

## The Paris Agreement: A New Chapter in International Climate Cooperation

**Never before has the world been as committed to seriously reduce greenhouse gases – and expectations are high for the UNFCCC climate summit in Paris.**

On the other hand, time is running out: past actions have been too slow and too few, and the window for staying below 2°C is closing fast. Looking at what countries have put on the table so far for Paris, even an optimist would not expect that the Paris agreement will be sufficient to keep global warming below 2°C global mean temperature.

Thus it is obvious that climate negotiation will have to continue beyond 2015. Paris will not conclude the story, but can become the first chapter of a new book of international climate cooperation. This chapter sets the scene for a future low-carbon – or rather no-carbon – world.

The Wuppertal Institute urges all states of the world to include four central elements in the Paris Agreement that are suitable to develop the dynamics that are necessary to achieve the overall goal:

### 1. A strong commitment to change instead of paltering over emission rights

With its focus on emissions, the UNFCCC has framed climate change as an environmental problem. It is focusing on the smokestack while the real problem is in the engine – the energy and agricultural system which fuels economic prosperity. It is not sufficient to put a filter on the smokestack. As long as the engine runs on fossil fuel, debating the allocation of greenhouse gas emission rights is like arguing who may run the engine for how long. This misses the point: The challenge is to build a new engine.

The multiple benefits of decreasing fossil fuel use and of advancing energy efficiency and renewable energy while ensuring poverty eradication – such as health, employment, and human development benefits as well as reducing fuel (import) bills – need to be moved to the centre of attention and seen in connection with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals process. The UNFCCC's focus needs to shift away from distributive struggles over emissions. Instead, emission targets need to be complemented by commitment packages including energy efficiency, renewable energy and specific policies, such as elimination of fossil fuel subsidies. Having **multiple, sustainable, and mutually reinforcing mitigation commitments** has the additional advantage of being more failsafe than having only one commitment. It will also harness synergies between mitigation commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Sustainable Energy for All objectives.

### 2. A new paradigm: complete phase out of fossil fuels by mid-century

The “below 2°C target” was an important negotiations outcome of the UNFCCC process – but it is not a sufficiently clear destination for setting course. It provides no clear direction of who needs to act, how, and in which timeframes.

Paris must deliver a clear direction for the long term. Given the long lifetimes of energy, industry, transport and building infrastructures, actors need long-term investment certainty. Thus, we urge all states to agree on a **fossil fuel phase out by the middle of the century**. Such a commitment to full decarbonisation would send a clear message that all actors at all levels need to change course immediately.

### 3. Transparency is key

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The Paris agreement is likely to not include legally binding commitments but only non-binding “nationally determined contributions”. The only mechanism to ensure that these contributions are actually delivered will therefore be countries’ interest to appear in a good light under public scrutiny. To allow such public scrutiny to take place, it is indispensable that countries report transparently on their delivery.

The Paris agreement therefore needs to include a **robust reporting and review system**, preferably built on the accounting system of the Kyoto Protocol.

### 4. Paris is just the bottom line – ambition needs to ratchet up continuously

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The Paris contributions need to be established as minimum, not maximum levels of ambition, and need to be frequently reviewed and re-negotiated. The experience in the UNFCCC has been that once agreed, commitments have been set in stone. Re-negotiation only occurs when commitments expire. With a long time horizon for commitments, concrete measures may be postponed and achievements hard to measure.

We therefore recommend to agree in Paris that **commitment periods** shall be set to cover **five years**. In our view this represents a good compromise of planning certainty, continuity and speed.

#### **Let ambition rule – frontrunners must not be held custody by laggards.**

As much as we see the need for a strong and ambitious climate treaty within the UNFCCC, the Convention’s rules and procedures are too rigid for true climate pioneers and engaged movements to move ahead. The consensus principle gives ample blocking power to those countries that do not even want the ship to leave port. It is, with all probability, not possible to bring about a global transformation by consensus of almost 200 countries.

After Paris, the more ambitious countries should therefore start moving ahead of the global convoy. They should

form a smaller ambitious climate club and adopt an additional, more dynamic treaty with flexible decision-making rules, effective reduction commitments and increased sustainability benefits for the societies of all participating countries. Similarly, cities, regions and companies could go ahead and adopt ambitious objectives, such as becoming fossil free by the middle of the century, which would have substantial multiplier effects.

If such initiatives can demonstrate the viability of truly sustainable non-carbon development, this should help to create momentum also for other countries to increase their ambition in subsequent chapters of the book of international climate cooperation that is to be opened in Paris.

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**Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy**

Contact: Wolfgang Obergassel

Tel.: +49 202 2492-149

Fax: +49 202 2492-250

wolfgang.obergassel@wupperinst.org

Web: <http://wupperinst.org>

<http://wupperinst.org/en/cop>