

Australia won't pay to climate fund

December 5 2014, byRod McGuirk



In this Sept. 19, 2014 file photo, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop addresses a meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Iraq at the United Nations headquarters. Australia will continue to directly pay for climate change adaptation in vulnerable South Pacific island nations through its aid budget rather than donate to a U.N. Green Climate Fund designed for the same purpose, Bishop said Friday, Dec. 5, ahead of climate talks in Peru. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews, File)

(AP)—Australia will continue to directly pay for climate change adaptation in vulnerable South Pacific island nations through its aid budget rather than donate to a U.N. Green Climate Fund designed for the same purpose, the foreign minister said Friday ahead of traveling to climate talks in Peru.

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said governments should judge for themselves whether bilateral action to reduce the impact of [climate change](#) on [developing countries](#) was a more efficient use of aid money than donating through the U.N.

"The Green Climate Fund is about supporting developing countries build resilience to climate change. Australia is already doing that through our aid program," Bishop told The Associated Press before leading the Australian delegation to Lima for a U.N climate summit.

"From my experience, bilateral work is able to customize responses when we're working directly with another partner country," she said.

Rich countries have pledged about \$10 billion to the recently launched Green Climate Fund, which is meant to become a key source of finance to help developing countries deal with rising seas, higher temperatures and extreme weather events.

Australia has been accused of setting a poor example for other countries by failing to contribute to the fund. Bishop's government has also been criticized for abolishing Australia's carbon tax that was levied on the country's worst greenhouse gas polluters until July.

It replaced the tax with a 2.55 billion Australian dollars (\$2.14 billion) government fund to pay polluters incentives to operate more cleanly.

Bishop said Australia was on track to achieve its target of reducing its

[greenhouse gas emissions](#) to 12 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.

But she said the Australian delegation would not give the Lima meeting any proposed Australian emission-cutting targets beyond 2020.

"The message that I will be presenting on Australia's behalf is that the new agreement should establish a common playing field for all countries to take climate action from 2020 and seek commitments from all the major economies to reducing emissions," she said.

Delegates from more than 190 countries are in Lima trying to lay the groundwork for a global emissions pact they hope will be adopted in Paris next year.

Bishop said that without legally binding commitments in Paris to reduce global emissions beyond 2020, any agreement would amount to nothing more than aspirations.

She said Australia wants to see the details of a U.S.-China emissions deal that was struck last month.

"China has already said that it will continue business as usual until 2030. We want to know whether there's some sort of binding commitment," Bishop said.

Chinese delegate Su Wei said China would present a detailed pledge sometime in the first half of next year, and criticized Australia for not contributing to the climate fund.

"It's not good news that Australia, if it's true, refuses to provide any money into the GCF," he said. "I think that's a legal obligation for all developed country parties to make their contributions."

New targets for fossil fuel use were announced ahead of the climate conference by the European Union, U.S. and China, the first Asian nation to make such a pledge. This has injected optimism into negotiations that are supposed to climax in Paris with the adoption of a long-awaited [climate](#) pact.

But Australia, India, Russia and Japan have yet to commit to new limits. Scientists say much sharper emissions cuts are needed in coming decades to keep global warming within 2 degrees C (3.6 F) of pre-industrial times, the overall goal of the U.N. talks.

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