

# UN climate accord 'inadequate' and lacks urgency, experts warn

Agreement will fail to halt devastating rise in global temperature, say scientists

Fiona Harvey in Katowice

Sun 16 Dec 2018 15:25 GMT

Last modified on Sun 16 Dec 2018 16:07 GMT



The two-week-long conference left questions about reducing greenhouse gas emissions unanswered. Photograph: Ryan Tong/EPA

The world has been put on notice that its best efforts so far will fail to halt the devastation of **climate change**, as countries came to a partial agreement at UN talks that failed to match up to the challenges faced.

Leading figures in climate science and economics said much more must be done, and quickly, to stave off the prospect of dangerous levels of global warming.

**Nicholas Stern**, the former World Bank chief economist and author of a **seminal review** of the economics of climate change, said: "It is clear that the progress we are making is inadequate, given the scale and urgency of the risks we face. The latest figures show carbon dioxide emissions are still rising. A much more attractive, clean and efficient path for economic development and poverty reduction is in our hands."

'We can move forward now': UN climate talks take significant step

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Johan Rockstrom, director designate at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, said: "My biggest concern is that the UN talks failed to align ambitions with science. We continue to follow a path that will take us to a very dangerous 3-4C warmer world within this century. Extreme weather events hit people across the planet already, at only 1C of warming."

The two-week-long UN talks in Poland ended with clarity over the "rulebook" that will govern how the Paris agreement of 2015 is put into action, but the crucial question of how to lift governments' targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was left unanswered.

Countries will meet again next year. The annual climate talks have been going on since 1992 when the UN framework convention on climate change was signed, binding governments to avoid dangerous levels of climate change. That agreement followed years of scientific predictions on global warming, culminating in a **landmark report in 1988** that warned of the dangers.

Since then, the warnings have grown clearer and scientists have eliminated the possibility that the global warming observed in recent decades has been due to natural forces. It is a manmade problem arising from the use of fossil fuels, which has poured the heat-trapping gas carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.



On current national emissions-cutting targets, the world would reach more than 3C of warming, scientists say. Two months ago the world's leading body of climate scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, found that **even 1.5C of warming** would cause sea level rises, coral reef die-off, extinction of species and droughts, floods, storms and heatwaves that would threaten the world's stability.

Levels of warming greater than that would devastate parts of the globe, wiping out agricultural productivity, melting the Arctic ice cap and rendering many areas uninhabitable.

Some businesses called on governments to act. Stephanie Pfeifer, chief executive of the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, which represents investors with more than \$21tn (£16.7tn) in funds, said: "It is vital that the world's governments recognise the serious challenge posed by

climate change and urgently scale up their efforts, both at a national level and globally. It is only through signals such as these that investors will have the confidence necessary to allocate the required capital to the low-carbon and climate-resilient transition."

Next year's negotiations, in Chile, are likely to focus on narrow technical issues. But the 2020 conference, which may be held in the UK or Italy, will be the biggest since the landmark Paris agreement of 2015. There, countries will have to come up with plans for cutting emissions drastically in order to avert a climate crisis that scientists say will cause greater economic, social and natural disruption than anything in humanity's history.

## Climate change: COP24 deal to bring Paris pact to life

By Matt McGrath  
Environment correspondent, Katowice  
4 hours ago



Negotiators in Poland have finally secured agreement on a range of measures that will make the Paris climate pact operational in 2020.

Last-minute rows over carbon markets threatened to derail the meeting - and delayed it by a day.

Delegates believe the new rules will ensure that countries keep their promises to cut carbon.

The Katowice agreement aims to deliver the Paris goals of limiting global temperature rises to well below 2C.

"Putting together the Paris agreement work programme is a big responsibility," said the chairman of the talks, known as COP24, Michal Kurtyka.

"It has been a long road. We did our best to leave no-one behind."

The common rulebook envisages flexibility for poorer nations.

Developing countries seek recognition and compensation for the impact of rising temperatures.

The idea of being legally liable for causing climate change has long been rejected by richer nations, who fear huge bills well into the future.

Last weekend, scientists and delegates were shocked when the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait **objected to the meeting "welcoming" a recent UN report** on keeping global temperature rise to within the 1.5C limit.

The report said the world is now completely off track, heading more towards 3C this century.

Keeping to the preferred goal would need "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society".



Chairman Michal Kurtyka was in high spirits as the conference reached agreement

### What did the delegates focus on?

Representatives from 196 states took part in the talks. They were trying to sort out some very tricky questions about the rulebook of the Paris agreement.

These are the regulations that will govern the nuts and bolts of how countries cut carbon, provide finance to poorer nations and ensure that everyone is doing what they say they are doing.

It sounds easy but is very technical. Countries often have different definitions and timetables for their carbon cutting actions.

Poorer countries want some "flexibility" in the rules so that they are not overwhelmed with regulations that they don't have the capacity to put into practice.

## Progress and problems as UN climate change talks end with a deal

Nations agree on implementing 2015 Paris agreement, but put trickiest issues on back burner

Fiona Harvey in Katowice

Sat 15 Dec 2018 22:43 GMT

First published on Sat 15 Dec 2018 22:33 GMT



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The Brazilian delegation was at the centre of negotiations at the UN climate change talks. Photograph: Kacper Pempel/Reuters

The UN climate change talks ended late on Saturday night in Poland with a deal agreed on how to put the **2015 Paris agreement** into action, but with other contentious problems left to be resolved next year.

Countries thrashed out the complex details of how to account for and record their greenhouse gas emissions, which will form the basis of a “**rulebook**” on putting the Paris goals into action. But difficult questions such as how to scale up existing commitments on cutting emissions, in line with **stark scientific advice**, and how to provide finance for poor countries to do the same, were put off for future years.

In the final hours, agreement was held up by a debate over the market in carbon credits, awarded to countries for their emissions-cutting efforts and for their carbon sinks, such as forests, which absorb carbon dioxide.

**Brazil** wanted an amendment that would benefit the country for its large rainforest cover, but this was opposed by others as it could allow the double-counting of carbon credits, undermining the integrity of the system.

This question has now been pushed back to next year’s annual conference. Brazil’s stance, however, under incoming president Jair Bolsonaro, who also **rescinded the country’s offer to host next year’s talks**, presages troubles to come.

