



Fact Sheet: U.S. Leadership is Resulting in Unprecedented Global Cooperation to Address the Crisis of Climate Change

World leaders are gathering in Paris to negotiate a historic global climate change agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The goal of the negotiations is to prevent a global temperature increase of more than 2 degrees Celsius, which the scientific community overwhelmingly believes is necessary to stem the devastating effects of climate change on public health, the environment, public safety and the global economy. The U.S. has led the effort of getting both developed and developing economies to make significant commitments to reduce dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and sharply increase the use of clean energy to generate electricity.

183 countries responsible for 97.8 percent of global carbon emissions have formally submitted plans to tackle climate change. This includes the top 10 emitting countries -- the U.S., China, India, the entire European Union, Russia, Japan and Saudi Arabia, among others. Just this week, 20 countries representing 75 percent of global carbon emissions pledged to double their investment in clean energy research and development during the next five years.

Yet instead of supporting critical international negotiations to protect Americans from climate change, Republicans are attempting to block a global climate change agreement to benefit special interest polluters. Republicans are taking every opportunity to try blocking meaningful action on climate change without offering any solutions of their own. They've tried repeatedly to stop the President's Clean Power Plan, gut clean energy research at the Department of Energy and now derail these critical COP 21 Paris climate talks.

Key Facts Ahead of the 2015 UNFCCC COP 21 Paris Climate Talks

U.S. Leadership brought us to this moment in history and the U.S. – government and private sector – will not walk away from this global opportunity.

The U.S. voluntarily submitted its Climate Action Plan, or INDC, to the UNFCCC very early in the process. Our deliberate early action, which included an explanation of the national policies that will result in the achievement of our emission reduction goals, has spurred more than 183 out of 196 countries to submit INDCs to the UNFCCC, representing more than 97 percent of global emissions. This global outpouring of support for cooperation is a true testament to the strength of U.S. global leadership on climate change. Optimism in global cooperation in this effort is at an all-time high and that is largely due to constructive U.S. engagement.

183 countries responsible for 97.85 percent of global carbon emissions have submitted national climate plans to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change. The top 10 emitting countries have all formally submitted plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sharply increase the use of clean energy to produce electricity. The top ten CO₂ emitters in the world (in order of size of emissions), are China, the United States, Europe (single contribution for the 28 member states of the EU), India, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. [COP21, [10/31/15](#)]

Failure to reach an agreement that puts us on the path to limiting global temperature increases to below 2 degrees Celsius will lead to catastrophic consequences such as super-droughts, more extreme weather, larger wildfires, rising sea levels and much lower crop yields. 98 percent of scientists, including those at NASA, NOAA and the National Research Council conclusively believe that failure to keep global temperature increases below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels would a total planetary catastrophe. If the world continued burning fossil fuels at the current rate, it is likely to hit 2 degrees of warming before midcentury or worse, and 3 to 5 degrees of warming by 2100. We are already halfway there, as the Earth has already warmed by 1 degree Celsius, with 2015 slated to be the hottest year ever recorded. The global commitments made in the 157 INDCs, covering 183 nations, represent shared responsibility for achieving the necessary reductions in global greenhouse gas pollution, but these commitments are also the starting point to help avoid the increasing risks from climatic events like super droughts, extremely powerful storms, rising sea levels and mass extinctions of animal species. Unchecked warming also means disrupted food and water supplies, spread of diseases to new areas, and further instability and conflict over resources. [CBS News, [11/30/15](#); NPR, [11/30/15](#)]

U.S. leadership has set the stage for global action. The U.S. has made significant climate announcements with China, now the worlds' largest emitter of greenhouse gases. During Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent state visit to Washington, D.C., the United States and China made a joint Presidential statement that outlined strong, ambitious climate targets and a common vision for a new global climate agreement for the Paris talks. The U.S. commitment to reduce emissions includes the clean power plan which will reduce emissions in the U.S. power sector by 32 percent by 2030, strong greenhouse gas standards for cars and trucks, among other measures, and China has made some aggressive commitments to address dangerous carbon pollution in its energy sector and across its economy. Some of the major commitments China has made include:

- China has pledged to reduce its CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP by 40-45 percent from 2005 levels and 60-65 percent by 2030. *China has committed that its CO₂ emissions will peak by 2030.* [White House, [9/25/15](#)]
- China has committed to increase renewable energy to account for 20 percent of its electricity generation by 2030. This will require China to build an additional 800 – 1,000 GW of non-fossil electric generation, which is close to the entire installed capacity of all power plants in the U.S. [White House, [9/25/15](#)]
- China will establish a national emissions cap and trading system beginning in 2017 that cover key industrial sectors including power generation, iron and steel, chemicals, cement paper making and non-ferrous metals. [White House, [9/25/15](#)]

