

# The Paris Vision - 100% clean renewable energy for all

## Greenpeace: Expectations for the UN Climate Conference in Paris

November 2015

After months of meetings and negotiations, the Paris climate summit is nearly upon us. It will open in the shadow of terrible attacks in the city, which took the lives of so many people, and exposed the deep fault-lines in our world.

The climate summit is a chance for world leaders to show unity towards the common threat of dangerous climate change. The importance of that struggle is recognized worldwide, which is why leaders like President Obama and Xi Jinping have committed to being in Paris for its opening. The UN's climate chief, Christiana Figueres, says there will be a deal. But what kind of deal? And what will change?

Paris is a chance for world leaders to make the world a better place, but, it will not be the end of the road. An agreement in Paris is just a milestone, albeit an important one, on a journey which will continue until we achieve a world with 100% renewable energy for all in a just transition that leaves no-one behind.

There are plenty of hopeful signs that this transition is already happening and that renewable energy will become the dominating energy of this century. Renewable energies, which already provide 22% of the world's electricity (2013), are growing fast, helped by plummeting costs and technological advances. The use of coal levelled off in 2014, and this year global coal consumption is heading for the biggest decline in history.

The run-up has also seen a sense of growing political momentum. Among the key moments have been:

- China and the US outlining a common vision for the Paris negotiations, including a \$3.1 billion commitment from China on climate finance. This voluntary finance pledge from an emerging economy signals a paradigm shift in effort sharing.
- The Pope's Encyclical and speech to Congress and the UN General Assembly, linking preservation of the environment and tackling poverty
- The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals which include ensuring sustainable energy for all through substantially increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix, halting deforestation by 2020 and taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- A growing number of businesses and corporations switching their own operations to 100% renewable energy and calling for a strong agreement in Paris.

In September, Greenpeace, in collaboration with the German Aerospace Center, published a ground-breaking report, the Energy [R]evolution scenario<sup>1</sup>, demonstrating that 100% renewable energy for all by 2050 is both achievable and cost-effective given the right political decisions..

There have also been major setbacks for the fossil fuel industry.

Shell announced it was stopping its drilling for oil in the Arctic – and is pulling out of a tar sands project in Canada. In October, President Obama took a historic decision by rejecting the Keystone XL oil pipeline, citing the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/publications/climate/2015/Energy-Revolution-2015-Full.pdf>

New technologies have transformed business and changed our world before. It happened with the launch of the internet, and the invention of the mobile phone. The move from fossil fuels to renewables is such a moment, which can transform our lives. It is the responsibility of world leaders in Paris to speed up that transformation, for the benefit of all.

### Countries' commitments

Countries' national commitments (also known as *intended nationally determined contributions* - *INDCs*) are key components of the Paris deal as they are the primary tools for immediate and drastic emissions cuts.

So far, around 160 countries have made submissions, representing almost 90% of global emissions. If countries deliver on their INDCs, it could make a real difference to the rise in greenhouse gas emissions. But we would still be facing a temperature rise of as much as 3.5°C. Even the lower end of predictions, 2.7 degrees C is almost double what the most vulnerable countries see as the maximum if they are to survive. It is not clear what the legal status of the INDCs will be in the Paris agreement, and 25% of them are conditional on finance from rich countries. It remains one of the most difficult areas of negotiation.

### What should happen in Paris?

The Paris deal should point the way to a just transition, where neither workers nor vulnerable communities are left behind, to 100% renewable energy for all. It needs to fire the starting gun for a series of continuous actions, which drive down emissions much faster than the submitted INDCs, protect forests, build climate resilience and keep global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C.

The following key elements must be included in the deal:

**A strong long-term goal: Reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050, through a phase out of fossil fuels and a just transition towards 100% renewable energy, without false solutions.** The Paris agreement has to mark the end of the fossil fuel era, and accelerate the transition to 100% renewable energy. It has to send a clear and convincing signal to governments and investors to end any new investments into fossil fuels, using clear language on the urgent shift to renewable energy rather than much vaguer and problematic terms like low-carbon economies or climate neutrality. The timeline must be mid-century – the end of the century is far too late.

**Stronger short-term action: Commitments to be reviewed and improved in 5 year cycles, starting right after Paris.** All countries' commitments need to follow a **five-year commitment period**, where each five-year period deepens the commitments, allowing no back-sliding. Before the intended commitments become permanent, they are reviewed and improved as necessary. The first such review cycle needs to start right after Paris, and bridge the current gap between the pledges and the agreed temperature goal, before inscribing them as commitments for the **first commitment period (2021-2025)**. With it, countries will be forced to take early action. It will also discourage misinformed investments into high-carbon infrastructure and make it easier to capture technological advances in renewable energies and energy efficiency. Five-year *review* or *stocktaking* cycles alone are not sufficient as they don't compel countries to table new, and more ambitious, commitments.

**Strong commitment for adaptation, finance and addressing loss and damage.** The Paris agreement has to acknowledge that less action on mitigation means a greater need for adaptation and loss and damage measures, especially through the provision of finance. The level of support and compensation must meet vulnerable countries' needs in line with the actual warming anticipated. A roadmap must be decided in Paris for how to meet the 100bn USD commitment for climate financing by 2020, with a clear understanding and commitment to increase the funding levels after 2020.

**Legally binding.** A legally binding agreement - including common accounting rules for mitigation

and finance - will compel leaders to act in a serious way, and reduce the risk of back-sliding because of political changes.

**Transparency to ensure implementation.** The assessments of the commitments as well as the tracking of their implementation needs to be done through a transparent, expert-led process. The process must guarantee that countries have the obligation to reconsider and upgrade their pledges or action to meet them as necessary.

**Shifting subsidies and investments away from fossil fuels.** All countries and development banks should commit to do their part in shifting subsidies and investments away from dirty energy and towards clean renewable energy. Providing these kinds of signals in the Paris agreement will be crucial.

**Protection of forests.** Protection and restoration measures of forests must not be used for offsetting of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions from the energy sector, allowing for the continued burning of fossil fuels. The inclusion of land-use emissions in the Paris Agreement must reinforce the internationally-agreed Sustainable Development Goal of halting deforestation and restoring degraded forests by 2020, as a step towards ensuring the world has more extensive and healthier forests in 2050 than it does today.

**Bring down emissions before 2020.** With the decline in coal consumption and the rapid changes happening in renewable energy, particularly in China, there is a real possibility that global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could peak within the next five years. When governments and corporate leaders meet in Paris, they need to take the decisions which ensure that this happens. The faster we move towards 100% renewable energy, the easier and cheaper the transition will be.

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