

Climate change summit: world leaders told to 'step up ambition'

Nelson Mandela's widow Graça Machel says leaders failed to rise to challenge after day of impassioned speeches at UN

Suzanne Goldenberg in New York

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Graça Machel, the widow of Nelson Mandela, speaks at the UN climate summit in New York. Photograph: Lucas Jackson/Reuters

The widow of Nelson Mandela punctured the self-congratulatory mood of the UN summit on Tuesday, saying world leaders had failed to rise to the challenge of climate change.

"There is a huge mismatch between the magnitude of the challenge and the response we heard here today," Graça Machel told the closing moments of the summit. "The scale is much more than we have achieved."

The gathering of 120 world leaders – the first such meeting on climate change in five years – resulted in a day of impassioned speeches, including a cameo from the actor and UN [ambassador Leonardo DiCaprio](#).

Several of the speeches, including that of Barack Obama, mentioned [the 300,000 people](#) who turned out for Sunday's climate march. "Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them," the president said.

But, as anticipated, the leaders held back on making new commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions or to give significant climate finance to developing countries, leaving it to business, cities and campaign groups to produce the real action on climate.

The searing critique of the summit carried additional weight because Machel is one of the Elders, global leaders charged with working for peace and human rights.

She spoke only moments after the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, had declared the gathering a success. "We have delivered," he said.

But Machel said leaders had failed to offer an adequate response to the hundreds of thousands of people who came out in the streets this week to demand action on climate change – and the millions in poor countries who will suffer its effects.

"Can we genuinely say we are going to preserve their lives, and ensure their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherit a planet which is safe and sustainable?" she asked.

Machel appealed to world leaders and business executives who descended on the UN on Tuesday to “go back to the drawing board”. She concluded: “The obligation in my view is to step up the ambition.”

Campaign groups also criticised the result.

But Al Gore, the climate champion and former US vice-president, said the summit – the first such meeting on climate in five years – was still a net positive. “There is no question that a considerable amount of momentum was generated here,” Gore told the Guardian. “I think it was a tremendous boost to the whole movement that is towards the Paris agreement.”

Barack Obama, in the most rousing speech of the day, said the US had done more under his presidency to cut carbon pollution than any other country, and volunteered to help lead the international community to an international agreement to fight climate change at a meeting in Paris at the end of next year.

“There should be no question that the United States is stepping up to the plate,” he told the summit, saying the US recognised its role in causing climate change.

China, which has surpassed the US as the world’s biggest emitter, said it would also do its bit, by curbing emissions “as soon as possible”.

Zhang Gaoli, the vice-premier, said China was on track to reduce carbon intensity by 40% from 2005 levels by 2020. “As a responsible major developing country, China will make an even greater effort to address climate change and take on international responsibilities that are commensurate with our national conditions.”



Zhang Gaoli speaks during the Climate Summit 2014 at United Nations headquarters in New York. Photograph: JUSTIN LANE/EPA

The UK prime minister, David Cameron, also touted his government’s environmental policies. “As prime minister I pledged to lead the greenest government ever and I believe we have kept that promise,” he said.

And France, which as host country will oversee the final stages of negotiations on a global deal, held out the prospect that dealing with climate change would also bring a new international economic order. “What will come out of Paris is a new economy,” the president, François Hollande, told an investors’ event on the sidelines of the summit.

Hollande took a swipe at world leaders who had been voicing their concerns about climate change for decades – without taking decisive actions to cut emissions, or aid poor countries which will bear the brunt of climate change.

“We can’t just limit ourselves to words, expressions of regret and exercises in stock-taking,” he told reporters.

France went on to commit to providing \$1bn to a climate change fund for poor countries – the first significant contribution since Germany threw in \$1bn last July. Sweden has also contributed.

The Green Climate Fund was founded in 2010 to help poor countries cope with climate change. UN officials and developing country diplomats have said repeatedly it will not be possible to reach a climate deal in Paris, without a significant fund for those countries which did the least to cause climate change but will bear the brunt.

South Korea and Switzerland went on to pledge \$100m each, Denmark pledged \$70m, Norway pledged \$33m and Mexico said it would give \$10m.

But the total of \$2.3bn pledged for the Green Climate Fund so far fell short of the \$10bn to \$15bn that UN officials and developing country said was needed to show rich countries were committed to acting

on climate change. It also was unclear whether Tuesday's pledges represented new money.



French president François Hollande welcomes Egyptian president General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. Photograph: ALAIN JOCARD/ap

"We welcome new pledges of money from France and others, but they fall well short of what's needed. With poor communities around the world already losing their homes and income due to climate change, all rich countries must pledge to the Green Climate Fund and set a clear timeline of when the money will be available," the campaign group ActionAid said in a statement.

The summit did produce other initiatives in addition to the climate cash, but these too were relatively modest, and all relied on partnerships with business and NGOs.

In the headline event at Tuesday's summit, more than 400 companies from 60 countries all signed on to support putting a price on carbon.

Some of the world's biggest palm oil and paper producers committed to stop destructive logging by 2030, and restore an area of forest equivalent to the size of India.

Nigel Purvis, the chief executive of the Climate Advisers consultancy which worked to get the deal, said: "This is like if Exxon Mobil and the Koch brothers got together to cut greenhouse gas emissions."

But Brazil, despite its critical role protecting the Amazon rainforest, said it had been left out of the negotiations. A number of campaign groups did not sign the agreement, saying it did not go far enough to protect the rights of indigenous people who rely on the forest, or to hold the big forestry companies to account.

"I think that it's impossible to think that you can have a global forest initiative without Brazil on board. It doesn't make sense," Izabella Teixeira, the Brazilian environment minister, told the Associated Press.

US will not commit to climate change aid for poor nations at UN summit

Rich countries pledged to find \$100bn a year by 2020, but so far only Germany has made a significant contribution

Suzanne Goldenberg, US environment correspondent

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Leaders of countries such as the Marshall Islands are most likely to feel the effects of climate change and are demanding

action. Photograph: Alamy

Barack Obama will not be pledging any cash to a near-empty fund for poor countries at a United Nations summit on climate change next week, the UN special climate change envoy said on Friday.

The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, has challenged the 125 world leaders attending the 23 September summit to make “bold pledges” to the fund, intended to help poor countries cope with climate change.

The UN has been pressing rich countries to come up with pledges of between \$10bn and \$15bn.

“We are putting a lot of pressure for them to do it at the summit on the 23rd,” the UN envoy and former Irish president, Mary Robinson, told the Guardian on the sidelines of a US Agency for International Development meeting. But she added: “I know the United States is not going to commit because I’ve asked.”

Obama put climate change at the top of his second term agenda, and the administration unveiled a host of new green measures in the run-up to next week’s meeting, including an initiative to cut the extremely potent greenhouse gas used as a coolant in refrigerators and air conditioners.

Obama’s speech to the summit will showcase those US actions, such as proposed new rules cutting carbon pollution from power plants.

“The president will use his speech at the climate summit to call on other leaders to keep their ambitions high and to work for a strong global framework to cut emissions,” White House adviser John Podesta told a conference call with reporters.

Todd Stern, the state department climate envoy, told the call those measures put Obama in a stronger position to help broker an international climate deal next year.

But cash for the Green Climate Fund – to help poor countries move off fossil fuels and protect their people from rising seas, heat waves and other consequences of climate change – will not be part of Obama’s agenda at this UN meeting.

The summit is intended to help catalyse action on climate change – and UN officials have said repeatedly it is not a negotiating session.

Instead, the meeting is being seen as a test of willingness of rich and poor countries to buckle down in the next 15 months and do the work needed to reach a deal that will cut greenhouse gas emissions and help insulate the world from effects of climate change.

Climate finance is a critical part of reaching a deal. Poorest countries did the least to cause climate change, but scientists say they will suffer the worst impacts.

Rich countries committed to the Green Climate Fund in 2009, pledging to mobilise \$100bn a year by 2020 to help poor countries deal with climate change.

So far, only Germany has made a significant contribution, with Chancellor Angela Merkel pledging \$1bn over four years in July, potentially poisoning the atmosphere for future negotiations.

“We must have a commitment on the Green Climate Fund. It has to be capitalised to a minimum of \$10bn and hopefully between \$12bn and \$15bn,” Robinson said.

“It is important for the trust between countries that rich countries really take responsibility. There were commitments made to have \$100bn a year by 2020 but we are still not seeing that fleshed out.”

Developing countries have said they want to see promises of \$15bn for the fund this year. Leaders of small island states, which face getting drowned by sea level rise, are also demanding to see cash – as well as strong action on climate.

“From those of us on the front line – or from our perspective on the water line – we need to hear the leaders at the the summit say very clearly they are prepared to take stronger actions than before to reduce emissions,” Tony de Brum, the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands, told a conference call

hosted by the World Resources Institute thinktank. "They also need to bring climate financing to the table."

Robinson said she expected to see pledges from European countries and South Korea at the summit, and maybe Mexico and Costa Rica as well, to demonstrate that the UN is casting the net wider for funding.

Other UN officials were hopeful of filling the pot.

Bob Orr, a UN assistant secretary general for policy, said the organisation hoped to see funds beginning to flow at the summit. "The secretary general has been calling on all the government of the world to fill this empty shell," he told a panel organised by the Center for American Progress. "We will see a good downpayment on that next week."

Climate change summit: Talk, pledges, but no commitment

4:14 PM Wednesday Sep 24, 2014



United States President Barack Obama addresses the Climate Summit, at United Nations headquarters. Photo / AP

In the first international test for his climate-change strategy, President Barack Obama pressed world leaders Tuesday to follow the United States' lead on the issue, even as a United Nations summit revealed the many obstacles that still stand in the way of wider agreements to reduce heat-trapping pollution.

"The United States has made ambitious investments in clean energy and ambitious reductions in our carbon emissions," Obama said. "Today I call on all countries to join us, not next year or the year after that, but right now. Because no nation can meet this global threat alone."

But none of the pledges made at Tuesday's one-day meeting was binding. The largest-ever gathering of world leaders to discuss climate was designed to lay the groundwork for a new global climate-change treaty.

It also revealed the sharp differences that divide countries on matters such as deforestation, carbon pollution and methane leaks from oil and gas production:

- Brazil, home to the Amazon rainforest, said it would not sign a pledge to halt deforestation by 2030.

- The United States decided not to join 73 countries in supporting a price on carbon, which Congress has indicated it would reject.

- And minutes after Obama said "nobody gets a pass," Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli insisted the world treat developing nations, including China, differently than developed nations, allowing them to release more heat-trapping pollution.

China, the No. 1 carbon-polluting nation, signed on in support of pricing carbon and vowed to stop the rise of carbon-dioxide emissions as soon as possible.

