



Two of 196 signatory countries to Paris Agreement have raised their climate ambitions



The flags of the 196 signatories to the Paris Agreement, in Katowice in Poland.

The signatories to the Paris Agreement are supposed to revise their climate ambitions upwards within the next 18 months. While states are struggling to get involved, businesses are trying to move forward. EURACTIV France reports.

The Paris Agreement, signed three years ago, was all about raising ambitions before 2020 as a matter of urgency.

The UN's approach requires every country to submit a climate plan nine months before COP 2020. The parties therefore have a year and three months to revise their climate commitments, called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), upwards.

For the time being, only Fiji and the Marshall islands have done so. As much as the commitments for 2050 are abounding, more concrete projects for 2030 are less common.

However, initiatives are being launched from all directions in an attempt to raise ambitions. Accordingly, the EU – which has been criticised for its passiveness – has been involved in a new coalition for greater ambition. This coalition calls for an ambitious outcome to negotiations and says that it is “determined” to raise its ambitions by 2020.

Around 70 countries – including 11 European ones, the group of the least developed countries, several Pacific states, Argentina and Mexico – were involved in this commitment.

Virtuous but unsystematic ambitions

The fragmented positions reflect the state of affairs: while some European countries would like ambitions to be revised upwards, others are taking little notice. Moreover, any official upward revision of the current position would require unanimous approval in the council of environment ministers.

While the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, Miguel Arias Cañete, did sign the coalition, the fact that many European countries – such as Belgium and Poland – are not associated with it, makes it weaker.

France has committed to raising its ambitions for 2030 and participated in the coalition for greater ambition. “But there is a gap between the stated ambition and the fact that France is no longer represented at ministerial level at COP24,” stressed Lucile Dufour from Réseau action climat.

The Polish presidency of COP set up pairings of ministers to make progress on certain issues. Notably, Sweden and Costa Rica are working together on the issue of transparency.

In addition to the commitment made by Fiji and the Marshall Islands, many other countries are working on raising the level of their ambitions.

They include Vietnam, Qatar and Lebanon but also Ukraine, which is wondering how to calculate the carbon emissions for the Donbass region annexed by Russia, and is considering removing it from its own carbon footprint.

Civil society showing greater ambition

In the face of the slow pace of negotiations between states, mobilisation from civil society continues to grow.

Under the banner of “We Are Still In,” many American states, businesses and other NGOs are, unlike Washington, certainly involved in climate action. This coalition represents 804 stakeholders, ranging from artists to multinational businesses, and has a significant stand at COP24.

Certain French businesses, such as Engie, L’Oréal and Groupe BPCE, are brought together under the “Net Zero” initiative and are aiming to be carbon neutral. They are working with the consultancy firm Carbone 4 to establish an ambitious methodological benchmark.

The aim is to record not only direct emissions from businesses but also the emissions saved by carbon-neutral or low-carbon products, such as electric cars, and negative emissions, which are called carbon sinks.

“Being carbon neutral is not a destination, it’s a path, a total commitment by the company in a direction that starts with transparency,” said Renaud Bettin, manager of the Zero Net Emission activities. He added that buying carbon allowances to offset emissions, while emitting more CO₂, is not conducive to being carbon neutral.

By continuing to browse the website, you are agreeing to our use of cookies **I agree**