

UNEP chief confident US will not ditch Paris climate deal

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The Paris climate agreement was signed last year by 175 countries including the United States and though Trump vowed during his campaign to "cancel" the accord, Erik Solheim, pictured in 2016, believes the US will stay on board

The UN's environment chief is confident that the United States will not pull out of the Paris climate deal and expects a decision from Washington next month.

Erik Solheim told AFP in an interview on Monday that even if the

United States withdraws, China and the European Union will step in and take the lead to implement the [global agreement](#) on reducing [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

"I am confident... I think we will see the United States on board," said Solheim, who spoke at UN headquarters in New York following meetings last week at the US State Department, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington.

The executive director of the UN Environment Programme said a decision is expected from President Donald Trump's administration before the G7 meeting in Italy at the end of May.

Despite the uncertainty from Washington, US businesses are already making the shift to the green economy, investing massively in solar technology and other forms of clean energy, Solheim said.

"Whatever happens with American policies, the United States will be able to fulfill the Paris commitments simply because of the surge of the private sector," he said.

"This is what defines reality. Reality is not just political decisions, it's technology and business."

The Paris climate agreement was signed last year by 175 countries including the world's top polluters China and the United States and went into force in November, just days before Trump won the presidential election.



The Arc de Triomphe is illuminated with the lettering reading "The Paris accord is done" in Paris on November 4, 2016, to celebrate the first day of the application of the Paris COP21 climate accord

During his campaign, Trump vowed to "cancel" the Paris accord but he has not taken a position since taking office.

His advisers are reportedly divided on whether to withdraw, with his daughter Ivanka said to be making the case for the administration to stick with the deal.

"We need American leadership," said Solheim, who served as environment minister and international development minister in Norway. He took the helm of the Nairobi-based UN agency last year.

"But if there is no American leadership, China will lead, the European Union will lead," he said.

"France in all likelihood will elect (Emmanuel) Macron as president and he is for sure committed to the climate agenda, with the Germans."

"China is ready to step forward to provide global leadership and they have the ability to do it," he said.

Under the agreement, signatories undertake to limit global warming to "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels, and to strive for 1.5 C.

Countries are submitting voluntary, non-binding carbon-cutting goals towards this goal.

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