Brazil has been a reliable supporter of the annual talks in the past, and has worked to broker deals between the developed and developing world. Without that support in future, the talks are only likely to grow more fractious.

Even when Brazil’s carbon-credits issue was postponed, a further obstacle was opened up by **Turkey**, which wants to be counted as a developing country rather than a developed one. Weary delegates finally filed into the closing session at nearly 10pm to hail the compromise agreement.

Despite these hitches, the two-week conference – the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as COP24 – finally ended in clarity, at least on some of the key building blocks for putting the Paris agreement into action.

David Waskow, of the **World Resources Institute**, said the final deal was “a good foundation for countries to go about implementing the Paris agreement”. He added: “It sets the direction of travel and will spur countries to take action. Now countries need to go home and do their homework, by increasing their commitments [on emissions].”

But the key question of whether countries are doing enough to cut their emissions, in the light of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that predicted **dire consequences** if temperatures were allowed to rise more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, was left out.

The IPCC’s report in October showed that the world **must change course drastically in the next decade** to avoid the consequences of a 1.5C rise, including the die-off of coral reefs, droughts and floods, and a decline in agricultural productivity over many areas.

This year has seen extreme weather across many parts of the globe, and the **fourth highest global average temperatures on record**, while the IPCC warning is the starkest yet to come from scientists.

António Guterres, secretary-general of the UN, praised countries for coming to an agreement, but demanded more. “The approval of the Paris agreement work programme is the basis for a transformative process which will require strengthened ambition from the international community,” he said.

“Science has clearly shown that we need enhanced ambition to defeat climate change. From now on, my five priorities will be: ambition, ambition, ambition, ambition and ambition.” He cited the need for countries to toughen their emissions-cutting targets and to adapt their infrastructure to cope with the effects of climate change.

Jennifer Morgan of Greenpeace said: “A year of climate disasters and a dire warning from the world’s top scientists should have led to so much more. Instead, governments let people down again as they ignored the science and the plight of the vulnerable.

“Without immediate action, even the strongest rules will not get us anywhere. People expected action, and that is what governments did not deliver. This is morally unacceptable.”

Gareth Redmond-King, head of climate change at WWF-UK, said: “[There has been] some positive progress, but we have not yet done enough. The world is in a state of climate emergency and yet some of our leaders prefer to stay in a state of denial.

“Everyone’s future is at stake. We need all countries to get much more serious about climate ambition.

# UN climate change talks avoid contentious issues in draft agreement

Struggles remain on enacting 2015 Paris accord despite more clarity on emissions

**Fiona Harvey** in Katowice

Sat 15 Dec 2018 12:39 GMT

Last modified on Sat 15 Dec 2018 19:31 GMT



A recent IPCC report that found dire consequences would follow from a temperature rise of 1.5C. Photograph: Pool/Getty Images

The UN met on Saturday in **Poland** to discuss a draft agreement on climate change, which sources said was likely to pass, as exhausted delegates made compromises on some key issues but left other contentious problems to be resolved next year.

The result will not be the breakthrough campaigners and some countries were hoping for, but will keep discussions alive on formulating key aspects of the implementation rules for **the 2015 Paris accord**.

Delegates have been thrashing out a text on the complex mechanisms required to put the Paris goals into effect for the past two weeks, and appeared partly successful as the talks overran their Friday deadline and looked likely to continue into late afternoon on Saturday at least.



**Poland's deadly addiction to coal – in pictures**

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2018/dec/14/poland-deadly-coal-addiction-in-pictures>

The text will give countries clarity on key points such as accounting for their greenhouse gas emissions and recording their carbon reductions. They will also go some way to encourage the stepping up of each country's climate change efforts.

Among the issues holding up progress is the highly technical question of what should happen to the market for carbon credits, held by some countries in recognition of their emissions-cutting efforts and their carbon sinks, such as forests.

These credits count toward countries' emissions-cutting targets. Brazil introduced wording that would benefit the country for its huge rainforest cover, but critics said contained loopholes that allowed for double counting of carbon credits would severely undermine the integrity of the system.



Steam rises from a coal-fired thermal power plant in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Photograph: Fehim Demir/EPA

That question is unlikely to be resolved in the time remaining, but gave an indication of Brazil's likely stance in future talks. Next year's conference was supposed to be held in Brazil, but will take place in Chile because Brazil's incoming president, Jair Bolsonaro, withdrew the offer to host.

Brazil has been a reliable supporter of the annual talks in the past and has worked to broker deals between the developed and developing world. Without that support in future, the talks are only likely to grow more fractious.

The US, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have also played a disruptive role, watering down a resolution that would have welcomed the recent IPCC report that a temperature rise of 1.5C would have dire consequences.



### Cutting emissions proves a sticking point at Poland climate talks

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/14/cutting-emissions-proves-a-sticking-point-at-poland-climate-conference>

The compromise in the redrafted text would have all countries "welcome the timely completion" of the IPCC report, but campaigners pointed out that this was weak because it refers merely to the timing of the report rather than its content. The EU, by contrast, and several other developed countries joined with scores of developing nations in announcing they would focus on preventing a 1.5C rise in their carbon-cutting efforts.

There were few new offers from the rich world of financing for developing countries to help them cut emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change, another issue that has been pushed to future talks.

As the last-minute negotiations wore on, delegates were saddened to hear of the death overnight of the veteran Philippine negotiator, Bernaditas de Castro Muller, who was a notable presence at the talks for nearly three decades. Tributes came from many who admired her forthright style.

## Katowice: UN climate talks stand-off continues

By Matt McGrath  
Environment correspondent  
5 hours ago



**Climate talks in Poland have gone into an extra day as negotiators try to agree the next steps forward for the Paris climate agreement.**

Some delegates believe that poor handling of the conference by the Polish government is behind the delays.

Ministers from around 100 countries are gathered in Katowice for the UN talks.

The majority of the details have been settled, but there is an ongoing stand-off over the question of carbon credits and carbon markets to reduce emissions.

Rich nations often reduce their emissions by paying for carbon-cutting projects in other countries. But these programmes are very difficult to police.

Fraud and double accounting have rendered many of them worthless - they are often dubbed hot air schemes.

At these talks, Brazil has been pushing for a weaker set of rules on carbon markets, despite strong opposition from many other countries.

A suggested compromise would see the discussions on markets kicked down the road to next year.

