

# Nations at climate talks back universal emissions rules

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Smoke billows from a chimney of the Solvay factory for production and processing of plastic materials, in Ospiate, near Milan, Italy, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018. The climate change conference, COP24, is closing today in Katowice, Poland. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

Nearly 200 countries at the U.N. climate talks have agreed upon universal, transparent rules on how nations can cut greenhouse gas emissions and curb global warming, putting the principles of the 2015

Paris climate accord into action.

But to the frustration of environmentalists and a group of countries who were urging more ambitious climate goals, negotiators on Saturday delayed decisions on two other climate issues until next year in an effort to get a deal on them.

"Through this package, you have made a thousand little steps forward together," said Michal Kurtyka, a senior Polish official chairing the talks.

He said while each individual country would likely find some parts of the agreement it didn't like, efforts had been made to balance the interests of all parties.

"We will all have to give in order to gain," he said. "We will all have to be courageous to look into the future and make yet another step for the sake of humanity."

The talks in Poland took place against a backdrop of growing concern among scientists that [global warming](#) on Earth is proceeding faster than governments are responding to it. Last month, a study found that global warming will worsen disasters such as the deadly California wildfires and the powerful hurricanes that have hit the United States this year.



Heads of the delegations react at the end of the final session of the COP24 summit on climate change in Katowice, Poland, Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

And a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, concluded that while it's possible to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, this would require a dramatic overhaul of the global economy, including a shift away from fossil fuels.

Alarmed by efforts to include this in the final text of the meeting, the oil-exporting nations of the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait blocked an endorsement of the IPCC report mid-way through this month's talks in the Polish city of Katowice. That prompted uproar from vulnerable countries like small island nations and environmental groups.

The final text at the U.N. talks omits a previous reference to specific

reductions in [greenhouse gas emissions](#) by 2030, and merely welcomes the "timely completion" of the IPCC report, not its conclusions.

Last-minute snags forced negotiators in Katowice to go into extra time, after Friday's scheduled end of the conference had passed without a deal.



The sun sets over buildings in Milan, Italy, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018. The climate change conference, COP24, is closing today in Katowice, Poland. (AP Photo/Luca Bruno)

One major sticking point was how to create a functioning market in carbon credits. Economists believe that an international trading system could be an effective way to drive down greenhouse gas emissions and raise large amounts of money for measures to curb global warming.

But Brazil wanted to keep the piles of carbon credits it had amassed

under an old system that developed countries say wasn't credible or transparent.

Among those that pushed back hardest was the United States, despite President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris climate accord and his promotion of coal as a source of energy.

"Overall, the U.S. role here has been somewhat schizophrenic—pushing coal and dissing science on the one hand, but also working hard in the room for strong transparency rules," said Elliot Diringer of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, a Washington think tank.



Participants leave before the end of the final session of the COP24 summit on climate change in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018.(AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

When it came to closing potential loopholes that could allow countries to dodge their commitments to cut emissions, "the U.S. pushed harder than nearly anyone else for transparency rules that put all countries under the same system, and it's largely succeeded."

"Transparency is vital to U.S. interests," added Nathaniel Keohane, a climate policy expert at the Environmental Defense Fund. He noted that breakthrough in the 2015 Paris talks happened only after the U.S. and China agreed on a common framework for transparency.

"In Katowice, the U.S. negotiators have played a central role in the talks, helping to broker an outcome that is true to the Paris vision of a common transparency framework for all countries that also provides flexibility for those that need it," said Keohane, calling the agreement "a vital step forward in realizing the promise of the Paris accord."

Among the key achievements in Katowice was an agreement on how countries should report their greenhouse gas emissions and the efforts they're taking to reduce them. Poor countries also secured assurances on getting greater predictability about financial support to help them cut emissions, adapt to inevitable changes such as sea level rises and pay for damages that have already happened.





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)

"The majority of the rulebook for the Paris Agreement has been created, which is something to be thankful for," said Mohamed Adow, a climate policy expert at Christian Aid. "But the fact countries had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the finish line shows that some nations have not woken up to the urgent call of the IPCC report" on the dire consequences of global warming.

In the end, a decision on the mechanics of an emissions trading system was postponed to next year's meeting. Countries also agreed to consider

the issue of raising ambitions at a U.N. summit in New York next September.

Canada's Environment Minister Catherine McKenna suggested there was no alternative to such meetings if countries want to tackle global problems, especially as multilateral diplomacy is under pressure from nationalism.

"The world has changed, the political landscape has changed," she told The Associated Press. "Still you're seeing here that we're able to make progress. We're able to discuss the issues. We're able to come to solutions."



A participants leaves before the end of the final session of the COP24 summit on climate change in Katowice, Poland, Friday, Dec. 14, 2018.(AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)





Worker dismantles the exhibition pavilion of Indonesia as the U.N. Climate conference draws to a close, and negotiators from almost 200 countries continue haggling over the fine print of the Paris climate accord in Katowice, Poland, Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018. Officials from around the world are still working to agree on the fine print even as workers dismantle sections of the conferenced venue around them.(AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)



President Michal Kurtyka poses for a photo after adopting the final agreement during a closing session of the COP24 U.N. Climate Change Conference 2018 in Katowice, Poland, Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018. (AP Photo/Czarek Sokolowski)

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