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# U.S. formally exits global climate pact amid election uncertainty

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WASHINGTON/BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The United States formally exited the Paris Agreement on Wednesday, fulfilling an old promise by President Donald Trump to withdraw the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter from the global pact to fight climate change.

FILE PHOTO: The United States Capitol and U.S flags are reflected in a window in Washington, U.S., October 29, 2020. REUTERS/Hannah McKay

But the outcome of the tight U.S. election contest will determine for how long. Trump's Democratic rival, Joe Biden, has promised to rejoin the agreement if elected.

“The U.S. withdrawal will leave a gap in our regime, and the global efforts to achieve the goals and ambitions of the Paris Agreement,” Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), told Reuters.

The United States still remains a party to the UNFCCC and Espinosa said the body will be “ready to assist the U.S. in any effort in order to rejoin the Paris Agreement”.

Trump first announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the pact in June 2017, arguing it would undermine the U.S. economy. The administration formally served notice to the United Nations one year ago on Nov. 4, 2019.

The departure makes the United States the only country of 197 signatories to have withdrawn from the agreement struck in 2015.

The UNFCCC, Britain, France, Chile and Italy said in a joint statement that they “note with regret” the U.S. withdrawal.

“We remain committed to working with all U.S. stakeholders and partners around the world to accelerate climate action,” the statement said.

“If climate deniers keep control of the White House and Congress, delivering a climate-safe planet will be more challenging,” said Laurence Tubiana, a former French diplomat instrumental in brokering the Paris accord, who now heads the non-profit European Climate Foundation.

