indian delegation would be pushing for a "just and sustainable agreement" here in Paris, Dr Mathur said.

Development was still the main aim for India. But the country had to find a different way of doing it, even compared to the greenest European countries, he said.

"What I am truly fearful about is say if India moves onto a path of Denmark, and even has two cars for 10 people, we will be swamped. Even the Denmark paradigm does not work for us."

US lead negotiator Todd Stern said the Indian statement was encouraging.

"We support the notion of India greatly increasing [renewables]. Prime Minister Modi has made pledges that are quite enormously impressive actually with respect to the development of renewable energy, the total of what he has pledged is 175 gigawatts in a very short period," he told a news conference.

"We provide assistance to India, we invest in India, many other countries do, we certainly want to work with our Indian partners to encourage and to help, exactly what they are trying to do and do our best to help them realise that."

China has also announced steps to upgrade many power plants in an effort to clean up the air and reduce carbon, according to the the official Xinhua news agency, quoting the State Council.

Any coal stations that do not meet the new standard by 2020 will be shut down, the agency reported.

U.S. and China Work Together for Climate Solution, So Far

The world's two largest polluters have been team players at the climate talks in Paris

ClimateWire

By [Lisa Friedman](#) and [ClimateWire](#) | December 1, 2015



U.S. President Barack Obama, left, meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping during their meeting held on the sidelines of the COP21, United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Le Bourget, outside Paris, Monday, Nov. 30, 2015.

AP Photo/Evan Vucci

LE BOURGET, France—The United States and China appear joined at the hip during U.N. global warming negotiations here, at least on the surface.

President Obama's first official climate meeting yesterday was with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The leaders of the world's two largest greenhouse-gas-emitting nations touted two previous joint emissions deals, gave nearly back-to-back speeches on the urgency of tackling the climate threat and together issued a statement of support for an ambitious global accord.

Even their pavilions, shiny public relations booths where countries show off their clean energy work, stand practically side by side. They are separated, fittingly, by that of Mexico—a country with a reputation at the climate talks for building bridges between developed and developing nations.

"I think there is no climate solution without the biggest emitters working together," said Li Shou of Greenpeace China.

But behind the photo ops, observers say, lies a still-deep uncertainty about how the U.S.-China relationship will play out this week as nations struggle for a new international agreement.

"The question is how strong the alignment between the U.S. and China gets reflected in a broad agreement among 190 nations," said Elliot Diring, executive vice president of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions.

"They don't see eye to eye on every issue, so there's still things that need to be worked out between them," he added.

Some of the concern comes from the political whiplash many U.S. officials said they felt at last year's U.N. talks in Lima, Peru. Though it was held just a month after the announcement of a much-heralded agreement between the two countries, China took as hard a line as ever during the actual negotiations. One diplomat described China as "playing both sides of the street."

Working from prior agreements

Frenemies at best, U.S. and Chinese officials both say climate change is a bright spot in an alliance divided over currency manipulation, cyberattacks and the South China Sea.

They have now struck two major climate agreements. The first was a joint announcement in November 2014 of their respective climate targets: America's to cut emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, and China's to peak emissions by 2030. Nearly a year later, Xi announced in Washington, D.C., that China would best America's \$3 billion pledge to help poor countries deal with climate change by an extra \$100,000 while launching the world's largest carbon market.

Most notably, the two agreed on new language on how to fairly divide responsibilities among countries for tackling climate change, which has found its way into several subsequent agreements.

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“The fact is that China has taken an undisputed leadership role,” U.N. climate chief Christiania Figueres said during a recent talk in Washington, adding, “Who would have been able to tell us that China would have been able to accept or even propose a peaking of coal?”

Speaking with Xi yesterday, Obama reaffirmed the growing closeness of the leaders on this issue.

“Nowhere has our coordination been more necessary or more fruitful” than on climate change, Obama said after the meeting.

“There are differences between our countries. That’s natural,” he added, citing cybersecurity and maritime issues. But, he said, “there’s far more that the United States and China have in common than separates us, and ... when we work together, good things happen.”