- In addition to national targets, 11 cities and provinces from across China have committed to peak their carbon emissions before the national goal of 2030. This group of Chinese cities comprises 25 percent of China's CO₂ emissions, equivalent to the total annual emissions of Japan or Brazil. [White House, [9/25/15](#)]
- China has set goals to double its wind capacity to 200 GW and more than quadruple its solar capacity to 150 GW by 2020. China was the world's number one investor in clean energy in 2012 with \$83.3 billion, accounting for 33 percent of global investment. [White House, [9/25/15](#)]

Both developed and developing countries have committed to aggressively increase investment in, and use of, clean, renewable energy to generate electricity. As part of the COP 21 talks, 20 countries representing 80 percent of global clean energy research and development (R&D) budgets are committing to double their respective R&D investments over five years to reach \$10 billion. The group of 20 countries launching Mission Innovation includes Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. [White House, [11/29/15](#)]

Major pledges from developing nations to boost clean energy as a share of their electricity generation include:

- **China** has committed to increase the share of non-fossil fuels used in its primary energy consumption to about 20 percent by 2030. This requires China to deploy an additional 800–1,000 gigawatts of non-fossil generation capacity, which is close to the entire installed capacity of all the power plants in the United States. [World Resources Institute]
- **India** has committed to increase its non-fossil fuel energy sources to 40 percent of total energy sources by 2030. India has set targets to substantially increase its renewable energy capacity, including increasing its solar capacity to 100 gigawatts by 2022—a twentyfold increase from current levels of 4 gigawatts and increasing its wind power capacity to 60 gigawatts by 2022 from current levels of 23.76 gigawatts. [World Resources Institute]
- **Mexico** has set a target for 40 percent of its energy to come from low-emission energy sources by 2035, and 50 percent by 2050 including renewables as well as nuclear and fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage. [World Resources Institute]
- **Brazil** has set a target to increase its share of renewables other than hydropower to 28–33 percent of its total energy mix by 2030. Currently hydropower generates about 66 percent of Brazil's electricity; and other renewable energy sources, less than 10 percent. [World Resources Institute]

The United States is not alone in contributing to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which will help support climate action in developing countries. The GCF is critical to helping developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change, boost the use of clean energy and grow their economies.

- **The GCF will rely on contributions from both developed and developing countries and public and private funding. So far, 31 countries (including 8 developing nations) have pledged a total of \$10.2 billion to the GCF. The**

following countries have already pledged funds to the GCF: U.S., Japan, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Canada, Norway, Australia, Spain, Netherlands, Finland, Rep. of Korea, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Mexico, Luxembourg, Colombia, Peru, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Panama, Latvia, Monaco, Chile, Mongolia, and Indonesia. [UNFCCC, [9/21/15](#)]

- **The GCF is a critical component of our partnership with developing nations in bolstering their actions to address climate change.** The GCF is a multilateral fund set up to provide assistance to vulnerable countries that have committed to reducing carbon emissions, including many U.S. allies and potential export markets. The GCF will help preserve stability and security in fragile regions of strategic importance to the U.S. *Every GCF dollar is intended to leverage many others in new private and public finance to save lives, safeguard vital U.S. foreign policy interests, and job creation with demand for US clean energy products.*
- **China has committed \$3.1 billion, even more than the U.S. to support low carbon, climate resilient development in developing countries.** Separate from the GCF, China created a bilateral fund designed to help developing countries combat climate change and boost investment in clean energy, infrastructure and resiliency projects. [White House, [9/25/15](#)]

The U.S. pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the Clean Power Plan and strong greenhouse gas standards for vehicles is consistent with U.S. law. The Supreme Court has upheld the President’s authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act three times.

- **In 2007, the Supreme Court held in *Massachusetts v. EPA* that the Clean Air Act’s definition of “air pollutant” included greenhouse gas emissions, authorizing EPA to regulate these emissions from motor vehicles.** In 2012, the D.C. Circuit Court unanimously affirmed the EPA’s finding that carbon pollution endangered human health and welfare, the foundation for regulation under the Clean Air Act pursuant to the Supreme Court’s 2007 ruling. [EPA, [6/26/12](#)]
- And in 2011, in *American Electric Power v. Connecticut*, the Supreme Court reaffirmed unanimously its earlier decision that EPA has authority to regulate greenhouse gas pollution and, in the same case, found EPA had authority to regulate greenhouse gas pollution from power plants, including existing power plants, under section 111 of the Clean Air Act. [U.S. Supreme Court, [6/20/11](#)]
- In its June 2014 *Utility Air Resources Group v. EPA* decision, the Supreme Court again affirmed that the Clean Air Act covers carbon pollution. [Department of Justice, [5/13/14](#)]