

# Building blocks missing for 2015 climate pact

June 7 2014, by Richard Ingham

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Government representatives of 195 countries attend the UN climate change conference in Bonn, western Germany on June 6, 2014

The clock is ticking for countries to lay the foundations of a 2015 deal to tackle dangerous climate change, ministers warned in Bonn on Friday.

A special UN summit in September, followed by a round of talks in Lima in December, must lay the first bricks of a highly complex accord due to be sealed in Paris in December 2015, they said.

China's top negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, pointed to traumatic memories of

the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, the last time countries tried to forge a worldwide deal on curbing Earth-warming [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

The much-touted event became a near-fiasco when heads of state were confronted with a sprawling, fiercely-contested draft agreement at the last minute.

"We hope we do not see a recurrence of the Copenhagen scenario... (with) a final agreement that is accepted by some parties but not accepted by others," Xie said.

Peruvian Environment Minister Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, who will chair the December 1-12 meeting, urged colleagues gathered for an interim round of negotiations in Bonn since Wednesday to "commit to commit".

"This train is moving and we cannot wait until Paris to get onboard," he said.

The Paris agreement is meant to set the cap on years of haggling among the 195 parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Taking effect from 2020, the pact must curb heat-trapping emissions from fossil fuels that are damaging Earth's fragile climate, amplifying risks from drought, flood, storms and rising seas.

Negotiators hope that, at the very least, the Lima deal will agree on rules for vetting and comparing national pledges that will form the core of the pact.



Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission of China and head of Chinese delegation Xie Zhenhua speaks during a press conference in Durban on December 5, 2011

### **Assessing the promises**

The pledges will be a disparate mix of promises to curb emissions, bolster climate defences, boost funds for vulnerable countries and transfer cleaner technology to the developing world.

There is a big technical challenge in ensuring that individual national efforts are verifiable and comparable, to avoid accusations that some countries are getting a free ride.

The pact's legal status—whether it should be legally binding or not, and what the term actually means—is also not settled. The United States, for one, has ruled out a format similar to the UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol, which has a tough and legally-enforceable compliance mechanism.

Xie said priority should be given to the content of the pledges, rather than the legal architecture. China would go along with the consensus, he said.

He stressed that a key to success in Lima, and then in Paris, lay in developed countries showing good faith in their pledges to act on [climate change](#) before 2020.

This includes a promise made in Copenhagen to channel up to \$100 billion a year in aid by that time.

"Unfortunately we are seeing very little of the finance that was pledged," said Ugandan Environment Minister Ephraim Kamuntu, representing the world's bloc of least-developed countries.

The 12-day session in Bonn included two ministerial-level sessions meant to give a political boost to the troubled process.



Christiana Figueres, Costa Rican diplomat and executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change poses with a Tesla S 85 premium electric car at the UN Mobility Solutions Fair in Bonn, western Germany on June 6, 2014

Ministers from several dozen countries attended, but there were many absentees from big players, including the US and France, the 2015 host.

Many hopes ride on a summit in New York on September 23 called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Campaigners for 73 environmental and development causes, meanwhile, formally returned to the UNFCCC process after walking out at the annual conference in Warsaw in 2013.

"We have come together to reiterate to all 'leaders' participating in the UN climate negotiations that they are dangerously off track in addressing the climate emergency," the group said in a statement.

"We call upon them to listen to the demands and solutions of people."

The UN talks seek to limit warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels—but scientists say current emission trends could hike temperatures to more than twice that level by century's end.

Veteran observer Alden Meyer of US group the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) said crunch time would come next year when national pledges are put on the table.

If, as expected, these are not enough to guarantee a 2 Celsius maximum, the Paris talks could launch "a review and an assessment between 2015 and 2020 to try to do more," he said.

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