Some differences remain

Yet differences remain on climate change as well, some of which were reflected in Obama’s and Xi’s respective speeches.

Obama, for example, homed in on holding countries accountable for keeping their mitigation pledges. Xi held firm on the need for finance and the right of growing countries to pollute, saying, “Addressing climate change should not deny the legitimate needs of developing countries to reduce poverty.”

Several analysts said they expect China to put up a public fight for those and other issues, and the U.S. alliance may play out behind the scenes.

“I would expect China to not lean forward very publicly because they need to stay aligned with the G-77 [group of developing countries]. But at the end of the day, they’ll use their influence to bring others along,” said one longtime observer of the U.N. talks.

Duncan Marsh, director of the international climate program at the Nature Conservancy, said both leaders’ speeches were made not only to the world leaders assembled at the U.N. conference but also to their home audiences.

Still, he said, “one can feel the room for convergence between them. It’s clear that the U.S. and China have a mutual interest in getting a deal in Paris.”

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Forests in spotlight at Paris climate talks

Uptick in deforestation in Brazil hints at difficulty of preserving and expanding forests.

- [Jeff Tollefson](#)

01 December 2015

Paris

Try watching this video on www.youtube.com

Brazil has long been [a source of hope](#) in the fight against climate change. Since 2004, [the country has curbed deforestation](#) in the Amazon by roughly 79%.

But now, as nations gather in Paris to negotiate a new global climate treaty, there are signs that this progress may have stalled — another reminder of just how hard it will be to curb humanity’s impact on the planet. On 27 November, the Brazilian government announced that landowners cleared 5,831 square kilometres of forest in 2015, an increase of 16% over the previous year.



Nature special: [2015 Paris climate talks](#)

“We have probably a new dynamic on deforestation,” says Brazilian environment minister Izabella Teixeira, “and we need to know what is happening.”

Countries are pouring billions of dollars into the effort to protect the world’s forests, with Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom agreeing this week in Paris to provide US\$5 billion through 2020. That figure includes substantial new aid to Brazil: \$600 million from Norway through 2020, and \$114 million from Germany.

[Curbing deforestation](#) could have substantial climate benefits. One recent analysis¹ estimates that aggressive forest management could offset roughly half of the globe’s current carbon emissions over the next decade. Reaching this target would require governments to halt deforestation, which now produces as much as 10% of annual global carbon emissions. Nations would also have to stop development in cleared areas that are regrowing, and plant forests on land that is not being used for agriculture or other purposes.

But increasingly, environmentalists and governments are looking beyond the United Nations for solutions to forest loss. The UN climate framework includes a mechanism that allows wealthy nations to invest in tropical countries that curb deforestation and increase forest cover. Yet without a formal, global carbon market that would allow countries to offset their greenhouse-gas emissions by paying for forest conservation, the existing UN scheme is funded largely by government donations.

Tree by tree

Although environmentalists are working to ensure that forests are included in whatever climate agreement comes out of Paris, they have focused on helping individual governments tackle deforestation and building partnerships with the agricultural industry, which drives deforestation through the production of major commodities such as palm oil, beef and soybeans.

“I don’t think we can expect Paris or the United Nations system to create the markets we are going to need to protect forests and slow down global warming,” says Steve Schwartzman, an anthropologist at the Environmental Defense Fund in Washington DC

Schwartzman, who has worked in Brazil since the 1980s, says he is not surprised by the recent uptick in forest loss there. Although the country’s government has made major progress against deforestation, it has yet to identify a system for rewarding landowners and local governments that are able to keep their forests standing.

“Getting below 5,000-6,000 square kilometres per year is going to be extremely difficult in the absence of any substantive positive incentives,” he says.

Still, Teixeira says that she is convinced that forests can make a difference in the fight against climate change — and that Brazil will meet its commitments in Paris to protect forests and reduce emissions over the next 15 years.

“I am not afraid,” she says. “We will achieve our goals, no problems, even considering the deforestation increase that we had last year.”

