

Quote of the day



These crises present us with the need to take decisions, radical decisions that are not always easy. ...moments of difficulty like these also present opportunities, opportunities that we must not waste.

POPE FRANCIS URGES WORLD LEADERS AHEAD OF COP26 CLIMATE SUMMIT



Protesters take part in a climate march in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv, calling on world leaders to take action to reverse climate change, yesterday, ahead of the COP 26 United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) in Glasgow.

PHOTO: AFP

NATIONAL CLIMATE PLEDGES

NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Six years ago, nearly every country in the world set targets for reducing their carbon emissions -- but the sum total of their pledges fell far short of what was needed to keep the planet from dangerously overheating.

CHINA: In 2016, China -- responsible for more than a quarter of all carbon pollution -- promised to reduce the intensity of its emissions 65 percent by 2030.

UNITED STATES: The second-largest carbon emitter, the US was a driving force behind the Paris deal, with an initial commitment to cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025, compared with 2005 levels.

EUROPEAN UNION: The EU committed in 2015 to reducing its CO2 emissions by at least 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

INDIA: India is the world's third-largest polluter, but has a per-capita carbon footprint far lower than the world's other top emitters.

RUSSIA: Russia, which did not formally join the Paris deal until 2019, submitted its first carbon-cutting plan in 2020.

JAPAN: Japan has submitted a more ambitious carbon cutting plan earlier this month which sets a goal of reducing emissions by 46 percent by 2030, compared to 2013 levels.

OTHER MAJOR EMITTERS: Among other big emitters, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, South Korea and Indonesia have all resubmitted NDCs that are no more ambitious -- and in the case of Mexico and Brazil even less ambitious -- than before, according to experts.

CARBON NEUTRALITY: More and more governments are committing to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century. So far, 49 countries accounting for 57 percent of global emissions -- including all EU member states, Britain and the United States -- have made formal or legal commitments.

SOURCE: AFP

China needs to do more

Say experts as Beijing's revised climate pledge 'casts shadow' over COP26

AGENCIES

China has submitted a revised plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions before the end of this current decade, but critics say the country that produces 27 percent of global emissions has failed to go further and demonstrate leadership at a critical moment for the planet.

Beijing promised its carbon dioxide emissions would peak before 2030, and that it would aim for "carbon neutrality" -- or no net emissions of CO2 -- before the year 2060, three days ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow.

"As President Xi Jinping reiterated, to address climate change is not at others' request but on China's own initiative. It is what China needs to do to achieve sustainable development at home, as well as to fulfill its due obligation to build a community with a shared future for mankind," it said in the plan, which was submitted to the UN on Thursday.

"China will implement a proactive national strategy on climate change."

To achieve its target, China said that it will

Beijing promises its carbon dioxide emissions will peak before 2030

Confirms its goal to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060

Vows to reduce coal consumption between 2025 and 2030

lower CO2 emissions per unit of GDP by more than 65 percent from the 2005 level.

It will also increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to approximately 25 percent, increase the forest stock volume by 6 billion cubic meters from the 2005 level, and bring its total installed capacity of wind and solar power to more than 1.2 billion kilowatts by 2030.

As well as new solar and wind farms, China is also planning to build new hydroelectric dams on the upper reaches of the Yangtze, Mekong and Yellow rivers, and make more use of new-generation nuclear technology, including small-scale offshore reactors.

China also vowed to reduce coal consumption between 2025 and 2030. Coal, which is considered one of the most polluting of fossil fuels, accounts for more than 60 per cent China's energy supply.

Last month, China announced that it would stop financing new coal power projects abroad -- a move seen as a "game-changer" given that Beijing is the biggest backer of coal power projects in the world.

Climate watchers have been looking closely for signs that China, the world's biggest source of climate-warming greenhouse gases, might make more ambitious pledges ahead of the Glasgow talks.

In an interview with New Scientist, climate expert Bernice Lee of Chatham House, a British think-tank, welcomed China's promise to peak emissions before 2030.

But she added, "You can't sugar-coat (it), it is disappointing. The world was expecting more from China at this point. It has missed a chance to slow global leadership."

Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air in Helsinki, noted China's latest pledges gave no answers to key questions about the country's emissions.

"At what level will emissions peak and how fast should they fall after the peak?"

Nations participating in the UN climate conference, known as the 26th Conference of Parties, or COP26, submit what are called "nationally determined contributions" that lay out emissions reduction plans.

Lewis of Georgetown University said that it was still possible that China would make additional announcements at the climate summit related to financing for renewable energy overseas.

But Li Shuo, of Greenpeace East Asia, said that China's latest plan "casts a shadow on the global climate effort".

"In light of the domestic economic uncertainties, the country appears hesitant to embrace stronger near term targets, and missed an opportunity to demonstrate ambition," he wrote on Twitter.

MORE NEWS

Brazil emissions rose in 2020 despite pandemic

Brazil's greenhouse gas emissions rose by 9.5 percent last year, mostly because of deforestation, a report said Thursday, making it one of the only major economies not to cut pollution as the pandemic hit.

Ransomware network disrupted after 2-year probe

International investigators yesterday said they had disrupted a network of cyber-criminals behind ransomware attacks on companies in dozens of countries.



