

Most countries' climate plans 'totally inadequate' – experts

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/05/most-countries-climate-plans-totally-inadequate-experts>

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05 November 2019



Smoke and steam billows from Belchatów power station in Poland, Europe's largest coal-fired power plant.
Photograph: Kacper Pempel/Reuters

The world is on a path to climate disaster, with 75% of the promises made by countries under the Paris deal “totally inadequate”, according to a recent report. Four countries create 50% of all carbon release (called “emissions”) in the world. The United States has gone into reverse on the issue of climate change under their current president, Donald Trump, and Russia has not made any commitment to climate change.

Oil-making nations, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have set no goals to lessen carbon emissions. China and India are cleaning up their energy systems, but their growing industries mean carbon release will continue to grow for a decade.

The 2015 Paris Agreement

Under the 2015 Paris deal, countries agreed to limit global heating to 2 Celsius, or 1.5C if possible. Each country made a voluntary promise of climate change action, but as of now, the results of countries' actions would still increase world temperatures by a dangerous 3-4C. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (called the "IPCC" and is a part of the United Nations) said in 2018 that carbon emissions, which are still rising, must fall by 50% by 2030 to increase world temperatures by only 1.5C.

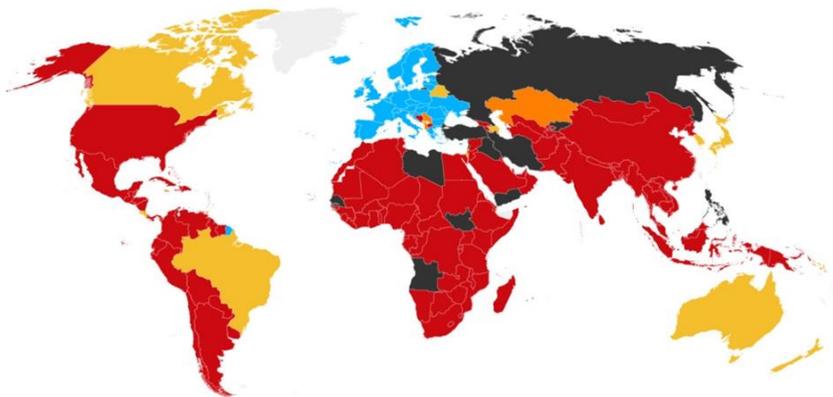
Only the 28 countries of the European Union and a few others including Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine are on track. Of the 184 national Paris promises (or "pledges") made, 136 are thought to not be enough.

Another problem is that many pledges are unlikely to be met, due to the U.S. withdrawing from the Paris agreement, Brazil's undoing of environmental laws, and because poorer nations do not get the aid funding they need – the U.S. and Australia have stopped making such donations to these countries.

"The current pledges made under the Paris agreement are totally inadequate to put us on a pathway to meet either the 1.5C or the 2C goal," said the report's writer Professor Sir Robert Watson. "With just 1C warming so far, we are already seeing some very significant effects. The effects at 3-4C will be very profound on people around the world."

Three-quarters of Paris agreement commitments are insufficient to tackle climate change, say experts

● Sufficient - emission reductions of 40%+ ● Partially sufficient 20-40%
● Partially insufficient 0-20% ● Insufficient No emission reduction target ● No commitment ● No data



Guardian graphic. Source: Universal Ecological Fund, The truth behind the climate pledges

Climate Change Action

Failing to cut carbon emissions by 2030 means the number of hurricanes, severe storms, wildfires and droughts are likely to double in number and power, the scientists said, costing countries \$2 billion (£1,55 billion) in damage. To prevent this, the amount of action on climate change must double or triple. The Paris agreement does allow for nations to increase their commitment to fight climate change if they wish.

China and India should be congratulated for improving their energy systems, Watson said, but their emissions need to hit their highest points. However, it has been hard expecting leadership from these countries when those with the biggest historical carbon emissions, like the United States, are not leading the fight against climate change, and countries that had pledged between 20-40% emission decreases by 2030 need to do much better, including Australia, Canada and Japan.

“Leaders need to adopt new policies to close coal-fired power plants and promote renewable and carbon-free power sources such as wind, solar and hydropower,” said co-author of the report James McCarthy. That means closing 2,400 coal-fired power stations around the world in the next decade and confronting the 250 new coal-powered stations that are currently being built.

Improved “energy efficiency” is also critical, said another co-author Professor Nebojsa Nakicenovic, possibly saving households around the world \$500 billion a year in energy bills. Energy efficiency means using less energy to run our normal household activities and our daily lives.

From cars to homes to industry, he said, the possibility of energy efficiency is so great that if used no extra energy would be needed in 2030, even though the global population is expected to be 1.2 billion higher than today.