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[Article](#)

COP21: Coal plans would derail 2 degree warming target

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent, BBC News
3 hours ago
From the section
[Science & Environment](#)



image copyright
Getty Images

image caption

If all the new coal plants are built, the chances of controlling warming will reduce significantly say researchers

Attempts to keep global warming to 2 degrees will be wildly off course if all planned coal fire plants are built.

That's the conclusion of a **new analysis presented here** at the UN climate conference near Paris.

Researchers said construction would see emissions four times higher than the 2 degree target by 2030.

They say the building plans are in conflict with the carbon cutting agendas of countries like India and China.

The Climate Action Tracker analysis says that 2,440 coal fired power stations are planned around the world before 2030.

Emissions from the world's existing plants will be 150% higher than what is consistent with a 2 degree target, says their report.

COP21 Live: read the latest from Paris

But if all those in the planning stage are actually built, the outlook would be far more pessimistic.

"If all of them were to be built, they would emit 6.5 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide in 2030," said Dr Niklas Hohne, one of the research team.

"If you add all of the power plants that are existing today and will still be operating in 2030, you come to 12 gigatonnes from coal fired power in 2030 and that's actually 400% higher than is necessary for 2 degrees."

Halfway house

Scientists say the 2 degrees target is the threshold of dangerous warming. Temperatures have already gone up around one degree from pre-industrial times, **according to the latest research**.

The coal study looks at eight countries including India, China, Indonesia and the European Union. All of them have submitted national carbon cutting plans, **termed INDCs**, promising to reduce or cap their emissions.

But many of these countries are pushing ahead with plans for coal fired power as a way of getting as many of their people on the electricity grid as rapidly as possible.

"For seven of the nine countries, the planned coal plants threaten their INDCs," said Markus Hagemann of the NewClimate Institute, who took part in the study.

"This would lead to higher emissions from coal plants and it would undermine the country's efforts and it could also lead in a worst case to a displacement of renewable energy."

The researchers believe that in many nations the apparent contradiction is caused by politics.

Different government departments have different plans, they say, and these power battles are leading to many countries offering to cut their carbon while increasing their reliance on coal.

According to some participants these contradictory signals are having a negative impact on the chances of setting a long term goal to get rid of fossil fuels.

One participant said the idea of including the term in the text being negotiated here had become "toxic" at COP21.

"Decarbonisation is emerging as a toxic word; many countries appear as quite opposed to decarbonisation," said Bill Hare, of Climate Analytics.

"Many of those countries, though not all, whose coal plans would breach their INDCs are among those opposed to the word decarbonisation.

"You can begin to draw a line between the coal stations being planned and the negotiating dynamics here of the long term goals."

India and China are said to oppose the idea of including the term or the idea as the long term goal in the text.

But the Indian environment minister gave a robust defence of his country's plans to continue using coal while increasing the amount of renewables.

"My energy consumption is one twelfth that of US and one tenth that of Europe, so don't you think that my people also have a right to grow and use energy?," said Prakash Javadekar.

"Should they remain in the dark? Is that humanity? That is why I will need power from all sources. We are increasing our renewable targets tenfold in the next 15 years but we will require coal because it is the need of the hour for my people to grow."

COP21: Rallies call for Paris climate change action

36 minutes ago

From the section



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Media caption

Police used tear gas to move protesters, some of whom threw objects at police

Hundreds of thousands of people are marching worldwide to demand action to stop climate change, but one protest in Paris was marred by violence.

More than 2,000 events are happening globally on the eve of a UN summit in the French capital.

In Paris, police fired tear gas at a large group of demonstrators gathered in the Place de la Republique.

They were apparently protesting against France's state of emergency, and have been disowned by the main organisers.

Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said 208 people were arrested, of whom 174 are still in custody.

The order, banning public gatherings, was put into place after the 13 November attacks in the city, in which 130 people died.

Many of those involved in the clashes wore masks or covered their faces. Protesters and police walked over candles and tributes left for the attack victims at a makeshift memorial.



Image copyright

AP

Image caption

France's president criticised the fact clashes took place at the memorial

President Francois Hollande said it was "scandalous" that the clashes happened "where flowers and candles have been left in memory of those who were killed by the terrorists' bullets".

He added that the clashes had "nothing to do with those who protect the environment".

