

Dutch lawmakers pass ambitious law to reduce emissions

December 20 2018, by Mike Corder

Dutch lawmakers overwhelmingly approved ambitious new climate legislation Thursday that aims to drastically drive down emissions of greenhouse gases.

The law that passed the lower house of the Dutch parliament targets a 95-percent reduction of emissions by 2050 compared with 1990 levels and a 49-percent cut by 2030.

It also aims to make electricity production in the Netherlands 100 percent carbon neutral in 2050. It also introduces an annual review mechanism to ensure that the targets are met.

However, the vote was overshadowed by a decision by environmental groups and labor unions to step out of negotiations aimed at working out a plan of action to achieve the goals. The so-called [climate](#) accord has been under discussion for months between the government, industry and agriculture representatives as well as environmental and labor groups.

Greenpeace, which was among the groups that refused to sign off on the accord, said it lacked ambition, would not prompt a necessary energy transition and failed to introduce a tax on [carbon emissions](#) that would hit big polluters hardest.

The climate law, which still has to be approved by the upper house of parliament, was supported by a broad coalition of parties from across the political spectrum.

Its approval in the lower house of parliament comes less than a week after countries agreed on a set of rules to ensure the [target](#) set in the Paris climate accord, of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) is met. At the talks in Katowice, Poland, last week, many countries wanted to formally back a more ambitious temperature goal of 1.5 C (2.7 F) which scientists say is safer, but opposition from countries such as the United States saw that decision punted down the road.

The European Union's executive last month proposed a long-term strategy for achieving the 1.5 C goal, which would see the bloc strive for "climate neutrality" by 2050. Experts say this would require a dramatic overhaul of the economy including the virtual elimination of fossil fuel use by the middle of the century.

Under the 2015 Paris accord, countries have to submit fresh targets by 2020 for reducing greenhouse gases. The Dutch law is a significant step up from the country's current emissions targets.

Dutch Green Party leader Jesse Klaver welcomed the legislation as a "big step forward to a clean and green country."

However he lamented the lack of a carbon tax in the climate accord, which was expected to be presented Friday.

"Clearly a carbon tax on polluting industry is not open to discussion by this government and industry," Klaver said in a tweet. "The polluter must pay. We can't wait any longer."

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