

U.N. Climate Talks End With Few Commitments and a ‘Lost’ Opportunity



Delegates in Madrid on Sunday at the closing session of United Nations climate talks.
Bernat Armangué/Associated Press

By Somini Sengupta
Dec. 15, 2019
Updated 7:35 p.m. ET

NY Times

In what was widely denounced as one of the worst outcomes in a quarter-century of climate negotiations, United Nations talks ended early Sunday morning with the United States and other big polluters blocking even a nonbinding measure that would have encouraged countries to adopt more ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions next year.

Because the United States is withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, it was the last chance, at least for some time, for American delegates to sit at the negotiating table at the annual talks — and perhaps a turning point in global climate negotiations, given the influence that Washington has long wielded, for better or worse, in the discussions.

But instead of seeking a breakthrough, the Trump administration used the meeting to push back on a range of proposals, including a mechanism to compensate developing countries for losses suffered as a result of more intense storms, droughts, rising seas and other effects of global warming.

The annual negotiations, held in Madrid this year, demonstrated the vast gaps between what scientists say the world needs and what the world’s most powerful leaders are prepared to even discuss, let alone do.

“Most of the large emitters were missing in action or obstructive,” said Helen Mountford, a vice president at World Resources Institute. “This reflects how disconnected many national leaders are from the urgency of the science and the demands of their citizens.”

Along with the United States, Australia and Brazil were also singled out for blocking on other issues. China and India balked at suggestions of more ambitious climate targets next year.

The outcome leaves many important decisions to be made at next year's negotiations, which will begin in Glasgow immediately after the United States elections next November.

If a new president is elected then, his or her administration could rejoin the Paris Agreement only after taking office the following January and then setting out new American national targets and timetables for cutting emissions. Many analysts say China, currently the world's largest emitter, is likely to look at what direction the United States takes before committing to new emissions reductions targets of its own.

The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, offered an unusually blunt assessment of the 25th annual negotiations, formally known as the Conference of Parties. "I am disappointed with the results of #COP25," he said on Twitter. "The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the climate crisis."

The negotiations, which had been scheduled to end Friday, extended into the early hours Sunday. It was the longest Conference of Parties ever, and it came against the backdrop of accelerating climate threats.

Though there was a general endorsement of finding a way to help poor countries cope with climate disasters, an agreement for funding failed on the question of whether major polluters could be held liable for climate damages in the future.

The delegates also deferred until next year an agreement on rules for international carbon trading. Australia and Brazil were among those who insisted on what were widely described as accounting loopholes.

[A coalition of small island nations said in a statement](#) that it was "appalled and dismayed" at what it called the scale of inaction and the failure to reach decisions on critical issues.

The talks had been meant to iron out the last unresolved details of the landmark Paris climate agreement. Under that pact, reached in 2015, countries set their own targets and timetables to rein in emissions of planet-warming gases.

There was a push from both rich and poor countries to commit, at least on paper, to ramp up climate-action targets next year. That is important because even if all countries meet the voluntary targets they have set so far, according to the scientific consensus, emissions are rising at a pace that makes storms and heat waves very likely to become more severe, and coastal cities to be at risk of drowning.

But there was no diplomatic consensus on even that. The final declaration was notable for what counts as exceptionally weak diplomatic language: It cited only an "urgent need" to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

China and India joined the United States in pushing back against more emphatic language calling on countries to enhance their climate-action targets in 2020. The European Union joined many poor, vulnerable countries in calls to be more ambitious, though it remained unclear when the bloc, which is one of history's biggest polluters, would update its own targets.

State Department officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The outcome was also notable in that it followed [a surge in street demonstrations this year](#), often led by young people, highlighting the deep fissures between the demands of thousands of ordinary citizens and their governments.

One of the most contentious issues that was kicked down the road was a set of rules on carbon trading, which would allow countries and companies to trade on emissions reductions. Australia and Brazil were among those countries that insisted on accounting loopholes, including the ability to carry over credits earned under an old trading system. Others considered that unacceptable.

Some environmental advocates saw a silver lining there. No deal on carbon trading was better than a bad deal, they said.

The United States, the only country in the world retreating from the Paris accord, stuck to its longstanding position on compensating countries that are pummeled by extreme weather events and slow-moving climate effects like sea level rise.

A coalition of these countries has long sought a form of "loss and damage" reparations not currently available from other climate funds, which are designed to help reduce emissions and adapt to climate effects. The one bit of progress made on this issue was an agreement to set up a review that looks at how to best compensate countries hit by disasters.

The United States insisted on language to protect itself from liability claims, delegates said, blocking progress in the loss and damage talks. The United States has defended its position by saying it is the largest humanitarian donor in the world.

For more climate news sign up for [the Climate Fwd. newsletter](#) or follow [@NYTClimate on Twitter](#).

COP25: Longest climate talks end with compromise deal

By Matt McGrath BBC
Environment correspondent, Madrid
23 minutes ago



KIARA WORTH/IIISD Some of the difficult issues proved impossible to resolve in Madrid

The longest United Nations climate talks on record have finally ended in Madrid with a compromise deal.

Exhausted delegates reached agreement on the key question of increasing the global response to curbing carbon.

All countries will need to put new climate pledges on the table by the time of the next major conference in Glasgow next year.

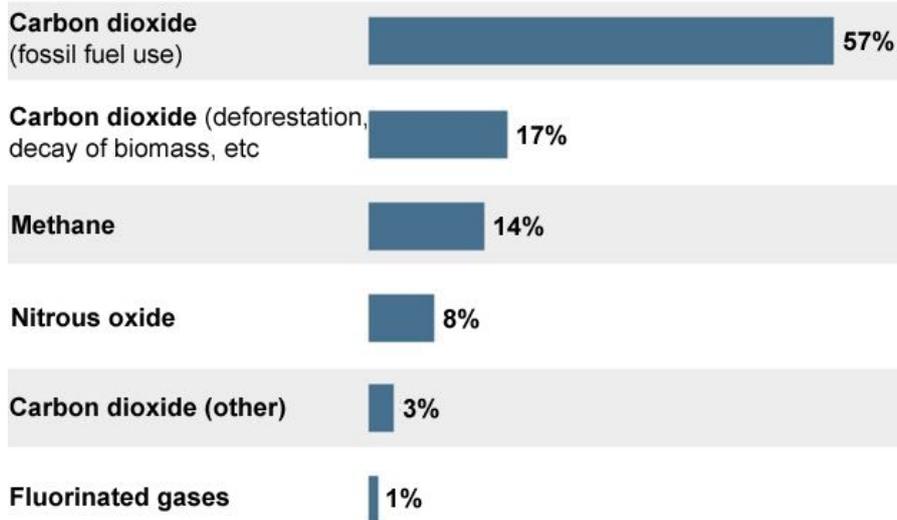
Divisions over other questions - including carbon markets - were delayed until the next gathering.

What was agreed?

After two extra days and nights of negotiations, delegates finally agreed a deal that will see new, improved carbon cutting plans on the table by the time of the Glasgow conference next year.

All parties will need to address the gap between what the science says is necessary to avoid dangerous climate change, and the current state of play which would see the world go past this threshold in the 2030s.

Greenhouse gas emissions by type



Source: IPCC

Supported by the European Union and small island states, the push for higher ambition was opposed by a range of countries including the US, Brazil, India and China.

However a compromise was agreed with the richer nations having to show that they have kept their promises on climate change in the years before 2020.

Huge pressure on UK

Next year's big climate conference will be held in Glasgow, Scotland - and that heaps enormous pressure on UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

He's already been warned by environmentalists that he will be "humiliated" if he tries to lead other nations whilst the UK is still failing to meet its own medium-term climate targets.

The UK's climate advisers warn that tens of millions of homes must be insulated.

Other experts say Mr Johnson's £28.8m road-building plans are not compatible with eliminating CO2 emissions.

They say even fully electric cars won't solve the problem completely - and urge the government to help people walk and cycle to benefit their health and the environment.

They also say expanding aviation will increase emissions.

Mr Johnson's Brexit decisions will play a part too. The US won't discuss climate change in any trade deal. Meanwhile the EU is putting a border tax on

countries that don't cut greenhouse gases. It will be impossible to please both.

What is the reaction?

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he was disappointed by the result.

"The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation and finance to tackle the climate crisis," he said, quoted by AFP.

'Another year of failure'

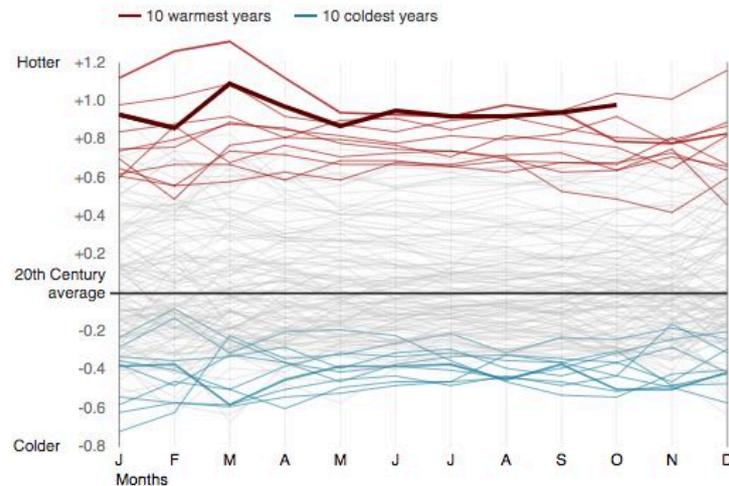
Meanwhile, Laurence Tubiana from the European Climate Foundation, and an architect of the Paris agreement, described the result as "really a mixed bag, and a far cry from what science tells us is needed."

"Major players who needed to deliver in Madrid did not live up to expectations, but thanks to a progressive alliance of small island states, European, African and Latin American countries, we obtained the best possible outcome, against the will of big polluters."

Decisions on other issues including the thorny question of carbon markets have been delayed until Glasgow.

How years compare with the 20th Century average

2019 is on course to be in the top three warmest years



This aspect of the deal was welcomed by campaigners.

"Thankfully the weak rules on a market based mechanism, promoted by Brazil and Australia, that would have undermined efforts to reduce emissions has been shelved and the fight on that can continue next year at COP26 in Glasgow," said Mohamed Adow, with the group Power Shift Africa.



Many of those in attendance were unhappy with the overall package, feeling it did not reflect the urgency of the science.

Spain's acting Minister for the Ecological Transition Teresa Ribera said the mandate was clear.

"Countries have to present more ambitious NDCs [nationally determined contributions] in 2020 than what we have today because it is important to address science and the demands of people, as well as commit ourselves to do more and faster."

However, negotiators will be satisfied to have kept the process alive after these difficult and complex talks in Madrid.

What is the evidence for global warming?

The world is now nearly one degree Celsius warmer than it was before widespread industrialisation, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The 20 warmest years on record have all occurred in the past 22 years, with the years from 2015-2018 making up the top four.

The WMO says that if the current warming trend continues, temperatures could rise by 3-5C by the end of this century.

A threshold of 2C had long been regarded as the gateway to dangerous warming. More recently, scientists and policy makers have argued that **keeping temperature rise to within 1.5C is a safer limit for the world**.

But an IPCC report in 2018 suggested that keeping to the 1.5C target would **require "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society"**.

How will climate change affect us?

There are varying degrees of uncertainty about the scale of potential impacts.

But the changes could drive freshwater shortages, bring sweeping changes to our ability to produce food, and increase the number of deaths from floods, storms, heat waves and droughts.

Even if we cut greenhouse gas emissions dramatically now, scientists say the effects will continue because parts of the climate system, particularly large bodies of water and ice, can take hundreds of years to respond to changes in temperature.

It also takes greenhouse gases decades to be removed from the atmosphere.

Major states snub calls for climate action as U.N. summit wraps up

Matthew Green, Jake Spring Reuters
5 MIN READ



MADRID (Reuters) - A handful of major states resisted pressure on Sunday to ramp up efforts to combat global warming as a U.N. climate summit ground to a close, angering smaller countries and a growing protest movement that is pushing for emergency action.

The COP25 talks in Madrid were viewed as a test of governments' collective will to heed the advice of science to cut greenhouse gas emissions more rapidly, in order to prevent rising global temperatures from hitting irreversible tipping points.

