

Spirit of Paris: on the climate change meet in Bonn

The 23rd conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change [under way in Bonn](#) faces the challenge of raising the ambition of the world's leaders, and giving practical form to the provisions of the Paris Agreement. Although 169 countries have ratified the accord, and there is tremendous support for greener, low-risk pathways to growth worldwide, the Trump administration in the U.S., one of the top emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs), has [announced it will withdraw from the pact](#). Even if it will take until 2020 to achieve an actual withdrawal, the U.S. action reverses the overall momentum achieved in Paris in 2015, and negates President Barack Obama's legacy of regulations designed to reduce America's GHG emissions, especially from the use of coal. It is heartening that China, which has achieved rapid economic growth and leads in GHG emissions, [is firmly behind the pact](#) to reduce the risk of climate change. There is steady progress in the growth of renewable energy sources as they become cheaper and the efficiency of solar, wind and energy storage technologies improves. As UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa has said, the time is now to firm up the tasks set out in the agreement reached in Paris, notably on funds to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Agreement has a benchmark of raising \$100 billion a year by 2020.

Major risks from climate change, such as extreme weather phenomena, loss of agriculture, water stress and harm to human health, pose a threat to millions around the world. For some countries, such as Fiji, which holds the presidency of the Bonn conference, and other small island-states, the future is deeply worrying because of the fear that sea levels may rise sharply due to climate change. The recent Emissions Gap Report from the UN underscores the terrible mismatch between the voluntary pledges made by countries for the Paris Agreement and what is necessary to keep a rise in global average temperature below 2° C, preferably 1.5° C. All major countries, especially those that have depleted the global carbon budget by releasing massive amounts of GHGs since the Industrial Revolution, have to respond with stronger caps in their updated pledges under the Paris Agreement. India's emissions have been rising overall, but it has committed itself to lowering the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35% by 2030 from the 2005 level. By some estimates, India has been awarded among the highest levels of multilateral climate funding at \$745 million since 2013. Securing funds for mitigation and adaptation is a high priority for India, but it must ensure that States acquire the capacity to absorb such assistance efficiently. While the emphasis on a giant renewable energy programme has won global acclaim, the focus is equally on India's readiness to embrace green technologies across the spectrum of activity, including buildings and transport.

Revving up infrastructure spending is necessary, but not sufficient

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