

# David Attenborough: 'The collapse of our civilizations is on the horizon'

By Mark Tutton, CNN

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Attenborough: 'If you...

Source: [CNN](#)

Attenborough: 'If you don't speak up nobody will' 16:01

**(CNN)**Renowned nature broadcaster David Attenborough has told world leaders that climate change could lead to collapse of civilizations, and much of the natural world.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the COP24 UN climate conference, in Katowice, Poland, Attenborough called climate change "our greatest threat in thousands of years."

[Follow the COP24 climate conference, live](#)

In the weeks leading up to the event, the UN asked people to send their thoughts on climate change. Attenborough was there to represent the public, by taking the "People's Seat" at the conference.

He said: "The world's people have spoken. Their message is clear. Time is running out. They want you -- the decision makers -- to act now.

"Leaders of the world you must lead," he added. "The continuation of our civilizations and the natural world on which we depend is in your hands."

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**UN Climate Change**



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Sir David Attenborough at #COP24: "If we don't take #ClimateAction, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon." #TakeYourSeat

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In an interview from the conference with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, Attenborough spoke about the damage humans have inflicted on the planet. "We have overrun it in a way that is unprecedented," he said. "No other creature in the world has had the effect on the planet that the human species has, and so we ought to be aware of what we've done and recognize the responsibility that we now have in our hands."

Asked about the United States, which President Trump has said will leave the Paris Agreement, Attenborough pleaded for the US to remain committed to fighting climate change.

"Please join the rest of the world," he implored. "The entire rest of the world is united in trying to take action on this. The United States is a very, very powerful voice. Please, please, join us."

## Implementing the Paris Agreement

COP stands for Conference of Parties. COP21, in 2015, led to the landmark Paris Agreement, a legally binding agreement to fight climate change, where countries committed to keep global warming well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and, if possible, below 1.5 degrees.

[Read: Climate conference in the heart of Poland's coal country](#)

At COP24, nations must finalize implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement -- known as the Paris Agreement Work Program or Paris Rulebook. The conference ends on December 14.

Among the world leaders speaking at the opening ceremony, Arnold Schwarzenegger unexpectedly took to the podium, invited by Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen.

The actor and former Governor of California said: "Every time you talk about America, you're right when you say that our leadership in Washington is a little bit backwards. But you're wrong when you say that America dropped out of the Paris Agreement.

"Because if you look a little bit beyond Washington you will see ... all the extraordinary work that is going on at a state and city level in America."

Earlier in the day, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the event "the most important gathering on climate change since the Paris Agreement was signed."

"We are still not doing enough, nor moving fast enough, to prevent irreversible and catastrophic climate disruption," Guterres continued, saying the majority of countries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions were behind in their efforts to meet their Paris pledges.

"What we need is more political will and more far-sighted leadership," he added. "This is the challenge on which this generation's leaders will be judged." Referring to ongoing discussions around the Paris Rulebook, Guterres said: "We cannot afford to fail in Katowice."

## G20 commits to Paris Agreement – US reiterates decision to withdraw



President Donald Trump attends G20 summit in Buenos Aires, November 30Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

At the weekend, G20 leaders agreed on a statement that includes a section on climate, saying that signatories to the Paris climate accord reaffirm the agreement "is irreversible and commit to its full implementation, reflecting common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances."

"We will continue to tackle climate change, while promoting sustainable development and economic growth," the document reads.

But a separate clause puts the United States alone, saying it "reiterates its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and affirms its strong commitment to economic growth and energy access and security, utilizing all energy sources and technologies, while protecting the environment."

28 min ago

## How much has been achieved since the Paris Agreement?

Climate author Mark Lynas paints a stark picture of the world's commitment to the Paris Agreement and efforts to tackle global warming.

This will be a big issue on the agenda at COP 24.

Read his opinion article here:

### Why the Paris Agreement won't save us from climate change



42 min ago

## Climate protests

On Sunday, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Brussels as part of the "Claim the Climate" march.

This followed similar climate protests in London, Berlin and Cologne, all urging delegates meeting at COP24 to set more ambitious targets to limit carbon emissions.



Climate protest in Brussels, December 2. Nicolas Maeterlinck/Belga/AFP/Getty Images

1 hr 16 min ago

## Climate conference in Poland's coal capital

COP 24 is happening in Katowice. It's a small city right in the middle of Silesia, one of the biggest coal-producing regions in Europe.

80% of Poland's electricity comes from coal power.

You can read more about it here:



Climate conference in the heart of coal country

1 hr 57 min ago

## What to watch out for today at COP24

Today we'll see the official opening ceremony, and what's known as the "high-level segment for heads of state and government."

It's notable that the heads of the world's biggest carbon-emitting countries *won't* be speaking today.