But the conference, in its concluding draft, endorsed only a declaration on the "urgent need" to close the gap between existing emissions pledges and the temperature goals of the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement - an outcome U.N. Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres called disappointing.

Many developing countries and campaigners had wanted to see much more explicit language spelling out the importance of countries submitting bolder pledges on emissions as the Paris process enters a crucial implementation phase next year.

Brazil, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia and the United States had led resistance to bolder action, delegates said.

“These talks reflect how disconnected country leaders are from the urgency of the science and the demands of their citizens in the streets,” said Helen Mountford, Vice President for Climate and Economics, at the World Resources Institute think-tank. “They need to wake up in 2020.”

The lack of a strong outcome to reinforce the Paris accord raises the stakes for the next big climate summit, in Glasgow in November next year. As hosts, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government faces the task of persuading countries to submit more ambitious plans to cut carbon emissions.

The Madrid summit had been due to end at the two-week mark on Friday but ran on for two extra days - a long delay even by the standards of often torturous climate summits.

After final decisions were made, Chile’s environment minister Carolina Schmidt - who served as president of the talks - said she was “of mixed emotions”.

The country had earlier triggered outrage after drafting a version of the text that campaigners complained was so weak it betrayed the spirit of the Paris Agreement.



'A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY'?

The process set out in the Paris deal hinges on countries ratcheting up emissions cuts next year.

The final draft did acknowledge the “significant gap” between existing pledges and the temperature goals adopted in 2015.

Nevertheless, it was still seen as a weak response to the sense of urgency felt by communities around the world afflicted by floods, droughts, wildfires and cyclones that scientists say have become more intense as the Earth rapidly warms.

Guterres, who opened the talks on Dec 2., said he was “disappointed”.

“The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation and finance to tackle the climate crisis,” he said in a statement. “We must not give up and I will not give up.”

Delegates drew some consolation from an agreement reached in Brussels last week by the European Union’s 28 member states, bar Poland, to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050, under a “Green Deal” to wean the continent off fossil fuels.

“It seems that EU now needs to be the leader and we want to be and we are going to be and that is what we are doing,” said Krista Mikkonen, Finland’s environment minister and the EU’s representative at the talks.

The negotiations became mired in disputes over the rules that should govern international carbon trading, favored by wealthier countries to reduce the cost of cutting emissions. Brazil and Australia were among the main holdouts, delegates said, and the summit deferred big decisions on carbon markets.

“As many others have expressed, we are disappointed that we once again failed to find agreement,” said Felipe De Leon, a climate official speaking on behalf of Costa Rica.

Smaller nations had also hoped to win guarantees of financial aid to cope with climate change. The Pacific island of Tuvalu accused the United States, which began withdrawing from the Paris process last month, of blocking progress.

“There are millions of people all around the world who are already suffering from the impacts of climate change,” Ian Fry, Tuvalu’s representative, told delegates. “Denying

this fact could be interpreted by some to be a crime against humanity.”

Reporting by Matthew Green, Valerie Volcovici and Jake Spring; Editing by David Gregorio and John Stonestreet

'Total disconnect': Voices from marathon Madrid climate summit

3 MIN READ



Extinction Rebellion dumps Manure at COP25

(Contains profanity in paragraph 20)

MADRID (Reuters) - A U.N. climate summit closed on Sunday with major states snubbing calls for tougher action to combat global warming, prompting sharp criticism from smaller countries and environmental activists.

Here are some key quotes from the final days of the COP25 summit:

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres:

“The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation and finance to tackle the climate crisis. We must not give up and I will not give up.”

Sofie Nordvik, Norway’s youth delegates:

“We lack the ambition needed to avoid this climate emergency. Our leaders need to step up. The world would have looked very different if young people were in charge today.”

Zhou Yingmin, China's lead negotiator:

"The results of the meeting did not meet our expectations... I believe everyone regrets that the result was not proportionate to our efforts."

Alden Meyer, Union of Concerned Scientists:

"I've been attending these climate negotiations since they first started in 1991. But never have I seen the almost total disconnect we've seen here at COP25 in Madrid between what the science requires and what the climate negotiations are delivering in terms of meaningful action."

Carolina Schmidt, president of the talks on behalf of Chile:

"We are all tired."

"We are of mixed emotions."

"This has been the longest COP in the history of COPs."

Ian Fry, Tuvalu representative:

"There are millions of people all around the world who are already suffering from the impacts of climate change. Denying this fact could be interpreted by some to be a crime against humanity."

Kevin Conrad, Papua New Guinea's climate envoy:

"Over the last 24 hours, 90% of the participants have not been involved in this process."

Ronan McNern, a spokesman for civil disobedience group Extinction Rebellion, after dumping a pile of horse manure near the entrance of the summit:

"Out of shit come the best roses. We hope that the international community comes together to create a beautiful future."

New York Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Twitter:

"An utter failure. COP25 & conferences like it are intended to be actual negotiations to urgently draw down global carbon emissions - not cocktail parties to make politicians feel better about themselves as they squash dissent & sell off our futures to fossil fuel

interests.”

Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International:

“This COP exposed the role of polluters in politics and the youth’s deep distrust of government, as climate blockers like Brazil and Saudi Arabia, enabled by an irresponsibly weak Chilean leadership, peddled carbon deals and steamrolled scientists and civil society.”

UN climate talks end with limited progress on emissions targets

Partial agreement at COP25 that countries must be more ambitious to fulfil Paris goals

Fiona Harvey *Environment correspondent Guardian*

Sun 15 Dec 2019 13:21 GMT

First published on Sat 14 Dec 2019 20:50 GMT

Climate talks in Madrid have ended with a partial agreement to ask countries to come up with more ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions in order to meet the terms of the 2015 Paris accord.

Few countries came to this year’s talks with updated plans to reach the Paris goals, though the EU finally agreed its long-term target of reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Experts say more ambitious emissions cuts are needed globally if the Paris pledge to hold global heating to no more than 2C is to be met.

This year’s round of annual UN talks focused on narrow technical issues such as the workings of the global carbon markets, a means by which countries can trade their successes in cutting emissions with other countries that have not cut their own emissions fast enough.

By midday on Sunday, more than 40 hours after the talks deadline, agreement on that was still far off and the issue will have to be resolved next year.

There were fears that the more substantive issue of future emissions cuts would also be sidelined, but a “high ambition coalition” made up of the EU and many smaller developing countries pressed for a resolution to ask all governments to formulate stronger national plans on cutting carbon.

They partially succeeded, and they will now hope to put political pressure – from within the talks, in behind-the-scenes meetings in world capitals, and in the outside world from civil society – on all governments to recommit to the 2015 Paris accord in 2020 through updates to their national climate plans.

That will be a difficult task, judging by the scenes at the two-week-long Madrid conference.

No major breakthrough had been seriously expected at this year’s meeting, known as COP25, but observers had at least hoped to see a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to press ahead with the **Paris agreement** goal of holding temperature rises to no more than 2C.

Both were lacking as the talks moved into the early hours of Sunday. Poor countries grew angry at what they saw as intransigence on the part of some richer nations, while the EU and a coalition of developing countries urged others to come forward with more ambitious plans to combat climate breakdown.

In the final hours, weary negotiators wrangled over the wording of provisions for “loss and damage”, by which developing countries are hoping to receive financial assistance for the ravages they face from climate breakdown. The US was blamed for refusing to agree to developing countries’ demands under what is known in the UN jargon as the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM).

A US state department official said: “The US government is the largest humanitarian donor in the world. The WIM should be a constructive space to catalyse action on the wide range of loss and damage issues. A divisive conversation on blame and liability helps no one.”

Brazil held up agreement over a **provision allowing governments to trade in carbon credits**. It insisted that its carbon sinks – mainly forests, including the Amazon – should count towards its emissions-cutting goals, while also selling carbon credits derived from preserving forests to other countries to count towards their emissions targets. Other countries said this was double counting and would undermine the carbon trading system.

Governments discussed these points for two weeks with little official attention paid to the broader and more urgent issue of how countries can accelerate their plans to cut carbon in the next decade. **Protesters outside and inside the halls** pointed to **increasingly stark scientific warnings** and the world’s failure so far to cut greenhouse gases. Research published during the talks showed that emissions have risen by **4% since the Paris agreement was signed in 2015**, and cuts of more than 7% a year will be **needed in the next decade** to avoid dangerous levels of heating.

The world’s poorest countries, and those most vulnerable to climate chaos, came away largely disappointed and calling for more action in the next year.

Sonam Wangdi, chair of the Least Developed Countries Group, said: “This COP was not able to meet our expectations in raising ambition to address the concerns of our people at home and youth around the world. Now while countries must make transformational improvements to [their emissions reduction] targets by 2020 that put us on a pathway to limit warming to 1.5C.”

Wangdi pointed to the problems already being seen in some of the poorest nations.

“Our people are already suffering from the impacts of climate change. Our communities across the world are being devastated. Global emissions must be drastically and urgently reduced to limit further impacts, and financial support scaled up so our countries can better address climate change and its impacts.”

Jamie Henn, the strategy director at the pressure group **350.org**, said: “The level of disconnect between what this COP should have delivered and what

it's on track to deliver is appalling and is a sign that the very foundations of the Paris agreement are being shaken up. A handful of loud countries has hijacked the process and is keeping the rest of the planet hostage."

Mohamed Adow, the director of Power Shift Africa, a climate and energy thinktank, said: "This is a disastrous, profoundly distressing outcome – the worst I have ever seen. At a time when scientists are queuing up to warn about terrifying consequences if emissions keep rising, and schoolchildren taking to the streets in their millions, what we have here in Madrid is a betrayal of people across the world. It is disgraceful and governments are simply not doing their job of protecting the planet."

The most high-profile of those young protesters, Greta Thunberg, tweeted a picture of herself on the way home from the conference on Saturday night.

The lack of progress leaves the UK, as a **co-host of next year's talks**, with a diplomatic mountain to climb in the next 10 months. In Glasgow early next November, countries will meet again with the aim of strengthening their commitments on emissions cuts under the Paris accord.

Without such reinforcements, current commitments put the world on track for at least 3C of warming, which [scientists say would spell disaster](#).

U.N. climate talks end with hard feelings, few results and new doubts about global unity

By
Brady Dennis and **Chico Harlan** Washington Post
December 15, 2019 at 12:33 PM EST

MADRID — Global climate talks lurched to an end here Sunday with finger pointing, accusations of failure and fresh doubts about the world's collective resolve to slow the warming of the planet — at a moment when scientists say time is running out for humans to avert steadily worsening climate disasters.

After more than two weeks of negotiations, punctuated by raucous protests and constant reminders about the need to move faster, bleary-eyed negotiators barely mustered enthusiasm for the compromise they had patched together, while raising grievances about the many issues that remain unresolved.

At a gathering where the mantra "Time for Action" was plastered throughout the hallways and on the walls, the negotiators failed to achieve their primary goals. Central among them: convincing the world's largest carbon-emitting countries to pledge to tackle climate change more aggressively beginning in 2020.

"We are not satisfied," said Chilean Environment Minister Carolina Schmidt, who chaired the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP25. "The agreements reached by the parties are not enough."

Delegates from nearly 200 nations wrestled for more than 40 hours past their planned deadline — making these the longest in the 25-year history of these talks — even as workers broke down parts of the sprawling conference hall, food vendors closed and all but the most essential negotiators went home.

As officials scrambled to finalize a complex set of rules to implement the 2015 Paris climate accord, a handful of larger-emitting countries squared off again and again against smaller, more vulnerable countries. In particular, negotiators came to loggerheads while crafting rules around a fair and transparent global carbon trading system, and pushed the issue to next year. Fights also dragged on about how to provide funding to poorer nations already coping with rising seas, crippling droughts and other consequences of climate change.

The painstaking pace of the talks stood in contrast to the [mass demonstrations](#) and vehement pleas from young activists, some of whom staged protests inside the conference hall and accused world leaders of neglecting the most significant challenge facing humanity.

"This is the biggest disconnect between this process and what's going on in the real world that I've seen," said Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists, who has been attending climate talks since the early 1990s.

