

# Biden pushes for momentum as US returns to climate fight

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and CHRISTINA LARSON

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is convening a coalition of the willing, the unwilling, the desperate-for-help and the avid-for-money for a global summit Thursday aimed at rallying the world's worst polluters to move faster against climate change.

The president's first task: Convincing the world that the politically fractured United States isn't just willing when it comes to [Biden's new ambitious emissions-cutting pledges](#), but also able.

Success for Biden in the virtual summit of 40 leaders will be making his expected promises — halving coal and petroleum emissions at home and

financing climate efforts abroad — believable enough to persuade other powers to make big changes of their own.

For small countries already fighting for their survival, global climate progress noticeably slowed in the four years of President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the effort. Panama Foreign Minister Erika Mouynes hopes the United States' high-profile return to international climate work will spur months of one-on-one worldwide deal-making leading up to November. That's when there will be United Nations talks in Glasgow, where about 200 governments will be asked to spell out what each is willing to do to keep the Earth from becoming a far hotter, more dangerous and less hospitable place.

With Biden's summit, "we can start with that momentum," Mouynes said. In Panama, freshwater shortages that officials blame on climate change already are complicating shipping through the Panama Canal, one of the world's main trade routes and the country's main money earner. Even Panama's best climate safeguards, like hotlines and surveillance drones to catch rainforest logging, aren't enough to save the country on their own, Mouynes says.

"Otherwise it's just empty speeches one after the other, where we all say we want a green country, a green planet, and nothing happens," she said.

The summit will see Biden, who campaigned on promises for a high-employment, climate-saving technological transformation of the U.S. economy, pledge to halve the amount of coal and petroleum pollution the U.S. is pumping out by 2030, officials said this week. That's compared to levels in 2005, and nearly double the voluntary target the U.S. set at the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord.

The [European Parliament confirmed Wednesday](#) that it will set a similarly ambitious target. The U.S. is looking to other allies, such as Japan and Canada, to announce their own intensified climate efforts, hoping that will spur China and others to slow building of coal-fired power plants and otherwise chill their smokestacks.

And the world is looking to well-off countries to make clear how they'll help poorer countries shutter coal plants and retool energy grids, including \$2 billion that the U.S. already promised but has never paid.

“The summit is not necessarily about everyone else bringing something new to the table — it's really about the U.S. bringing their target to the world,” said Joanna Lewis, an expert in China energy and environment at Georgetown University.

This is an urgent but hardly perfect time for the U.S. to try to spur action for multiple reasons, and the summit will play out as a climate telethon-style livestream because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The world's top two climate offenders, China and the United States, are feuding over nonclimate issues. Chinese President Xi Jinping waited until Wednesday to confirm he would even take part.

India, the world's third-biggest emitter of fossil fuel fumes, is pressing the United States and other wealthier nations to come through on billions of dollars they've promised to help poorer nations build alternatives to coal plants and energy-sucking power grids.

“Where is this money? There is no money in sight,” Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said ahead of the summit this month, after Biden climate envoy John Kerry visited.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose nation by some assessments is the world's fourth-worst climate polluter, also accepted the U.S. invitation but is fuming over Biden calling him a “killer,” as part of high tensions over Putin's aggressiveness abroad and U.S. sanctions.

And at home, political divisions exposed by Trump's presidency have left the United States weaker than it was at the 2015 Paris global accord.

Unable to guarantee that a different president in 2024 won't undo Biden's climate work, the Biden administration has argued that market forces — with a boost to get started — will soon make cleaner fuels and energy efficiency too cheap and consumer-friendly to trash.

“The president has every intention of getting reelected, and certainly, ensuring that he is implementing policies where ... addressing our climate crisis, putting Americans back to work, go hand in hand,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Wednesday.

Having the United States, with its influence and status, back in the climate game is important, said Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air in Helsinki.

But hoping the world will forget about the last four years seems like wishful thinking, he said. “There is too much of an impulse in the U.S. to just wish away Trump’s legacy and the fact that every election is now basically a coin toss between complete climate denial and whatever actions the Democrats can bring to the table.”