Ministers and negotiating teams say they are happy to agree to this idea.

But they insist it is up to the Polish presidency of the conference to lead the way. And some negotiators are already unhappy about the way their Polish hosts have allowed the conference to meander.



No more beef? Five things you can do to help stop rising global temperatures

On Friday, organisers released a new text intended to form the basis of a deal. The outline decision contains plans for a common rulebook for all countries, with flexibility for poorer nations.

Developing countries seek recognition and compensation for the impact of rising temperatures.

The idea of being legally liable for causing climate change has long been rejected by richer nations, who fear huge bills well into the future.

Prof Myles Allen, from the University of Oxford told BBC News: "Climate change is already affecting many people around the world and the people most affected by climate change are not those who have historically contributed most to the problem."

But many observers believed that, overall, a degree of progress has been made.

"It was never going to be great, not least because the US is playing a laggard role, but I think we can get a decent outcome, if it's framed in the right way," said Alden Meyer from the Union of Concerned Scientists.

In the final week, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres **returned to the meeting to try to push it to a successful conclusion.**

"To waste this opportunity would compromise our last best chance to stop runaway climate change," Mr Guterres said. "It would not only be immoral, it would be suicidal."

And the former president of the Maldives and now their lead negotiator, Mohamed Nasheed, said that there would be "hell to pay" if countries did not come together at the summit to prevent temperatures shooting past 1.5C.

Last weekend, scientists and delegates were shocked when the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait **objected to the meeting "welcoming" a recent UN report** on keeping global temperature rise to within the 1.5C limit.

The report said the world is now completely off track, heading more towards 3C this century.

Keeping to the preferred goal would need "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society".

Prof Allen said: "For countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia, where an enormous chunk of their national income arises from sales of fossil fuels, this is a much deeper problem, and that's where sticking points are arising."

## World leaders are trying to make a climate deal in Poland – despite Trump

The US sent a delegation to a climate conference to promote coal, but other countries are still working on forging an agreement.

By Umair Irfan Dec 14, 2018, 5:00pm EST

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Polish students part of an international climate strike hold up signs at COP24, the United Nations conference for climate change negotiations in Katowice, Poland. Monika Skolimowska/Getty Images

An agreement between 200 nations at a major international climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, is taking longer than expected, even as scientists and activists push for yet more ambitious commitments to reduce emissions in the final days of the negotiations.

The goal of the 24th Conference of Parties (**COP24**) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is to hammer out critical the details of the **Paris climate agreement**. Under the 2015 accord, countries set out to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2100 at most, with a preferred target of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

However, the original pledged cuts in **greenhouse gas emissions** would not put the world anywhere near meeting these targets. So the agreement included provisions for countries to meet regularly and ramp up

their ambitions, all of which are voluntary. COP24 is the first time since Paris that countries are actually talking with each other about going beyond their initial commitments. That's why this two-week meeting, which was meant to conclude Friday but will drag on into the weekend, is so important.

“If the Paris agreement is actually going to live up to that model of voluntary bottom-up commitments, ... ongoing ratcheting down of those commitments, then it has to happen at this first moment,” said Lou Leonard, senior vice president for climate and energy at the World Wildlife Fund, by phone from Katowice. “And if it doesn't happen at this first moment, then it will call into question whether this ratcheting will actually work.”

The outcome of the negotiations became increasingly uncertain after **President Trump** in 2017 announced he would withdraw the United States from the accord.

For an agreement that hinges so much on cooperation and good faith, the worry was that without the US, the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter, the deal would fall apart, that other countries would weaken their ambitions or sign an agreement so full of loopholes as to be useless.

But that's not what's happening in Poland, according to the drafts of the agreement that have been released so far. “I think the text looks better than I expected,” said Leonard.

For delegates, the goal is to nail down critical details, like how to verify that countries are actually progressing in cutting greenhouse gases, creating market mechanisms to control emissions, and coming up with ways to help developing countries finance a transition to cleaner energy sources.

It turns out countries are making progress in tracking their emissions, but are still struggling with many of the financial issues associated with mitigating climate change. It's yet another example of the tension between the threat of rising average temperatures and the fears of short-term economic stain that hinder ambition in cutting greenhouse gases.

## Fighting climate change is only getting harder

The literal and metaphorical backdrops of the COP24 negotiations highlight the enormity of the challenge. Katowice is in the heart of Poland's **coal country** and the conference is sponsored in part by Polish coal companies. The conference venue is literally festooned with coal.





**James Ellsmoor**  
@jellsmoor



At the global [#ClimateChange](#) convention our host, Poland, greets us with a shrine of ACTUAL coal



This year the [#UNFCCC](#) event is sponsored by coal companies in a country that generates 80% of electricity from coal



An insult to everyone who cares about the planet [#COP24](#)

526

8:02 PM - Dec 3, 2018 · Katowice, Poland

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The country as a whole gets almost **80 percent** of its electricity from coal, a major greenhouse gas emitter. During the negotiations, Poland's environment minister, **Marcin Korolec**, who is also serving as the president of COP24, was fired from this government post (He is slated to be replaced by Maciej Grabowski, a former deputy finance minister in charge of taxing shale gas).

But it's not just Poland that can't quit dirty energy. **Global greenhouse gas emissions** reached a record high in 2018 and are accelerating higher.

That's a huge problem given the October report from the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**. The special report, commissioned by the UNFCCC, focused on what it would take to limit climate change to 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming above preindustrial levels by the end of the century. The Paris climate agreement set out to limit warming to 2 degrees Celsius, with an additional target of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The IPCC report found that it would require an unprecedented international effort, demanding technologies that are still in their infancy, and that the world may have as little as 12 years to act. That would likely require current cutting global emissions in half by 2030.

Though the United States has managed to reduce its **greenhouse gas emissions** while growing its economy, largely by switching from coal to natural gas, other countries have yet to satiate their appetites for dirty energy. **China**, for examples, emits more greenhouse gases than the United States and Europe combined, and its emissions are still growing.

