

Countries far apart as climate talks enter final week

November 8 2021, by Patrick Galey



Tens of thousands of people thronged the streets of Glasgow on Saturday demanding faster action from governments after Greta Thunberg branded the summit "a failure"

UN climate talks entered their final week Monday with countries still

worlds apart on key issues including how rapidly the world curbs carbon emissions and how to help nations already impacted by global heating.

After a week of headline announcements from host Britain on ending deforestation and phasing out coal, experts say the underlying COP26 negotiations have barely progressed.

Countries are in Glasgow to work out how to implement the Paris Agreement's goals of limiting temperature rises to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius.

And while recent announcements mean they have inched closer, many disputes remain unresolved.

These include ratcheting up ambition on national carbon reduction plans, providing a long-promised \$100 billion annually to developing nations and rules governing carbon markets.

"All countries are playing hardball," Stephen Leonard, climate law and policy specialist and veteran COP observer told AFP.

"The EU want the highest ambition possible. The African countries want as much finance for adaptation as possible. Australia and Japan want to be able to trade as much carbon as possible."

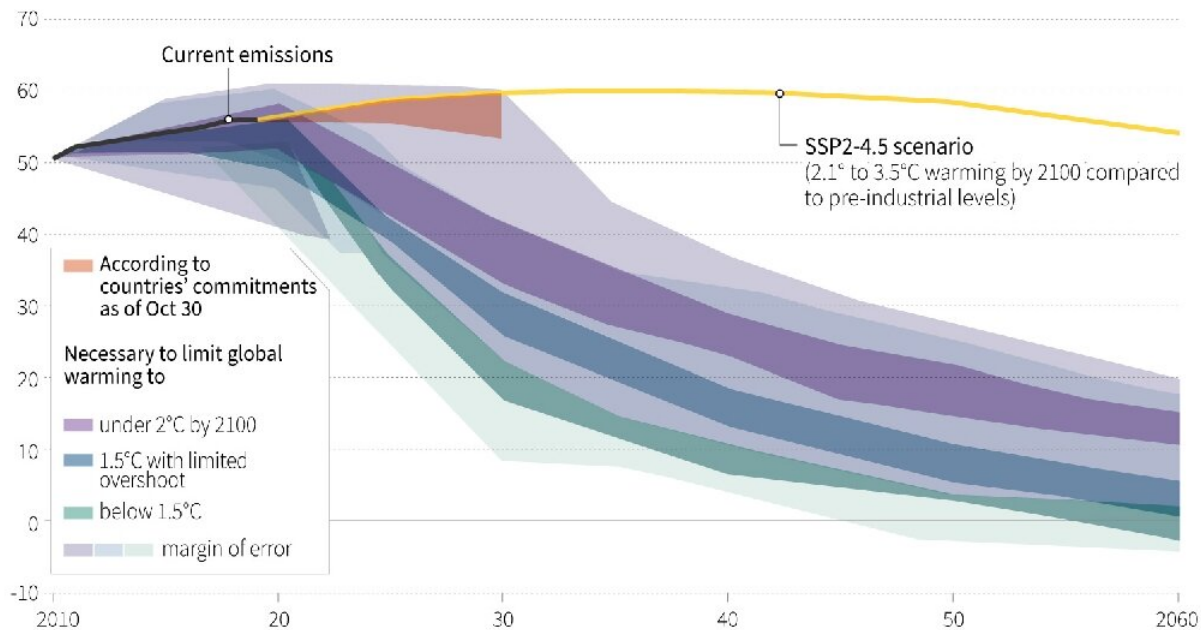
Addressing the first formal "stocktake" on Monday of progress so far, COP26 President Alok Sharma said one week of technical negotiations had "already concluded some important issues that will drive accelerated climate action".

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TOO HIGH

COP26

Countries' pledges to lower greenhouse gas emissions as of Oct 30 are insufficient to limit global warming to the Paris Agreement objectives

Greenhouse gas emissions (in billions of tonnes of CO₂ equivalent)



Source: United Nations Climate Change Secretariat

AFP

Shows changes in greenhouse gas emissions up until 2030, according to countries' pledges (NDC) and emission trajectories needed up until 2060 to limit warming to 1.5°C, 2°C by 2100.

But he said any preliminary conference decision text—over which ministers will haggle when they arrive in Glasgow later this week—had not yet materialised.

"We have a lot of work to do across all issues that remain," said Britain's chief negotiator Archie Young.

"We will need to work at pace."

Some progress

COP26 is taking place a year late due to the Covid-19 pandemic and against a backdrop of ever-stronger drought, flooding and storms supercharged by higher temperatures that are battering countries across the globe.

Its first week saw around 100 nations commit to slash their emissions of methane—a powerful greenhouse gas—by at least 30 percent by 2030.

In another development likely to dent emissions, India—the fourth largest polluter—said it would achieve carbon neutrality by 2070.

Experts said these announcements, along with countries' latest emissions cutting pledges, could have a real impact on future temperature rises.



Delegates from nearly 200 nations are in Glasgow to work out how to deliver the goals of the 2015 climate deal.

But a UN assessment late last week found emissions were still on course to increase 13.7 percent by 2030.

To keep warming to 1.5C, they must fall 45 percent this decade.

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"Last week saw a flurry of announcements, from halting deforestation to reducing methane emissions," said Tracy Carty, head of Oxfam's COP26 delegation.

"Yet, for some of these announcements there is a glaring lack of detail. They must not be a distraction from the urgent issue of countries needing to increase the ambition of their national [emission](#) reduction targets by 2030."

Dozens of nations have signed up to a COP26 initiative to end their [use of coal](#)—the most polluting fossil fuel—within decades, including major users South Korea and Vietnam.

But the pact excluded the top consumers China, India and the United States.



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Major exporter Australia, which also declined to join the initiative, said Monday it would continue to sell coal for "decades into the future".

"We have said very clearly we are not closing [coal mines](#) and we are not closing coal-fired [power stations](#)," Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt told national broadcaster ABC.

Australia has been among the countries to recently unveil 2050 net zero plans criticised by scientists and green groups for lacking detail and relying heavily on as-yet-unrealised technologies to suck CO₂ out of the air.

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