"You have the science crystal on where we need to go. You have the youth and others stepping up around the world in the streets pressing for action," he said. "It's like we're in a sealed vacuum chamber in here, and no one is perceiving what is happening out there — what the science says and what people are demanding."

Sunday's outcome underscored how international divisions and a lack of momentum threaten the effort to limit the warming of the Earth to dangerous levels, only four years after the Paris agreement produced a moment of global solidarity.

"The can-do spirit that birthed the Paris agreement feels like a distant memory today," Helen Mountford, vice president for climate and economics at the World Resources Institute, said in a statement Sunday.

The lack of progress in Spain sets up a critical moment ahead of next year's gathering in Scotland, where countries will be asked to show up with more ambitious pledges to slash their carbon footprints.

But Sunday's conclusion raised new doubts about whether key nations would rise to that challenge. Already, many countries are not keeping the promises they made in Paris in 2015, when leaders vowed to limit global warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) — and to try to remain below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The world already has warmed more than 1 degree Celsius above preindustrial levels, and current pledges would put the world on a trajectory to warm more than 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

In Madrid, [small and developing countries accused the United States and others](#), such as Brazil and Australia, of obstructing key parts of the negotiations and undermining the spirit and goals of the Paris accord. Countries already hard hit by climate change argued that large emitters continue to dawdle, as other imperiled nations face intensifying cyclones, increased flooding and other climate-related catastrophes.

"This is an absolute tragedy and a travesty," Ian Fry, the climate change ambassador from the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu, told fellow negotiators. Fry specifically pointed to the United States for playing a destructive role in the talks.

The United States is in its final year as part of the international agreement it once helped spearhead. The Trump administration has said it [officially will withdraw](#) from the Paris accord on Nov. 4, 2020 — the day after the U.S. presidential election.

As delegates voted on the final texts, many seats were empty: Some negotiators, tired and with flights to catch, had simply gone home. Those who remained had technical trouble retrieving the documents, even as they voted on them, and continually stopped the proceedings to say they needed help.

"If you refresh, maybe?" Schmidt proposed from the dais.

Later, as countries were offering statements, Norway's climate minister offered the floor to a 24-year-old member of the delegation, who had taken a 2½ -day train ride to Madrid to reduce her carbon footprint.

"Our leaders need to step up," Sofie Nordvik said. "Please use our solutions."

The conference was not envisioned as a landmark moment in the implementation of the Paris accord. Negotiators had been asked to iron out a set of complex but important details about how the deal will be implemented.

U.N. Secretary General António Guterres spent much of this year pleading with countries to produce more aggressive plans to combat global warming over the coming year.

"The point of no return is no longer over the horizon. It is in sight and hurtling towards us," he said as the climate talks convened. He said the "world's largest emitters are not pulling their weight."

In the end, promises of simply did not emerge.

One question that proved particularly contentious at the talks was carbon trading, an unresolved but crucial aspect of the Paris agreement. Some countries accused Brazil and others of pushing for accounting loopholes that they said would weaken transparency and mask emissions in a way that would undermine the integrity of the accord.

Officials ultimately punted away any resolution on the issue, just as they had done a year ago — a result that many negotiators described as a major disappointment.

Scientists have made clear there is no longer time for delay, especially after a decade in which emissions continued to rise.

The U.N. reported last month that global greenhouse gas emissions [must begin falling by 7.6 percent](#) each year beginning in 2020 to meet the most ambitious aims of the Paris climate accord. Global emissions are projected to hit another record high in 2019.

The U.N.-led Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change this year detailed how warming is already threatening food and water supplies, turning arable land to desert, killing coral reefs and supercharging monster storms. A new federal assessment on Tuesday found that the Arctic might already have crossed a key threshold and could become a contributor to global carbon emissions as huge amounts of permafrost thaw.

One of the few promising developments during the talks came not from Madrid, but from Brussels, where European leaders on Friday [pledged to eliminate their carbon footprint](#) by 2050. Though the European Union talks revealed divisions of their own — coal-reliant Poland refrained from signing on — they provided a rare example of one of the world's big emitters taking steps to draw up more ambitious reductions goals.

Roughly 80 countries have committed to setting more ambitious targets in 2020, but most are small and developing nations that account for barely 10 percent of the world's emissions.

During the talks, officials from many of those small countries spoke with exasperation about the pace and tenor of the proceedings, saying they had been excluded from key negotiations and stonewalled by major-emitting nations. But the most visceral displays of outrage came from young protesters, who held news conferences, chanted, and pressed — often in vain —

for sit-downs with negotiators.

The teenagers were part of a broader group that has staged climate strikes across the world this year, many of them inspired by 16-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg.

"I am losing all of my trust in the establishment and the people who are leading this world," said Jonathan Palash-Mizner, 17, one of the American leaders of Extinction Rebellion.

As the negotiations headed toward their drawn-out conclusion, some 300 people joined in the middle of the convention hall, where one young speaker after another held a megaphone and called for "climate justice."

Outside, they gathered with others in front of the cavernous facility. "The oceans are rising and so are we!" they chanted.

But a day, a night and another morning later, when negotiators finally gaveled the divisive conference to a close, the protesters were long gone.

All that remained were the now-empty hallways, dead and dying potted trees and signs that people had passed each day as they exited the nearby subway, warning that time was running short.

"Tick tock," they read. "Tick tock."

chico.harlan@washpost.com

COP25 was meant to tackle the climate crisis. It fell short

By Tara John, Arwa Damon, Ingrid Formanek and Sheena McKenzie, CNN

Updated 1900 GMT (0300 HKT) December 15, 2019

(CNN)The message from [climate activists](#) was passionate, the warning from the scientific community and countries already experiencing the effects of climate change, urgent. The action from world powers has been excruciatingly slow and inadequate.

What had been scheduled as a 12-day summit aimed at hammering out the rules of the 2015 Paris Climate accord, instead dragged on two extra days and highlighted the huge disconnect between the world's biggest polluting nations, and the [global community demanding change](#).

Negotiators in Madrid worked through the night to salvage a rulebook for cutting greenhouse gas emissions before 2020, when signatories must start meeting those targets.

Yet even after extending overtime, many observers, scientists and climate activists called the resulting agreement a monumental failure, strewn with watered-down language that kicks urgent items down the road to COP26 in 2020.

Host country Spain said Sunday's agreement "expresses the urgent need" for new carbon-cutting commitments. Critics said the text falls short on decisive language for doing so.

"As time ran out, the COP looked more and more like a hostage situation inside a burning building -- together with most negotiators, people and planet were held captive," said May Boeve, Executive Director of climate campaign group 350.org, in a statement.

She added that, "after forcing negotiators to keep at it for three days straight," the world's biggest carbon emitters and fossil fuel industry "got what they wanted -- a weakened text that kicks most of the big issues down the road to COP26."

Helen Mountford, vice president for climate and economics at global research organization the World Resources Institute agreed. "There is no sugarcoating it," she said. "The negotiations fell far short of what was expected. Instead of leading the charge for more ambition, most of the large emitters were missing in action or obstructive."



Scientists and activists were left exhausted by the grinding pace of negotiations at the annual meeting.

"The can-do spirit that birthed the Paris Agreement feels like a distant memory today."

There was some glimmer of hope. Eighty governments -- mostly developing and island nations most vulnerable to the effects of climate change -- have committed to bringing enhanced climate plans to COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, representing over 10% of global emissions, according to environmental communications experts, Climate Nexus.

It added that the United States "showed many different faces" at the summit. While negotiators blocked progress on some issues, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also led a 15-member Congressional delegation to assure the world that "we are still in."

Sticking point

The summit featured almost 200 countries wrangling over the rules of the 2015 Paris climate accord. Its political foot-dragging was in stark contrast to impassioned pleas coming from campaigners.

On the verge of tears, Ugandan climate activist, Hilda Flavia Nakabuye, told CNN: "When you talk to people who are causing this [climate change] and they are not listening, it feels like you are wasting time."

She was 10 years old when torrential rains stripped her family's crops and drought forced them to sell their land and livelihood.



Nakabuye Hilda F.

@NakabuyeHildaF

"I came here to represent millions of African young people who are bearing the brunt of the Climate Crisis..." My speech at the special event on the #ClimateEmergency with @GretaThunberg @marcelomena @Teresaribera @jrockstrom @CRMinae and Freddy Medina.

<https://www.pscp.tv/w/cMEENXR3LTkx>

[psc.p.tv/w/cMEENXR3LTkx](https://www.pscp.tv/w/cMEENXR3LTkx)

[NzM5Nzc5OTk3MjYwNTk1M3wxQmR4WWVBUIlvWXhYtmwJsb8SqnykdqTaSkJYp4JogI96AINV-0udQ8yVyaY=?t=41m3s](https://www.pscp.tv/w/cMEENXR3LTkx)



UNFCCC @UNFCCC

Special Event on the #ClimateEmergency

[psc.p.tv](https://www.pscp.tv)

4:48 AM - Dec 12, 2019
[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

122 people are talking about this



"I am the voice of dying children, displaced women, and people suffering at the hands of the climate crisis created by rich countries," Nakabuye told conference members, urging delegates to recognize the scale of the environmental emergency.

"Voices from the global south deserve to be heard... we are humans who do not deserve to suffer a crisis that we did not create."

Negotiators struggled to find common ground at the summit, especially over rules for a new global carbon trading market. It's a major part of the Paris agreement, designed to reduce emissions of planet-warming gases, and has yet to be finalized.

The US, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, India and other big polluters are accused of obstructionist behavior while Australia and Brazil stand accused of seeking loopholes to recycle old carbon credits in order to meet their commitments under the Paris accord.

"Brazil is being difficult because what they want their past emission reductions to be carried forward to the new regime," Bob Ward, policy director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics, told CNN.

Critics say this route, which is similar to using expired banknotes in a modern market, means greenhouse gases won't be lowered at the rate needed to keep global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

And the United States, the history's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, is leaving the process next year. Members of the "We Are Still In" coalition, which was at the conference, are trying to fill the gap. The group consists of US states and cities, businesses, tribes and academic institutions, that came together soon after the Trump administration said it wanted to leave the Paris accord.

"Even though our federal government decided to leave the Paris agreement, governments, institutions, corporations around the US are fully still in and we are working together and with our partners around the world to make sure that those agreements are met," Bill Peduto, the Democratic Mayor of Pittsburgh, told CNN in Madrid.



Protests broke out over the lack of climate action at the conference.

The American coalition [says it represents](#) an economy worth \$6.2 trillion -- equivalent to the third biggest country in the world. [According to its report](#), it will be able to reduce US total emissions by 37% below the 2005 levels by 2030. But for the US to be able to bring emissions in line with the necessary goal, the federal government needs to come on board.

"It's going to be very difficult to reach a goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius without the US (federal government) playing the leadership role we need it to play," Andrew Steer, President and CEO of the Washington-based climate policy think tank, World Resources Institute, told CNN.

'We need leadership, not talks'

The burning of fossil fuels is the main driver of climate change, and activists blame the oil, coal and gas industry of slowing governments down on emissions targets.

Meanwhile there are mounting public concerns about climate change, a slew of scientific reports warning of climate catastrophe and fury from a youth-led protest movement, which saw an estimated 4 million people join a global climate strike in September.

Teen activist Greta Thunberg who began the youth-led movement of kids striking for the climate, excoriated delegates for their inaction on Wednesday.

"We have been striking for over a year, and basically nothing has happened," Thunberg told the crowd. "The climate crisis is still being ignored by those in power, and we cannot go on like this."

There were some signs of hope at the event. On Monday, finance ministers from more than 50 countries unveiled an action plan that would see them incorporate climate solutions into their policies, which Ward described as a "game-changing" moment.

"If we are going to really change to a zero carbon economy, it needs a massive investment and that investment will be made by finance ministries," he said.

Yet campaigners are urgently calling for more dramatic change after decades of debate.

"We all talk about climate emergency but don't act as if there is any," Ugandan campaigner Nakabuye implored the summit.

"Dear leaders, we need leadership on climate action not talks. For how long will you keep negotiating? You have been negotiating for the last 25 years, even before I was born."

Arwa Damon and Ingrid Formanek reported from Madrid. Sheena McKenzie and Tara John wrote and reported from London.