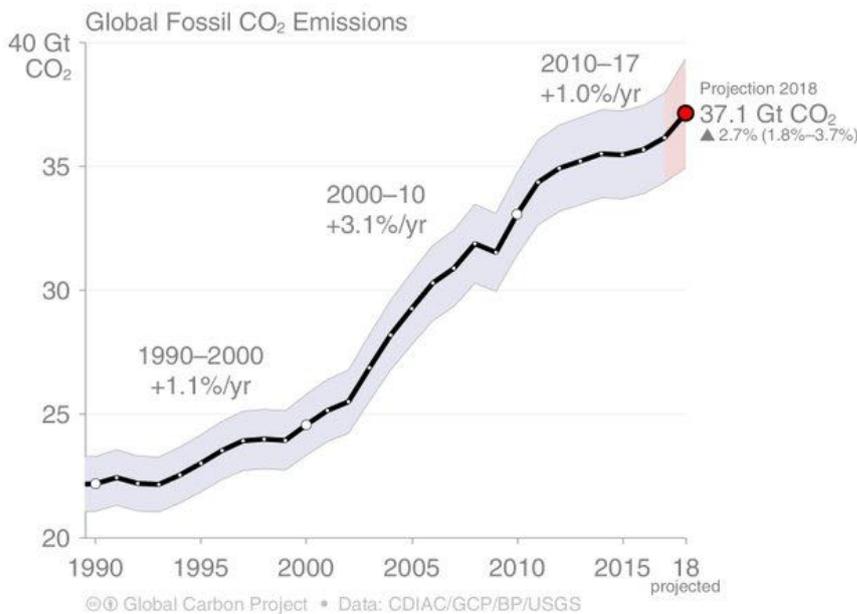


**Glen Peters**  
@Peters\_Glen  
· Dec 6, 2018

THREAD (Global Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions)

Global fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are on track to rise more than 2% in 2018 (2.7%, range 1.8% to 3.7%). Emissions rose 1.6% in 2017 (leap-year adjusted) after a temporary slowdown from 2014 to 2016. #CarbonBudget #COP24  
<http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/index.htm>

...



**Glen Peters**  
@Peters\_Glen

Countries that need to slowdown:

- \* China, up 4.7% [2.0–7.4%]
- \* India, up 6.3% [4.3–8.3%]
- \* Others (largely developing), up 1.8% [0.5–3.0%]

Countries that need faster reductions:

- \* USA, up 2.5% [0.5–4.5%]
- \* EU, down 0.7% [-2.6–1.3%]#CarbonBudget #COP24

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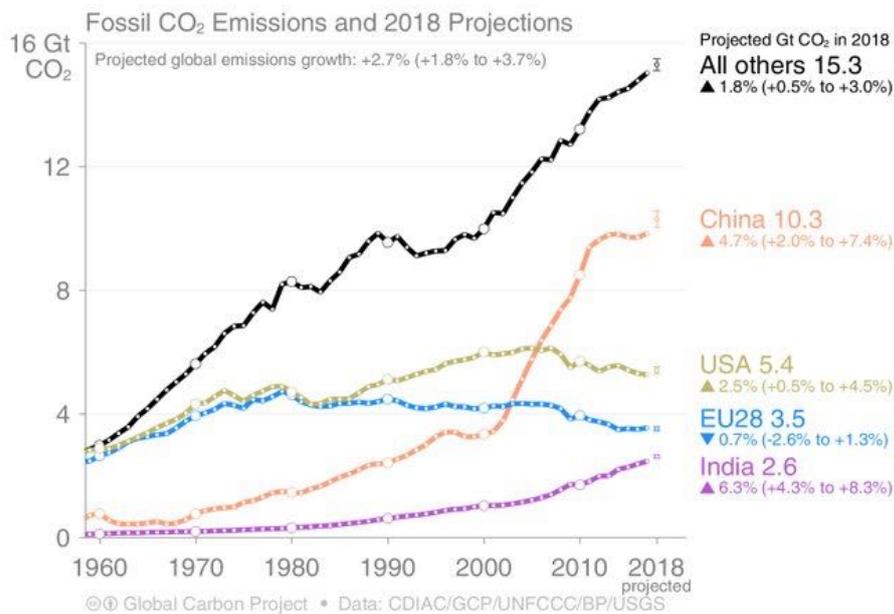
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176

7:06 AM - Dec 6, 2018

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The world as a whole needs to sharply bend the emissions curve as fast as possible if the planet is to stay below 2 degrees Celsius of warming, let alone 1.5 degrees Celsius. And seven big countries, including the US, are well behind hitting the pledges they made in Paris, according to the UN Environment Program's most recent annual **"emissions gap" report**.

So the agreement taking shape in Poland seems to be a mixed bag. "Some of the issues like transparency rules are going in the right direction, but market mechanism is a pretty big mess," said Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists, speaking from Poland.

The first step in limiting greenhouse gases is to keep track of them and provisions on measuring and verifying carbon dioxide emissions inventories for different countries looks to be strong.

But countries are still struggling with the best way to deal with climate change around the world, whether it means deploying clean energy in their own countries, financing climate change adaptation in vulnerable regions, or pooling money to help more fossil fuel-dependent countries sever their ties to carbon-intensive energy. Some delegates, particularly those from island nations threatened by sea level rise, also want more stringent targets for greenhouse gases.

**The US government is a major obstacle in climate negotiations, but**

## not the only one

As Vox's **David Roberts** has explained, the United States is undermining the success of the Paris agreement. It's not just that **Trump** announced his intent to withdraw from the accord. The Trump administration has gone as far as to gleefully taunt delegates at COP24 with a panel promoting the use of more coal.



**Amy Harder**



@AmyAHarder

Protesters chant keep fossil fuels in the ground at Trump #COP24 event. The truth is, they provide 81% of the energy consumed in the world, a figure that has not changed in 30 years.

[http://  
axios.link/SZ6A](http://axios.link/SZ6A)

12

2:12 AM - Dec 11, 2018 · Katowice, Poland

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Unlike previous proposed international climate agreements, there's no penalty or enforcement mechanism for breaching greenhouse gas targets. And the targets, remember, are set by countries for themselves.

Instead, the agreement hinges on peer pressure, which in turn requires countries to be open and transparent about their progress in fighting climate change.

So when the world's second-largest carbon dioxide emitter decides not to play ball, it drastically weakens how much other countries can be shamed or prodded into limiting their emissions.

That in turn makes it more difficult to secure investments in clean energy, since the regulatory environment has become more volatile.

