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GLOBAL PEER PRESSURE

LIMA, Peru — After more than 36 straight hours of negotiations, top officials from nearly 200 nations agreed to the first deal committing every country in the world to reducing the fossil fuel emissions that cause global warming. In its structure, the deal represents a breakthrough in the two-decade effort to forge a significant global pact to fight climate change. **The Lima Accord**, as it is known, is the first time that all nations — rich and poor — have agreed to cut back on the burning oil, gas and coal.

But the driving force behind the new deal was not the threat of sanctions or other legal consequences. It was global peer pressure. Over the coming months, it will start to become evident whether the scrutiny of the rest of the world is enough to pressure world leaders to push through new global warming laws from New Delhi to Moscow or if, as a political force, international reproach is impotent.

The strength of the accord — the fact that it includes pledges by every country to put forward a plan to reduce emissions at home — is also its greatest weakness. In order to get every country to agree to the deal, the Lima Accord does not include legally binding requirements that countries cut their emissions by any particular amount. Instead, **each nation will agree to enact domestic laws to reduce carbon emissions** and put forth a plan by March 31, 2015 laying out how much each one will cut after 2020 and what domestic policies it will pass to achieve the cuts. Countries that miss the March deadline will be expected to put forth their plans by June. The plans from every country, known within the United Nations as “Intended Nationally Determined Contributions,” will form the basis of a sweeping new deal to be signed in Paris in 2015.

By asking countries to put forward plans dictated by their own economies and domestic politics, rather than a top-down mandate, the Lima Accord helped secure the agreement of every nation to some kind of carbon-cutting action, experts say. But with no language requiring the significant cuts scientists say are needed to stave off the costly effects of global warming, countries can put forth weak plans that amount to little more than business as usual. Countries can even choose to ignore the deal and submit no plan at all.

“If a country doesn’t submit a plan, there will be no punishment, no fine, no black U.N. helicopters showing up,” said Jennifer Morgan, an expert on climate negotiations with the World Resources Institute. Instead the architects of the plan hope that the agreement will compel countries to act to avoid international condemnation. “It relies on a lot of peer pressure,” Ms. Morgan said.

The structure of the deal is what political scientists often call a “name-and-shame” plan. Under the Lima Accord all countries must submit plans that would be posted on a United Nations website and made available to the public. Already, a number of research groups and universities expect to crunch the numbers of the plans, producing apples-to-apples assessments. The hope, negotiators said, is that as the numbers and commitments of each country are publicized, compared and discussed, countries will be shamed by the spotlight into proposing and enacting stronger plans.

The motivations of the world leaders and whether they care about those assessments are essential to the success of the deal.

NEW DELHI Children carrying coal to operate machinery.

