

US climate change envoy: China, US working closer on deal

March 20 2015, by Jack Chang



A man wears a mask on the streets of Beijing Friday, March 20, 2015. A U.S. envoy for climate change said Friday that China and the U.S. are working more closely than ever ahead of a conference this year in Paris that raises hopes for a global plan to cut greenhouse emissions. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

A U.S. envoy for climate change said Friday that China and the U.S. are working more closely than ever ahead of a conference this year in Paris that raises hopes for a global plan to cut greenhouse emissions.

Special Envoy Todd Stern told reporters in Beijing that he still expects hard negotiations between many countries in advance of the U.N. summit. But he told reporters there's "a greater level of convergence on some very important structural issues" compared to the months before the last major U.N. climate summit, which ended without a significant agreement in 2009.

With China emitting more greenhouse gases than any other country, and the U.S. a distant second, many are watching if the two countries can agree to a plan before the Paris meeting.

"I think we're on the same page on some issues, not every issue probably," Stern said of the U.S. and China. "But we are working I think in a closer and more cooperative basis than we ever have before."

Similar bilateral meetings resulted in major announcements by both countries in November of landmark climate change plans, including China's pledge to peak carbon emissions by around 2030.

In response to a reporter's question, Stern said he hadn't seen any sign from his Chinese counterparts that they planned to advance that deadline, although some experts say China's emissions need to peak much earlier to stave off major climate consequences.

"We didn't have any sense from within the (Chinese) government that there were views on their readiness to announce 2025 or 2020" as a peak date, Stern said.

He said Chinese and U.S. negotiators also hadn't discussed how quickly, or even if, Chinese emissions would begin dropping after reaching their peak.

Stern said the U.S. would like a Paris deal to set hard immediate carbon

reduction targets and then a series of future reduction targets as well as pledges to generally move economies away from fossil fuels and other sources of carbon emissions.

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