The US's actions have given some cover to other countries who are less than enthralled with the prospect of cutting greenhouse gas emissions. At COP24, this manifested in a fight over how to acknowledge the findings of the recent IPCC special report on limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. A draft of the final text initially said that negotiators "welcome" the findings from more than 300 researchers.

But the US, joined by Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, objected to the language and want the final text to “note” the IPCC report rather than “welcome” it.

“The United States was willing to note the report and express appreciation to the scientists who developed it, but not to welcome it, as that would denote endorsement of the report,” the US State Department said in a statement to the **Associated Press**. “As we have made clear in the IPCC and other bodies, the United States has not endorsed the findings of the report.”

More recent drafts of the agreement now say that countries “appreciate” the IPCC report.

## The federal government isn't the only representative of the United States in Poland

Because of the rules of the Paris accord, the US can't formally withdraw until after the 2020 election. But a consortium of US companies, investors, tribes, universities, and legislators have pledged to continue cutting carbon dioxide emissions in line with their commitments under the Paris accord.

Members of the **We Are Still In** coalition, which represents about half of the US population, are meeting with other negotiators as they highlight their own initiatives in fighting climate change to help encourage other countries to pursue their own. **California**, for example, has set a target of zero net carbon emissions by 2045, deploying aggressive policies to encourage electric cars, rooftop solar power, and batteries on the power grid to store variable renewable energy.

The hope is to bypass the Trump administration's retrenchment on climate change action. However, activists are still not content with the pace of progress. **Students in Poland** staged a strike at the COP24 venue on Friday, demanding that countries set tougher emissions goals for themselves.

Observers say that whatever agreement that's forged in Poland is only a first step. After representatives take the deal back to their home countries, their governments will still have to implement the rules and report back next year at the United Nations general assembly next September. That gathering will highlight just how far apart words and actions are on climate change.

“That will be the real acid test of ambition,” Meyer said.

## Climate change: 'Hell to pay' if COP24 talks fail

By Matt McGrath  
Environment correspondent, Katowice  
3 hours ago



**Amid impassioned pleas for progress, negotiators at the UN climate talks in Poland are facing the final day with many issues undecided.**

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed said there would be “hell to pay” if countries failed to take significant steps.

Countries are struggling to complete the complex “rulebook” of the Paris climate agreement.

But they are also under pressure to boost their promises to cut carbon.

One of the biggest challenges facing the talks is the sheer number of decisions that have been passed up to around 100 ministers from all over the world who have travelled here to Katowice.

They are also feeling the heat from developing countries and small island states who fear that they will face ruin if temperatures rise by more than 1.5C.

Right now, the world has warmed about 1C since the industrial revolution.

Former president of the Maldives and now their lead negotiator, Mohamed Nasheed, made an impassioned plea for urgent progress on cutting carbon.



Mohamed Nasheed is an influential figure in the UN climate process

"It's just madness for us to allow global CO2 levels (in the atmosphere) to go beyond 450 parts per million, and temperatures to shoot past 1.5 degrees," he told a press briefing.

"That can still be prevented. If we come together on the basis of the emergency facing us, we can do it.

"Every country at this summit will have hell to pay if we don't."

### What are the delegates trying to decide?

Representatives from 196 states are here trying to sort out some very tricky questions pertaining to the rulebook of the Paris agreement which comes into force in 2020.

These are the regulations that will govern the nuts and bolts of how countries cut carbon, provide finance to poorer nations and ensure that everyone is doing what they say they are doing.

It sounds easy but it is very technical. At the moment countries often have different definitions and timetables for their carbon cutting actions.

However some progress is being seen in shaping the rules.

"Some of the text that are key to the rulebook, in terms of the transparency of countries reporting their mitigating actions are pretty strong, they are better than they were a week ago," said one senior negotiator.

## UN chief attempts to revive flagging climate change talks

**António Guterres returns to Katowice to urge China to intervene as world is 'running out of time'**

**Fiona Harvey, Ben Doherty and Jonathan Watts**

Wed 12 Dec 2018 16:35 GMT

Last modified on Wed 12 Dec 2018 18:23 GMT



The Katowice talks are centred on raising countries' level of ambition to counter climate change. Photograph: Fehim Demir/EPA

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has made a dramatic intervention to revive flagging climate talks in Katowice, Poland, by flying back to the conference and preparing a personal call to the Chinese president, **Xi Jinping**.

"We're running out of time," he told the plenary. "To waste this opportunity would compromise our last best chance to stop runaway climate change. It would not only be immoral, it would be suicidal."

The talks have centred on devising a rulebook for implementing the 2015 Paris agreement and raising countries' level of ambition to counter **climate change**, but progress has been slow on several key issues and divisions have emerged between four fossil fuel powers – **the US**, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait – and the rest of the world.

The UN believes **China** could play a stronger role in the absence of leadership from the US. Sources said Guterres would make a telephone call to Xi to ask for his help in nudging talks forward.

The EU also wants China – which is a key member of the block of 77 developing countries – to step up to ensure that countries all follow the same rules in being transparent over their greenhouse gas emissions.

EU member states and many other developed nations, apart from the US, joined with scores of developing countries, including some of the world's poorest states, to reinforce the need to **focus on a 1.5C limit on warming**, and to put in place the framework needed to reduce emissions.

Guterres, in a pointed criticism aimed at the four countries which have been refusing to "welcome" the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report on 1.5-degree warming, said rejecting climate science was indefensible.

He added: “The IPCC special report is a stark acknowledgment of what the consequences of global warming beyond 1.5 degrees will mean for billions of people around the world, especially those who call small island states home. This is not good news, but we cannot afford to ignore it.”

Frank Bainimarama, the prime minister of Fiji and the outgoing chair of COP23, amplified Guterres’ message . He told delegates they risked going down in history as “the generation that blew it – that sacrificed the health of our world and ultimately betrayed humanity because we didn’t have the courage and foresight to go beyond our short-term individual concerns: craven, irresponsible and selfish”.



Al Gore at the COP24 UN climate change conference 2018 in Katowice, Poland. Photograph: Agencja Gazeta/Reuters

The former US vice president Al Gore told delegates they faced “the single most important moral choice in history of humanity.”

Behind the scenes, delegates said there had been strong progress on the area of finance thanks to a doubling of commitments by Germany and Norway to help poorer nations adapt to climate change and build institutions capable of monitoring emissions. Nicholas Stern, the author of a landmark review on the economics of climate change, praised “the level of ideas and cooperation”.

