

Tens of billions promised to boost clean energy tech

November 29 2015, by Sylvie Corbet, Karl Ritter And Seth Borenstein



Activists form a human chain during a protest ahead of the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, in Paris, Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. More than 140 world leaders are gathering around Paris for high-stakes climate talks that start Monday, and activists are holding marches and protests around the world to urge them to reach a strong agreement to slow global warming. (AP Photo/Christophe Ena)

Government and business leaders are banking on clean energy technology to fight global warming, kicking off this week's high-stakes

climate change negotiations by pledging tens of billions of dollars for research and development.

Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates, President Barack Obama and French President Francois Hollande will announce the new initiative on Monday, committing to spend tens of billions of dollars for a technological fix to the planet's climate woes, three current and former officials have told The Associated Press.

"It's quite a big deal," said Jennifer Morgan, global climate director for the World Resources Institute. "It brings a new kind of burst of energy into the conference right at the beginning on something very important."

The U.N. climate summit formally opened Sunday afternoon with a minute of silence for the victims of this month's Paris attacks and vows not to let terrorism derail efforts to slow or stop [climate change](#).

The "ambitious" effort to develop clean energies initially involves eight countries—France, the U.S., India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada and Norway—according to a French official, who asked not to be named for lack of authorization to speak. These countries would pledge to double their spending on low or no-carbon energy, according to an early version of a document obtained by the AP.

President Barack Obama revealed no details Sunday as he traveled to the talks, but wrote on his Facebook page that "we'll work to mobilize support to help the most vulnerable countries expand clean energy and adapt to the effects of climate change we can no longer avoid."



Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, center, leaves the Elysee Palace, after a meeting in Paris, Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. More than 140 world leaders are gathering around Paris for high-stakes climate talks that start Monday, and activists are holding marches and protests around the world to urge them to reach a strong agreement to slow global warming. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

The money would focus on research and development of technologies such as energy storage, which could make better use of clean power from wind and solar regardless of the vagaries of weather.

Led by Gates, about 20 private [business leaders](#) have signed on to the initiative, making their pledges conditional on governments also pledging more money, said a former U.S. government official who is familiar with the plan.

"They are committed to making increased investments in existing

technologies and new breakthrough technologies to lower the cost of emissions reductions," the former U.S. government official said, adding that Gates is particularly concerned about alleviating the "energy poverty" that denies power to millions of people in India and elsewhere.

But a multinational research effort combining the investments of governments, corporations and private individuals could create intellectual property problems. It also remains to be seen how much of this money is new and how much will involve repackaging old promises.

"The Obama administration recognizes that this is a fundamental competitive advantage for the United States," the former U.S. official said, but getting such funds approved by a Republican-controlled Congress could be difficult.

Storing electricity is especially crucial for wind and solar power, which can be intermittent because of the weather. Improving batteries is key, and there have been breakthroughs both in technology and production announced this year, including by space and electric car tycoon Elon Musk, whose Gigafactory has begun producing large batteries for home power storage to make solar and wind power more viable.



France's President Francois Hollande gestures as Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon leaves the Elysee Palace, after a meeting, in Paris, Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. More than 140 world leaders are gathering around Paris for high-stakes climate talks that start Monday, and activists are holding marches and protests around the world to urge them to reach a strong agreement to slow global warming. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

The conference center where more than 140 nations will be meeting for two weeks began to bustle Sunday as lower-level negotiators arrived, and U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres expressed optimism about the outcome.

World leaders were expected to arrive on Monday, including Obama and the leaders of China, India and Russia, to discuss commitments to reducing ever-rising carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

Armed security was noticeable nearly everywhere at the Le Bourget center, and 200 to 300 people violated a national ban on protests under the state of emergency France declared when extremists killed 130 people in Paris.



France's President Francois Hollande, right, shakes hand with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, prior to a meeting at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. More than 140 world leaders are gathering around Paris for high-stakes climate talks that start Monday, and activists are holding marches and protests around the world to urge them to reach a strong agreement to slow global warming. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

About 100 protesters found to have projectiles or other suspicious objects were detained after some demonstrations turned violent, said the Paris police chief, Michel Cadot.

The climate activist group 350.org, which had organized some gatherings, distanced itself from the violence, and thousands of other people joined peaceful demonstrations in other European capitals on Sunday.



France's President Francois Hollande, right, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau talk during a meeting at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015. More than 140 world leaders are gathering around Paris for high-stakes climate talks that start Monday, and activists are holding marches and protests around the world to urge them to reach a strong agreement to slow global warming. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus, Pool)

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Tens of billions promised to boost clean energy tech (2015, November 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-11-tens-billions-boost-energy-tech.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.