

IMPLEMENTING THE PARIS AGREEMENT - COP23

BACKGROUND

At the **COP21 UN climate change conference in Paris** in December 2015, a global agreement was reached which contains goals and mechanisms for responding to climate change and **binding obligations for all Parties**. The Paris Agreement sets a **long-term goal** of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to **well below 2 degrees C** above pre-industrial levels, and of pursuing efforts to limit this temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C. It also includes the goal to increase the **ability to adapt** to the adverse impacts of climate change and to make **finance flows** consistent with a **pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions**. In order to achieve these goals, the Paris Agreement requires **all Parties** to undertake efforts towards reaching **global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible** and towards achieving a **balance** between **anthropogenic emissions** by sources and **removals** by sinks (“**carbon neutrality**”) in the **second half of the 21st century**.



According to recent studies, the **temperature increase by the end of the 21st century will be closer to 3 degrees C** given the currently pledged mitigation contributions. Hence, **more extensive mitigation efforts are required** to bring the world on a path towards the **temperature goal** of the **Paris Agreement**.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study summarises the developments leading to the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015 and provides an overview of its contents. The further **implementation process** and the roles of the main Parties and other stakeholders are discussed, as well as related **international developments** and the **challenges** of the **climate change conference in Bonn** (presided over by the **Fiji islands**) in **November 2017**.

The role of the main Parties and other stakeholders



The year 2017 saw **new challenges** emerging when President Donald Trump announced that the **United States** would **withdraw** from the Paris Agreement. Although the U.S. withdrawal will not become effective until late in 2020, **U.S. mitigation measures and the financial support** the United States provides to developing countries will certainly suffer a setback. **China** has surpassed the U.S. as the **world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases** in 2005. It has seen a strong emission growth over the past 15 years, but its CO₂ emissions decreased slightly in 2015. The recent **expansion of solar and wind energy** will contribute to the achievement of China's goal of reversing its CO₂ emission trend. After China and the United States, the **European Union** is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. It is currently preparing climate and energy policies which will be needed to meet the Union's climate change mitigation commitments by 2030. The United Kingdom's plan to leave the EU (“**Brexit**”) will need to be addressed in this context. Besides the Parties and groups of Parties there are other stakeholders such as NGOs or international organisations with close links to climate negotiations that play an important role.

Other sectoral agreements and developments

In October 2016, the **ICAO** assembly adopted a resolution on a **Global Market-based Measure**, which aims at offsetting the increase in greenhouse gas emissions from **international aviation**. In the same month, an amendment to the **Montreal Protocol** was adopted, committing Parties to a stepwise **phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons** as they are potent greenhouse gases.

Other recent climate-change related developments on the international level include negotiations on mitigation strategies in **maritime transport** and the adoption of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** and the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** in 2015. The **refugee crisis** and **migration** have diverted the attention from topics as climate change although they are also linked.

Energy markets and policies may impede and/or support the transition to a low-carbon economy in the coming years. **Geo-engineering**, i.e. large-scale technologies for altering the climate system, are being discussed as an option to alleviate the impacts of climate change in the future.

The challenges of the COP23 negotiations in Bonn

The technical **implementation of the Paris Agreement** creates a number of challenges for the negotiators:

- **Time constraints:** The “Paris rulebook” has to be completed by December 2018;
- **Overlaps** between agenda items may jeopardise progress in linked negotiation strands;
- Strike the **balance** between **mitigation and other topics** such as adaptation and support;
- Keep obligations for **developing countries** in line with their **capabilities**;
- Role of **US negotiators** unclear - risk of slowing down the overall negotiations;
- Inclusion of **non-Party stakeholders** with potential conflict of interest.



Outlook



The year **2018** will mark an **important milestone** in the implementation of the Paris Agreement because first, the modalities and guidelines for the implementation of the Paris Agreement – the “**Paris rulebook**” - are to be finalised and adopted at the end of that year. Second, the **facilitative dialogue** will take place, where Parties will **take stock of their efforts** in relation to the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement.

In **September 2018**, the **IPCC** will present its **Special Report** on the **impacts of a global warming of 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels** and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways This report will be used as a key input to the facilitative dialogue.

A main challenge for Parties after 2018 will be to **update their NDCs** (national contributions). This will be especially important because **global efforts are currently not sufficient** to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. More ambitious climate action and support will be needed to meet the expectations placed on the international community and the goals stipulated in the Paris Agreement.

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