But others said there were still many disputed brackets in the negotiating text on transparency and other elements of the rulebook.

“There has been some progress but it’s a very worrying time. There is still a lot more on the table than we hoped for at this stage,” said Helen Mountford, the vice president of the World Resources Institute. “The secretary general is coming in to make sure this COP can land in a good place. He will hold a summit next year to raise ambitions. If he wants success there, then here we need a robust rulebook and clear signals on ambition and finance.”

Janos Pasztor, the former climate adviser to Ban Ki-moon, told the Guardian Guterres was doing the right thing by intervening at a crucial stage. “He needs to make clear what the IPCC has described as a major challenge, and that we have to deliver on that,” he said.

Pasztor added: “We are talking about the need for massive emissions reductions, that have to happen now, not in the future. It is very daunting. The secretary general has reminded the world of what is at stake, and the political significance of that.”

The contrasts with the Paris climate summit, in terms of the political atmosphere, were striking. David Levaï, who was part of the French government team that helped to broker the successful 2015 conference, said the geopolitical winds were far less favourable today. Globally, the rise of nationalists such as Donald Trump in the US and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil has tilted power towards fossil fuel and agribusiness interests.

He said: “In the year before Paris, all countries made clear that they wanted an agreement. Now, there are repeated attacks on multilateralism and this has empowered groups that take negative actions.”

Levaï, who is at the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, expressed hope that the secretary general might make a difference. “The fact that he has come back shows he feels a need to whip countries into order,” he said.

There has been some criticism of the pro-coal government of Poland for failing to press governments to raise their ambitions. But it joined Fiji as co-chair of the Talanoa phase of the negotiations to issue a call for action that recognised the importance of the 1.5C report as the basis for more urgency and ambition.

“The window for action is closing fast – we need to do more and we need to do it now,” said the document, which would form part of the official statement from this conference.

## 'A huge mess': Failure at COP24 climate talks would be 'suicidal'

By [John D. Sutter](#), CNN

Updated 1459 GMT (2259 HKT) December 12, 2018

**Katowice, Poland (CNN)**The heads of state for some of the main countries causing climate change -- the United States, the UK, Germany, China, Canada and India among them -- are not present here in Poland to try to keep the wheels from falling off an agreement meant to save humanity and the planet.

So the weight of the world at the COP24 climate talks here in Poland appears to be falling on tiny nations like Vanuatu, which saw more than half of its GDP vanish after a recent cyclone.

That nation's minister of foreign affairs, Ralph Regenvanu -- call him "Minister Ralph," his delegation says -- has emerged as one of the few clear, moral voices present at these talks, which are seen by some scientists, environmentalists and policy experts as a "huge mess" that threaten to cause calamity if they fall apart entirely this week. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday said it would be "suicidal" for these global warming negotiations to fail.

Regenvanu stood at a lectern wearing a green tie and glasses, indicting the global community.

"[P]arty negotiators rocking meaningful progress should have much on their conscience," he told diplomats on Tuesday. "There is no political argument to counter atmospheric measurements showing that CO2 emissions have risen since Paris and are on track for a 2.7% rise in 2018," he said, referencing the 2015 UN climate negotiations in Paris -- a moment when the world stood in unison demanding an end to fossil fuels. "Whether you 'welcome' or 'note' or shamelessly ignore the science all together, the fact remains that this is catastrophic for humanity."

In the guarded world of climate diplomacy, Regenvanu's statement is a massive burn to the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Over the weekend, those nations refused to "welcome" the latest scientific report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which makes clear urgent action is needed to avoid catastrophe, including superstorms, deadlier heatwaves and floods. Those countries instead asked to simply "note" the report's existence. The United States issued a statement questioning the well-established science. As did Saudi Arabia.

"The time for limitless negotiations on climate change has passed," Regenvanu said. "It pains me deeply to have watched the people of the United States and other developed countries across the globe suffering the devastating impacts of climate induced tragedies while their professional negotiators are here at COP24 putting red lines through any mention of loss and damage in the Paris Guidelines," he added, "and square brackets around any possibility for truthfully and accurately reporting progress against humanity's most existential threat." A US State Department spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on that critique.

Important aspects of the talks, which aim to create rules for tracking carbon emissions cuts as part of the Paris Agreement, which was hashed out three years ago, have become "a huge mess," said Bill Hare, director of Climate Analytics, a research group based in the UK. "What we're seeing now is that many countries are exploring the bottom of the drain when it comes to ambition -- and in a surprising way," said Hare, who is a climate scientist and physicist. "For those in the scientific community following this here, the levels of concern are rising." The rules as they were being discussed early Wednesday would allow for "massive loopholes" and "double counting" that would create confusion about how much countries really were doing to curb greenhouse gas emissions that warm the planet, he said. It's so bad that he's started to wonder if it might be better for countries not to agree on anything at all -- rather than to codify lasting rules that are weak to the point of irrelevance.

Hare's teenage kids have been asking him if the whole process is, in fact, irrelevant.

"If at that moment we can't see progress then people can legitimately ask what is going on with this," Hare said. "What exactly is this (Paris) Agreement doing -- and how can it be fixed? Right now, I think concern is rising but the moment of truth is not quite there yet."

The final test, Hare said, will be 2020, when countries submit updated pollution-reduction plans.

Jeff Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said the discord is a sign that "this process is not working." "Leading countries -- especially the United States -- are fighting hard against," the Paris rulebook, he said. "These meetings go on and on. It's very sad ... There are not more than a handful of countries that are going to determine the fate of the world."

Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International, said a severe lack of leadership at the UN COP24 talks is resulting in mass confusion at this "critical" stage. It's like the talks inside this sterile conference center are on another planet from the real world, she said, where wildfires, storms and other climate calamities are becoming more severe, where the science of climate change never has been starker, and where people are demanding action.

"There is a way forward, but it requires leadership," she said. "That's the gap -- the leadership."

Instead, said Eliza Northrop, a senior associate at the World Resources Institute, there's "bickering" about basic science showing more than 1.5 degrees of warming would be disastrous. People already have warmed the climate 1 degree since the Industrial Revolution.

COP24 talks are being held in Katowice, Poland, which is the heart of European coal country. Poland has the reputation for being a laggard in climate negotiations and some observers say the country's leadership at the talks has been lacking, perhaps related to those interests.