COP25 really is the 'point of no return' in the climate emergency. Here's why

By [Ivana Kottasová](#), CNN

Updated 1555 GMT (2355 HKT) December 2, 2019
Source: CNN

(CNN)It's a summit that could make or break the world's climate commitments.

Around 25,000 people from 200 countries are descending on Madrid this week to attend the COP25 climate change conference. They include dozens of heads of state and government, business leaders, scientists and, of course, activists -- including Swedish teenager [Greta Thunberg](#).

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Sunday that the summit marks the "point of no return" in [humanity's fight against climate change](#).



Climate change is forcing one person from their home every two seconds, Oxfam says

Just getting there was tricky. The gathering was originally going to be hosted by Brazil. But the country dropped out under the then-newly elected president Jair Bolsonaro late last year, so the meeting moved to Chile. When violent [anti-government protests erupted in Chile](#) in October, the meeting was moved again, this time to the Spanish capital.

What is COP25, anyway?

Remember the [Paris Climate Accord](#)? Under the 2015 agreement, more than 200 nations committed to keep global warming to [well below 2 degrees Celsius](#) above pre-industrial levels and, if possible, to less than 1.5 degrees above.

The world is now 1.1 degrees warmer than it was at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution -- a change that has already had a profound effect on the planet and people's lives.

COP -- officially, the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change -- is the body that makes sure the Paris agreement is implemented. The 25 signifies that this is the group's 25th meeting.

But there are so many climate change conferences.

Yes, climate change is increasingly on the agenda, because its destructive effects are becoming more visible and impossible to ignore -- even by the world's most powerful people.

Just on Monday, a new report from Oxfam found that [one person is forced out of their home every two seconds](#) as a result of climate change.

Guterres said Sunday that "climate change is no longer a long-term problem."

"We are confronted now with a global climate crisis," he said. "The point of no return is no longer over the horizon. It is in sight and hurtling towards us."

That sounds a bit alarmist. Is COP25 really the 'point of no return'?

Guterres has a point. While scientists have been making the connection between climate change and greenhouse gases for decades, emissions are still going up.

The Madrid meeting is the last gathering of the COP group before 2020, the year when the Paris agreement comes into effect.

When nations signed the deal back in 2015, they agreed that global emissions of greenhouse gases must peak in 2020 at the latest, and then start coming down -- or the world [will face disastrous and irreversible damage](#).

Under current scenarios, emissions will need to fall by 7.6% every year in the next decade.

That will require most countries to up their commitments ahead of the next COP meeting in Glasgow next November. According to the UN, if [we rely only on the current climate plans](#), temperatures can be expected to rise by 3.2 degrees this century.

That sounds scary. Can we do anything to stop this?

Yes. But we need to act quickly.

To make meeting the reduction targets even remotely possible, global leaders must come up with a practical plan for cutting emissions in the next two weeks.

Some rules were agreed at the COP24 conference in Poland last year. But that meeting failed to agree the rules for a new international emission-trading system, a crucial part of the plan. That discussion is back on the agenda this year.

Experts say that if the delegates reach a deal on emissions trading, we might just about be able to reach the targets. If they fail, we will definitely trail behind the plan.

That doesn't mean all is lost -- but it does make dealing with the consequences of climate change even more expensive. The later we wait, the more drastic (and pricey) measures will be needed to save the planet.

What is emissions trading?

A global market for carbon dioxide emissions would allow governments and businesses to trade their greenhouse gas output. Those that manage to keep their emissions below a set cap could sell the remaining allowance to those that can't.

Experts agree that an efficient trading mechanism could make our fight against climate change cheaper and fairer. It would also allow business to play much bigger role -- something scientists say is necessary in order to achieve the Paris goals.

But the issue is thorny. A badly designed trading system could lead to double counting, which would make cuts look bigger than they actually are. And a carbon price that is too high or too low could jeopardize the whole idea.

This is not a groundbreaking idea. The European Union set up the world's first trading system in 2005. It covers the bloc's most polluting power stations and industrial plants, and airlines. The EU says it works -- emissions from the installations covered the system are falling.

Isn't it all pointless if the US isn't on board?

There is no doubt that the decision by President Donald Trump to take the United States out of the Paris accord was a major setback to

the effort to limit global warming.

The US is responsible for 13% of global emissions, the world's second biggest emitter after China. If calculated per head, the US is well above anyone else.

But while it may be more difficult to reach the targets without the US -- the American absence means the world's other big polluters will have to step up their commitments. -- some global leaders doubled down on the pledge.



John Kerry on the climate crisis: 'No country is getting the job done'

Just days after the US withdrew from the Paris agreement, Chinese President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron signed a pact recommitting to it.

And even though the US has formally withdrawn, under the framework of the agreement, the withdrawal process cannot be completed until November 4, 2020, which happens to be one day after the 2020 presidential election.

Should Trump lose the 2020 election, a new president could rejoin the agreement.

In that case, the US would have to make new, more ambitious climate commitments to the UN straightaway (something other countries will do gradually in the coming months).

In the meantime, some individual American cities and states have pledged to stick to the agreement.

Greta Thunberg apologises for 'put leaders against the wall' comment

3 hours ago



AFP In Swedish, the phrase means "to hold someone accountable"

Greta Thunberg has apologised for saying world leaders should be "put against the wall" in a speech.

The teenage climate activist made the comment while addressing a Fridays For Future protest in Turin, Italy.

In English the phrase is associated with execution by firing squad, but Ms Thunberg said it had a different meaning in her native language Swedish.

"That's what happens when you improvise speeches in a second language," she added on Saturday.

Ms Thunberg was speaking in Turin after attending the UN climate summit COP25 in the Spanish capital Madrid.

She said she feared the summit alone would not lead to adequate climate action, and that activists should continue to take world leaders to task.

"World leaders are still trying to run away from their responsibilities, but we have to make sure they cannot do that," she said.

"We will make sure that we put them against the wall, and they will have to do their job to protect our futures."



EPA Greta Thunberg was addressing a crowd in Turin, Italy, on Friday

After some initial concern over her use of the phrase - which usually means to execute people by firing squad, against a wall - she tweeted a clarification. "Yesterday I said we must hold our leaders accountable and unfortunately said 'put them against the wall'," she wrote. "That's Swenglish: 'att ställa någon mot väggen' (to put someone against the wall) means to hold someone accountable." She continued: "Of course I apologise if anyone misunderstood this. I cannot enough express the fact that I - as well as the entire school strike movement - are against any possible form of violence. It goes without saying but I say it anyway." As she travelled back from Madrid on Saturday, the climate activist was involved in a much-commented-on exchange with German rail authorities, after she posted a picture of herself sitting on the floor of an overcrowded train.

Skip Twitter post by @GretaThunberg



Greta Thunberg



@GretaThunberg

Traveling on overcrowded trains through Germany. And I'm finally on my way home!



172K

10:53 AM - Dec 15, 2019

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

16.4K people are talking about this

End of Twitter post by @GretaThunberg

Report

Deutsche Bahn issued a statement - and tweets - thanking the activist for supporting the railway workers in their fight against climate change.

The company suggested, however, that it would have appreciated it if she had also highlighted the fact that she was eventually given a seat in the first-class carriage, and treated very well there.

In her subsequent response, Ms Thunberg denied she had been complaining with her picture, saying overcrowding was a good sign of high demand.

Skip Twitter post 2 by @GretaThunberg



Greta Thunberg



@GretaThunberg

Replying to @GretaThunberg

Our train from Basel was taken out of traffic. So we sat on the floor on 2 different trains. After Göttingen I got a seat. This is no problem of course and I never said it was. Overcrowded trains is a great sign because it means the demand for train travel is high!

40.4K

2:25 AM - Dec 16, 2019

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

3,598 people are talking about this

End of Twitter post 2 by @GretaThunberg

Report

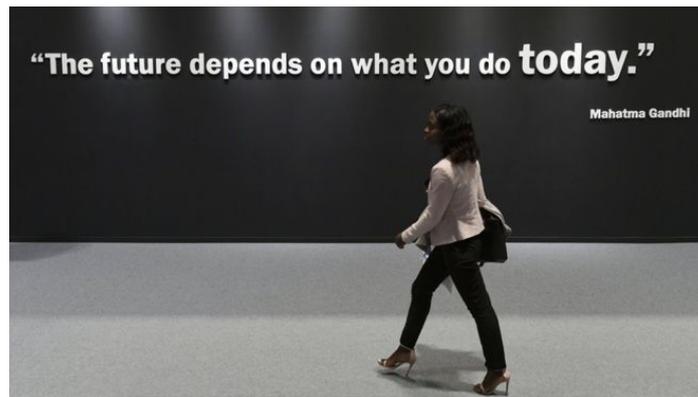
Ms Thunberg was recently named **Time magazine's youngest ever Person of the Year**, for inspiring a global movement to fight the climate crisis.



At the COP25 summit, Greta Thunberg criticised CEOs and politicians for their lack of action

Climate change: Call for 'flexibility' to reach consensus at talks

By Matt McGrath and Paul Rincon
Science and environment, BBC News
25 minutes ago



AFP Talks in Madrid have gone into extra time as delegates try to agree on measures

The Chilean official leading UN climate talks in Madrid has called on delegates to show flexibility, as they struggle to reach agreement on crucial measures needed to tackle climate change.

The negotiations, which were scheduled to end on Friday, continued throughout Saturday and into Sunday morning.

Carolina Schmidt said a deal was almost there but the outcome needed to be ambitious.

The goal is a commitment to new carbon emissions cuts by the end of 2020.

The European Union and small island states vulnerable to climate change are pushing for stronger commitments to cut those emissions. Some of the biggest polluters, including the United States, Brazil and India, say they see no need to change their current plans.



Ms Schmidt, Chile's environment minister who is the conference's president, said early on Sunday: "I request all the flexibility, all your strength to find this agreement to have an ambitious result."

She added: "It's hard, it's difficult but it's worth it. I specially need you. But people in our countries need us."

On Saturday, a new draft text from the meeting was released, designed to chart a way forward for the parties to the Paris agreement, which came into being in 2015.

The pact's intention is to keep the global average temperature rise to well below 2C. This was regarded at the time as the threshold for dangerous global warming, though scientists subsequently shifted the definition of the "safe" limit to a rise of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

The situation was unprecedented since talks began in 1991, said Alden Meyer from the Union of Concerned Scientists.

He commented: "The latest version of the Paris Agreement decision text put forward by the Chilean presidency is totally unacceptable. It has no call for countries to enhance the ambition of their emissions reduction commitments.

"If world leaders fail to increase ambition in the lead up to next year's climate summit in Glasgow, they will make the task of meeting the Paris agreement's 'well below 2C' temperature limitation goal - much less the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal - almost impossible."

His view was echoed by David Waskow, international climate director for the World Resources Institute (WRI). "If this text is accepted, the low ambition coalition will have won the day," he said.

The conference in the Spanish capital has become enmeshed in deep, technical arguments about a number of issues including the role of carbon markets and the financing of loss and damage caused by rising temperatures.

Responding to the messages from science and from climate strikers, the countries running this 26th conference of the parties (COP) meeting are keen to have a final decision here that would see countries put new, ambitious plans to cut carbon on the table.

According to the UN, 84 countries have promised to enhance their national plans by the end of next year. Some 73 have said they will set a long-term target of net zero by the middle of the century.

But earlier in the meeting, negotiators from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) pointed the finger of blame at countries including Australia, the United States, Canada, Russia, India, China and Brazil.



KIARA WORTH/ISIP | Protests led by young delegates have seen up to 200 protesters ejected from the talks

They had failed to submit revised plans that would help the world keep the rise in global temperatures under 1.5C this century.

At a "stock-taking" session on Saturday morning, Tina Stege, a negotiator with the Marshall Islands delegation, said: "I need to go home and look my kids in the eye and tell them we came out with an outcome that will ensure their future."

She added: "The text must address the need for new and more ambitious NDCs and long-term goals. We can't leave with anything else."

Reinforcing the sense of division, India, supported by China, Saudi Arabia and Brazil, has been taking a hard line on promises made by richer countries in previous agreements before the Paris pact was signed in 2015.

The deal saw every country, India included, sign up to take actions.

This was a key concession to the richer nations who insisted that the deal would only work if everyone pledged to cut carbon, unlike previous agreements in which only the better off had to limit their CO2.



