

Climate talks extended as island nations demand action

December 14 2018, by Frank Jordans And Monika Scislowska



In this Friday, Nov. 30, 2018 file photo smoke rises from a factory as a truck loaded with cars crosses a bridge in Paris, France. (AP Photo/Michel Euler, File)

Weary officials from almost 200 countries faced another day of negotiations at the U.N. climate talks to bridge their last remaining differences as small island nations on Friday demanded an ambitious stance against global warming.

The talks in Poland were supposed to end Friday, but Michal Kurtyka, a senior Polish official chairing the negotiations, told delegates to resume talks on a revised draft text at 4 a.m. Saturday (0300 GMT).

The effort was bringing results in the form of preliminary texts for fine tuning, according to Kurtyka's statement late Friday.

"Polish Presidency informs that a preliminary version of the package implementing the Paris Agreement has been worked out. Several days of intensive work has produced results in the form of closing particular areas," the statement said.

The text was being consulted upon with various negotiating groups, the statement said.

After two weeks of talks in the southern Polish city, diplomats were coming closer to agreeing on the rules that govern the 2015 Paris climate accord. These include how countries should transparently report both their greenhouse gases emissions and their efforts to reduce them.

Scientists say global emissions need to drop dramatically by 2030 and reach near-zero by 2050 in order to prevent the potentially catastrophic consequences for life on Earth.



Polish teenagers stage a protest in the U.N. climate conference venue on the last days of talks to urge negotiators from almost 200 countries to reach an agreement on ways of keeping global warming in check in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018.(AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that it's possible to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) higher by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times. That's the lower end of the 1.5-to-2 degrees C (2.7-3.6 degrees F) scale mentioned in the Paris accord.

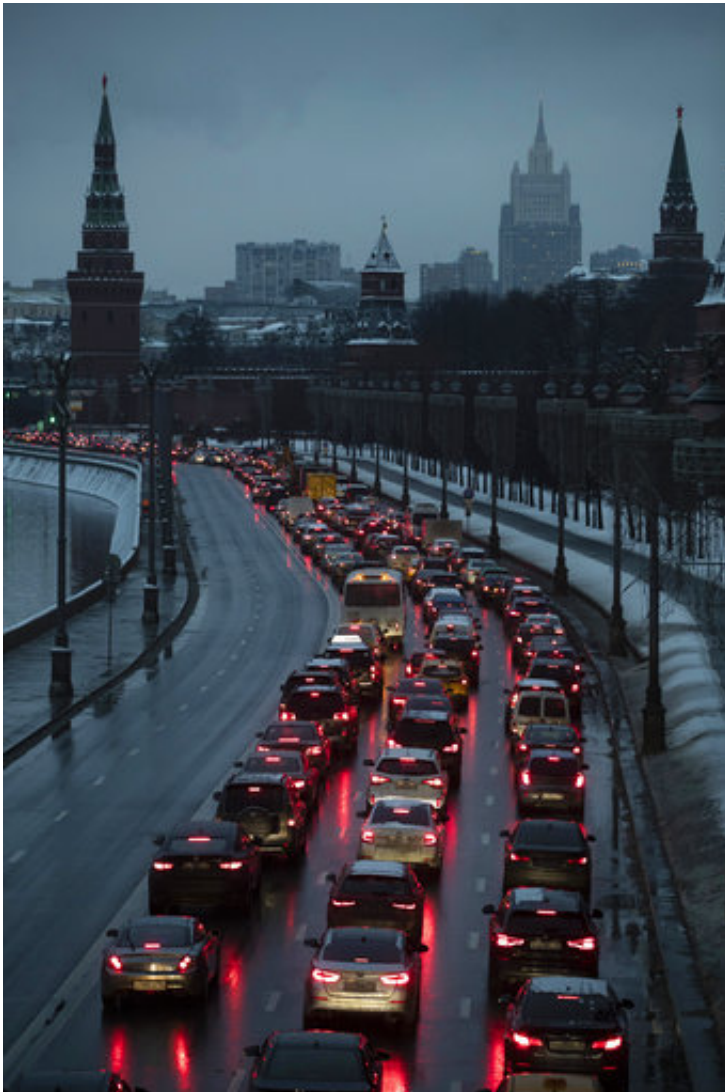
But this would require a drastic overhaul of the global economy, including ending the use of almost all fossil fuels.