The COP President, Michał Kurtyka, from Poland, told delegates late Tuesday that there had been "insufficient progress" at the talks. That was bold considering the sensitivities, said Jake Schmidt, who directs the international program at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Schmidt said no one is expecting wild success from COP24 -- they best to hope for is a "B" grade, he said. It's worrying that these rules don't often get stronger as negotiations trod on, he said. "It's rare that the thing gets better. It does sometimes. Paris was a rare exception," he said. "It's pretty rare to start with a low bar and work your way up at this stage ..."

Delegations from rich countries with some moral high-ground -- Germany, New Zealand and Canada, among them -- are not doing enough to rally support, observers said. The United States used to fill that role as a sheep herder, said Hare, but is noticeably absent here. US President Donald Trump's administration promotes increased coal extraction and questions the basics of climate change, despite longstanding scientific consensus that burning coal, oil and natural gas for electricity and other purposes dangerously warms the atmosphere. The US delegation drew protests here this week at an event promoting fossil fuels and technology.

The negotiations are expected to continue through Friday or likely beyond.

"The window of opportunity is closing," said UN Secretary-General Guterres. "We no longer have the luxury of time. That's why we need to have the work of Katowice finalized -- and finalized in three days."

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"Minister Ralph" is willing to hold onto whatever hope he can grasp.

The nations of the world are more linked together than ever by this common enemy, he said in an interview.

And this is a problem too significant to give up.

"We live on one planet," he said. "We're all affected by the same climate.

"We hope there will be some compromise."

## US accused of obstructing talks at UN climate change summit

**Vanuatu's foreign minister says worst offenders on global warming are blocking progress**

**Ben Doherty in Katowice**

@bendohertycorro

Tue 11 Dec 2018 20:52 GMT

Last modified on Tue 11 Dec 2018 21:55 GMT



The climate change summit, known as COP24, began on Tuesday in Katowice, Poland. Photograph: Łukasz Kalinowski/Rex/Shutterstock

The United States and other high carbon dioxide-emitting developed countries are deliberately frustrating the UN climate summit in Katowice, Poland, Vanuatu's foreign minister has said. His warning came as Pacific and Indian ocean states warned they faced annihilation if a global climate "rule book" could not be brokered.

In a bruising speech before ministers and heads of state, Vanuatu's foreign minister, Ralph Regenvanu, singled out the US as he excoriated major CO2-emitting developed countries for deliberately hindering negotiations.

"It pains me deeply to have watched the people of the United States and other developed countries across the globe suffering the devastating impacts of climate-induced tragedies, while their professional negotiators are here at COP24 putting red lines through any mention of loss and damage in the Paris guidelines and square brackets around any possibility for truthfully and accurately reporting progress against humanity's most existential threat," he said.

Regenvanu said the countries most responsible for climate change were now frustrating efforts to counter it.



'Window is narrowing': scientists urge action at UN climate talks

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/11/the-window-is-narrowing-scientists-urge-action-at-un-climate-talks>

The UN's climate change talks in Poland have been distracted by a semantic debate over whether the conference should “welcome” or “note” the IPCC's special report warning of dire consequences if global warming rises more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, with a bloc of four oil-producing countries – the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Kuwait – insisting the report be only “noted”.

Documents from the conference presidency, seen by the Guardian, indicate the issue of how to acknowledge the report will be returned to later in the week and is likely to further slow progress on negotiating a final outcome. Negotiators said they are growing increasingly pessimistic that talks can be concluded by their deadline on Friday.



Australia only nation to join US at pro-coal event at COP24 climate talks

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/11/australia-only-nation-to-join-us-at-pro-coal-event-at-cop24-climate-talks>

“Whether you welcome, or note, or shamefully ignore the science altogether,” Regenvanu said, “the fact remains that this is catastrophic for humanity, and party negotiators blocking meaningful progress should have much on their conscience.”

He said climate change represented an existential threat to humanity, but “we have overcome greater human-induced wrongs before like colonialism, like slavery”.



Protesters disrupt pro-fossil fuel event at COP24 – video

As 193 countries at the climate talks seek to establish a “rule book” on how to implement the commitments made in the Paris agreement three years ago, Regenvanu condemned a two-tier system that exempted high-emissions countries from reductions obligations, saying the world needed “one common rule book, in which rules apply to all”.

The US state department declined to comment on his remarks.

Regenvanu was part of a cohort of small island states in the Pacific and Indian oceans that urged greater global action on limiting global warming to 1.5C; leaders from Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu, the Cook Islands and the Maldives argued their countries faced an impending existential threat from climate change.



Climate change to drive migration from island homes sooner than thought

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/25/climate-change-to-drive-migration-from-island-homes-sooner-than-thought>

Speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States, the Maldives' environment minister, Hussain Rasheed Hassan, said the world needed to question "why we are continuing failing?".

He said: "After a quarter of a century of UNFCCC negotiations and three years since the historic Paris agreement, we are further from approaching our goal of stabilising emissions than ever, and ... rapidly approaching the point of no return.

The prime minister of Kiribati, Taneti Maamau, said the countries that had contributed least to climate change were feeling its impacts first – and most acutely: "Truly, but sadly, the prosperity enjoyed by a few developed countries, has become the tragedy and misery of the mess of developing countries and particularly those most vulnerable to climate change."

Henry Puna, the prime minister of the Cook Islands, said while the Paris agreement represented a moment of global solidarity, inaction and infighting since then had paralysed efforts to reduce emissions. "I am scared for my children's future, and for the future of generations to come," he said. "Parties have called for action, but it is evident our current efforts are not enough."

He said climate change denialism jeopardised the future of Pacific countries: "Some are not willing to accept the stark realities."

## Brazil reneges on hosting UN climate talks under Bolsonaro presidency

**Reversal comes two months after country agreed to host COP25 conference in 2019 – and one month after far-right climate sceptic won election**

**Jonathan Watts**

Wed 28 Nov 2018 01:17 GMT

Last modified on Wed 28 Nov 2018 19:15 GMT



An illegally deforested area in Brazil's Amazon basin. Photograph: Felipe Werneck/AP

Brazil has abandoned plans to host crucial UN climate talks in 2019 amid growing signs of the anti-internationalism of the new government being formed by president-elect **Jair Bolsonaro**.