Nicholas Haeringer, of the campaign group 350.org, **said protests should still be allowed to continue**, adding that campaigners would "stand against any attempts by the French authorities to use the incidents this afternoon to unnecessarily clamp down on civil liberties".

Live: Follow latest on global marches

In pictures: How eco-activists are mocking brands and leaders

Earlier in **Paris**, a human chain was formed by hundreds linking arms along the 3km (1.9 miles) route of a march that was called off after the 13 November attacks.

A gap in the chain was left in front of the Bataclan concert hall, where 89 people were killed.

Hundreds of pairs of shoes were left on Place de la Republique to remember those left frustrated in their plans to march.



Emma Ruby-Sachs of the Avaaz campaign group: "These are shoes from the closets of average citizens"

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Media caption

Emma Ruby-Sachs of the Avaaz campaign group: "These are shoes from the closets of average citizens"



Image copyright

AFP/Getty Images

Among them were a pair donated by Pope Francis, who has called for urgent action on climate change.

Elsewhere in Europe, organisers said some 10,000 people turned out in **Berlin**, with close to double that in **Madrid**.

An estimated 50,000 people took part in **a march in central London**, where opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn addressed crowds.

Activists want action to limit the rise in the average global temperature to 2C (3.6F) above pre-industrial levels.



Image copyright

Reuters

Image caption

Close to 10,000 are believed to have turned out in Berlin



Image copyright

EPA

Image caption

The protest in Rio de Janeiro involved plenty of mud



Image copyright

Getty Images

Image caption

Tens of thousands gathered in the middle of London

In **Sydney**, many people carried placards reading "There is no Planet B" and "Solidarity on a global scale".

"In 10 years' time our children are going to say, 'Mum, did you know about this? What was everyone doing?'" said Kate Charlesworth, a doctor and mother, in Sydney.

Mayor Clover Moore **tweeted** to say that, according to organisers, the true number of demonstrators was "at least 45,000", which would make it the biggest ever such march in Sydney, if confirmed.

"Those who did the least to cause the problem are feeling the impacts first and hardest, like our sisters and brothers in the Pacific," said Oxfam campaigner Judee Adams in a protest of some 5,000 people in **Adelaide**.

Further demonstrations are being held in **Sao Paulo, Mexico City** and **New York**, among other cities.

About 150 world leaders are due to attend the Paris talks including US President Barack Obama, China's Xi Jinping, India's Narendra Modi and Russia's Vladimir Putin.

Mr Hollande says he hopes a deal can be achieved, but that it will not be easy.

"Man is the worst enemy of man," he said. "We can see it with terrorism. But we can say the same when it comes to climate. Human beings are destroying nature, damaging the environment."

COP21: Paris climate deal 'more likely' after terror attacks

By Matt McGrath

Environment correspondent, BBC News, Paris

3 hours ago

From the section

Science & Environment



Image copyright

EPA

Image caption

Delegates feel the recent Paris attacks will enhance chances of an agreement

Nearly 150 global leaders are gathering in Paris amid tight security for a critical UN climate meeting.

The conference, **known as COP21**, starts on Monday and will try to craft a long-term deal to limit carbon emissions.

Observers say that the recent terror attacks on the French capital will increase the chances of a new agreement.

Around 40,000 people are expected to participate in the event, which runs until 11 December.

The gathering of 147 heads of state and government is set to be far bigger than the 115 or so who came to Copenhagen in 2009, the last time the world came close to agreeing a long term deal on climate change.

Rallies call for action

While many leaders including Presidents Obama and Xi Jinping were always set to attend this conference, the recent violent attacks in Paris have encouraged others to come in an expression of solidarity with the French people.

Unlike at Copenhagen, the French organisers are bringing the leaders in at the start of the conference rather than waiting for them to come in at the end, a tactic which failed spectacularly in the Danish capital.

Considerable differences

Delegates are in little doubt that the shadow cast over the city by the attacks will enhance the chances of agreement.