Biden sketched out some of his \$2 trillion approach for transforming U.S. transportation systems and electrical grids in his campaign climate plan and in his infrastructure proposals for Congress. But there’s no hard and fast plan detailing how the U.S. will fulfill Biden’s promise to eliminate all carbon emissions from its economy by 2050.

Deborah Seligsohn, a political scientist and expert in air pollution and governance at Villanova University, said the overall approach signaled by the White House — focusing on investment first, rather than regulation — was a promising departure from past administrations.

In his campaign, for example, Biden had called for giving Brazil \$20 billion in international aid to protect the Amazon, the world’s largest rainforest and a sink for the world’s fossil fuel sins.

Before the summit, however, Senate Democrats are warning that Trump-allied Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro might take the money but keep up destruction of the Amazon.

The United Nations is trying to consolidate the private financial sector’s carbon-fighting campaign, Kerry and a U.N. finance official said Wednesday. The U.N.-backed Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero,

which involves more than 160 companies with combined assets topping \$70 trillion, aims to support efforts to stop fossil fuel emissions by 2050.

China and the United States together account for nearly half of the world's climate-wrecking emissions. Climate experts hope Xi will watch what the U.S. and China's neighbors pledge and toughen its own emissions goals in following months.

Xi's government continues building and financing new coal-fired power plants, and China's emissions are still rising. Myllyvirta, the climate expert at the Helsinki center, said Xi's comments at recent domestic political forums make clear he is serious about cutting emissions.

Amid U.S. and China disputes over territorial claims, trade practices and human rights, however, the two countries' presummit pronouncements were an island of climate cooperation in a sea of complaints and grievances. "The international community knows very well who is taking actions, who is playing lip service, who is making contributions and who is seeking one's own interest," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said before the summit.

# EU reaches major climate deal ahead of Biden climate summit

By RAF CASERT  
an hour ago



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivers a statement after a meeting of the college of commissioners at EU headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, April 14, 2021. EU Commission chief...

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — The European Union reached a tentative climate deal that should make the 27-nation bloc climate-neutral by 2050, with member states and parliament agreeing on the targets on the eve of a virtual summit that U.S. President Biden will host.

“Our political commitment to becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050 is now also a legal commitment. The Climate Law sets the EU on a green path for a generation,” said EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen early Wednesday.

Under the provisional deal reached after officials negotiated through the night, the EU also commits itself on an intermediate target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

“It was high time for the agreement, as Europe has to show where it stands in view of the positive developments in the USA and China,” said MEP Peter Liese, the negotiator for the EPP Christian Democrat group.

Up to now, the 2030 target had been 40% but under the pressure of increasing evidence of climate change and a more environmentally-conscious electorate that target was pushed up, even if the EU legislature had wanted at 60% target.

The Greens specifically complained that too many accounting tricks had been used to reach the level of 55% while in reality the reduction would be lower.

The United States, the world's second-biggest polluter after China, is preparing to announce its new target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Under Biden, the United States has returned to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and all global partners will be meeting in Glasgow, Scotland, to push for strong targets.

Both Washington and Brussels are aiming to go “carbon neutral” by midcentury, a goal scientists say needs to be achieved to keep average global temperatures from rising above 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) by the year 2100. The Paris accord's more ambitious target of capping global warming at 1.5 C (2.7 F) by the end of the century compared with pre-industrial times would likely require even more drastic worldwide cuts in emissions.

Wednesday's EU deal still needs to be officially approved by the member states and the legislature but should be little more than a rubber stamp.

## **China's Xi to participate in Biden's climate summit**

an hour ago



FILE - In this Oct. 23, 2020, file photo, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers his speech at the commemorating conference on the 70th anniversary of the Chinese army entering North Korea to resist...

**BEIJING (AP) —** Chinese President Xi Jinping will take part in President Joe Biden’s climate summit this week, the government announced Wednesday.

Xi will participate in the online event by video link from Beijing and “deliver an important speech,” the official Xinhua News Agency said.

China and the United States are the biggest emitters of climate-changing carbon pollution.

Xi said in December that China’s emissions would fall by 65% from 2005 levels by 2030.

Wednesday’s announcement gave no indication whether Xi might make additional commitments at this week’s meeting.