



United States, China to sign Paris climate accord on April Earth Day

The United States and China confirmed that they will sign the Paris climate change agreement in New York on April 22, a move that officials hope will help the accord enter into force this year.

The world's two biggest greenhouse gas emitters issued a joint presidential statement in which they called on other countries to sign the accord "with a view to bringing the Paris Agreement into force as early as possible."

Leaders from nearly 200 countries forged the landmark agreement to transform the world's fossil fuel-driven economy on Dec. 12 after four years of fraught negotiations.

But the Paris climate agreement needs at least 55 countries representing at least 55% of global emissions to formally accede to it before it can enter into force.

Todd Stern, the U.S. climate envoy who helped broker the deal in Paris, said hitting that threshold as soon as possible will benefit countries that are vulnerable to climate change. "The best thing that can happen for them is to get this agreement going and get it into force," he said.

Stern has stepped down from his role as the chief U.S. climate negotiator. He will be replaced by his former deputy, Jonathan Pershing.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that he expects 120 or more countries will sign the accord at the April 22 ceremony at its New York headquarters. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is expected to sign on behalf of the United States.

India's Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar will also attend the signing of the agreement at the United Nations headquarters.

The U.S.-China statement also confirms that the countries will continue to cooperate on efforts to combat climate change.



Both countries said they would work jointly to ensure that a global agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions in aviation at the International Civil Aviation Organization and a pact to curb HFCs, a potent greenhouse gas, are reached this year.

(Reporting By Valerie Volcovici; Editing by Jonathan Oatis)

The United Nations says a record 155 countries will sign the landmark agreement to tackle climate change at a ceremony at U.N. headquarters on April 22.

U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq said five countries, Barbados, Belize, Tuvalu, Maldives and Samoa will not only sign but ratify the agreement reached in Paris in December.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, French President Francois Hollande and French Environment Minister Segolene Royal, who heads global climate negotiations, have invited leaders from all 193 U.N. member states to the event. The U.N. says more than 60 heads of state and government plan to attend.

The previous opening day record of 119 signatures is held by the Law of the Sea treaty in 1994.



UN climate chief: Paris Agreement could take effect ahead of schedule

The UN's soon-to-depart climate chief has said that the Paris climate change pact agreed last December could come into force two years earlier than the originally planned date of 2020.

Speaking ahead of the official COP21 signing ceremony in New York – which will ratify the agreement to limit global warming well below 2C above industrial levels – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres believes an early arrangement could be in the cards. “I think we will have [it] in effect by 2018,” Figueres told an

audience at Imperial College, also saying that she expected more than 130 countries to ink their support for the Agreement which was due to enter into force in 2020.

“We think there may be more, but let's see what happens on 22 April,” added Figueres, who will step down from her position in July. Figueres insisted that Paris was only a blueprint for ensuring a global reduction in carbon emissions, warning that those who “still put money into high carbon will lose money”.

The UN climate official's caution comes in the same week that the world's largest privately-owned coal producer Peabody Energy Corp filed for bankruptcy, after a drastic fall in coal prices left it unable to accommodate for recent expansions into Australia.

Figueres' optimistic predictions about the Paris Agreement reflect a generally positive mood surrounding the future of climate change policy, driven by a series of positive announcements made by national governments and big businesses.

The US and China revealed plan to formally join the Paris Agreement in 2016. The two countries – responsible for 40% of global emissions – released a joint statement agreeing to sign the contract in order to take ‘respective domestic steps’ to approve the deal. That news was announced at the same time as four of the world's largest tech giants – Google, Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft – collectively warned that any attempts to block a low-carbon transition in the US would prove ‘costly’ to both the global economy and human wellbeing.

Those businesses that “still put money into high carbon will lose money.” Christiana Figueres

But, while the majority of governments and big businesses have seemingly embraced the main elements of the Paris deal, it has recently become apparent that approval may not be forthcoming from every nation. An influential think tank urged developing countries to boycott the signing ceremony, citing a potential loss in political influence if the deal was signed without sufficient negotiation. The Third World Network laid-out a five-page briefing imploring developing countries ‘not to rush’ when signing the Agreement, warning that countries would lose the political leverage that is ‘critical’ to ensuring that developed countries pull their weight.

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