The United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have refused to

"welcome" the IPCC report, angering other countries and environmentalists.

Former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed warned that nations such as his, which consider themselves on the front lines of global warming, would veto the current draft because it lacks a clear commitment to the 1.5 C-target.

"If necessary, we will rebel against the negotiations," Nasheed told reporters.



In this Monday, Dec. 10, 2018 photo cars are stuck in a traffic jam on a bank of the Moskva River outside the Kremlin, with the Russian Foreign Ministry building, center in the background, in Moscow, Russia. (AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)

Another issue haunting negotiators is the rules for an international market in carbon credits.

The clash pits emerging economies such as Brazil—which amassed large piles of carbon credits under the 1997 Kyoto treaty's rules—against industrial countries such as those in the European Union, which believe the older credits aren't worth the paper they were printed on.

Economists believe a functioning carbon trading system could be an effective way to drive down emissions and raise large amounts of money for measures to curb global warming.

Alex Hanafi, lead counsel at the New York-based Environmental Defense Fund, said Brazil was trying to weaken the rules in such a way that would allow countries to count their emissions reductions twice, undermining the carbon markets.

"This loophole needs to be closed so zombie credits from the old (Kyoto) Clean Development Mechanism cannot infect the climate integrity of the Paris Agreement," he said.



Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change Patricia Espinosa, left, and UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, right, attend the COP24 summit in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

Brazil's delegation rejected the claim.

"Brazil is currently working with other parties on a bridging proposal," said the country's chief negotiator, Antonio Marcondes.

Aid for poor countries, and whether they could benefit from a levy on the carbon market, is another key issue at the talks.

Poor countries insist they should get financial support not just to lower emissions and adapt to climate change, but also to make up for the global warming damages that have already occurred, largely because of

emissions from industrial nations.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday waded into the debate over the costs of tackling climate change, telling Fox News that if he had remained in the Paris climate accord the U.S. "would be paying trillions of dollars, trillions of dollars for nothing, and I wouldn't do that."



In this Monday, Dec. 10, 2018 photo toxic froth from industrial pollution floats on Bellundur Lake in Bangalore, India. As politicians haggle at a U.N. climate conference in Poland over ways to limit global warming, the industries and machines powering our modern world keep spewing their pollution into the air and water. The fossil fuels extracted from beneath the earth's crust—coal, oil and gas—are transformed into the carbon dioxide that is now heating the earth faster than scientists had expected even a few years ago. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi)

Trump announced last year that the U.S. is pulling out of the Paris

climate accord unless he can get a better deal—a possibility that others such as the EU and China have dismissed.

Germany's environment minister said the failure to curb climate change would cost the world a lot more than the trillions Trump claims that he's saving.

"If we let entire stretches of this planet become uninhabitable, then it will trigger gigantic costs," Schulze told reporters, adding that developing technology to lower emissions would give Germany a competitive economic advantage.

With climate delegates hoping to clinch a deal on Saturday, they were able to agree on one thing Friday: that next year's climate talks will be held in Chile.



Students protest under the banner of 'Fridays for Future' in front of the Reichstag building, host of the German Federal Parliament, in Berlin, Germany,

Friday, Dec. 14, 2018 against the climate change. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)



A participant in U.N. climate talks is reading the day's agenda on the last scheduled day of the negotiations between almost 200 countries in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)



People gather to take part in the ecological organizations demonstration during the COP24 summit at the 'Spodek' multipurpose arena complex in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

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