Activists from Oxfam, Amnesty International and Emergency hold a flash mob a day before the G20 summit begins in Rome to demand leaders to end global inequality of access to vaccines and Covid-19 treatments, in Rome, Italy, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MOUNTING BREXIT TENSIONS

France, Britain locked in fishing standoff

REUTERS, London/Le Havre

Britain yesterday threatened to board French fishing boats and France stood by a plan to impose sanctions on British vessels in a deepening row over post-Brexit fishing rights.

The long-running dispute flared this week after France listed measures that would be taken against Britain if London did not allow more French trawlers to fish in UK waters and then seized a British boat in French territorial waters.

Britain challenged France's explanation that the scallop dredger had no permission to fish in French waters, and hit back by threatening retaliation and summoning the French ambassador to London for talks later yesterday to explain Paris's actions.

The row is part of a wider dispute over post-Brexit trade arrangements between Britain and the European Union which could lead to severe disruptions before Christmas if it spins out of control.

British Environment Secretary George Eustice said London could retaliate if France enforces sanctions including extra customs checks on British goods from Tuesday. The prospect of Paris also raising energy tariffs to Britain also loomed.

French Agriculture Minister Julien Denormandie told France 2 TV there had been no progress in the negotiations for more licences to fish in British and said it was right for France to consider sanctions against Britain.

France says Britain has refused to grant its fishermen the full number of licences to operate in British waters that France says is warranted. Britain says it is issuing licences to vessels that meet its criteria. France has threatened to ban British fishing boats from unloading in French ports, carry out additional licence checks on British vessels, tighten controls of trucks, reinforce customs and hygiene controls and raise power tariffs.

FUTURE PANDEMICS

G20 to commit to cutting period to develop vaccines

REUTERS, Rome/Brussels

Leaders of the world's 20 largest economies are set to commit to supporting cutting to 100 days the period in which pharmaceutical companies can develop new vaccines, drugs and tests during a pandemic, according to a draft joint document.

In normal circumstances developing vaccines takes more than a decade, but the Covid-19 pandemic spurred an unprecedented rush in research, trials and regulatory procedures that made it possible to have vaccines ready in less than a year. Now G20 leaders want that period cut further.

In health emergencies caused by pandemics "we will support science to shorten the cycle for the development of safe and effective vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics from 300 to 100 days," the G20 leaders say in a draft statement which they are set to adopt over the weekend at a summit in Rome. The draft is still subject to last-minute changes, but officials said this commitment was expected to remain unchanged.

One of the measures seen as crucial to cut the time needed to develop vaccines and drugs is the shortening of clinical trials. This could be possible by facilitating cooperation for conducting trials, setting up large registries for volunteers and involving regulators more closely during the trials.

Data sharing is also to be encouraged to speed up research. New technologies, such as the messenger RNA, have also demonstrated they permit faster development of new vaccines.

G20 leaders will also support the goal of the World Health Organization (WHO) to vaccinate 70% of the eligible population in each country globally by mid-2022, the draft conclusions of the summit say.

Biden criticizes Sudan's junta

Anti-coup protest death toll climbs to 11 amid global condemnation

REUTERS, Khartoum/Washington

The United States and United Nations dialled up the pressure on Sudan's new military junta on Thursday as confrontations between soldiers and anti-coup protesters took the death toll to at least 11.

After the 15-member UN Security Council called for the restoration of Sudan's civilian-led government -- toppled on Monday - US President Joe Biden said his nation like others stood with the demonstrators.

"Together, our message to Sudan's military authorities is overwhelming and clear: the Sudanese people must be allowed to protest peacefully and the civilian-led transitional government must be restored," he said in a statement.

"The events of recent days are a grave setback, but the United States will continue to stand with the people of Sudan and their non-violent struggle," said Biden, whose government has frozen aid. With thousands taking to the streets

to oppose the takeover led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, witnesses said live and rubber bullets were used on protesters in Bahri, across the river from the capital Khartoum as nightly protests picked up.



A doctors committee, which tracks the violence, said a "martyr" died in those clashes while two others were wounded and in critical condition. Earlier, a 22-year-old man died of gunshot wounds, a medical source said. That took the total of fatalities in four days to at least 11, medical sources said.

On Thursday night, Burhan said in a speech to groups who helped remove

dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 that consultations were underway to select a prime minister, according to a video aired by Al-Jazeera TV.

He said that the army is negotiating with Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok of the now dissolved transitional council to form the new government.

The UN Security Council, along with other foreign powers, called for restraint, dialogue and freedom of detainees.

The latest of several recent coups in Africa ended a shaky transitional set-up in Sudan intended to lead to elections in 2023. Power was shared between civilians and the military following the fall of Bashir.

Officials at some ministries and agencies of government have defied the new junta, refusing to step down or hand over duties. They have declared a general strike, along with unions in sectors from healthcare to aviation, although officials say they will continue to supply flour, gas and emergency medical care.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sole candidate for WHO chief

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is the sole candidate for the WHO leadership when his current term expires, the WHO announced yesterday. The 56-year-old Ethiopian former health and foreign minister has been at the forefront of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic as the head of the WHO. Elected to the WHO leadership in 2017, his mandate runs out in August next year. Tedros secured the backing of 28 countries, including France, Germany, Indonesia, the Netherlands and Spain, the WHO said. The deadline for nominations passed on September 23.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS