

Apr 22, 4:53 PM EDT

# 175 STATES SIGN LANDMARK PARIS DEAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE



AP Photo/Mark Lennihan

UNITED NATIONS (AP) -- Leaders from 175 countries signed the Paris Agreement on climate change Friday as the landmark deal took a key step forward, potentially entering into force years ahead of schedule.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, holding his young granddaughter, joined dozens of world leaders for a signing ceremony that set a record for international diplomacy: Never have so many countries signed an agreement on the first available day. States that don't sign Friday have a year to do so.

"We are in a race against time," U.N. secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the gathering. "The era of consumption without consequences is over."

Many now expect the climate agreement to enter into force long before the original deadline of 2020. Some say it could happen this year.

After signing, countries must formally approve the Paris Agreement through their domestic procedures. The United Nations says 15 countries, several of them small island states under threat from rising seas, did that Friday by depositing their instruments of ratification.

China, the world's top carbon emitter, announced it will "finalize domestic procedures" to ratify the Paris Agreement before the G-20 summit in China in September. Ban immediately welcomed the pledge.

Kerry said the United States "absolutely intends to join" the agreement this year. The world is watching anxiously: Analysts say that if the agreement enters into force before President Barack Obama leaves office in January, it would be more complicated for his successor to withdraw from the deal because it would take four years to do so under the agreement's rules.

China's climate envoy, Xie Zhenhua, said his government hopes the United States will join the climate agreement "as soon as possible."

The United States put the deal into economic terms. "The power of this agreement is what it is going to do to unleash the private sector," Kerry told the gathering, noting that this year is again shaping up to be the hottest year on record.

Ban warned that the work ahead will be enormously expensive. "Far more than \$100 billion - indeed, trillions of dollars - is needed to realize a global, clean-energy economy," he said.

The agreement will enter into force once 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions have formally joined it.

An analysis by the Washington-based World Resources Institute found that at least 25 countries representing 45 percent of global emissions joined the agreement Friday or committed to joining it early.

French President Francois Hollande, the first to sign the agreement, said Friday he will ask parliament to ratify it by this summer. France's environment minister is in charge of global climate negotiations.

"There is no turning back now," Hollande told the gathering.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also announced that his country would ratify the agreement this year. Other countries that said Friday they intend to join the agreement this year include Mexico and Australia.

The climate ceremony brought together a wide range of states that on other issues might sharply disagree. North Korea's foreign minister made a rare U.N. appearance to sign Friday, and Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe brought applause when he declared, "Life itself is at stake in this combat. We have the power to win it."

Countries that have not yet indicated they would sign the agreement Friday include some of the world's largest oil producers, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Nigeria and Kazakhstan, the World Resources Institute said.

The Paris Agreement, the world's response to hotter temperatures, rising seas and other impacts of climate change, was reached in December as a major breakthrough in U.N. climate negotiations, which for years were slowed by disputes between rich and poor countries over who should do what.

Under the agreement, countries set their own **targets** for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The targets are not legally binding, but countries must update them every five years.

Already, states face pressure to do more. Scientific analyses show the initial set of targets that countries pledged before Paris don't match the agreement's long-term goal to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), compared with pre-industrial times. Global average temperatures have already climbed

by almost 1 degree Celsius. Last year was the hottest on record.

The latest analysis by the Climate Interactive research group shows the Paris pledges put the world on track for 3.5 degrees Celsius of warming. A separate analysis by Climate Action Tracker, a European group, projected warming of 2.7 degrees Celsius.

Either way, scientists say the consequences could be catastrophic in some places, wiping out crops, flooding coastal areas and melting Arctic sea ice.

"This is not a good deal for our island nations, at least not yet," the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, Nauru President Baron Divavesi Waqa, told the gathering. "The hardest work starts now."

As the Paris Agreement moves forward, there is some good news. Global energy emissions, the biggest source of man-made greenhouse gases, were flat last year even though the global economy grew, according to the International Energy Agency.

Still, fossil fuels are used much more widely than renewable sources like wind and solar power.

Friday was chosen for the signing ceremony because it is Earth Day.

## Paris climate deal: countries with about half of global emissions to join this year

At least 34 countries representing 49% of greenhouse gas emissions formally joined the agreement, bringing it 'within striking distance' of entering into force



US secretary of state John Kerry holds his granddaughter as he signs the Paris climate agreement.  
Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

**Suzanne Goldenberg**

@suzyji

Monday 25 April 2016 22.21 BST

Last modified on Tuesday 26 April 2016 00.31 BST

[Share on Pinterest](#)

[Share on LinkedIn](#)

[Share on Google+](#)

Shares

24

Comments

25

[Save for later](#)

The White House has said countries accounting for about half of the world's greenhouse gas emissions would join the [Paris climate agreement](#) this year, bringing the agreement “within striking distance” of entering into force.

At least 34 countries representing 49% of greenhouse gas emissions formally joined the agreement, or committed to joining the agreement as early as possible this year

at a [high-profile signing ceremony](#) at the United Nations last Friday.

That brought the historic agreement closer to the critical threshold for becoming operational faster than expected, officials said.

“The progress that [was] made in only hours and days after the agreement was formally opened for signing now puts us within striking distance of entering into force years earlier than anyone would have anticipated,” Brian Deese, a White House adviser, told a conference call with reporters.

The gathering at the UN made other advances towards dealing with climate change, the White House said.

The World Bank, along with countries such as Canada and Mexico, earlier this month endorsed [setting a price on carbon](#).

## Approval of the Paris Agreement

India 4.10 Japan 3.79 Canada 1.95 Mexico 1.70  
Indonesia 1.49 Australia 1.46 Argentina 0.89  
60.89%

55% of total  
global GHG

Rest of the world  
39.11

Russia  
7.53

US  
17.89

Example of how  
this could work

China  
20.09%  
of total

global GHG

The Paris Agreement will come into force when countries representing at least 55% of total global greenhouse gasses, and 55% of the population join the agreement

Guardian graphic

Source: World Resources Institute

But economists and scientists say governments are still [moving too slowly to map out a long-term future](#) free of coal, oil, and gas – even as rising temperatures and melting polar ice unleashes havoc in real-time.

About 175 governments took a first step of signing onto the deal on Friday. The action, though entirely symbolic, had maintained important momentum since the Paris climate meeting last December, the White House said.

China, which on its own accounts for about 20% of global emissions, told the UN it would finalise domestic procedures to join the agreement before the G20 meeting in September. Other industrialised countries offered similar pledges to submit the agreement for approval to parliament.

The agreement reached in Paris seeks to avoid catastrophic climate change by limiting warming to 1.5C to 2C. Governments committed to replacing fossil fuels almost entirely by clean energy in the second half of this century.

But first the deal must become operational – a threshold required the formal approval of 55 countries accounting for 55% of global emissions.

By the UN's count, the Paris climate deal was already very close. At least 15 countries formally joined the agreement on Friday. They included mainly small island countries at risk of drowning in rising seas, but also Palestine and Somalia.

The White House said the count was now up to 34 for countries that have formally joined the agreement, or were committed to joining this year.

Together, they represent about 49% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Deese said.

The White House has been an important cheerleader for the global agreement – despite legal challenges and opposition from Republicans in Congress and the party’s presidential candidates to its efforts to cut climate pollution from power plants – Barack Obama’s signature climate plan.