



China and the US announce plan to work together on cutting emissions

In a surprise press conference, the two superpowers promised to cooperate more and hoped for the success of Cop

Fiona Harvey

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China and the US announced a surprise plan to work together on cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the crucial next decade, in a strong boost to the Cop26 summit, as negotiators wrangled over a draft outcome.

The world's two biggest emitters had been trading insults for the first week of the conference, but on Wednesday evening unveiled a joint declaration that would see the world's two biggest economies cooperate closely on the emissions cuts scientists say are needed in the next ten years to stay within 1.5C.

The remarkable turnaround came as a surprise to the UK hosts, and will send a strong signal to the 190-plus other countries at the talks. China and the US will work together on some key specific areas, such as cutting methane – a powerful greenhouse gas – and emissions from transport, energy and industry.

“Both sides recognise that there is a gap between the current effort and the Paris agreement goals, so we will jointly strengthen our Paris efforts and cooperation ... to accelerate a green and low carbon transition,” said Xie Zhenhua, China's head of delegation. “Climate change is becoming an increasingly urgent challenge. We hope this joint declaration will help to achieve success at **Cop26.**”

John Kerry said: “The two largest economies in the world have agreed to work together on emissions in this decisive decade.

“This is a roadmap for our countries and future collaboration. China and the US have no shortage of differences. But cooperation is the only way to get this job done. This is about science, about physics.

He told the conference: “This declaration is a step that we can build on to close the gap [between the emissions cuts set out so far and those needed]. Every step matters. We have a long journey ahead of us.”

Kerry compared the cooperation with China to the agreements by the US to reduce nuclear weapon arsenals in the Cold War. “You have to look beyond differences sometimes to find a way forward.”

The China-US Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s came despite growing political tensions between the two powers, which had been reflected in the climate talks. In his parting shot at the conference, Joe Biden on Tuesday slammed China’s president Xi Jinping for “not turning up”. After that, Xi took a swipe at the US in an interview with the Guardian, saying: “We are not like some countries who withdrew from the Paris Agreement after entering into talks.”

Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary-general, welcomed the agreement: “Tackling the climate crisis requires international cooperation and solidarity, and this is an important step in the right direction.”

The announcement followed a call by developing countries for rich nations to come forward with more financial help for vulnerable countries, saying a new draft outcome for the talks was too weak in this regard.

The draft text, published early on Wednesday morning by the UK as president of the talks, set out the probable outcome of the Cop26 talks, including a potential requirement for countries to return to the negotiating table next year to beef up their national plans on cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The text also set out the scientific case for limiting global temperature rises to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, and expressed “alarm” that emissions were far higher than the levels needed to stay within safe temperature thresholds.

But poor countries said the text needed more emphasis on climate finance, to help them cut carbon and cope with the impacts of climate breakdown.

Aubrey Webson, chair of the Alliance of Small Islands States, which represents 37 of the most at-risk countries, said: “The text provides a basis for moving forward but it needs to be strengthened in key areas in order to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly on finance. We won’t get the ambition on emissions we need for 1.5C if we don’t scale up the provision of finance, and this includes the long overdue recognition of a separate and additional component for loss and damage.”

He added that the language was too weak: “‘Urging’, ‘calling’, ‘encouraging’ and ‘inviting’ is not the decisive language that this moment calls for. We have limited time left in the Cop to get this right and send a clear message to our children, and the most vulnerable communities, that we hear you and we are taking this crisis seriously.”

Bruce Bilimon, minister of health for the Marshall Islands, part of the High Ambition Coalition made up of developed and developing countries, added: “We need a comprehensive Glasgow package to build and reinforce trust between developed and developing states.”

Other developing countries told the Guardian that clearer commitments were needed to force countries to ratchet up their emissions cuts.

The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, made a flying visit to Glasgow on Wednesday, where he warned delegates that failure to reach an effective agreement would bring an “immense” and well-deserved backlash from around the globe.

Johnson called for “a determined push to get us over the line” – and said some countries had not done enough to achieve this. Leaders not in Glasgow needed to “pick up the phone to their teams here and give them the negotiating margin, give them the space they need in which to manoeuvre and get this done”, he said.

Johnson criticised – but did not name – some countries for “conspicuously patting themselves on the back” for signing up to the Paris climate accord but doing too little at Cop.

“The world will find it absolutely incomprehensible if we fail to deliver [a good outcome]. And the backlash from people will be immense and it will be long-lasting, and frankly we will deserve their criticism and their opprobrium.”

China, US pledge to enhance climate cooperation at UN talks

By SETH BORENSTEIN, ELLEN KNICKMEYER and FRANK JORDANS
16 minutes ago



Emissions from a coal-fired power plant are silhouetted against the setting sun, Monday, Feb. 1, 2021, in Kansas City, Mo. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, File)

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — The world’s top two carbon polluters, China and the United States, jointly pledged Wednesday to increase their cooperation on climate action despite their strong disagreements on other matters.

