

Bound by Paris deal, says India

Committed to a cause: External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addresses a UN General Assembly meeting on Tuesday. AP

India on Tuesday reaffirmed its commitment to the landmark Paris climate change agreement, saying it was willing to “work above and beyond” the pact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during a UN ‘Leadership Summit on Environment Pact’, said India had been at the forefront of the debate on environment and development.

Her remarks came amid uncertainty over the U.S. role in the deal after President Donald Trump in June announced that America was withdrawing from the Paris deal, arguing that it gave undue advantage to countries like India and China.

India, which is the world’s third largest carbon polluter, reached a pact, along with more than 190 nations, in December 2015 with an aim to prevent an increase in the global average temperature and keep it well below 2 degrees Celsius.

The deal, which replaced the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, was ratified last October.

Participating in the UN meet hosted by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Ms. Swaraj said India was willing to work “above and beyond” the Paris agreement. “Understanding our responsibility towards Planet Earth,” External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted.

Solar alliance

The summit was presided by French President Emmanuel Macron. India takes the climate change issue very seriously, Mr. Kumar said.

“We also mentioned that India and France are working together on the international Solar Alliance,” he said.

During the day, Ms. Swaraj had a series of bilateral meetings with leaders from Mexico, Norway and Belgium. She also called on Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth.

“There were some discussions on the possibility of a high-level visit from Belgium to India later this year,” Mr. Kumar said.

Later in the evening, Ms. Swaraj attended a reception hosted by British Prime Minister Theresa May for the Commonwealth Heads of Government delegations. Ms. Swaraj is scheduled to hold meetings with her counterparts from San Marino, Brazil, Morocco and Moldova and call on Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. She is also scheduled to participate in several multilateral meetings including that of the G-4 (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Foreign Ministers.

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