Image copyright

Hawkey

Image caption

Religious pilgrims have walked to Paris from many parts of Europe to support a strong outcome

"I believe that it will make a deal more likely, because what I feel from the parties is that they are very eager to move," said Amjad Abdulla from the Maldives, who chairs the Alliance of Small Island States in the negotiations.

A former UK government adviser on climate change and now chairman of **environmental think tank E3G**, Tom Burke, believes that some leaders will push the line that, by tackling rising temperatures, you remove one of the causes of terrorism.

While the mood music around the event is very positive, there are still considerable differences between the parties.

Security for the summit

Already planned to be tight even before the attacks

Following the attacks, border controls temporarily imposed. They were set to begin on 30 November anyway

Almost 1,000 people considered security risks refused entry since 13 November

8,000 police and gendarmes to carry out border checks

2,800 of them at the conference venue at Le Bourget north of Paris

120,000 police and troops already mobilised across France since the attacks

Sale and transport of flammable materials such as gas cylinders, domestic solvents, barbeque firelighters and firecrackers banned until 13 December

Some major roads to be closed for two days

One key problem is what form an agreement will take. The US for instance will not sign up to a legally binding deal as there would be little hope of getting it through a Senate dominated by Republicans.

"We're looking for an agreement that has broad, really full participation," said US lead negotiator Todd Stern at a news briefing earlier this week.

"We were quite convinced that an agreement that required actually legally binding targets would have many countries unable to participate."

Many developing countries fundamentally disagree. As does the European Union.



Image copyright

Hawkey

Image caption

Security all over Paris is highly visible ahead of the arrival of world leaders

"We must translate the momentum we have seen on the road to Paris into an ambitious, operational, legally binding agreement," said EU commissioner Miguel Arias Canete, in a statement.

As well as the form there are also many issues with the content.

There are a wide range of views on what the long-term goal of the agreement should be.

While it will ostensibly come down to keeping temperatures from rising more than 2C above the pre-industrial level, how that will be represented in the text is the subject of much wrangling. Some countries reject the very notion of 2C and say 1.5C must be the standard. Others want to talk about decarbonising the world by the middle or end of this century.

For major oil producers the very idea is anathema.

'Trust and confidence'

While the fact that more than 180 countries have put forward national plans to cut emissions is a major strength of this conference, there are still big questions marks about how to verify those commitments that will actually be carried out.

"People in the negotiations, people outside the negotiations are going to be looking for the capacity to have trust and confidence in what countries say they are doing," Todd Stern told reporters.

"[You] can't run the system without that."

UN climate conference 30 Nov - 11 Dec 2015



COP 21 - the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties - will see more than 190 nations gather in Paris to discuss a possible new global agreement on climate change, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the threat of dangerous warming due to human activities.

While there is some consensus among the parties that the plans will need to be reviewed every five years, there is no question of punitive restrictions if a country doesn't meet its targets.

And among the many other issues in dispute, almost inevitably, is money. While rich countries promised they would give \$100bn by 2020 to the developing world back in 2009, the cash has been slow in coming. Right now there is no agreement about what happens after 2020.

While there is a general air of optimism and a willingness to get a deal done, success isn't guaranteed this time round. Many believe that a country such as India, with close to 300 million people without electricity, will refuse to sign up to a strong agreement that limits future fossil fuel use.

If that happens, the whole process could come unstuck, as nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

Tom Burke for one believes that going against the flow will be particularly difficult this time round.

"I think one of the reasons people will find it hard to hold out at the end will be because of the level of political capital that Obama has invested in climate change, making it clear it is a primary legacy issue for him," he said.

[COP 21: UN climate change conference | Paris](#)

Paris climate summit: world leaders told to iron out differences before talks end

France steps up diplomatic efforts to get consensus on a global deal six days before official talks conclude



Laurent Fabius, French minister of foreign affairs, speaks during an interview at the French embassy in Brasilia, Brazil. Photograph: Evaristo Sa/AFP/Getty Images
[Fiona Harvey](#) and [Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Saturday 28 November 2015 07.01 GMT Last modified on Saturday 28 November 2015 07.04 GMT

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Negotiators at key UN climate talks in Paris that open next week are being told by the French government they must iron out their main differences six days before the end of the talks, according to the foreign minister, Laurent Fabius.