Some visitors have other things to do at the COP

But India now wants to see evidence that in the years up to 2020, the developed world has lived up to past promises.

For many delegates, the deadlock is intensely frustrating in light of the urgent need to tackle emissions.

"I've been attending these climate negotiations since they first started in 1991. But never have I seen the almost total disconnect we've seen here at COP25 in Madrid between what the science requires and the people of the world demand, and what the climate negotiations are delivering in terms of meaningful action," said Alden Meyer.

"The planet is on fire and our window of escape is getting harder and harder to reach the longer we wait to act. Ministers here in Madrid must strengthen the final decision text, to respond to the mounting impacts of climate change that are devastating both communities and ecosystems all over the world."

Jake Schmidt, from the US-based Natural Resources Defense Council, said: "In Madrid, the key polluting countries responsible for 80% of the world's climate-wrecking emissions stood mute, while smaller countries announced they'll work to drive down harmful emissions in the coming year.

"The mute majority must step up, and ramp up, their commitments to tackle the growing climate crisis well ahead of the COP26 gathering."

Also on Saturday, activists staged a protest outside the summit venue to express their frustration at what they see as the failure of world leaders in taking meaningful action on climate change.

Climate change: Anger as protesters barred from UN talks

By Matt McGrath
Environment correspondent
12 December 2019



Protesters staged a sit in at UN climate talks

Environmentalists and observers have been barred from UN climate talks in Madrid after a protest inside the conference.

Around 200 climate campaigners were ejected after staging a sit in, preventing access to one of the negotiating halls. Protesters said they were "pushed, bullied and touched without consent."

In the wake of the disruption all other observers were then barred from the talks.

Observers play an important role in the talks, representing civil society. They are allowed to sit in on negotiations and have access to negotiators on condition that they do not reveal the contents of those discussions.

Just hours after **Greta Thunberg had delivered a powerful speech to COP25**, young campaigners staged a noisy demonstration in front of the main halls where the UN secretary general was due to update the conference on the progress of the talks.

They were expressing a rising sense of disappointment with the slow progress of the conference, which is in marked contrast to the urgency of scientists and the clamour for action from school strikers.



KIARA WORTH/ISD Greenpeace executive director Jennifer Morgan has attended 25 COPs and this is the first time she has been barred from entry

As the group banged pots and pans and chanted slogans, UN security staff intervened to move the protestors outside "abruptly and roughly," from the building, protestors said.

Julius Mbatia, 25, a climate youth leader in Africa who works with Christian Aid said: "It's displeasing that young people here to peacefully make the case for strong action on climate change, are being kettled and kicked out of the summit so that the UN climate process can conclude an outcome that will seemingly be weak and doesn't protect their future."

Around 200 had their badges removed, preventing them from returning to the talks.



SIMON CHAMBERS/ACT ALLIANCE Protestors were forced outside by UN security staff

The executive director of Greenpeace International, Jennifer Morgan, was one of those who went outside in solidarity with the protestors. Ms Morgan was also barred from entry when she tried to return, despite playing no part in the protest. Earlier in the day, Ms Morgan had sat on a panel with Greta Thunberg - part of an effort by the UN to include the voices of young people around the world. "I call on the UN secretary general to intervene here to make sure that youth and citizens around the world can engage and have their voices heard in these negotiations - it's absolutely imperative that he get involved," Ms Morgan said, speaking outside the venue.



KIARA WORTH/ISD The protest took place a few hours after Greta Thunberg had spoken to the conference

The UN described the incident as "an unfortunate security incident." After consultations with observer groups, the UN has agreed to allow those barred after the protest to return for the rest of the conference.

Discontent with the way the talks have been going has been rising in recent days with the sense that major emitting countries are doing all they can to block progress.

The UN on Wednesday released more details about the scale of the challenge.

All countries who signed the Paris agreement are due to put new climate pledges on the table by the end of next year. So far, 84 countries have promised to enhance their national plans by then. Some 73 have said they will set a long-term target of net zero by the middle of the century.

But many in attendance at the meeting believe that this is far short of where the world needs to be to avoid dangerous levels of warming.

"Frankly, I'm tired of hearing major emitters excuse inaction in cutting their own emissions on the basis they are 'just a fraction' of the world's total," said the prime minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama.

"The truth is, in a family of nearly 200 nations, collective efforts are key. We all must take responsibility for ourselves, and we all must play our part to achieve net zero. As I like to say, we're all in the same canoe. But currently, that canoe is taking on water with nearly 200 holes -- and there are too few of us trying to patch them," Mr Bainimarama said.

There are also worries that the final statement of ambition from this meeting may be watered down, with all the major decisions kicked down the road towards the key meeting in Glasgow at the end of next year.

Follow Matt on Twitter: [@mattmcgrathbbc](https://twitter.com/mattmcgrathbbc).

Anger as rifts scupper hopes of breakthrough at UN climate talks

Governments including the US, Brazil, Australia and China accused of frustrating COP25 negotiations in Madrid

Fiona Harvey *Environment correspondent*

Sun 15 Dec 2019 00.54 GMT

First published on Sat 14 Dec 2019 20.50 GMT



Activists protest outside the COP25 climate talks congress in Madrid on Saturday. Photograph: Manu Fernández/AP

Global climate talks have continued past midnight on Saturday after a marathon final negotiating session in Madrid that has lasted since Friday without clear resolutions on how to implement the Paris agreement.



Activists dump manure outside the COP25 climate talks congress in Madrid on Saturday. Photograph: Óscar del Pozo/AFP via Getty Images

Global climate talks were continuing towards dawn on Sunday after a marathon final negotiating session in Madrid that has lasted since Friday without clear resolutions on how to implement the Paris agreement.

Campaigners from around the world expressed their frustration at the lack of progress, with one group of activists dumping horse manure and staging a mock hanging outside the venue.

At a meeting on the sidelines of the talks, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, an activist from Chad, called for more urgency.

"The climate emergency is now," she said. "We need our voices to be here ... action must start now."



Carolina Schmidt, COP25 president and Chile's minister of environment, speaks in Madrid. Photograph: Nacho Doce/Reuters

Climate change: UN talks in Madrid hit rough waters

By Matt McGrath and Paul Rincon
Science and environment, BBC News
8 hours ago



GETTY IMAGES

UN climate talks appear to be in trouble as they head into extra time.

Fault lines have re-appeared between different negotiating blocs, with one delegate describing a new draft text as "totally unacceptable". Alden Meyer from the Union of Concerned Scientists said the situation in Madrid was unprecedented since climate negotiations began in 1991. Negotiators are working towards a deal for countries to commit to new carbon emissions cuts by the end of 2020.

Saturday saw the release of a new draft text from the meeting, designed to chart a way forward for the parties to the Paris agreement.

The Paris pact came into being in 2015, with the intention of keeping the global average temperature rise to well below 2C. This was regarded at the time as the threshold for dangerous global warming, though scientists subsequently shifted the definition of the "safe" limit to a rise of 1.5C above pre-industrial

levels.



But Mr Meyer commented: "The latest version of the Paris Agreement decision text put forward by the Chilean presidency is totally unacceptable. It has no call for countries to enhance the ambition of their emissions reduction commitments.

"If world leaders fail to increase ambition in the lead up to next year's climate summit in Glasgow, they will make the task of meeting the Paris agreement's 'well below 2C' temperature limitation goal - much less the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal - almost impossible."



Glen Peters

@Peters_Glen

How big is the CO₂ bucket for 1.5°C?

Well, the bucket is about to overflow in a few short years, unless we:

1. Turn off the tap (urgently)
2. Put a hole in the bottom to remove CO₂ (negative emissions) [#COP25](#) [#CarbonBudget](#) [@FutureEarth](#) [@gcarbonproject](#)
<https://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/index.htm>

...

His view was echoed by David Waskow, international climate director for the World Resources Institute (WRI). "If this text is accepted, the low ambition coalition will have won the day," he said.

The conference in the Spanish capital has become enmeshed in deep, technical arguments about a number of issues including the role of carbon markets and the financing of loss and damage caused by rising temperatures.

Responding to the messages from science and from climate strikers, the countries running this 26th conference of the parties (COP) meeting are keen to have a final decision here that would see countries put new, ambitious plans to cut carbon on the table.

According to the UN, 84 countries have promised to enhance their national plans by the end of next year. Some 73 have said they will set a long-term target of net zero by the middle of the century.

But earlier in the meeting, negotiators from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) pointed the finger of blame at countries including Australia, the United States, Canada, Russia, India, China and Brazil.



KIARA WORTH/ISD | Protests led by young delegates have seen up to 200 protestors ejected from the talks

They had failed to submit revised plans that would help the world keep the rise in global temperatures under 1.5C this century.

At a "stock-taking" session on Saturday morning, Tina Stege, a negotiator with the Marshall Islands delegation, said: "I need to go home and look my kids in the eye and tell them we came out with an outcome that will ensure their future."

She added: "The text must address the need for new and more ambitious NDCs and long-term goals. We can't leave with anything else."

Reinforcing the sense of division, India, supported by China, Saudi Arabia and Brazil, has been taking a hard line on promises made by richer countries in previous agreements before the Paris pact was signed in 2015. The deal saw every country, India included, sign up to take actions.

This was a key concession to the richer nations who insisted that the deal would only work if everyone pledged to cut carbon, unlike previous agreements in which only the better off had to limit their CO2.



Some visitors have other things to do at the COP

But India now wants to see evidence that in the years up to 2020, the developed world has lived up to past promises.

For many delegates, the deadlock is intensely frustrating in light of the urgent need to tackle emissions.

"I've been attending these climate negotiations since they first started in 1991. But never have I seen the almost total disconnect we've seen here at COP25 in Madrid between what the science requires and the people of the world demand, and what the climate negotiations are delivering in terms of meaningful action," said Alden Meyer.

"The planet is on fire and our window of escape is getting harder and harder to reach the longer we wait to act. Ministers here in Madrid must strengthen the final decision text, to respond to the mounting impacts of climate change that are devastating both communities and ecosystems all over the world."

Jake Schmidt, from the US-based Natural Resources Defense Council, said: "In Madrid, the key polluting countries responsible for 80% of the world's climate-wrecking emissions stood mute, while smaller countries announced they'll work to drive down harmful emissions in the coming year.

"The mute majority must step up, and ramp up, their commitments to tackle the growing climate crisis well ahead of the COP26 gathering."

UN climate talks drag on as rifts scupper hopes of breakthrough

Governments including the US, Brazil, Australia and China accused of frustrating negotiations

Fiona Harvey *Environment correspondent*

Sat 14 Dec 2019 20:50 GMT

Last modified on Sat 14 Dec 2019 20:59 GMT



Brazil's environment minister Ricardo Salles at the COP25 in Madrid. Photograph: Nacho Doce/Reuters

Global climate talks look set to continue past midnight on Saturday, after a marathon final negotiating session that has been ongoing since Friday without clear resolutions on how to implement the Paris agreement, to the frustration of many countries and the dismay of **campaigners**.

Some bodies attending the summit – notably the EU – came forward with **new long-term goals** on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, but most were content to spend the two weeks of **UN talks in Madrid** arguing over narrow technical issues, including the details of carbon trading.

Governments including the US, Brazil, Australia, India and China were all accused of holding up aspects of the negotiations. No major breakthrough had been seriously expected at this year's annual meeting, known as COP25, but observers had at least hoped to see a spirit of cooperation and a willingness to press ahead with the **2015 Paris agreement** goal of holding temperature rises to no more than 2C.

Both were lacking as the talks dwindled into the late hours of Saturday evening. Poor countries grew angry at what they saw as intransigence on the part of some richer nations, while the EU and a coalition of developing countries urged others to come forward with more ambitious plans to combat climate breakdown.

In the final hours, weary negotiators wrangled over the wording of provisions for "loss and damage", by which developing countries are hoping to receive

financial assistance for the ravages they face from climate breakdown. The US was blamed for refusing to agree to developing countries' demands under what is known in the UN jargon as the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM).

A US state department official said: "The US government is the largest humanitarian donor in the world. The WIM should be a constructive space to catalyse action on the wide range of loss and damage issues. A divisive conversation on blame and liability helps no one."