"Today we must set the world on a new course," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, who added that pricing carbon was critical. "Climate change is the defining issue of our age. It is defining our present. Our response will define our future."

In some ways, the summit, which was part of the annual UN General Assembly, answered that call.

The European Union said its member nations next month were set to approve a plan that would cut greenhouse gases back to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. The EU also called for using renewable energy for 27 percent of the bloc's power needs and increasing energy efficiency by 30 percent.

The United States will not release its new emissions targets until early next year.

"There were not that many surprises," said Connie Hedegaard, the top climate official for the European Commission, referring to Obama's speech.

Hedegaard said the first-ever limits on carbon from power plants, proposed by Obama back in June, were "a good signal to send, but after today we will still have to wait until first quarter of 2015 to see how ambitious the United States will be."

By 2020, China will reduce its emissions per gross domestic product by 45 percent from 2005 levels, Zhang said. But because economic growth in China has more than tripled since 2005, that means Chinese carbon pollution can continue to soar. Still, outside environmentalists hailed the country's promises because they went beyond any of China's previous statements.

More than 150 countries set the first-ever deadline to end deforestation by 2030, but that goal was thrown into doubt when Brazil said it would not join. Forests are important because they absorb the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. The United States, Canada and the entire European Union signed onto a declaration to halve forest loss by 2020 and eliminate deforestation entirely by 2030.

If the forest goal is met, the UN says it would be the equivalent of taking every car in the world off the road. A group of companies, countries and nonprofits also pledged to restore more than 1 million square miles of forest worldwide by 2030. Norway promised to spend \$350 million to protect forests in Peru and another \$100 million in Liberia.

World leaders pledged to spend at least \$5 billion making the world more sustainable. France promised \$1 billion. Korea pledged \$100 million. Others, like Chile, pledged cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

A 2009 agreement called the Copenhagen Accord called for developed countries to contribute \$10 billion a year in 2010 and scale it up to \$100 billion a year by 2020 to help developing countries cut emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro chastised "polluting powers" for causing an "evil of such

planetary dimensions" and then trying to barter their way out of their responsibilities.

Seychelles President James Michel called small island nations like his "victims of this pollution" and said it was up to the countries that burn the most coal, oil and gas to do the most.

"If they don't do something, the Earth will not survive, and that will be the end of us all," Michel said in an interview before the start of the summit.

Ban, actor Leonardo DiCaprio, former US Vice President Al Gore and scientist Rajendra K Pachauri warned that time was short. By 2020, Ban said, the world must reduce greenhouse gases to prevent an escalating level of warming. Five years ago, leaders pledged to keep world temperatures from increasing by another 3.6 degrees Celsius.

Pachauri, who headed a Nobel Prize-winning panel of scientists that studied the issue, and Ban told world leaders the effects of global warming are already here, pointing to a UN building that flooded during the devastating Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Pachauri said it will get worse with droughts, storms and food and water shortages. He foresaw even more violent climate-driven conflicts.

And, Pachauri said, "a steady rise in our death toll, especially among the world's poorest. How on Earth can we leave our children with a world like this?"

- AP

UN climate summit: China pledges emissions action



Zhang Gaoli said China would aim to cap emissions or have them peak "as early as possible"

For videos see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-29334807>

China has pledged for the first time to take firm action to tackle climate change, telling a UN summit it aims to make deep emissions reductions by 2020.

Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli said China's carbon emissions - the world's highest - would soon peak.

US President Barack Obama said climate change was moving faster than efforts to address it, and the US and China had a responsibility to lead other nations.

The summit was the largest high-level climate meeting since 2009.

Hosted by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, it aimed to encourage 120 member states to sign up to a comprehensive new global climate agreement at talks in Paris next year.

As he closed the summit, Mr Ban hailed the meeting, saying "never before have so many leaders gathered to commit to action on climate change".



Mr Obama said the world needed to follow a new course in the battle against climate change. The UN **has previously warned** that the impacts of global warming are likely to be "severe, pervasive and irreversible", leading to problems such as sea level rises, greater flood risks and changes to crop yields.

Mr Zhang told the summit China would aim to cap emissions or have them peak "as early as possible".

"As a responsible major country, a major developing country, China will make even greater effort to address climate change and take on international responsibilities that are commensurate with our national conditions and actual capabilities," Mr Zhang said.

"All countries need to follow the path of green and low carbon development that suits their national conditions, [and] set forth post-2020 actions in light of actual circumstances."

Correspondents say this is the first time China has said it is willing to take firm action to cut carbon emissions.

However, Chinese President Xi Jinping was not at the summit, held before the formal start of the UN General Assembly session.

Leonardo DiCaprio: "I believe that mankind has looked at climate change as if it was a fiction"
Speaking earlier, Mr Obama said that he had spoken to Mr Zhang, with the pair agreeing that the world's two biggest emitters "have a responsibility to lead", but that all nations must play a part.

The "urgent and growing threat of climate change" would ultimately "define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other" issue, he added.

Jeffrey Sachs: "Our governments do not take care of the future, they're short term, short sighted"
"We recognise our role in creating this problem, we embrace our responsibility to combat it."

An "ambitious" agreement "that reflects economic realities in the next decade and beyond" needed to be reached, because that was what "the scale of this challenge demands", Mr Obama said.

Mr Obama is eager to leave an environmental legacy, but correspondents say he faces numerous obstacles - including a Congress unwilling to curtail greenhouse gas emissions, or ratify an international agreement.

