

EU adopts climate change targets for Paris conference (Update)

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The EU formally adopted climate change targets for December's Paris conference including a 40 percent cut in emissions by 2030

The EU formally adopted on Friday climate change targets for December's Paris conference including a 40 percent cut in emissions by 2030, climate commissioner Miguel Arias Canete said.

The targets were agreed on by leaders of the 28 European Union

member states at a summit in October, but the confirmed benchmarks have now been officially sent to the UN, Canete said.

"There is an agreement, but it was not an easy matter," Canete said after a meeting of EU environment ministers in Brussels.

French minister Segolene Royal added: "Europe is the first continent to send its contribution, as was asked by the United Nations."

The offer of the EU, which is responsible for nine percent of global emissions of greenhouse gases, was sent to the UN secretariat, Canete said.

Negotiators told AFP that Ireland fought successfully to have the carbon removed by forests and farmland included in the calculation of greenhouse gas reduction—which critics said made it easier to reach the 40 percent target by four or five percent.

"By avoiding a decision to treat emissions and removals from the land use sector separately and on top of the EU's 'at least' 40 percent domestic target, the EU wastes important political capital to set incentives for other countries to be transparent on the amount of emission reductions they will achieve," Carbon Market Watch Director Eva Filzmoser said in a statement.



French Environment Minister Segolene Royal (L) speaks with European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Canete at the European Council headquarters in Brussels, on March 6, 2015

Countries, which are tasked with trying to limit the rise in global temperatures to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels, have until March 31 to announce their commitment to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The EU, which when taken together is the world's biggest economy, says it will cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent compared to 1990 levels.

The United States, which accounts for 12 percent of global emissions, announced its intention to reduce them by 26-28 percent in 2025 compared with their level in 2005.

China, which accounts for 25 percent of global emissions, has set a target date of about 2030 for its emissions to peak.

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