The foreign ministry announced the reversal in a message to Patrícia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Convention on Climate Change, according to the **O Globo news website**.

Two months after winning the bid to host the COP25 conference in 2019, the note said **Brazil** would withdraw its offer to stage the event due to the transition in government and budget restrictions, the paper said.

The decision is a blow to global efforts to prevent dangerous levels of global warming. Brazil, which is home to the the world's biggest rainforest, the Amazon, has been an important player in international climate talks. Its sudden weakening of support comes just days before the opening of this year's climate talks in Katowice, Poland.

The Climate Observatory NGO said Brazil had abdicated its role in one of the areas where it was most needed by the world and its own people.

"By ignoring the climate agenda, the federal government also fails to protect the population, hit by a growing number of extreme weather events. These,

unfortunately, do not cease to occur just because some doubt their causes," the group said in a statement.

"It is not the first and certainly will not be the last bad news of Jair Bolsonaro for that area."

The broken promise is in line with the anti-globalist rhetoric of the far-right former army captain, who was elected president in October and will take power in January. He threatened to quit the Paris climate agreement, then subsequently backtracked, but has made no secret of his desire to open up the Amazon to mining, farming and dam building.

He has also aligned himself closely to Donald Trump. Earlier this month he chose a new foreign minister who claims "climate alarmism" is part of a **cultural Marxist plot** and who said the United Nations **has no language** for "love, faith and patriotism".

The shift has been abrupt. Just two months ago – shortly before the election – the foreign ministry said Brazil's offer to host the COP25 talks "confirms the country's leadership role in sustainable development issues" and "reflects the consensus of Brazilian society on the importance and the urgency of actions that contribute to the fight against climate change", according to the O Globo news website.

# 'Planetary emergency:' After 30 years, leaders are still fighting about basic truths of climate science

Analysis by John Sutter, CNN

Updated 1446 GMT (2246 HKT) December 16, 2018

**Katowice, Poland (CNN)**Hidden in the [133-page document](#) agreed upon at the UN climate change talks was a compromise that many consider an infuriating distraction. The countries of the world agreed to welcome the fact that a scientific report on the state of global warming had been produced. But they failed to welcome its findings.

That seemingly small difference is massive in the hyper-subtle, hyper-polite world of climate diplomacy. So massive, in fact, that the bickering over the wording hung like a cloud over these negotiations. Almost 200 countries agreed -- barely -- to a "rulebook" governing the Paris Agreement on climate change, which is meant to help limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Debate over whether to "welcome" the findings or simply "note" their existence flared up a week ago. The United States, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Russia -- among the leading producers of fossil fuels, which cause climate change -- stated publicly that they did not want to "welcome" the findings of a report the UN head had called an "ear-splitting wake-up call."

That report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says carbon pollution must be cut about in half by 2030 and reach "net zero" by mid-century to avoid what could be described as disastrous climate change -- superstorms, floods and the like. Polish students walked out of school and into negotiations holding signs that underscored the urgency in this latest assessment of the science: "12 years left."

That urgency is new, but the basic science is not. Thirty years ago, a NASA scientist testified before Congress that the era of human-induced global warming had begun. In 1992, countries agreed to create the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which oversees talks on global warming now held at the end of each year.

The fact that discord remains on the basics of the science -- much less the actual process of how to cut pollution and how to govern that process -- stunned some delegates and observers at the talks, which, symbolically, were held in Europe's "coal capital."

"We were not able to get the strong endorsement we should have," said Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists, an environmental group.

What the IPCC report declares is a "planetary emergency," he said.

Yet there also was a sense of "relief" that the countries could agree on a statement at all -- and that they produced a rulebook that is seen by many as setting the stage for a detailed accounting of emissions and new pledges to cut pollution that will be submitted in 2020.

Those concrete rules are more important than the fights about the validity of the IPCC report, said Yamide Dagnet, project director on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change for the World Resources Institute, a group that studies environmental policy.

"We really have the foundations we need to move forward, not to wait," Dagnet said in Poland. "We regret what happened last Saturday, but we need to remember it was just a handful of countries that contested this report ... What matters is what you do about it."

The what-to-do-about-it is what concerns Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University in New York. The fight over how to treat the IPCC report, which is regarded as the premier science on this issue, is a massive distraction, he said.

"What's sad is how much time is wasted on those words because what's really looming over this are the acts of the Trump administration

and a few other governments to willfully put the planet at risk," Sachs said. "It's not a matter of belief or denial. It's a matter of putting oil and coal company -- and country -- interests above the interests of all of humanity.

"It got translated into many frustrating days of arguing over a few words."

What's happening should be considered "climate crimes against humanity," he said.

"It's nothing less than that and that's how history will record what the Trump administration is doing right now: These are crimes against humanity," he told CNN. "Many people are dying as a result of this. And it's not a sufficient defense to say, 'I don't believe it.' "

The Paris Rulebook is meant to govern the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change, which was decided at a similar UN meeting three years ago. US President Donald Trump has pledged to abandon that agreement, but the country still had a presence at the COP24 talks, which concluded in an overtime session late Saturday night.

Trump at times has denied the basic science of climate change, which states that burning coal, oil and natural gas produces emissions that trap heat in the atmosphere, warming the planet. It's become increasingly clear that warming is happening faster than previously thought and with worse results. The US National Climate Assessment published this year says thousands of Americans could die and gross domestic product could take a 10% hit by century's end.

Trump has advocated for burning more coal, a major cause of climate pollution. In Poland, the US delegation held an event dedicated to coal and fossil fuel technologies.

A US State Department spokesperson said the event was intended to show "the remarkable progress we have made through innovation for cleaner technologies."

"These job-creating innovations have contributed to reducing US emissions while also growing our economy and providing reliable and affordable access to energy," the spokesman said in a statement.

The event was interrupted by a group of young people mock-laughing at the display.

"It's so ridiculous. It's a joke," said Vic Barrett, a 19-year-old protester.

"We're done listening to false solutions and things we know don't work."

Some negotiators emphasized that only four countries stood up to decline welcoming the science. If the climate talks were not guided by consensus, that would be a fringe view, they said. There actually is wide agreement on the importance of these reports -- both among governments and the public, said Teresa Ribera, Spain's minister for ecological transition.

"You cannot contradict what has been said by science," she said. "It is fact."