Matt McGrath, BBC Environment correspondent

As well as the hallmark rhetoric, President Obama's speech was notable for the absence of big pledges and for its realistic tone.

Every time the president used the word "carbon", he tagged the word "pollution" on the end.

His goal was to underline that carbon dioxide is damaging to humans in the same way as air pollution, and in the US it should be regulated by executive power rather than by through legislation in a very divided Congress.

The president also acknowledged the scale of opposition to his attempts to cut carbon. The most substantial pledge he made was an announcement that early next year he would publish a post-2020 plan to cut emissions.

He appealed to China, saying that together with the US the two countries had a special responsibility to lead. But everyone had to contribute. "No-one gets a pass," he said.

The president wants to bind in the Chinese with an ambitious, inclusive - and most critically - a flexible deal that he can sign without recourse to the Senate.

'Raising awareness'

Other attendees at the summit included US Vice President and climate campaigner Al Gore, Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio, Chinese actress Li Bingbing and Rajendra Pachauri, head of the UN climate panel, which won the Nobel peace prize in 2007.



Iraq's President Fouad Massoum (L) and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani were two of the many world leaders attending the summit

France's President Francois Hollande promised \$1bn (£610m) to help poor nations cope with the effects of rising temperatures, while Norway pledged \$147m (£90m) to Liberia to end deforestation by 2020.

British Prime Minister David Cameron, for his part, argued that he had "kept that promise" to run the "greenest government ever".

With so many nations attending the summit at the UN headquarters and so little time at the one-day meeting, three separate sessions ran simultaneously on Tuesday in three different rooms.

The meeting was the largest climate summit since failed talks at Copenhagen in 2009, when countries failed to agree a timetable to reduce long-term emissions.

Away from the leaders' speeches there remained some scepticism.

Economist Jeffrey Sachs, an adviser to Ban Ki-moon, told the BBC: "This meeting [by itself] will not solve the

problems. This meeting is to raise awareness.

"Our governments do not take care of the future, they're short-term, short-sighted," he added.

23 September 2014 Last updated at 02:21

Rockefellers to switch investments to 'clean energy'

Heirs to the Rockefeller family, which made its vast fortune from oil, are to sell investments in fossil fuels and reinvest in clean energy, reports say.

For videos see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-29310475>

The **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** is joining a coalition of philanthropists pledging to rid themselves of more than \$50bn (£31bn) in fossil fuel assets.

The announcement was made on Monday, a day before the UN climate change summit opens on Tuesday.

Some 650 individuals and 180 institutions have joined the coalition.

It is part of a growing global initiative called **Global Divest-Invest**, which began on university campuses several years ago, the **New York Times** reports.

Pledges from pension funds, religious groups and big universities have reportedly doubled since the start of 2014.

UN summit

Rockefeller Brothers Fund director Stephen Heintz said the move to divest from fossil fuels would be in line with oil tycoon John D Rockefeller's wishes,

"We are quite convinced that if he were alive today, as an astute businessman looking out to the future, he would be moving out of fossil fuels and investing in clean, renewable energy," Mr Heintz said in a statement.



The last major conference on climate change, in Copenhagen in 2009, ended without results

The philanthropic organisation was founded in 1940 by the sons of John D Rockefeller. As of 31 July 2014, the fund's investment assets were worth \$860m.

"There is a moral imperative to preserve a healthy planet," Valerie Rockefeller Wayne, a great-great-granddaughter of Mr Rockefeller and a trustee of the fund, is quoted by the Washington Post as saying.

A climate change summit is due to start on Tuesday at the UN headquarters in New York, with 125 heads of

state and government members expected to attend.

It is the first such gathering since the unsuccessful climate conference in Copenhagen in 2009.

At the scene: Matt McGrath, Environment Correspondent, BBC News

The event held to launch the Rockefellers' news was more revivalist meeting than press conference. There was whooping, cheering, hollering and stamping of feet.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu appeared by video and told the assembly that the move was "a tipping point of transition to a new energy economy that was just and equitable".

Rockefeller Brothers Fund director Stephen Heintz said dryly that "everyone noted the irony" that a foundation built on oil wealth would now be leading the charge out of fossil fuel.

Actor Mark Ruffalo, who also signed the pledge, told the conference: "These are not silly people, these are people who know how to deal with money."

They recognised that clean energy was "the future", he said - prompting more whooping, cheering and stamping of feet.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hopes leaders can make progress on a universal climate agreement to be signed by all nations at the end of 2015.

On Sunday, hundreds of thousands of marchers took to the streets in more than 2,000 locations worldwide, demanding urgent action on climate change and calling for curbs on carbon emissions.

Business leaders, environmentalists and celebrities also joined the demonstrations, which were organised by The People's Climate March.

Huge crowds attended climate marches in New York and other cities around the world on Sunday

21 September 2014 Last updated at 20:54

Climate change summit: Thousands join global protests



Andy Moore reports from the People's Climate March in London

Street protests demanding urgent action on climate change have been taking place around the world, with marches reported in more than 2,000 locations.

The People's Climate March is campaigning for curbs on carbon emissions, ahead of the UN climate summit in New York next week.

Huge demonstrations have been taking place in Australia and Europe.

In Manhattan, tens of thousands of people are at a march that is also being attended by UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

"This is the planet where our subsequent generations will live," Mr Ban told reporters. "There is no 'Plan B,' because we do not have 'Planet B.'"

