

# China adds coal power despite climate pledge: report

November 20 2019, by Jing Xuan Teng

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China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, and still relies heavily on polluting coal for its growing energy needs

China plans to add new coal power plants equivalent to all of the EU's current generating capacity, putting the world's biggest emitter out of

sync with its commitments to combat climate change, researchers said Wednesday.

China built enough new plants between January 2018 and June 2019—nearly 43 gigawatts worth of capacity—to cancel out the decrease in the rest of the world, said the US-based Global Energy Monitor.

Researchers warned that an increase in China's coal power capacity was incompatible with keeping global warming "well below" 2 degrees celsius, a key commitment of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change which China is a party to.

Another 147.7 gigawatts of coal plants in the country are currently under construction or likely to be reopened, nearly as many as the entire European Union's 150 gigawatts of existing capacity, the report said.

The plants would take China's total coal power plant capacity to 1174.7 gigawatts.

The report attributed China's coal expansion to a two year period in which [provincial governments](#) rapidly approved projects as part of an effort to boost regional growth.

An ongoing economic slowdown could further weaken China's resolve to switch to renewables despite the central government's calls in recent years to slow the development of coal plants.

"There is a risk that Chinese leaders will feel the need to continue supporting coal-intensive industries and make climate concerns second to continued economic growth," Christine Shearer, a director at Global Energy Monitor, told AFP.

China's efforts against climate change are key as it is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

The International Energy Agency said last week that current energy policies around the world could result in a situation where "hundreds of millions of people still go without access to electricity... and where CO2 emissions would lock in severe impacts from [climate change](#)."

Within China, continued expansion of coal capacity could cause a "further worsening of the coal power overcapacity problem in China, and [financial distress](#) for power companies," Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, told AFP.

"This will complicate China's transition to clean energy by creating an incentive for the power industry to slow down expansion of [clean energy](#) and saddling the industry with debt at a time when they should be investing in an [energy](#) transition," Myllyvirta said.

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