World leaders including Barack Obama, Xi Jinping, Angela Merkel and David Cameron are preparing to fly to the French capital to open the COP 21 negotiations, which begin on Monday and aim to produce an international deal to reduce carbon emissions that will kick in from 2020.

The highly unusual demand by the French hosts is a sign of their confidence that they believe a deal is within sight and that the huge diplomatic push they have made to ensure the talks succeed has not been knocked off course by the terrorist attacks two weeks ago.

But Fabius's request to have the final version of the [negotiating text](#) signed off by next Saturday will be met with scepticism among some observers of the talks. Frequently, previous incarnations of the UN talks have finished one or even two days after deadline.

Fabius vowed in an interview to forge an agreement that would be "universal, legally binding, durable and dynamic".

In the wake of the attacks, Fabius confirmed that security would be tightened around the conference centre, which is on the outskirts of Paris, near the airport where a planned

attack was foiled and not far from the St-Denis district where the attacks were planned. There will be a total lockdown on the area of Paris surrounding the conference centre on Sunday afternoon, when many of the heads of state and government are expected to arrive, in time for the first official day of talks on Monday.

Fabius praised the [climate activists who had agreed to call off their planned march](#) through Paris as a result of the attacks. "I have to salute the responsibility of the organisations who would have liked to demonstrate but who understand that if they demonstrate in a public place there is a security risk, or even a risk of panic."

He said: "The first week [of the fortnight-long talks] will be devoted to reducing the number of options in the text," in which delegates have suggested multiple alternatives in wording on certain issues. "I will ask that by [next] Saturday midday the text will be transmitted to me, the president of the COP, and at that moment everyone will know where we are and the procedure to follow. Obviously, I hope a maximum number of options will have been lifted but I will have to take into account the situation at that moment."

In a veiled reference to the situation at the last climate summit in Copenhagen, when negotiations were thrown into chaos by rumours of a draft text that had been circulated to some governments, he added: "I don't have a text in my pocket that I can pull out. I have found with the delegations that there is a real willingness to move forward, a willingness to be transparent.

"If there is no agreement by Saturday, of course I will take the initiative. I will see the different groups with the facilitators," he said. "Success is at our door, but it is not yet won."

Fabius, speaking in his resplendent office in France's foreign ministry, was in ebullient mood. Amply gilded and frescoed, with French windows looking out on to ornamental gardens on the banks of the Seine, the ministry was built with the intention of impressing France's many allies, and potential enemies.

The French are hoping that the discord that has marked previous talks, preventing a legal agreement at the last climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009, will be averted by [meticulous planning](#). Fabius, despite his punishing schedule since the atrocities in Paris, has been habitually squeezing questions on climate change into every meeting with his foreign counterparts and heads of state, as has the French president, François Hollande.

Before the talks, governments responsible for more than 90% of global emissions – including all major developed economies and most of the biggest developing nations, such as China and India – have laid out [plans for cuts or curbs to their emissions](#). These will form the centrepiece of any deal, and even if a deal is not reached, these commitments will be hard for governments to renege on.

Fabius said the COP 21 talks were "a success in terms of numbers and actions" pledged by countries on emissions reductions. "If we add together all these contributions, we avoid catastrophe, in the form of the consequences of inaction, a world four, five or six degrees [warmer]. But we are still not at 2C or 1.5C, which is the goal of Paris."

Scientists estimate that if the world warms by more than 2C on average above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century, the effects of climate change will become catastrophic and irreversible. A 2C limit has long been the goal of UN climate conferences, and current pledges from all countries are estimated to lead to warming of 2.7C to 3C, although the proposed deal has a provision for increased emissions cuts in future.

Fabius urged governments to move beyond the entrenched positions of the past. "We must do our utmost to avoid the blocking of an agreement because of irreconcilable principles. A good approach is to take this issue subject by subject."

On financing, for instance, he said there was general agreement that rich countries would ensure the funds promised to poor nations to help them cut emissions and adapt to global warming would be forthcoming.