The UN Secretary General was accompanied by primatologist Jane Goodall and the French Ecology Minister, Segolene Royal.



The protesters in New York used outsized floats to convey their message



A group of marchers in Mexico City pose for a 'selfie'



In Manhattan, Ban Ki-moon (in blue hat) was flanked by primatologist Jane Goodall (to his right) and French ecology minister Segolene Royal



Many of the marchers in New York wore costumes associated with indigenous people. Organisers of the Manhattan event said they had attracted 550 busloads of marchers, billing it as the biggest protest on the issue for five years.

They said the massive mobilisation was aimed at transforming climate change "from an environmental concern to an 'everybody issue.'"

Business leaders, environmentalists and celebrities are expected to join the demonstration.

Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio also took part, having been appointed as a UN representative on climate change last week.

Analysis: Roger Harrabin, BBC Environment analyst

Another protest, another climate conference - will this time be any different?

Well, the marches brought more people on to the streets than ever before, thanks to the organizational power of the social media site Avaaz.

And the climate talks will also be influenced by technology as it was reported this week that the sun and wind can often generate power as cheaply as gas in the home of fossil fuels, Texas.

Certainly the UN's secretary general Ban Ki Moon hopes that he can make a fresh in the endless blame-your-neighbour round of climate talks.

Next year world leaders are due to show up in Paris to settle a global climate deal based not on a bitterly-

contested chiseling negotiation in the middle of the night, but on open co-operative offers of action to tackle a shared problem.

Mr Ban has invited leaders to New York to make their offers public. Some small nations will doubtless make new contributions to the carbon contraction effort as they realize the vulnerability of their own economies to a hotter world.

But some big players may continue the game of climate poker, holding back their offers until they see what else is on the table.

So there is no guarantee that Ban's idea will work - but at least for weary climate politics watchers, it will be a change.

In Australia, organisers said up to 20,000 people had turned out in Melbourne to call on Prime Minister Tony Abbott to do more to tackle climate change.

The BBC's Phil Mercer in Sydney says protesters fear Australia faces more severe droughts, bushfires and storms unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.



Tens of thousands of people - some of them dressed as animals - also marched in London



An image captured from a drone shows protesters in Sydney forming the words "Beyond Coal + Gas"



A masked protester joins the demonstration in Paris



Protests have been held in about 160 countries around the world

On Tuesday, the UN will host a climate summit at its headquarters in New York with 125 heads of state and government - the first such gathering since the unsuccessful climate conference in Copenhagen in 2009.

Mr Ban, the UN's Secretary General, hopes leaders can make progress on a universal agreement to be signed by all nations at the end of 2015.

He said he would "link arms with those marching for climate action" to show that the UN stands "with them on the right side of this key issue for our common future."

The New York rally is part of a global protest that includes events in 161 countries - Afghanistan, the UK and Italy among them.

From Melbourne to Manhattan: thousands join global protests for action on climate change

Worldwide day of protests came on the eve of the first United

Nations leaders' summit on climate change in five years

US will not commit to climate change aid for poor nation at UN summit

Record CO₂ emissions 'committing world to dangerous climate change'

People's Climate March in New York – in pictures



Thousands of people from across the world participated in what was billed as the largest march ever on global warming. Photograph: Craig Ruttle/AP

Suzanne Goldenberg in New York, Damian Carrington and James Randerson in London, Karl Mathiesen in Paris and Oliver Milman in Melbourne

Sunday 21 September 2014 19.39 BST

[87 comments](#)

From Melbourne to Manhattan, tens of thousands of people took to the streets on Sunday to stage the biggest display of popular support for climate action ever seen, and demand that their leaders take action.

The day of protests, which organisers claimed involved some 2,700 events in 161 countries, came on the eve of the first United Nations leaders' summit on climate change in five years.

In Manhattan, a noisy, hopeful cavalcade of protesters – led by Hurricane Sandy survivors carrying placards of sunflowers and native Americans in traditional headdresses – took over the streets of midtown, juggling, singing, blowing synagogue shofars, whistling and beating drums, with biodiesel powered floats chugging along.

"I think it will make a difference," said Tashina Red Hawk, aged 10, who wore intricately

beaded traditional Sioux Indian dress, and who lives on the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota. “But it would still be good to do all kinds of other stuff.”

In London, organisers said 40,000 had marched through the city to the Houses of Parliament. The protest was peaceful, although loud jeers rose up as the crowd passed both Downing Street and the Department of Energy and Climate Change.



Emma Thompson and John Sauven from Greenpeace join an estimated 40,000 people (and polar bears) marching through London. Photograph: John Cobb/AP

In Melbourne, protesters paraded a giant puppet of the Australian prime minister, Tony Abbott.

The People’s Climate March comes two days before President Barack Obama and about 120 other world leaders will gather at the United Nations in New York for a meeting on climate change.

The challenge for those leaders is clear: left unchecked, the world is on course for a 4.5C (8.1F) temperature rise, a level which would inflict a catastrophe on some of the poorest countries of the earth, swallowing up coast lines with sea-level rise and scorching fields with heat waves and drought.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) announced last week that June, July, and August were the hottest months on record and that 2014 was on course to break the record for hottest year, which was set in 2010.

But the agenda for Tuesday’s gathering is uncertain. The UN has said repeatedly the gathering is not a negotiation. That will take place in Lima in two months’ time, when diplomats will enter the final stretch of long and difficult negotiations aimed at reaching an international agreement to cut the greenhouse gases that cause climate change by the time

of a Paris conference in late 2015.

