

US joins 'ambition coalition' at UN climate talks

December 10 2015, by Dave Clark



Secretary of State John Kerry announced on December 9, 2015 that the US would join the EU and 79 developing countries as part of an "ambition coalition" pushing for a bold accord with less than two days remaining at the COP21 global climate summit. The 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) is held in Paris from November 30 to December 11 aimed at reaching an international agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions and curtail climate change.

The United States said Wednesday it had united with the European Union and 79 developing countries to jointly push for an ambitious

accord in Paris to curb global warming.

The decision, announced by US Secretary of State John Kerry, came a day after the European Union said it had joined the African, Caribbean and Pacific nations most vulnerable to climate disasters to lobby for a far-reaching deal.

"This is a group of countries that is fully committed to ensuring the agreement is a truly ambitious one," Kerry said in Paris, where 195 nations are aiming to forge a pact to cut Earth-warming [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

"Addressing [climate change](#) will require a fundamental change in the way we power our planet."

However countries within the alliance dubbed the "high ambition coalition" by the United States have conflicting aims on some key points in the accord.

Low-lying small islands, for example, are calling on the world to cap [global warming](#) at less than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.5 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

The United States appears happy to leave the core goal at less than 2C (3.6F), although it would accept a mention of the 1.5C ceiling within the text.

"To be clear this is not a negotiating group," said Tony De Brum, the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands who was one of the key figures behind the formation of the alliance.



NGO activists keep the pressure on negotiators at the COP21 global climate summit on December 9, 2015, in Paris as the US joined the EU and 79 developing countries in a coalition pushing for a "truly ambitious" accord. Climate experts say the need to agree on a global carbon price to cut pollution and aid clean technologies is a no-brainer, and yet the topic will have no place at the upcoming Paris climate talks.

"It is rather about joining the voices of all those who are committed to an ambitious agreement and a safe climate future—big and small, rich and poor," he told reporters.

"To do this we are building personal bonds between us as ministers, forging a joint resolve to fight together."

India—which has baulked at accelerating the review of carbon-cutting pledges and at setting the decarbonisation of the global economy as a goal—is not part of the coalition.

Nor are economic giants China and Brazil.

Miguel Arias Canete, the European commissioner for climate action and energy, has called for other nations to join the group in the final hours of the UN talks, which have a Friday deadline for a deal to be signed.

Common goals

Together, they are calling for a legally binding, fair, durable agreement in Paris that must set a long-term goal, be reviewed every five years and include a system for tracking progress.

"These negotiations are about all of us, both developed and developing countries, finding common ground and solutions together. That is why the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries have agreed to join forces for an ambitious outcome here in Paris," Canete said Tuesday.

Alden Meyer, climate change expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the grouping started informally in July.

The emergence of a coalition among those most determined to make deep and verifiable emissions cuts may be seen as a sign that deep divisions remain as the delegates battle to put together a final deal.

Illustrating the complexities at play in Paris, many of the developing nations in the "coalition of ambition" remain in an official negotiating bloc that includes China, India and Brazil known as the G77.

In the lead-up to Paris, the United States has also been engaging with all major powers.

Kerry and President Barack Obama held regular and intense talks with

their Chinese, Brazilian and Indian counterparts in past weeks, according to US officials.

Obama discussed the climate accord by telephone with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, a day after holding a conversation on the topic with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, officials said.

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