Brazil also held up agreement over a **provision allowing governments to trade in carbon credits**. It insisted that its carbon sinks – mainly forests, including the Amazon – should count towards its emissions-cutting goals, while also selling carbon credits derived from preserving forests to other countries to count towards their emissions targets.

Other countries said this was double counting and would undermine the carbon trading system.

Governments discussed these points for two weeks with little official attention paid to the broader and more urgent issue of how countries can accelerate their plans to cut carbon in the next decade. **Protesters outside and inside the halls** pointed to **increasingly stark scientific warnings** and the world's failure so far to cut greenhouse gases. Research published during the talks found that emissions have risen by **4% since the Paris agreement was signed in 2015**, and cuts of more than 7% a year will be **needed in the next decade** to avoid dangerous levels of heating.

Jamie Henn, the strategy director at the pressure group **350.org**, said: "The level of disconnect between what this COP should have delivered and what it's on track to deliver is appalling and is a sign that the very foundations of the Paris agreement are being shaken up. A handful of loud countries has hijacked the process and is keeping the rest of the planet hostage."

"This is a disastrous, profoundly distressing outcome – the worst I have ever seen," said Mohamed Adow, the director of Power Shift Africa, a climate and energy thinktank. "At a time when scientists are queuing up to warn about terrifying consequences if emissions keep rising, and schoolchildren taking to the streets in their millions, what we have here in Madrid is a betrayal of people across the world. It is disgraceful and governments are simply not doing their job of protecting the planet."

The lack of progress leaves the UK, as **co-hosts of next year's talks**, with a diplomatic mountain to climb in the next 10 months. In Glasgow early next November, countries will meet again with the aim of strengthening their commitments on emissions cuts under the Paris accord.

Without such reinforcements, current commitments put the world on track for at least 3C of warning, which **scientists warn would spell disaster**.

Richer nations accused of stalling progress on climate crisis

Brazil, India and China singled out in UN talks as acting to block agreement on article 6 of Paris agreement

Fiona Harvey in Madrid

Fri 13 Dec 2019 20:41 GMT

Last modified on Fri 13 Dec 2019 21:00 GMT



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres delivers a speech during the round table talks at the COP25 UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid, Spain Photograph: ZIPI/EPA

Poor countries have accused a handful of richer nations of holding up progress on tackling the climate crisis at **UN talks in Madrid**, as demonstrators and activists vented their frustration in the final hours of two weeks of negotiations.

The talks dragged on to what looked set to be a late final night with no guarantee of an agreed outcome, as governments wrangled over the details of a seemingly arcane issue: **carbon markets**, governed by a provision of the 2015 Paris agreement known as article 6.

Brazil, India and China were singled out as acting to block agreement on article 6, as ministers from the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** warned that their countries would suffer most if there was no decision.

Simon Stiell, Grenada's environment minister, speaking for AOSIS, urged all parties to reach a compromise. "Our countries will be rendered uninsurable if we breach 1.5C warming," he said.

There was a widespread view among delegates that Brazil was refusing to compromise on article 6 as a means of holding up implementation of the Paris accord. Brazil's rightwing president, Jair Bolsonaro, is hostile to the Paris agreement, and is accused of paving the way for **devastating fires set by ranchers in the Amazon**, but the government is still officially a party to the UN talks.

Article 6 focuses on the role of carbon markets and carbon trading in helping countries to fulfil their pledges under the Paris agreement. Carbon markets allow for countries to claim carbon credits for carbon sinks, such as standing forests, and for emissions-cutting efforts, such as wind farms or renewable energy projects.

These credits can be sold to rich countries, which can count them towards their own emissions targets. Carbon markets were introduced in the **1997 Kyoto protocol** as a mechanism for directing financial investment towards poor countries which would otherwise struggle to implement clean technology, or face economic pressure to cut down their forests.

Brazil's contention is that its forests should be counted as carbon sinks towards its national emissions targets, meaning it could make less effort to cut emissions in other areas, but that it should also be allowed to sell credits based on keeping the forests intact. Critics regard this as double counting and some countries are determined to prevent it.

Other countries are also trying to ensure that carbon credits awarded in the decades since the Kyoto protocol are carried over beyond 2020, which critics say would allow those countries to ease off on their Paris commitments.

Carbon markets are seen by some businesses, economists and campaigners as a way to generate financial flows to poor areas, and to cut carbon at the lowest possible cost.

"Carbon markets are one way to not only manage mitigation [emissions cuts], but help to find the lowest cost and therefore the best possible means for implementing international efforts," said Fenella Aouane, an investment specialist at the Global Green Growth Institute.

For campaigners, the issue is more nuanced. Nat Keohane, the senior vice president at the Environmental Defense Fund, said: "We know we are not going to solve the climate crisis without international cooperation... [Carbon markets] can be a way of cooperating and raising ambition."

But he said the markets would only work with strong rules and a ban on double counting.

Jennifer Morgan, the executive director of Greenpeace International, said setting a price on carbon was a good way of assisting governments to make cuts, but warned that allowing countries simply to offset their emissions through carbon credits, rather than making substantial new efforts, would not work. "The real question is over urgency – we need absolute cuts in global carbon," she said. "We see this as a dangerous distraction. Why are we here in 2019 still talking about a failed policy from 1997?"

Another vexed issue at the talks is loss and damage – the acknowledgment by rich countries that poor countries face serious hardship as the result of climate breakdown, even though most of the emissions to date have come from the rich world. Rich countries were willing as part of the Paris agreement to make this acknowledgment, which would open the way for the poor to receive financial assistance, but they balk at admitting liability, which could require legal redress and compensation payments.

The talks, scheduled to end on Friday night but likely to carry on into Saturday, were intended to forge agreement on these outstanding issues in order to clear the way for a discussion to take place next year around strengthening countries' commitments under the Paris agreement.

The commitments put forward in Paris in 2015, for countries to cut or at least curb the growth of their emissions by 2030, were always acknowledged to be inadequate to the scale of the climate crisis. If allowed to stand, they would lead to an estimated 3C of warming, far beyond the 1.5C threshold beyond which sea level rises, droughts, storms and floods would devastate swathes of the globe.

At next year's talks, to be hosted by the UK in Glasgow in November, countries are supposed to agree much more ambitious national commitments for 2030, in line with the Paris goal of holding heating to no more than 2C above pre-industrial levels, with an aspiration to stay within a 1.5C limit.

On Friday, a group of developing countries and the EU called the High Ambition Coalition said it was essential the Madrid outcome should involve a clear call for countries to come forward with more ambitious plans.

Frans Timmermans, the vice president of the European commission, which on Thursday finally agreed a target of net zero carbon by 2050, said: "We can only get there [to 2050] if we start now. We need concrete plans and concrete steps – we need to come to Glasgow with plans."

European Green Deal to press ahead despite Polish targets opt-out

Poland opts out of 2050 net-zero emissions after hours of wrangling over timetables and money

Jennifer Rankin in Brussels

Fri 13 Dec 2019 09:08 GMT

First published on Fri 13 Dec 2019 08:15 GMT



Smoke and steam billows from Belchatów, Poland – Europe's largest coal-fired power plant. Poland relies on coal for 80% of its electricity. Photograph: Kacper Pempel/Reuters

European Union leaders have vowed to press on with a major economic plan to confront the climate emergency, despite Poland's opt-out from a net-zero emissions target by 2050.

The Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, told journalists he had secured an exemption for Poland on the 2050 target, which is meant to become the legally binding centrepiece of the "European Green Deal", a plan to transform Europe's economy announced two days ago.

Poland, which relies on coal for 80% of its electricity, is angling for more precise and generous commitments of EU funds to move away from fossil fuels before it agrees to implement the target. "Poland will be reaching climate neutrality at its own pace," Morawiecki said.

Morawiecki had even floated the idea that Poland should be able to meet the target in 2070, an idea shot down in the leaders' talks that ran hours over

schedule.

The European council president, Charles Michel, who wanted a success at his first summit in the chair, declared victory on the 2050 target, despite the ambiguity about Poland. “Climate neutrality by 2050 is our common goal,” he told journalists after 10 hours of talks. “But at the same time it is correct that for one member state, at this stage, it is not possible to commit to implement this objective.”

He added: “It is very important for the European Union, the strong message today is we want to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050.”

Leaders expect Poland to sign up to implementing the target in June.

The French president Emmanuel Macron tweeted: “Yes **Europe** will be the first carbon neutral continent! We did it together last night. Let’s move on now to implement the green new deal.”

Asked whether the EU had a common goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, one diplomat said “nearly”, adding: “It’s not the strongest political signal you could give. You have 27 saying they support it and Poland saying we don’t object if the others support it.”

A greater diplomatic embarrassment was narrowly averted – following a previous failure to agree the target in June – via some linguistic gymnastics in the EU summit [text](#).

“The European council [of EU leaders] endorses the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050, in line with the objectives of the Paris agreement. One member state, at this stage, cannot commit to implement this objective as far as it is concerned, and the European council will come back to this in June 2020,” states the text, which was agreed after hours of wrangling over timetables and money.

The **European commission** president, Ursula von der Leyen, said Poland’s position would not deter the commission from moving ahead with the next steps of the green deal.

She has promised to publish details of a €100bn (£83bn) “just transition fund” in January to help European economies make the green transition, in addition to €1tn the European Investment Bank has said it plans to generate from public and (mostly) private sources.

Von der Leyen said she accepted it was necessary for Poland “to have a closer look” at the details of the just transition fund.

EU leaders were more successful in bringing into the fold two other countries that had previously opposed the target: the Czech Republic and Hungary. Both want generous guarantees of EU funds for their green transition.

The Czech prime minister, Andrej Babiš, who had gone into the summit discussion “all guns blazing”, according to one diplomatic source, came onboard after an agreement that nuclear energy could be referenced in the summit text.

He claimed: “Nuclear energy is clean energy, without any emissions. And I don’t know why a lot of countries have a problem with this.”

EU member states are free to choose whether to use nuclear power, but the debate over the controversial energy source bogged down the discussions for hours, with Luxembourg’s anti-nuclear government opposed to any reference in a climate text.

The tense discussion on the 2050 target heralds even more difficult talks on agreeing tougher greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2030. The commission wants to cut the EU’s emissions by at least 50% by 2030 (compared with 1990 levels), but that requires member states taking decisive steps to decarbonise their economies in the short term.

Campaigners said the EU’s decision fell short of the action needed. “A target 30 years in the future in 2050 does not represent emergency action, and it absolutely must be matched with immediate action to dramatically reduce climate emissions everywhere,” Susann Scherbarth, climate justice spokesperson for Friends of the Earth Europe, said in a statement.

“The huge demonstrations of people calling for climate justice know that all of Europe must phase out all fossil fuels, including gas, in the next decade – today’s announcement won’t reassure them of a safer future.

“Like the green deal unveiled by the European commission yesterday, this promise risks being too late and too vague on details how it will be achieved.”

EU aims to stir global action with pledge on climate crisis

Brussels sets goal to halve emissions by 2030 and become first climate-neutral continent by 2050

EU’s soaring climate rhetoric not always matched by action

Fiona Harvey in Madrid

Wed 11 Dec 2019 09:00 GMT

Last modified on Wed 11 Dec 2019 09:31 GMT



The announcement comes just weeks after Venice was flooded in freak weather blamed on global warming. Photograph: Andrea Merola/AP

The EU will attempt to revive the world's flagging attempts to tackle the climate crisis with a historic proposal from Brussels to halve emissions by 2030, and reach net zero carbon by mid-century.

Wednesday's announcement is seen as the vital first step towards gathering a "coalition of ambition" among key countries to fulfil the pledges of the 2015 Paris agreement, which is in danger of languishing amid **deadlocked UN talks**.

Ursula von der Leyen, the new president of the European commission, **writing in the Guardian** on Tuesday, said: "Science is telling us we are **running out of time**. The new European commission is wasting no time. Our goal is to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, slowing down global heating and mitigating its effects. This is a task for our generation and the next, but change must begin right now – and we know we can do it."

The proposals will be aired on Wednesday lunchtime in Brussels followed by a debate in the EU parliament, and the 2030 target will be a signal of intent rather than a formal commitment at this stage. But negotiators are keen to take a strong position in the final days of the UN talks in Madrid, which have lacked much sense of urgency.