Instead, the UN said it will use Tuesday's gathering to press world leaders to do more: to cut more carbon and, for the rich countries, put up more cash to help poor countries cope with climate change.



From left: French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, primatologist Jane Goodall, former US vice-president Al Gore, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in New York. Photograph: Craig Ruttle/AP

Those attending Sunday's protests – which in New York included the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-Moon, and the former vice-president Al Gore – said that by putting their bodies in the streets they could help propel the world leaders to act.

“You can't get 200 people together and not have something get out of it. It's going to be huge,” the actor, Mark Ruffalo, a prominent supporter of environmental causes, told the Guardian. “I don't know exactly the effect, but I promise you one, five, 10, 15 leaders are going to come out of it, and do something. Somebody is going to want to be a hero.”



Actor and activist Mark Ruffalo at the start of the People's Climate March in New York. Photograph: Craig Ruttle/AP

Van Jones, an activist who briefly served as Obama's "green jobs" tsar, said it was possible the march could, in hindsight, be viewed as an historic moment, much like the civil-rights era "March on Washington".

Sunday's protests were at the very least an organising triumph for Avaaz, 350.org and a new breed of climate activists who are trying to reach out beyond traditional green constituencies.

The day started in Melbourne, where demonstrators carried their giant Tony Abbott puppet in protest at his repeal of the carbon price.

The usual call-and-response of "What do we want? Climate action. When do we want it? Now" was revised to "10 years ago", by a crowd that felt it had already fought this battle.

"I'm deeply concerned about my children's future. They are the ones who will have to clean it up," said one marcher, Victoria Marshall-Cerins. "Australia is now dragging its heels. From one of the world's leaders, we're now going backwards. We're embarrassing."



The day started in Melbourne, where demonstrators carried their giant Tony Abbott puppet in protest at his repeal of the carbon price. Photograph: Sydney Low/Demotix/Corbis

In London, the campaign group Avaaz, which helped organise the event, said 40,000 people attended, although other estimates put the crowd at 27,000. A rally was held outside parliament, which the compere kicked off by asking the crowd: “Who’s sick of the ice receding faster than David Cameron’s hairline?”

The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, gave the first speech. “We are tenants, and we must keep the Earth fit for our children,” he said. “Climate change is a moral issue.” Actor Emma Thompson also spoke: “Every single person on this Earth has the power to change the world. And when we all come together, our power becomes irresistible. Now we must use our power to tackle the biggest threat humanity has ever faced.”

Earlier, she told the Guardian: “Unless we’re carbon-free by 2030, the world is bugged.”

In her address, the designer Vivienne Westwood railed against capitalism: “A triad of [fossil fuel] monopolies, banks and politicians are ruining the planet. If runaway climate change kicks in then, within a generation, there will be very little habitable on the planet and the suffering will be unimaginable.”

Scientist Alice Hooker-Stroud, from the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales, used the platform to argue that a zero-carbon Britain was attainable with existing energy technologies. “We have huge renewable energy resources in the UK. Business as usual is not a possible future.”

In the crowd, Victoria Bamford, a 66-year old gardener from Wales, had left her home at 6am to reach the capital in time.

“We are on a knife edge now in every way,” she said, adding that she had noticed changes in

the climate in her work. “You cannot rely on the seasons any more, and plants are getting stressed and ill. I’m no bloody expert, but we have to tackle the fossil fuel business, but I don’t think the government is doing anything.”



People with zebra puppets in front of Big Ben in London. Photograph: Laura Lean/PA
Nearby, 10-year-old Lauren [her mother declined to give a surname] from Oxford, was carrying a colourful home-made banner which declared: “Tick tock climate clock – stop climate change now.”

The gay rights activist Peter Tatchell told the Guardian: “Climate change is a global emergency – governments must act soon.”

Ben Phillips, campaigns director with the charity Oxfam, explained why his organisation took part: “In the past five years alone, that’s since the last time leaders met to discuss climate change, 112,000 lives have been lost, 650 million people have been affected by climate-change related disasters and half a trillion dollars has been lost.” He said the march was about keeping the pressure up on politicians. “If you ask the suffragettes, the civil-rights movement or the India freedom movement just 10 years in, 20 years in, ‘What have you achieved?’, they’d say ‘Well, we’ll keep on fighting until we win’, and so will we.”

Numerous marchers wore costumes, including a polar bear and small herd of gazelles. One of the latter, Merlin from Brighton, said: “People are important, but animals are vital as well. We are here representing all the animals not here today.”

The London march ended with a minute of silent reflection, followed by loud cheers.



A climate protester wearing a Guy Fawkes mask holds a banner reading: 'World leaders act!' on the Republic statue in Paris. Photograph: François Guillot/AFP/Getty Images
In Paris, organisers said 25,000 people attended – heavy with the knowledge that history would be made on climate, one way or another, in the city in a years' time. Police put the

attendance at 8,000.

Avaaz campaigner Pascal Vollenwieder said the global action was designed to restore the sense of momentum at the beginning of a year-long campaign leading up to the Paris conference.

“This is just the starting point,” he said. “After Copenhagen, we had to show the people that there is still a climate movement.”

21 September 2014 Last updated at 02:38

UN chief on streets for climate deal

By **Matt McGrath**

Environment correspondent, BBC News, New York



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and actor Leonardo di Caprio will join thousands in a march for climate action in New York on Sunday.

