Climate change: what are the objectives of COP23? (video)

A delegation of 12 MEPs will attend the 23rd UN climate summit in Bonn, Germany, from 14 to 17 November. What is the focus of COP23 after the Paris agreement?

The COP conferences are a series of summits where countries discuss how to tackle climate change and stands for Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The next one in Bonn will be the 23rd one, dedicated to discussing how to follow up on the Paris agreement, which was the result of a previous COP summit.

Parliament will attend with a delegation of 12 MEPs led by environment committee chair Adina Vălean, a Romanian member of the EPP group.

European Parliament delegation in Bonn

The Parliament delegation to COP23 will be briefed on a daily basis by Miguel Arias Cañete, the commissioner responsible for climate action and energy. At the summit MEPs will also take part in background talks with representatives from the UN, delegations from different countries and international organisations and civil society organisations.

German EPP member Peter Liese, who will be part of the Parliament delegation, said about COP23: "Big decisions won't be made, but it's extremely important that after the United States announced they will opt out of the Paris agreement, the rest of the world stays united."

He added: "It is important not to take a step back, and maybe we will even be able to take a step forward with partners like China, Canada, Japan, and get the United States involved again when a new government is in power."

Meeting with COP special advisor
On 8 November the environment committee together with Parliament’s delegation for relations with the US discussed the challenges involved Edmund G. Brown Jr, the governor of California. Brown is this year’s COP23 special advisor for states and regions. He created the US Climate Alliance, together with governors Jay Inslee (Washington) and Andrew Cuomo (New York), in response to the US federal government’s decision to withdraw the country from the Paris agreement. It currently numbers 15 states, comprising 36% of the US population and $7 trillion in gross domestic product.

Brown told MEPs during the meeting: “The nature of the threat from climate change is existential, and the level of commitment is not up to the threat.” He added: “Even though dealing with climate change is difficult, decarbonising is a transformation of our whole civilisation (...). We have to go to zero-emissions by 2050 or maybe even sooner. It’s almost unimaginable how we get it done, but science is so clear: we don’t have another choice. Even the 2°C goal may not be enough.”

What is the Paris agreement?

The Paris agreement is the world’s first universal, legally binding climate deal adopted by 195 countries in December 2015 at the COP21 summit in Paris. It sets out a global plan on how to limit the increase in global temperatures to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. The deal entered into force on 4 November 2016 after the European Parliament gave its consent to the EU’s ratification.

What are the goals of COP23?

Governments are meeting at COP23 to advance the implementation of the Paris agreement. The focus is on the development of guidelines on how the Paris agreement’s provisions will be implemented across a wide range of issues including transparency, adaptation, emission reductions, provision of finance, capacity-building and technology. The aim is make progress in all these areas so that the guidelines can be completed by the time the next COP summit takes place in Poland next year.

What will be some of the challenges at COP23?

One of the tasks of COP23 is to prepare next year’s talks on countries will need to increase their contributions in order to meet the targets of the Paris agreement. In addition the US withdrawing from the agreement will make it more difficult to achieve the targets set out in it.

For more about this, read our interview with environment committee chair Adina-Ioana Vălean.
What is the Parliament doing to support the Paris agreement?

Parliament is currently working on three pieces of legislation to implement the Paris agreement:

- Reform of the EU's emissions trading system (ETS) to boost innovation in new sustainable technologies in industry
- National targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions from transport, buildings, waste and agriculture
- Measures to preserve and strengthen the capacity of forests and soils in the EU to capture CO₂ in a sustainable way

**Find out more**

COP23: the EU should ratchet up its climate goals (4 October 2017)
Articles on Parliament's fight against climate change
COP23 website
A guide to the UNFCCC