Her intervention – seen as a game-changer by experts – comes as the talks on implementing the Paris agreement **stalled**, with nations wrangling over small print on details such as carbon markets. Negotiators have largely ignored the key question hanging over these talks: how to ensure governments strengthen their targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions in line with scientific advice.

Current targets under the 2015 Paris accord would lead to more than **3C of warming**, which would cause irreparable harm and violate the core Paris goal of holding global heating to no more than 2C above pre-industrial levels, with an aspiration to hold to 1.5C. Global temperatures have already risen about 1.1C.

To fulfil the pledges they made in Paris, nations must step up in the next year with new targets for emissions for 2030. Global carbon emissions are **now 4% above the levels they were in 2015 when the Paris accord was signed**. According to scientific advice, to stay within 1.5C the world must begin cutting emissions in the next year and reduce them by **more than 7% a year for the next decade**.

In becoming the first major economic bloc to propose a 2030 and 2050 goal, the EU is hoping to galvanise other key countries such as China and India into making similar commitments to curb greenhouse gases by 2030, and so rescue the Paris agreement.

While 68 other countries have also come forward with 2030 pledges, most are small economies and the world's big emitters – the US, China, India, Japan and others – have remained on the sidelines.

The US is in the process of **withdrawing from Paris**, though the Democratic presidential hopeful Michael Bloomberg led a delegation in Madrid promising to continue action on the climate.

All eyes are now on China, as the EU will try to woo Beijing with promises of trade negotiations and the lure of joint investments. There may be sticks as well as carrots: Frans Timmermans, the EU vice president, said he would be "at the disposal of any country that wants to talk to us" about targets, but added the EU would "not hesitate" to impose measures such as carbon tariffs on imports from countries without strong Paris commitments.

The EU's move was hailed as a "game-changer" by David Waskow, international climate director at the World Resources Institute. "This announcement could have a galvanising effect for numerous other countries to step up their efforts to tackle climate change."

Todd Stern, former White House climate chief at the Paris negotiations, commended the EU's move: "What the world most needs right now is a clear recognition of the scale and speed of decarbonisation we need, a clear plan to produce that transformation, and the political will to do what it takes. **Europe** has always been a climate leader and looks ready to take that leadership to the next level."

Laurence Tubiana, chief executive of the European Climate Foundation and the French official who led the Paris agreement, said: "[This will] have a major impact. If one of the largest economies and largest trading bloc moves to climate neutrality by 2050, this sends a strong signal to markets and players across the globe."

The commission's proposals still face opposition from a few countries – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary – that are concerned over economic losses from moving away from coal, and the proposals on emissions cuts for 2030 may take time to finalise. Von der Leyen promised €100bn funding for a "just transition" to help countries.

Green campaigners also want to see higher targets for 2030, and want the EU to confirm its commitments sooner. Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International, told the Guardian: "To be truly credible and consistent with staying below 1.5C, the EU needs to commit to increasing its 2030 commitment to 65% [emissions cuts]. This is what's needed to be taken seriously by China in the lead-up to the EU-China summit in autumn next year."

Green campaigners are also worried that the EU will not finalise its commitments **until late next year**, but the Commission is confident that by signalling its intent now it can form alliances with other key countries to come up with the joint pledges needed at next year's crunch conference in

November in Glasgow. That is the deadline for new commitments on emissions to fulfil the Paris accord.

Europe launches 'Green Deal' as Thunberg denounces climate inaction

Jake Spring, Valerie Volcovici
5 MIN READ



BRUSSELS/MADRID (Reuters) - Europe sought on Wednesday to bolster the world's faltering battle against climate change with its "Green Deal" to slash fossil fuel dependence, while teen activist Greta Thunberg rebuked global leaders for dragging their feet.

With fires, floods and droughts ruining millions of lives around the world, the European Union's new executive cast the plan as the bloc's "man on the moon moment," kindling hopes among campaigners that other big emitters may follow suit.

Nevertheless, the chasm between the pace of action by Europe and other major economies and the kind of transformational change that scientists say is needed to preserve a hospitable climate stoked fury at U.N. negotiations in Madrid.

"I'm sure that if people heard what was going on and what was said ... during these meetings, they would be outraged," Thunberg told the gathering. She was named on Wednesday as Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2019 .

"It seems to have turned into some kind of opportunity for countries to negotiate loopholes and to avoid raising their ambition," she added at the summit, accusing politicians of "clever accounting" and "creative PR".

Hours later, police removed more than 100 mostly young protesters, some of whom were crying and angrily demanding "climate justice" in a rare intrusion of visceral emotion into

the usually sedate annual two-week U.N. climate talks.

“It’s a terrible signal to the world. If they think they can keep us out to try to roll things through, then they are wrong,” Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International, who left the venue to support the protesters, told Reuters.

In Brussels, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen portrayed the Green Deal, her first major proposal since taking office on Dec. 1, as a major step towards committing the EU to climate neutrality by 2050.

“Today is the start of a journey. But this is Europe’s man-on-the-moon moment,” she told reporters.

Von der Leyen’s talk of visionary action cut a sharp contrast with U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision last month to begin withdrawing from global climate negotiations, but many climate activists question how quickly the bloc can embrace a low-carbon future.



Climate change activist Greta Thunberg speaks at the High-Level event on Climate Emergency during the U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Madrid, Spain December 11, 2019. REUTERS/Susana Vera

TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Coal-reliant Eastern European states want to win financial guarantees before backing the Green Deal, and campaigners cautioned that the initiative fell short of the massive shifts they say are needed to save vanishing ecosystems.

“We’re on a runaway train to ecological and climate collapse and the EU Commission is gently switching gears instead of slamming on the brakes,” said Jagoda Munic, director of environmental group Friends of the Earth Europe.

‘DOOMED’?

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres said he hoped the Green Deal would set off a virtuous circle in which other big emitters such as India, China and Japan also ramp up pledges under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

“If we just go on as we are, we are doomed,” he told Reuters.

So far, 80 countries, accounting for 10.5% of global emissions, have pledged to increase their climate targets in 2020, mostly as part of a new “Ambition Alliance” that Guterres launched in September, the World Resources Institute said.

Hundreds of companies and some large investors have also committed to supporting the Paris temperature goals.

With next year shaping into a decisive moment for the world’s efforts to avert catastrophic temperature increases, the European Commission promised new laws in March to make the EU climate neutral by 2050 under the Green Deal.

It also aims to tighten emissions targets, and develop a so-called Just Transition Fund to support those nations most affected by weaning off fossil fuels.

All member states except Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have accepted the climate-neutral goal, which would mean not producing emissions beyond what can be absorbed.

“We are telling adults to act,” said Annika Kruse, 18, an activist who came by train from Germany to the talks in Madrid and was among those removed by police.

Activism came from outer space too.

Floating inside the International Space Station, Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano joined the summit via a live stream, exhorting people to “pull their heads out of the sand” because they are “refusing to see what’s happening” around them.

(\$1 = 0.9073 euros)

Reporting by Isla Binnie, Matthew Green, Valerie Volcovici and Jake Spring in Madrid and Jonas Ekblom and Gabriela Baczynska in Brussels; Additional reporting by Barbara Goldberg in New York; Writing by Matthew Green; Editing by Andrew Cawthorne, William Maclean and Peter Cooney

DECEMBER 12, 2019 / 12:52 AM / UPDATED 11 HOURS AGO

U.N. head demands bolder climate action

or 'we are doomed'

Matthew Green
3 MIN READ

MADRID (Reuters) - U.N. chief Antonio Guterres exhorted major world economies on Wednesday to signal more ambitious commitments to cut greenhouse emissions as climate talks in Madrid hit an intense phase.



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres poses for a picture during an interview with Reuters, at the U.N. Climate Change Conference (COP25), in Madrid, Spain December 11, 2019. REUTERS/Susana Vera

“We need to have the big emitters understanding that their role is essential, because if the big emitters fail, everything will fail,” Guterres told Reuters in an interview.

“If we just go on as we are, we are doomed.”

He was speaking in a hangar-like conference center in Madrid where ministers from around the world are cloistered in the final days of two-week talks to shore up the 2015 Paris Agreement to avert catastrophic global warming.

Major polluting countries such as China, India and the United States - which is leaving the pact - are not expected to make big new announcements at the summit, where delegates are focused on technical negotiations over rules on carbon markets.

Nevertheless, Guterres hopes the talks will conclude on Friday with a strong signal that governments are ready to submit more ambitious climate plans in 2020, seen as a make-or-break year for the Paris process.

Under the deal, countries are supposed to submit more stringent targets to cut carbon

emissions in the run-up to the next annual round of talks in Glasgow.

Scientists say that current pledges are nowhere near enough to stabilize the earth's climate in time to avert catastrophic sea-level rise, prevent severe damage to agriculture, and stop droughts and floods generating waves of forced mass migration.

Guterres urged major emitters to send a clear signal they are ready to increase their ambition next year and "hopefully" commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 - seen as vital to keeping global temperatures within manageable levels.

"History cannot accept that my generation will betray our children and grandchildren," said Guterres, a former Portuguese prime minister, who has made climate a signature issue since taking over as U.N. secretary-general in early 2017.

Guterres welcomed moves by the European Union to adopt a new "European Green Deal" to transition to a low-carbon economy. Details of the policy were being unveiled in Brussels on Wednesday to coincide with the U.N. climate summit.

"It is always essential that someone starts," Guterres said. "If Europe will do so, that I think will be a very important contribution for others to consider the same kind of commitment. If no-one starts, then there is no chance."

Writing by Matthew Green; Editing by Andrew Cawthorne
Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

Greta Thunberg changes Twitter bio after Trump dig

3 hours ago



Climate activist Greta Thunberg has changed her Twitter bio to mock US President Donald Trump's outrage at her winning Time Person of the Year 2019.

He said she had an "anger management problem" and should go to "a good old fashioned movie with a friend".

"Chill Greta, Chill!" he added.

She then adapted her Twitter bio to say she was "a teenager working on her anger management problem. Currently chilling and watching a good old fashioned movie with a friend".

The Swedish 16-year-old was named as Time magazine's Person of the Year on Wednesday after leading a global movement against climate change.



This is not the first time she has changed her Twitter bio to reflect Mr Trump and other leaders' criticism of her. On Tuesday Ms Thunberg changed her bio to "pirralha" - the Portuguese word for brat - after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro criticised her highlighting the plight of Brazil's indigenous people. "Greta's been saying Indians have died because they were defending the Amazon," Mr Bolsonaro told reporters. "It's amazing how much space the press gives this kind of pirralha."

In October she changed the bio to "a kind but poorly informed teenager". This was exactly how Russian President Vladimir Putin had described her at a conference in Moscow. In September President Trump posted a video of her speaking emotionally at the UN conference and sarcastically commented: "She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future." She changed her bio accordingly: "A very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future".

Greta Thunberg named Time Person of the Year for 2019

2 hours ago



Greta Thunberg criticised CEOs and politicians for their lack of action

Greta Thunberg, the Swedish schoolgirl who inspired a global movement to fight climate change, has been named Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2019.

The 16-year-old is the youngest person to be chosen by the magazine in a tradition that started in 1927.

Speaking at a UN climate change summit in Madrid before the announcement, she urged world leaders to stop using "creative PR" to avoid real action. The next decade would define the planet's future, she said.

Last year, the teenager started an environmental strike by missing lessons most Fridays to protest outside the Swedish parliament building. It sparked a worldwide movement that became popular with the hashtag #FridaysForFuture.

Since then, she has become a strong voice for action on climate change, inspiring millions of students to join protests around the world. Earlier this year, she was **nominated as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.**

At the UN Climate Conference in New York in September, she blasted politicians for relying on young people for answers to climate change. In a now-famous speech, she said: "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. We'll be watching you."

Reacting to the nomination on Twitter, the activist said: "Wow, this is unbelievable! I share this great honour with everyone in the #FridaysForFuture movement and climate activists everywhere."



EPA/Time magazine's cover for its Person of the Year edition

The teenager's message, however, has not been well received by everyone, most notably prominent conservative voices. Before her appearance in Madrid, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro called her a "brat" after she expressed concern about the killing of indigenous Brazilians in the Amazon. "Greta said that the Indians died because they were defending the Amazon," Mr Bolsonaro told reporters. "It's impressive that the press is giving space to a brat like that," he said, using the Portuguese word for brat, "pirralha". The activist responded by briefly changing her Twitter bio to "Pirralha". She has previously been at odds with US President Donald Trump, who has questioned climate science and rolled back many US climate laws, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who once called her a "kind but poorly informed teenager".