The Manhattan demonstration is part of a global protest, with over 2,000 marches taking place around the world.

Mr Ban will also tackle the issue with 125 heads of state and government on Tuesday at UN headquarters.

It will be the first such gathering since the unsuccessful Copenhagen conference in 2009.

The meeting will attempt to push forward political momentum towards a new universal agreement on climate to be signed by all nations at the end of 2015.

'Linking arms'

To maintain pressure on the political leaders, the People's Climate March has been carefully organised to show that there is popular support for action to curb carbon emissions.

Speaking before the event Mr Ban said he wanted to take part to show he supported the need for rapid action.

"I will link arms with those marching for climate action," he told a news conference.

"We stand with them on the right side of this key issue for our common future."

Joining him will be the Wolf of Wall Street star, who has recently been appointed a UN Messenger of Peace with special responsibility for climate change.

Mr Di Caprio tweeted at the time that he was "honoured to accept at this key moment".

In New York, the march will also be attended by former Vice President Al Gore and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius.

It will feature thousands of colourful displays of art, all designed to enhance an intended narrative that the time for dithering is over.



Leonardo di Caprio has been named a UN messenger of peace, with responsibility for climate change

"I think at this point everyone around the world is feeling the urgency and our institutions are behind the curve," said Gal Golan, one of the artists working on the march.

"This moment becomes crucial for asserting that action is necessary immediately, and we have very limited time to make changes to avoid unprecedented levels of catastrophe."

Explaining why the UN secretary general was taking part, Mary Robinson, former UN special envoy, explained: "I think the Secretary General recognises that this is for everyone, and it is important that in every country civil society comes out and puts pressure on their leaders to make the changes necessary so that we will have a safe world.

"He doesn't see the marchers as them and the insiders as being an us, rather he sees the two as part of building a momentum, it is civil society asking their leaders to be more ambitious."

The artists are being joined by a diverse range of people including scientists, religious leaders, and farmers. Also in attendance will be survivors of Tropical Storm Sandy and Hurricane Katrina, as well as indigenous tribes from South America and elsewhere.

Organisers have spent six months preparing the protests in places as diverse as Papua New Guinea, Lagos, London and Rio where the famous statue of Christ will be turned green.

They believe that a huge global turnout can't be ignored by the heads of state and government that will convene at UN headquarters on Tuesday.

"The march is incredibly important, because it will help draw policy makers and corporate leaders' attention to the importance of climate change, including the need to adapt to climate change," said Dr Jessica Hellmann, associate professor of biological sciences at the University of Notre Dame.

"The march demands that government grow its commitment to adaptation. The diversity of people participating in the climate change march all around the world, sends a strong message that everyone is affected by climate change."

Mr Ban has asked that the political leaders come to UN headquarters bearing pledges of action. He wants to hear commitments to cut carbon and offers of finance for those most affected.

It remains to be seen how significant these will be.

The leaders of China, India, Australia, Russia and Canada won't be here. Observers believe the meeting can still achieve political momentum. After all, there will be more leaders in New York than in Copenhagen in 2009 when hopes of a last minute deal were dashed in confused and rancorous discussions.

Climate warning to world leaders: stick to 2C limit or face 'mayhem'

Experts deliver stark message for Obama and Cameron ahead of UN summit in New York

[Desmond Tutu: climate change is our global enemy](#)

Robin McKie

The Observer, Sunday 21 September 2014

[Jump to comments \(35\)](#)



Ban Ki-moon has called upon the international community to unite in addressing challenges including climate change and poverty eradication. Photograph: Xinhua News Agency/Rex

World leaders must commit themselves to holding current rises in global temperatures to 2C. That is the stark message of experts and campaigners in the runup to the [United Nations](#) climate summit that will be held in [New York](#) later this week.

They say that 2C is the maximum temperature increase that the world can tolerate without causing environmental mayhem, and they insist that politicians attending the meeting, including Barack Obama and David Cameron, must agree to that upper limit.

"If Obama and the others decide that 2C has to be the limit, then negotiators will subsequently find it so much easier to hammer out a framework for curtailing carbon dioxide emissions over the next year," said [Nicholas Stern](#), the British economist and climate expert who will be attending the meeting.

"If they have a specific goal – a 2C limit – then that will make it so much easier to design carbon emission limits for different countries," he told the *Observer*.

The importance of setting an upper temperature limit is also [backed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in the Observer](#). "Our environment is already saturated with carbon," states the Nobel peace prizewinner and activist. "If we don't limit global warming to two degrees or less, we are doomed to a period of unprecedented instability, insecurity and loss of species."

The meeting in New York is not part of the United Nations' official climate negotiating process. Instead it has been called by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon to kickstart the full-scale carbon emission negotiations that are scheduled to be held in 2015. These are intended to culminate in official talks in Paris next year when it is hoped that a framework will be hammered out for limiting carbon emissions over the following three decades.

"More than 120 world leaders are going to attend the conference in New York, and that will be extraordinarily important in setting the agenda for the Paris talks," added Stern. "If those leaders agree to that temperature limit, the decision will open up all sorts of negotiating avenues."

Scientists say that humans have now poured around 1,950bn tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – by burning fossil fuels – over the last 200 years. If that total reaches 3,670bn tonnes, they add, it will be hard to avoid a 2C rise in global temperatures and that would trigger a host of devastating changes to the climate. These would include major rises in sea levels, the melting of ice-caps, droughts in Africa, America and Asia, storms and ocean acidification.

