

Britain to intensify fight against climate change

12 June 2019, by Gregory Katz And Frank Jordans



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May during a visit to Imperial College where she saw machinery which converts carbon dioxide into oxygen, in London, Wednesday, June 12, 2019. Britain's outgoing prime minister on Wednesday announced plans to eliminate the country's net contribution to climate change by 2050 as Europe's effort to slow global warming picked up speed. (Stefan Rousseau/Pool photo via AP)

Britain's outgoing prime minister on Wednesday announced plans to eliminate the country's net contribution to climate change by 2050 as Europe's effort to slow global warming picked up speed.

Theresa May said the plan will be put before Parliament later in the day. The amendment to the 2008 Climate Change Act will intensify Britain's push to drastically reduce carbon emissions ahead of a European Union summit next week that's expected to address the bloc's effort to tackle global warming. Though Britain plans to leave the EU, there is broad cross-party support in Parliament for the international fight against climate change.

"Standing by is not an option," she said. "Reaching net zero by 2050 is an ambitious target, but it is

crucial that we achieve it to ensure we protect our planet for future generations." The government's Committee on Climate Change says the change will help public health by reducing air and noise pollution and also help biodiversity.

Scientists say the world must stop pumping more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere no later than the middle of the century if it wants to stop average global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees C (2.7 F) compared to pre-industrial times.

The ambitious goal, set in the 2015 Paris accord, is seen as the best chance of preventing potentially catastrophic effects of climate change, from sea level rise to increases in extreme weather.

While experts agree it won't be possible to eliminate all emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, "net zero" would ensure that an equal amount of gas would be captured by natural means such as forests or artificial systems that suck carbon out of the atmosphere.



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May's announcement means Britain will likely leapfrog other major industrialized countries, such as France and Germany, which are working on similar legislation to be passed this year.

Under President Donald Trump, the United States has backed away from the entire Paris agreement, though some U.S. states and cities have set their own targets for legislation for cutting carbon emissions over the coming decades.

Smaller European countries, including the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden already have the "net zero" target enshrined in domestic laws, some of which are more ambitious than the U.K. proposal.

One difficulty has been keeping track of the efforts made by various countries to reach their emissions goals.

Sweden's environmental agencies Wednesday launched a platform that allows citizens to monitor the country's progress toward the net-zero emissions target by 2045.

The online dashboard displays the country's carbon emissions data by sector and allows users to view various efforts in place in Sweden, as well as planned actions toward CO2 reduction.



In this Tuesday April 23, 2019 file photo, climate change protesters march along Whitehall toward parliament, in London. Britain's prime minister has announced plans to eliminate the country's net contribution to climate change by 2050. Theresa May said the plan will be put before Parliament Wednesday, June 12. She says the amendment to the 2008 Climate Change Act will intensify Britain's push to drastically reduce carbon emissions because "standing by is not an option." (AP Photo/Matt Dunham, file)

Users can zoom in from Sweden's national carbon emissions in the transport sector all the way down to local policies aimed at increasing the use of public transport.

"We're talking about the transformation of all society," said Ola Altera, the head of the Swedish Climate Policy Council, who says visualization gives a common picture of "where we are, where we are going, and how we are doing."

Separately Wednesday, the Norwegian parliament approved a plan for the country's \$1 trillion sovereign wealth fund to dump stocks in some companies that extract fossil fuels. The fund—which receives a share of revenues from Norway's oil industry—is expected to shift about \$7.5 billion in assets away from mining companies such as Switzerland-based Glencore and Germany's RWE, and instead invest more in renewable energy projects.

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