Greta at UN climate change talks - one year apart

Announcing Time's decision on NBC, editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal said: "She became the biggest voice on the biggest issue facing the planet this year, coming from essentially nowhere to lead a worldwide movement." The magazine's tradition, which started as Man of the Year, recognises the person who "for better or for worse... has done the most to influence the events of the year". Last year, it named murdered and imprisoned journalists, calling them "The Guardians".

What happened in Madrid?

At the COP25 Climate Conference in Madrid, Greta Thunberg accused world powers of making constant attempts "to negotiate loopholes and to avoid raising their ambition".

"The real danger is when politicians and CEOs are making it look like real action is happening when, in fact, almost nothing is being done apart from clever accounting and creative PR," she said, drawing applause.

"In just three weeks we'll enter a new decade, a decade that will define our future," she added. "Right now, we're desperate for any sign of hope."

A speech grounded in research

This was meant to be a big moment in the talks, the elixir of the "Greta effect" bringing new energy to a flagging process. The teenager is almost certainly the most famous person here, attracting far more attention than other celebrities like Al Gore, and the UN badly needs a boost.

Her talk came over as measured, grounded in the latest research, and avoided the flash of hurt and anger she displayed in New York in September. Looking around the hall, it was striking how many of the national delegations had not turned up for this morning session at the conference.

A snub by the big fossil fuel economies? Or maybe they were too busy in the negotiations themselves?

In any event, the passion among the millions of young people who have taken to the streets to demand action on climate change feels very remote from the diplomatic struggles in these halls.

Meanwhile in Brussels, the European Commission - the EU executive - announced ambitious environmental proposals to cut the bloc's dependency on fossil fuels, hoping to make Europe carbon neutral by 2050.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who took office on 1 December, called the **European Green Deal** Europe's "man on the Moon moment". It includes proposals that affect everything from transport and buildings to food production, and air and water pollution.

The package will be debated by EU leaders at a summit on Thursday and includes:

- A €100bn (£84bn; \$110bn) mechanism to help countries still heavily dependent on fossil fuels to transition to renewable energy sources

- Proposals to tighten the EU's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for 2030

- A law that will set the EU "onto an irreversible path to climate neutrality" by 2050

- A plan to promote a more circular economy - a system designed to eliminate waste - that will address more sustainable products as well as a "farm to fork" strategy to improve the sustainability of food production and distribution

Reacting to the proposals, Jagoda Munic, director of environmental group Friends of the Earth Europe, said they were "too small, too few and too far off", adding: "We're on a runaway train to ecological and climate collapse and the EU Commission is gently switching gears instead of slamming on the brakes."

Climate change: Five things we've learned from Madrid talks

Matt McGrath

Environment correspondent

16 December 2019



KIARA WORTH/IISD The Chilean presidency came in for severe criticism from many

At the conclusion of UN climate talks in Madrid, our environment correspondent Matt McGrath considers the key lessons.

1. Leadership is REALLY important

COP25 in Madrid only happened because the Chilean government, faced with mounting civil disorder, decided to cancel the meeting in Santiago.

Spain stepped in and in three weeks organised a well-resourced and well-run event. However, the fact that it was being run by one government, while hosted by another, gave rise to severe difficulties.

Delegates were highly critical of the fact that when it came to the key text about ambition, the Chileans presented the lowest common denominator language first, resulting in a huge number of objections from countries eager to see more ambition on carbon cuts.

Experienced COP watchers said they should have started with high ambition and negotiated down to a compromise.

Insiders say that agreement was only found because of the influence of Spanish minister Teresa Ribera who played a key role in bringing parties together during the

long, last night of negotiations.

2. Disconnect is the key word

This was the word that was most widely used to describe COP25.

There was a yawning gap between the demands of those outside the process and the actions of those within.



KIARA WORTH/IISDCampaigners staged their own final plenary session as they felt things were going awry in the real one

This disconnect was the difference between the urgency underlined by the latest science, the demands for more ambitious climate targets from school strikers around the world, and the torturous, convoluted nature of the talks.

During the talks, young activists staged an unauthorised protest that saw hundreds ejected by security.

"It's clear that civil society is at a boiling point, they are frustrated with the glacial pace and they are livid with the presence of polluters and their trade associations," said Sriram Madhusoodanan from Corporate Accountability, a campaign group that monitors the presence of the oil and gas industry at COP.

"If these talks are ever going to deliver, governments have to take a long serious look at why its failed for 25 years, and start by kicking polluters out."

3. Leipzig in September

This will be the most critical climate encounter in 2020.

The next conference of the parties may be in Glasgow, but the chance of any real success there will be determined, to a large extent by what happens in the EU-China summit taking place in the German city of Leipzig next September.



KIARA WORTH/IISD Tired negotiators worked through two nights as COP25 went into overtime

The hope is that by then the EU will have formalised its zero-carbon long term goal and also updated its 2030 pledge to cut emissions by 55% of 1990 levels.

The EU will likely try and secure agreement from the Chinese to improve their nationally determined contribution (NDC).

Back in 2014 the climate pact signed by President Obama and President Xi Jinping became the lynchpin of the Paris Agreement.

Many observers hope that if the EU and China can do the same, it will be a massive boost for Glasgow.

"The good news is that the Chinese president is coming to the summit," said Li Shuo, a senior policy adviser with Greenpeace China.

"From the Chinese perspective the NDC enhancement decision is one that has to be made at the very top level so the fact the president is going would provide one potential condition for a political level decision."

4. The elephant in the room....

At Paris in 2015, countries submitted their first climate plans, which was relatively easy for many of the larger developing countries.

But in 2020, they are supposed to do much more and as Madrid proved, many are fighting this hard.



KIARA WORTH/IISD Negotiators from small island states said they were excluded from some key meetings

The actions of the US in pulling out of Paris and adopting an antagonistic attitude to the COP have chimed with the desire among some of the larger emitters to put off difficult decisions.

That was clearly evident in Madrid.

So Australia fought hard to keep old carbon credits in the system because it wants to use them to reduce its own carbon rather than taking actions that might impact consumers.

India became much more vocal about the need for an examination of whether richer countries have done enough in the years running up to 2020.

If countries can't be persuaded to move away from these self-protective positions, Glasgow will suffer the same fate as the ill-fated Copenhagen COP in 2009.

5. Glasgow has a mountain to climb

The key takeaway from Madrid is that making progress in climate talks requires huge preparation, strong diplomacy and very committed leadership.



KIARA WORTH/IISD Some visitors were distinctly unimpressed by COP25

Because Madrid failed to clarify so many key issues the onus now falls on the UK to resolve many of the most challenging questions.

In Glasgow, the question of loss and damage, of carbon markets, transparency and many other technical issues will need to be solved.

Most importantly the countries will have to agree a major boost in their carbon cutting if the world is to keep the rise in global temperatures under 1.5C this century.

At a time when the UK will be negotiating trade deals with the EU and with the US, it is going to require enormous diplomatic clout to deal with the climate question as well.

"The diplomacy to build the confidence of the Chinas and the Indias that they can do more and they will be supported, through economic co-operation and that everyone else is moving in that direction, is incredibly important for changing the politics heading into next year," said Jennifer Tollman, a climate expert with the E3G think tank.

"The UK can't do it on its own. They will have to outsource this to people they know and trust."

DECEMBER 17, 2019 / 10:43 AM / UPDATED 3 HOURS AGO

Under fire over climate summit, Chile blames big polluters

Aislinn Laing, Matthew Green, Isla Binnie
5 MIN READ

SANTIAGO/LONDON/MADRID (Reuters) - Chile defended itself on Monday against criticism it was too weak in presiding over international climate change negotiations, saying it did all it could but that four big polluting countries got in the way.



FILE PHOTO: Chile's President Sebastian Pinera addresses the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters in New York City, New York, U.S., September 24, 2019. REUTERS/Lucas Jackson

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera described as “insufficient” the agreements reached on Sunday after marathon talks, but said it was not for the host’s lack of trying and criticism of its role was unfair.

“You have to convince 195 countries, and so if just one opposes, there is no agreement,” Pinera said in comments to local media. When it came to rules governing carbon markets, he said: “The four big countries didn’t accept the proposals.”

Pinera said he personally lobbied other presidents to reach a deal, but would not identify who he called and did not name the countries which he said blocked the deal.

“The countries that pollute the most did not live up to the challenge and remain in debt,” he said in a subsequent tweet.

Diplomats have listed the Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the United States among those resisting bolder action.

Chile had stepped in to preside over the talks after Brazil pulled out following the election

victory of right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro. It was then forced to host them more than 10,000 km away in Spain due to unrest at home.

Environment Minister Carolina Schmidt, president of the U.N. summit known as COP25, came under fire on Saturday for circulating a draft text that campaigners said threatened to undermine the landmark 2015 Paris agreement on carbon reduction.

“If this text is accepted, the low ambition coalition will have won the day,” David Waskow of the World Resources Institute, said in the cavernous venue at the time. Greenpeace International said the Chileans were being “irresponsibly weak”.

Pinera said it was not fair to blame her.

“She did all that was humanly possible,” he said.

By extending the talks, Schmidt salvaged a face-saving compromise text during late-night discussions. It cited the “urgent need” to close the gap between existing emissions pledges and the temperature goals of the Paris agreement to avert catastrophic global warming.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Schmidt said she was “sad and pained” at how nations had failed to find consensus but that the issue of carbon markets - a key sticking point - had tied down the last four summits.

“Neither the will nor the political maturity yet exists from some of the big emitting countries to be able to reach agreement on this,” she told a news conference.

Laurence Tubiana, Chief Executive Officer of European Climate Foundation, said to win commitments more in line with the warnings of climate science the next host would need to build broad alliances and force those blocking progress to explain themselves openly.

“It means deploying an intensive diplomatic effort right now,” she said.

Britain will preside over the next summit, which will be held in Glasgow in November 2020.

Challenges include Brazil’s insistence on a carbon accounting approach others say is baffling and Australia’s insistence on carrying over old credits to meet its Paris emissions targets, which others see as an accounting trick.

Brazil and developing countries, in turn, accused the European Union and other industrialized economies of stymieing progress on financial aid for poorer countries, saying they could not be more ambitious on their climate goals unless they received more

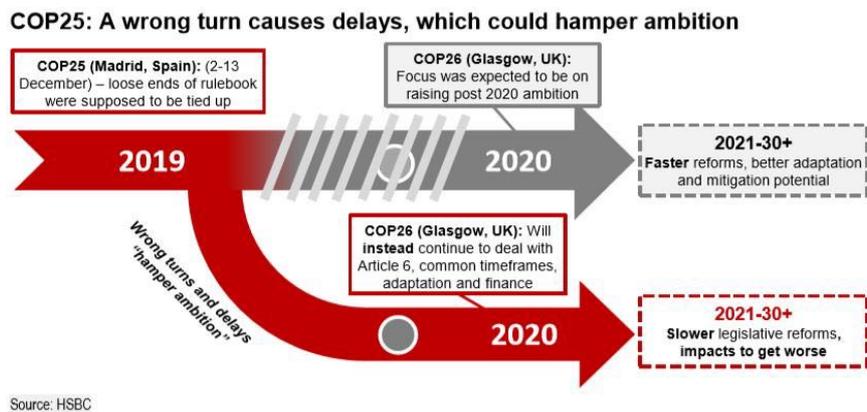
assistance.

Chile did manage to coax some governments into joining a new Ambition Alliance of mostly small countries, cities and businesses committed to slashing emissions.

But the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations felt marginalized as Chile tried to force deadlocked major players into a compromise.

Belize's Carlos Fuller, who represented small island states, told Reuters he was forced to assert himself by striding into a side-gathering of delegates from the United States, Brazil and European Union so they would be sure to see him.

"We should have been invited into that room," he said.



Additional reporting by Fabian Cambero in Santiago, Valerie Volcovici and Jake Spring in Madrid and Susanna Twidale in London; reporting by Matthew Green; editing by Philippa Fletcher