In back-to-back news conferences at U.N. climate talks in Glasgow, Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua and U.S. counterpart John Kerry said the two countries would work together to accelerate the emissions reductions required to meet the temperature goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

“The whole point of this is that the steps we’re taking we believe can answer questions people have about the pace at which China is going and help China and us to be able to accelerate our efforts,” Kerry said.

China agreed for the first time to crack down on methane leaks, following the lead of the Biden administration’s efforts to curb the potent greenhouse gas. Beijing and Washington agreed to share technology to reduce emissions.

Governments agreed in Paris to jointly cut greenhouse gas emissions enough to keep the global temperature rise “well below” 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, with a more stringent target of trying to keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) preferred.

Both sides recognize that there is a gap between efforts taken globally to reduce emissions and the goals of the Paris deal, Xie said.

“So we will jointly strengthen climate action and cooperation with respect to our respective national situations,” he said.

In a joint declaration, the two countries said they are “alarmed” by recent scientific reports detailing the progress of what they both term “the climate crisis.”

A U.S.-China bilateral agreement gave a huge push to the creation of the historic 2015 Paris accord but that cooperation stopped with the Trump administration, which pulled the U.S. out of the pact. The Biden administration brought the U.S. back in to that deal, but has clashed with China on other issues such as cybersecurity, human rights and Chinese territorial claims.

“While this is not a gamechanger in the way the 2014 US-China climate deal was, in many ways it’s just as much of a step forward given the geopolitical state of the relationship,” said Thom Woodroffe, an expert in U.S.-China climate talks. “It means the intense level of US-China dialogue on climate can now begin to translate into cooperation.”

The two nations will also establish a bilateral working group that will “meet regularly to address the climate crisis and advance the multilateral process, focusing on enhancing concrete actions in this decade,” the declaration said.

Both Washington and Beijing intend to update the world on their new national targets for 2035 in 2025 — a move that is particularly significant for China.

The declaration also said China will “make best efforts to accelerate” its plans to reduce coal consumption in the second half of this decade.

The announcement came as governments from around the world were negotiating in Glasgow about how to build on the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect vulnerable countries from the impacts of global warming.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres called the move “an important step in the right direction.”

Some experts said the deal was short on commitments that would significantly reduce heat-trapping gases.

“It’s a good sign that the world’s two biggest emitters can actually work together to face the biggest crisis of humanity but there’s not a lot of meat there after the methane stuff,” said Byford Tsang a China policy analyst for the European think tank E3G.

Earlier Wednesday, a draft of a larger deal being negotiated by almost 200 countries in Glasgow called for accelerating the phasing out of coal — the single biggest source of man-made emissions — although it set no timeline.

Setting deadlines for phasing out fossil fuels is highly sensitive to countries that still depend on them for economic growth, including China and India, and to major exporters of coal such as Australia. The future of coal is also a hot-button issue in the U.S., where a spat among Democrats has held up one of President Joe Biden's signature climate bills.

Greenpeace International director Jennifer Morgan, a long-time climate talks observer, said that the call in the draft to phase out coal would be a first in a U.N. climate deal, but the lack of a timeline would limit the pledge's effectiveness.

"This isn't the plan to solve the climate emergency. This won't give the kids on the streets the confidence that they'll need," Morgan said.

The draft also expresses "alarm and concern" about how much Earth has already warmed and urges countries to cut carbon dioxide emissions by about half by 2030. Pledges so far from governments don't add up to that frequently stated goal.

The draft is likely to change, but it doesn't yet include full agreements on the three major goals that the U.N. set going into the negotiations: for rich nations to give poorer ones \$100 billion a year in climate aid, to ensure that half of that money goes to adapting to worsening global warming, and the pledge to slash global carbon emissions by 2030.

It acknowledges "with regret" that rich nations have failed to live up to the climate finance pledge. Currently they are providing around \$80 billion a year, which poorer nations that need financial help both in developing green energy systems and adapting to the worst of climate change say isn't enough.

Papua New Guinea Environment Minister Wera Mori said that given the lack of financial aid his country may "rethink" efforts to cut logging, coal mining and even coming to the U.N. talks.

European Union climate chief Frans Timmermans was more upbeat.

"We're ready and willing to make sure we deliver on the highest possible levels of ambition, leading to prompt global action," he said.

The draft says the world should try to achieve “net-zero (emissions) around mid-century,” a target that was endorsed by leaders of the Group of 20 biggest economies in a summit just before the Glasgow talks. That means requiring countries to pump only as much greenhouse gas into the atmosphere as [can be absorbed again](#) through natural or artificial means.

In a nod to one of the big issues for poorer countries, the draft vaguely “urges” developed nations to compensate developing countries for “loss and damage,” a phrase that some rich nations don’t like. But there are no concrete financial commitments.

Britain’s Alok Sharma, who is chairing the negotiations, acknowledged that “significant issues remain unresolved.”

“My big, big ask of all of you is to please come armed with the currency of compromise,” he told negotiators. “What we agree in Glasgow will set the future for our children and grandchildren, and I know that we will not want to fail them.”

Associated Press journalists Ellen Knickmeyer and Helena Alves contributed to this report.