

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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MEMORANDUM

November 18, 2015

To: Subcommittee on Energy and Power Democratic Members and Staff

Fr: Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic Staff

Re: Democratic Forum on “Global Solutions to Climate Change”

On Thursday, November 19, 2015, at 2:00 p.m. in room HVC-210 of the Capitol Visitor Center, the Committee on Energy and Commerce Democrats will hold a forum on “Global Solutions to Climate Change.” The Forum will provide members with an opportunity to participate in a dialogue with representatives of other nations that will be participating in the 2015 Paris Climate Conference this December (COP21). The nations represented on the panel have all pledged to take specific actions to reduce carbon emissions and make a contribution to addressing climate change. The purpose of this forum is for Members to hear what other nations are doing to combat climate change and what these nations hope to accomplish at COP21.

I. BACKGROUND: COP AND THE UNFCCC

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, countries joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or the “Convention”), an international treaty to cooperatively consider how the partner countries could mitigate climate change and cope with imminent impacts. The United States ratified the UNFCCC on October 15, 1992, and the Convention entered into force on March 21, 1994. The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the Convention and works to assess progress and advance implementation of the Convention. As the name suggests, COP21 is the 21st session of the Conference of the

Parties which includes 196 countries, and will meet in Paris from November 30th to December 11th, 2015.¹

In December 2011, the COP adopted the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action which commenced negotiations to develop an agreement from 2020 onward to “[strengthen] the multilateral, rules-based regime under the Convention”.² The main objective of this agreement is to take ambitious steps toward keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius,³ a benchmark indicated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that is likely to result in devastating climate impacts.⁴ The Durban Platform proposed that negotiations would conclude in 2015 with adoption of this agreed outcome at COP21. The decision in Durban was intended to address the inadequacy of previous frameworks adopted by the Parties, including the obligatory Kyoto Protocol and the voluntary agreement at the 2009 Copenhagen summit. Two years later in Lima, a report was published outlining the decisions adopted by the COP, which included:

- The “commitment to reaching an ambitious agreement in 2015 that reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances”, which effectively dissolved the “developed” and “developing” labels for countries; and
- Reiterates its invitation to each Party to communicate to the secretariat its intended nationally determined contribution towards achieving the objective of the Convention.⁵

In response to decisions made in Durban and Lima, countries will submit intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs), which outline a country’s commitment to reducing carbon pollution after 2020.

II. ROAD THROUGH PARIS

Leading up to COP21, there have been and will be a series of events held that set the stage for the climate negotiations, including the 10th Annual G20 Meeting in Turkey, the Major

¹ United Nations Environment Program (UNEP): Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015, *Find Out More About COP21* (accessed Nov. 2015) (online at www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21).

² Establishment of an Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.17, Dec. 11, 2011, UN Doc. FCCC/CC/9/Add.1.

³ UNEP: Sustainable Innovation Forum 2015, *Find Out More About COP21* (accessed Nov. 2015) (online at www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21).

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report* (2007) (online at www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/spms5.html).

⁵ UNFCCC, *Lima Call for Climate Action* (Dec. 2014) (online at unfccc.int/files/meetings/lima_dec_2014/application/pdf/auv_cop20_lima_call_for_climate_action.pdf).

Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in Virginia, and Paris Pre-COP, where ministers and government officials will continue negotiations ahead of COP21.⁶ The Parties to the Montreal Protocol also met in early November to discuss hydrofluorocarbon⁷ (HFC) proposals, launching formal negotiations of how to “phase-down” HFC emissions.⁸

As of October 1st, 156 countries had submitted their INDCs, according to the UNFCCC website.⁹ However, most countries are expected to submit their INDCs prior to the Paris negotiations. Below is a brief selection of current INDCs that have been submitted.

A. India

India’s INDC outlines its pledge to reducing GHG emissions with consideration to its projected economic and population growth.¹⁰ As part of its INDC, India pledges to reduce its carbon emissions relative to its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 from their 2005 levels.¹¹ India is committed to generating 40 percent of its electric power through non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030. In that same year, India plans to increase forest and tree cover to remove 2.5 to 3 billion tons of CO₂ equivalents. In addition to these milestones, India will generally promote a culture of more sustainable living, invest in the development of climate-sensitive sectors (e.g., water resources, coastal regions, and health), and foster and implement research and development for new climate technologies.

B. Republic of China

As of June 2015, China has pledged to lower its CO₂ emission per unit GDP by 60 to 65 percent from 2005 levels, increase forest and tree cover by 4.5 billion cubic meters from the

⁶ Climate Nexus, *The Road through Paris: Events to Watch* (Nov. 2015) (online at www.theroadthroughparis.org/events-to-watch).

⁷ For more information about HFCs, their climate impacts, and proposals to reduce HFC levels, see U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Recent International Developments Under the Montreal Protocol* (Oct. 2015) (online at www3.epa.gov/ozone/intpol/mpagreement.html).

⁸ United Nations Environment Programme, *Montreal Protocol Parties Devise Way Forward to Protect Climate Ahead of Paris COP21*, UNEP News Center (Nov. 6, 2015) (online at unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=26854&ArticleID=35543&l=en).

⁹ UNFCCC, *Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* (accessed Nov. 2015) (online at unfccc.int/focus/indc_portal/items/8766.php).

¹⁰ UNFCCC, *India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Oct. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/India/1/INDIA%20INDC%20TO%20UNFCCC.pdf).

¹¹ *Id.*

2005 level, and increase non-fossil fuel energy consumption to 20 percent.¹² The INDC also indicates that China will work to adapt to current and future effects of climate change. Some methods to achieve these goals include: implementing national and regional strategies for climate change, enhance climate resiliency, promote energy efficiency, control emissions from the transportation sectors, and increase carbon sinks.