In a pointed reference to one of the countries that may hold out on an agreement, Fabius said: "I was talking to the prime minister of India and he said for the moment my resource is coal, so he is approaching this on how he can make coal more clean."

But he said that generally the world was moving towards decarbonised energy. "We must not, it seems to me, present this climate question as a constraint, but an opportunity. China is a big leader in the world on solar energy. There are lots of opportunities in different countries," he went on. "For instance, programmes suggested for Africa – we have to help this development, it can give direct employment, and in the case of Africa can be a factor for growth."

COP21: Public support for tough climate deal 'declines'

By Matt McGrath Environment correspondent, BBC News

- 27 November 2015
- From the section [Science & Environment](#)

Image copyright Getty Images

Image caption The Paris conference is seen as the best opportunity in six years to agree a new global climate treaty
Public support for a strong global deal on climate change has declined, according to a poll carried out in 20 countries.

Only four now have majorities in favour of their governments setting ambitious targets at a global conference in Paris.

In a similar poll before the Copenhagen meeting in 2009, eight countries had majorities favouring tough action.

The poll has been provided to the BBC by research group [GlobeScan](#).

Just under half of all those surveyed viewed climate change as a "very serious" problem this year, compared with 63% in 2009.

Image caption The poll was carried out with 1,000 people in each of the 20 countries on the map

The findings will make sober reading for global political leaders, who will gather in Paris next week for the start of the [United Nations climate conference, known as COP21](#).

It's being billed as the best opportunity in six years to achieve a significant advance on tackling rising temperatures.

In 2009, in Copenhagen, the [leaders failed to deliver a strong outcome](#) despite widespread public expectation that a deal was needed.

The BBC asked the GLOBEscan research group what their long-term polling suggested about public opinion on climate negotiations

Around 1,000 people in each of 20 countries were questioned about their attitudes. The survey was carried out in January and February of 2015.

Declining support

The number rating climate change as a very serious issue in richer countries declined significantly from 2009, while support for strong action at the Paris conference has only grown in three of the 20 countries polled.

Canada, France, Spain and the UK are the only four with majorities in favour of their governments taking a leading role.

All told an average of 42% of those polled want their government to play a leadership role in setting ambitious targets, while another 41% want their government to take a more moderate approach and support only gradual action.

"The public are less concerned about climate change, and when you put that in the context of the climate conference in Paris, the findings show less support for an ambitious and binding agreement at a global level than there was ahead of COP15 in 2009 in Copenhagen," said Lionel Bellier, from GLOBEscan.

"It's not an abrupt change of views, the trend seems to be now towards a softer approach."

Public support has also declined in developing countries including China and Indonesia. The pollsters believe that global economic recession has played a significant role in

changing people's perspectives on rising temperatures.

"When we look at the broad range of environmental issues, they all have gone down in terms of concern, in all countries, since 2009, at the same time you see that concerns about the economy have risen, and what's capturing the agenda is terrorism, which has risen up the agenda over the last two years."

Commenting on the findings, former UN Executive Secretary, Yvo de Boer, now with the Global Green Growth Institute, said he wasn't surprised there had been some fall-off in support since 2009 when he chaired the meeting in the Danish capital.

"It is certainly true that in the run-up to Copenhagen there was very broad international support and enthusiasm to see a strong outcome," he told BBC News.

"There was obviously very significant disappointment when that didn't happen and on top of that came the financial crisis, so I do think there is a pre-occupation with more direct economic concerns of today."

Image caption Most developed countries have seen a significant drop in support for strong climate leadership

What may also cause concern for political leaders meeting in Paris is the growing sense among rich and poor countries that taking action on climate change could be costly and might destabilise fragile growth.

"The slowdown of the economy in China in the past 12 months has certainly impacted people's views, but also people are increasingly worried about the impact on their economies of curbing emissions, if we take major steps on climate change," said Lionel Bellier.

The pollsters suggest that citizens globally are becoming more informed about climate change. They also found more than twice as many people today blame rising levels of carbon dioxide from human activities for extreme weather events as compared to a similar poll carried out in January 2000.

UN climate conference 30 Nov - 11 Dec 2015

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