The trouble is that, at present rates of fossil fuel consumption, that 3,670bn-tonne limit will be reached in less than three decades. The aim of the New York meeting – which will be marked by a people's climate march in several cities, including London on Sunday – is to give new impetus to climate change negotiations which have stalled over the past two or three years. "The United Nations has run up against governments and leaders of industry who have until now put short-term economic and political goals ahead of our collective long-term survival," writes Tutu. "We can no longer tinker about the edges."

Observers at the meeting will look for a strong lead from Obama. According to Stern, it is critically important that the US president announce his commitment to limit global temperatures to a rise of no more than 2C. It is also hoped that the Chinese leadership will play a more active role in talks, he added.

The New York meeting takes place amid increasing worries about climate change and in particular about surging carbon dioxide levels, the major cause of global warming. These levels rose at their fastest rate for 30 years in 2013, according to figures released this month by the World Meteorological Organisation.

The carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere now stands at 142% of what it did before the industrial revolution, with concentrations reaching 396 parts per million last year, an increase on the previous year of 2.9ppm. At this rate, annual concentrations are likely to pass the symbolic 400ppm level by 2015, say scientists.

"Our weather is becoming more extreme due to human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels," said World Meteorological Organisation secretary-general Michel Jarraud. "We must reverse this trend by cutting emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases across the board. We are running out of time."

It was also revealed last week that this summer was the hottest since global temperature records began in 1880. According to a report that was published last week by the US National Climatic Data Centre, the world's land and ocean surfaces averaged 16.35C in August 2014, a temperature that was 0.7C above the average for the 20th century.



Thousands expected in NYC for largest climate-change march in history

Sunday's event, which comes ahead of a UN summit, will call on leaders to do more to meet the threat of climate change

September 20, 2014 2:24PM ET

Celebrities, activists and political leaders are expected to join more than 100,000 people in New York City on Sunday for what organizers say will be the largest climate-change march in history.

The "People's Climate March" has been endorsed by more than 1,400 organizations, including environment, faith and justice groups, as well as labor unions. Students have also mobilized marchers at more than 300 college campuses for the event, which calls on world leaders to do more to confront the threat of climate change and comes ahead of a United Nations climate summit.

"People from all walks of life, all over the world care deeply about climate change and are extremely worried and scared and so this march is showing the huge variety of people and the huge variety of reasons that people are invested in this issue," march organizer Rachel Schragis told Al Jazeera.

Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio are expected to participate in Sunday's march — which will wind its way through Midtown Manhattan on a two-mile route starting at 11:30 a.m.

After a moment of silence at 1 p.m., participants will be encouraged to use instruments, alarms and whistles to make as much noise as possible, helped by marching bands and the tolling of church bells.

Around the world, [more than 2,700 climate events in 158 countries are planned to](#)

coincide with the New York march, including rallies in New Delhi, Jakarta, London, Melbourne and Rio de Janeiro.

Recapturing lost momentum

Sunday's march will come ahead of a meeting of over 120 world leaders at the U.N. next week, who will convene for a one-day climate summit on Tuesday. The hope is to recapture the momentum lost after the disappointing 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen. However, few decisions are expected beyond galvanizing political will for a new global climate treaty.

Still, Ban and other U.N. officials hope the summit will energize negotiations on reaching a deal on cutting greenhouse gas emissions and set the stage for a crucial conference in Paris in December 2015 aimed at finalizing an agreement.

"We are breaking ground here on many different levels," Executive Secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Christiana Figueres told reporters. "First, we're going to see unprecedented public mobilization for climate action."

President Barack Obama will attend the summit and is expected to highlight strides the U.S. has made on climate change, senior administration officials said Thursday.

The U.S. heads into the summit in the strongest position it has been in years. It has cut emissions by 10 percent from 2005 to 2012, more than any other country. Officials say about half of that reduction is due to the economic recession, but it puts the U.S. well on its way toward meeting its goal to cut emissions by 17 percent by 2020 from 2005 levels.

Political 'lip service'

But whatever emerges from the one-day summit Tuesday is unlikely to bring the world closer to a goal set back in 2009: Preventing Earth's temperature from rising 2 degrees Fahrenheit from where it is now.

Rather than firm commitments from closed-door negotiations, the summit is expected to jumpstart a series of much-publicized initiatives and partnerships. The heads of state for both India and China, two of the world's largest carbon polluters, are not expected to attend the summit, further dimming hopes of meaningful action.

There have also been concerns about funding for poorer countries on the frontlines of the fight against climate change and their ability to move away from fossil fuels and

protect their citizens. While richer countries made a commitment in 2009 to raise \$100 billion by 2020 for less-affluent countries, so far only Germany has made a significant pledge to the fund, [the Guardian reported](#).

In the weeks leading up to the summit, the World Meteorological Organization said that concentrations of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas, increased more in 2012 and 2013 than in any year since 1984. [The months of May, June and August were the warmest of any on record](#) in the United States. A study issued earlier this year said the West Antarctic ice sheet was starting to collapse and was unstoppable.

"We hear these warnings from scientists. They're becoming increasingly panicked and our politicians sort of pay lip service to how concerned they are about climate change on the one hand. But on the other hand, it's basically 'drill baby drill,'" activist [Naomi Klein told Al Jazeera](#). "They're opening up all kinds of new frontiers for fracking, for tar sands, for coal and so people in the streets are going to be expressing their sense of urgency."