

Developments in international climate policy

UN climate talks in Bonn made only slow progress in negotiations towards a new international climate agreement, although a deal was reached to protect forests with a view to mitigating climate change. More than 40 countries have submitted pledges for post-2020 climate action. Meanwhile, the G7 called for global decarbonisation within this century, the International Energy Agency (IEA) found that global energy-related emissions could peak by 2020, Pope Francis issued an encyclical addressing climate issues, and medical experts highlighted the health benefits of climate action. The EU and China agreed to step up their cooperation on climate issues. The European Parliament's Environment Committee has been discussing an own-initiative report on the climate negotiations.

Bonn conference: slow progress on negotiating text for Paris agreement

Delegates met in Bonn (1–11 June 2015) for [negotiations](#) towards a [new international climate agreement](#) that is due to be adopted by the 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris (30 November – 11 December 2015). They cut the [negotiating text](#) from 90 to 85 pages, but left most of the controversial issues unresolved. Observers noted that the meeting was characterised by a high level of trust among delegates, but left a lot of work to do before the Paris conference. The conference co-chairs intend to deliver a streamlined text by 24 July 2015, in preparation for further negotiation meetings scheduled for August/September and October 2015. Ahead of the Bonn conference, the Agreement for Climate Transformation (ACT) Consortium, an international group of climate experts, published [a draft legal text](#) as input to the negotiations.

Also at the Bonn conference, the current climate policies of 24 developed countries were subjected to a [multilateral assessment](#) to evaluate progress towards achieving their economy-wide emissions targets.

REDD+ agreement to protect forests for climate mitigation

After ten years of negotiations, the Bonn meeting [agreed](#) a mechanism for stopping deforestation and forest degradation with a view to mitigating climate change ([REDD+](#)). This mechanism, which rewards developing countries for protecting forests, should become part of the Paris agreement. The issues resolved at the Bonn conference were safeguards for indigenous rights and biodiversity, payments for non-carbon benefits such as the preservation of watersheds and biodiversity, and the inclusion of non-market mechanisms. Observers were surprised that these long-standing points of disagreement were finally resolved.

Intended nationally determined contributions

Besides the EU and its 28 Member States, only four other countries submitted pledges for post-2020 climate action – known as [intended nationally determined contributions](#) (INDCs) – in the first quarter of 2015, a date suggested at the December 2014 Lima climate conference to allow for discussion and possible revision before the Paris conference. As of 30 June 2015, 11 more countries have submitted their INDCs. The INDCs submitted so far account for more than half of global emissions. [China](#), the world's largest emitter, intends its emissions to peak around 2030, and make efforts to bring that peak forward; to increase the share of non-fossil energy sources in its overall energy mix to around 20 per cent over the same period; to lower the carbon intensity of its economy; and to expand forests. [South Korea](#) plans to reduce its emissions by 37% compared to business as usual. INDCs submitted by 1 October 2015 will be included in a UN synthesis report on their aggregate effect, to be published by 1 November 2015.

Christiana Figueres, head of the UN climate change secretariat, [indicated](#) that the INDCs submitted so far are not sufficient to meet the internationally agreed target of keeping global warming below 2°C. According to the IEA, the submitted and announced INDCs would set the world on a path to 2.6°C global warming by 2100 and 3.5°C after 2200, unless emissions are reduced sharply after 2030.

G7 declaration reaffirms 2°C target and calls for decarbonisation

The G7 leaders issued a [declaration](#) during their 7–8 June summit meeting in Schloss Elmau, Germany, affirming the target of keeping global warming below 2°C. It calls for a decarbonisation of the world economy by the end of this century, and for a cut in global greenhouse-gas emissions at the upper end of a range of 40-70% recommended by the IPCC by 2050, using 2010 as a baseline. The G7 countries aim to transform their energy systems by 2050 and commit to developing national long-term low-carbon strategies. The G7 countries reaffirm their commitment to mobilising climate finance from public and private sources, including multilateral development banks. They pledge to support efforts in vulnerable countries to manage climate-related disaster risks, and to accelerate access to renewable energy in developing countries.

International Energy Agency: global emissions could peak by 2020

The International Energy Agency's [World Energy Outlook Special Report on Energy and Climate Change](#), published on 15 June 2015, analyses how significant emission reductions can be achieved while maintaining economic growth and giving the world's poorest access to energy.

The IEA report presents a scenario for global energy-related emissions to peak by 2020 without reducing economic growth. The IEA recommends reducing emissions through increased energy efficiency, investment in renewable energy sources, phasing-out of inefficient coal power plants and fossil-fuel subsidies, and reducing methane emissions in oil and gas production. By accelerating the decoupling of emissions from economic output, the emission reductions would come at no net economic cost. This could change the dynamics of the climate negotiations, as these cost-neutral emissions reductions would not be regarded as a burden. The greatest potential for such reductions was identified in China. According to the IEA scenario, Chinese emissions could peak in the early 2020s. This is consistent with recent findings from the [London School of Economics](#) that predict China's emissions peaking by 2025 or even earlier.

Vatican speaks out for climate action, but is wary of market-based approaches

Pope Francis, in his [encyclical](#) published on 18 June 2015, considers the climate as a 'common good'. He acknowledges the climate science and speaks of an urgent need to develop policies for reducing emissions, through enforceable international agreements. He calls for phasing out fossil fuels, but rejects emissions-trading as a mechanism. The document is generally critical of markets and consumerism. The papal encyclical opens up the debate about the ethical dimension of climate change.

Lancet Commission: climate action as a public-health opportunity

The [Lancet Commission on Health and Climate](#) report, published on 23 June 2015, found that tackling climate change could be the greatest public-health opportunity in the 21st century. According to the study, the effects of climate change threaten to reverse the health gains from economic development. The Lancet Commission recommends actions over the next five years, including investment in climate change and public-health research, financing for climate-resilient health systems, phasing-out of coal to protect cardiovascular and respiratory health, carbon pricing, access to renewable energy in developing countries, and an international agreement that supports countries in transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The Lancet Commission will set up a 'Countdown to 2030' group to provide expertise and monitor progress.

EU-China joint statement on climate change

Climate change was one of the topics of the EU-China summit on 29 June 2015 in Brussels. In a [joint statement on climate change](#), the EU and China commit to working towards an ambitious and legally binding agreement at the Paris conference. They agreed to cooperate on developing a low-carbon economy while maintaining robust economic growth, enhance bilateral cooperation on carbon markets, launch a low-carbon cities partnership, and strengthen their cooperation on a number of issues.

European Parliament prepares own-initiative report

Following a February 2015 Communication from the Commission on the '[Paris Protocol](#)', the European Parliament's Environment Committee discussed an [own-initiative report](#) on 16 June 2015. The [draft report](#) (Gilles Pargneaux, S&D, France) recommends phasing out global carbon emissions by the middle of this century, and calls for a five-year review and reinforcement cycle. It calls for raising the ambition of the EU's 2030 climate and energy targets, and a roadmap for scaling up EU climate finance, as part of a credible global financial package. The vote in plenary is expected for October 2015.