

UN chief sees cities, companies filling US void on climate

September 23 2019, by David Wainer, Bloomberg News



It is the first time that data has been used at a national scale to judge how the beauty of the environment impacts onshore windfarm development. Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The head of the United Nations said he believes the U.S. can still pull its

weight on climate change, even though President Donald Trump is skipping a U.N. climate summit on Monday and has worked to roll back restrictions on everything from vehicle to power plant emissions.

Cities and businesses are helping fill part of the void left by national governments, including the U.S., on [climate issues](#), U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told reporters in New York on Friday. Guterres is pushing countries to raise their commitments to wean the world away from [fossil fuels](#) and said he expects an "impressive" number of leaders to announce commitments to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 during the summit.

"The influence of governments in societies has diminished," Guterres said. "Other actors are becoming fundamental, especially the business community and the local authorities. That movement largely compensates for the lack of positive engagement by the government. We are pushing as much as possible for that."

Still, government leaders dominate the agenda at the climate summit, which comes ahead of the annual U.N. General Assembly meetings that will bring about 200 prime ministers and presidents to New York for talks on everything from U.S.-Iran tensions to the crisis in Venezuela and global trade.

The Climate Action Summit on Monday will feature French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel announcing new pledges to address an issue for which Guterres says time for effective action is running out. Other speakers include Indian President Narendra Modi, South Korea's Moon Jae-in and Chilean President Sebastian Pinera.

In the lead up to the U.N. gathering, several large companies and cities announced voluntary efforts to deal with [climate change](#). Amazon.com

Inc. founder and Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos earlier this month announced a plan to meet the goals of the Paris agreement 10 years early, while more than 500 investors called on governments to take more action to combat climate change.

The summit will be preceded by a meeting of youth leaders on Saturday, as activists like Swedish teen Greta Thunberg call on countries to do more. Guterres said he was encouraged by youth activism. As he spoke, young people from Sydney to New York City were skipping school to protest the climate crisis.

Guterres has reached out to dozens of leaders urging them to halt the building of coal power stations and make more binding commitments to reduce carbon emissions. In response to questions about why leaders from several coal-reliant countries, such as Japan and Australia, aren't speaking at the summit, Guterres said every country that sent him a serious proposal to tackle [climate](#) change was invited to speak.

Guterres added that capitalism and market-based solutions such as carbon taxing and reducing fossil fuel subsidies can go a long way to fixing the problem.

"What we are saying to those governments is to stop the distortion of markets that do not allow markets to act in a proper way," he said. "If the markets are allowed to function, they are on our side."

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