

U.S., CHINA AGREE TO COOPERATE WITH URGENCY ON CLIMATE CRISIS

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Common ground: John Kerry says both countries are set to cooperate with each other to tackle climate change. APMichel Euler

The U.S. and China, the world's two biggest carbon polluters, agreed to cooperate to curb climate change with urgency, just days before President Joe Biden hosts a virtual summit of world leaders to discuss the issue.

The agreement was reached by U.S. special envoy for climate John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua during two days of talks in Shanghai last week, according to a joint statement.

The two countries "are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands," said the statement.

Mr. Kerry said the language in the statement is "strong" and that the two countries agreed on "critical elements on where we have to go." But the former Secretary of state said, "I learned in diplomacy that you don't put your back on the words, you put on actions. We all need to see what happens."

Biggest polluters

China is the world's biggest carbon emitter, followed by the U.S. The two countries pump out nearly half of the fossil fuel fumes that are warming the planet's atmosphere. Their cooperation is key to the success of global efforts to curb climate change.

Noting that China is the world's biggest coal user, Mr. Kerry said he and Chinese officials had a lot of discussions on how to accelerate a global energy transition.

Mr. Biden has invited 40 world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, to the April 22-23 summit. The U.S. and other countries are expected to announce more ambitious national targets for cutting carbon emissions ahead of or at the meeting, along with pledging financial help for climate efforts by less wealthy nations.

While Mr. Kerry was still in Shanghai, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng signalled on Friday that China is unlikely to make any new pledges at next week's summit. "For a big country with 1.4 billion people, these goals are not easily delivered," Mr. Le said in Beijing. "Some countries are asking China to achieve the goals earlier. I am afraid this is not very realistic."

'Not a geopolitical chip'

During a video meeting with German and French leaders on Friday, Mr. Xi said that climate change "should not become a geopolitical chip, a target for attacking other countries or an excuse for trade barriers," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

On whether Mr. Xi would join the summit, Mr. Le said “the Chinese side is actively studying the matter.”

The joint statement said the two countries “look forward to” next week’s summit. Mr. Kerry said on Sunday that “we very much hope that (Xi) will take part” in the summit but it’s up to China to make that decision.

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