C. Rwanda

Rwanda has prioritized climate adaptation, including increasing sustainability, establishing water resource management, and disaster management.¹³ To mitigate its carbon contributions, Rwanda preliminarily pledges to make reductions from projected emissions resulting from the deviation of Business-As-Usual (BAU) emissions for the year 2030. Rwanda is currently developing an estimated impact of policies and actions for the reduction of GHG emissions which will be informed by the Third National Communications Report to be completed by 2017. Rwanda will undertake programs of action to power its national grid with a low carbon energy mix, encourage sustainable small-scale energy installations in rural areas, promote green industry development in its private sector, develop a climate compatible mining industry, and adopt low carbon urban systems.¹⁴

D. Republic of Seychelles

The Republic of Seychelles plans to reduce absolute GHG emissions by 29 percent below the BAU baseline by 2030.¹⁵ Currently, Seychelles is a net carbon sink, but under the BAU scenario it will become a net emitter by 2025. Seychelles submitted an INDC that would ensure that the Republic continues to be a net sink. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), the Republic is especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and has prioritized climate adaptation. Some of the climate impacts of concern for the island nation are sea level rise, increase in sea temperature and acidity, flooding, and landslides, all of which will have significant economic impacts.

E. Netherlands

¹² UNFCCC, *China's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Jun. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/China/1/China's%20INDC%20-%20on%2030%20June%202015.pdf).

¹³ UNFCCC, *Rwanda's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Sept. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Rwanda/1/Rwanda%20INDC_%2029Sept2015%20-final.pdf).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ UNFCCC, *Republic of Seychelles' Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Oct. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Seychelles/1/INDC%20of%20Seychelles.pdf).

The Netherlands joined Latvia and the European Commission on behalf of the European Union in the INDC for the EU's 28 member states.¹⁶ The EU and its Member States committed to at least 40 percent domestic reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. EU Member States have already reduced their emissions by around 19 percent based on 1990 levels while GDP has grown by more than 44 percent over the same time period. Average per capita emissions across the European Union have fallen from 12 tons of CO₂ equivalent in 1990 to 9 tons in 2012. Average per capita emissions are projected to reach roughly 6 tons of CO₂ equivalent by 2030.

III. UNITED STATES: PLEDGE & DEVELOPMENTS

A. Intended Nationally Determined Contribution

The United States aims to reduce its emissions by 26 to 28 percent below its 2005 levels by 2025, but has indicated it will make its best efforts to decrease its emissions even further.¹⁷ The United States plans to use current regulatory authorities to achieve this new target, including the Clean Air Act, the Energy Policy Act, and the Energy Independence and Security Act.

Under the President's Climate Action Plan, the United States has already taken steps toward realizing a more sustainable future, using existing authority to implement programs and policies that will help the United States decrease its carbon emissions and promote investments in renewable energy. The United States is currently on track to reduce emission by 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 due to these policy actions. These actions are an essential component of the United States' pledge to the United Nations.

B. American Business Act On Climate Pledge

This year the White House launched the American Business Act on Climate Pledge to highlight the commitments made by private companies to combat climate change.¹⁸ Hundreds of

¹⁶ UNFCCC, *Submission by Latvia and the European Commission on Behalf of the European Union and its Member States: Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Mar. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Latvia/1/LV-03-06-EU%20INDC.pdf).

¹⁷ UNFCCC, *United States of America's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution* (Mar. 2015) (online at www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/United%20States%20of%20America/1/U.S.%20Cover%20Note%20INDC%20and%20Accompanying%20Information.pdf).

¹⁸ The White House, *Fact Sheet: White House Launches American Business Act on Climate Pledge* (Jul. 2015) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/fact-sheet-white-house-launches-american-business-act-climate-pledge).

American businesses have already taken steps to increase energy efficiency, boost low-carbon investing, and make solar energy more accessible to low-income Americans.

As of last month, 81 companies have signed the American Business Act on Climate Pledge.¹⁹ These companies have operations in all 50 states, employ more than 9 million people, make more than \$3 trillion in annual revenue, and have a combined market capitalization of over \$5 trillion. The companies include some of the largest industry leaders across the American economy, including Alcoa, Apple, Bank of America, Berkshire Hathaway Energy, Bloomberg, Coca-Cola, General Motors, Goldman Sachs, Google, Microsoft, Ricoh USA, PepsiCo, Target, and Walmart.²⁰

By signing the pledge, American businesses are voicing support for a strong outcome at COP21 in Paris. This ongoing commitment to climate action demonstrates that American companies are leaders in the global effort to combat climate change.

IV. PANELISTS

The following panelists have been invited to participate:

Ambassador Mathilde Mukantabana

Ambassador to the United States of America
Republic of Rwanda

Ambassador Ronald Jumeau

Ambassador for Climate Change and Small Island Developing State Issues
Republic of Seychelles

Ms. Kitty van der Heijden

Ambassador for Sustainable Development,
currently on secondment to World Resources Institute
Kingdom of the Netherlands

Mr. Bruno Fulda

Counselor for Ecology, Sustainable Development, Energy and Transportation
Embassy of France

Dr. Mark Z. Jacobson

Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering (on behalf of the Solutions Project)
Stanford University

¹⁹ The White House, *Fact Sheet: White House Announces Commitments to the American Business Act on Climate Pledge* (Oct. 19, 2015) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/19/fact-sheet-white-house-announces-commitments-american-business-act).

²⁰ *Id.*