



Road to COP25

Institutional Developments and Disagreements

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Key messages >>>

- The G20 Osaka Summit failed to achieve anything ambitious, as the host country Japan remained focused on building consensus, even if mild because of its deep ties with US and Trump's adversarial approach to climate negotiations based on the principle of America First.
- Saudi Arabia fueled climate science skepticism at UN Bonn Climate Change Conference by successfully excluding the target of the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius (SR1.5) to the disadvantage of small island states.
- European Union failed to pass the proposal on the net-zero carbon emissions target by 2050 due to the concerns of poorer Central European economies relying heavily on fossil fuel industry.
- There is still hope to stop the global warming as per Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change if only resolute action is taken on creating a green economy by drastically doing away with emissions in all economic sectors.

The annual Conference of Parties under the aegis of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is in many ways impacted by the momentum created by year round climate negotiations at various forums and the agendas that evolve in the process. Youth movements this year have been particularly successful in creating noise on the urgency of action on climate change. Newspapers like [The Guardian](#) took the initiative to redefine the semantics of climate change, more specifically

shifting to the usage of climate crisis to refer to the current scenario. So, the message that has come out is that climate crisis is no longer the problem of the future generation, it is an emergency that exists right this moment. All these broad ideas that exist and arise in the public space out in the streets eventually push through the doors of the institutions, reaching the political elites especially in the developed countries in Europe, who even in their reluctance have to take cognizance of the same in their statements.

This year, three important institutional processes—that have contributed to the overall mood of the conversation on climate change prior to the UNFCCC’s Conference of Parties—are the G20 Osaka Summit, Bonn Climate Change Conference and the EU vote on climate neutrality.

G20 Osaka Summit

G20 countries have an important role to play in building pressure for addressing climate change as these **countries own 80% of the global wealth** with an equal percentage of greenhouse gas emissions. Though the group was active in pushing forward the Paris Agreement, but has since been on a back foot due to the rise of **populist politics both in US and European Union** and an intense opposition to multilateral climate policy in US and Brazil.

The Summit having being organized in Japan and Japan being a close ally of US, there were opinions that Abe was not able to talk tough on the course of action on climate change. Despite that, French President Emmanuel Macron called out for consistent efforts for reducing GHGs with a **strong reference to the Paris Agreement**, which was adhered by the G20 by mentioning in the communique that the parties to the Paris Agreement resolve to implement the agreement in its entirety. At the same time, the communique also mentioned American government’s rationale for rejecting Paris Agreement which was, “The United States reiterates its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement because it disadvantages **American workers and taxpayers**”. In fact, Trump’s approach to such gatherings has not been of solving the **common problem through cooperation** with allies but to intimidate the adversaries by prioritizing his own agenda, thus defeating the purpose of such summits. Environmental groups, on the other hand, were concerned that the wording of the summit on Paris Agreement were weak and the **agenda under discussion not ambitious enough**.

Eventually, it was decided in the summit to focus on the **role of innovation in tackling marine plastic pollution** and climate change in general with the rider that such approach should not hurt economic growth. More decisions were taken on developing

hydrogen as a fuel and on **carbon capture, including utilization and storage**. Adding to all this, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that some of the leaders present in Osaka have already **indicated greater commitment by targeting "net zero" emissions by 2050**. Moreover, Japanese officials on the whole sided with **consensus in the summit**, even if mild, than confrontation on issues.

Bonn Climate Change Conference

The meeting in Bonn this year comprised of the 50th meetings of UNFCCC’s **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)**. Though there was progress made on many fronts, especially the issues **related to Paris Agreement Article 6** (market and non-market cooperative approaches), there was still some dissatisfaction with regards to the outcomes related to scientific issues, which is striking given that it has been through the efforts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that the scientific knowledge on climate change has been disseminated on the international forums since decades, thus setting the climate agenda in a significant way.

One probable reason is the responses to IPCC’s special report on 1.5°C with a bunch of nations led by **Saudi Arabia questioning the scientific basis of the report**. The report was commissioned by the UN to find out the **differences between 1.5°C and 2°C of warming**. Thankfully, **developing countries and small island states** countered the above argument by raising concerns about their existence with a temperature rise of 1.5°C. Also, IPCC’s report advocated unprecedented transition away from fossil fuels to keep the **temperature rise below 1.5°C and cut the emission to 45% by 2030**. Nonetheless, the meeting failed to incorporate the target of the **Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR1.5)** prepared by the IPCC in 2018, which was again vehemently lamented by the small island states. Finally, with regards to the **Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage**, which is of great importance to small island states, Terms of Reference were adopted that were to set

out the scope, inputs and other conditions for the review of WIM that is to be held in Santiago at a Climate Change Conference in December 2019.

European Union 2050 Carbon Neutrality

Carbon neutrality by 2050, which has long been on the agenda of EU failed to realize this June when the four **Central European countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary blocked the proposal** in the European Council. To achieve the net-zero carbon emissions target by 2050, the proposal aimed to **cut emissions from homes, transport and industrial activities**, supplementing with carbon dioxide soak up or avoiding emission fully. But the proposal block came as a setback when expectations were high given the huge advantage earned by the green parties in the EU elections this year. Concern raised by these countries was the anticipated **slowdown in their nuclear power and coal sector** by the targets, especially in a scenario of heavy economic dependence on these sectors. In his justification, the Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki demanded that EU should **compensate its poorer members to achieve the targets** in order for them to support the bloc's decision on carbon neutrality.

In the end, to the disappointment of climate activists around the world, the **ambitious goal on**

carbon neutrality was reduced to a footnote in the final summit text, mentioning the support of the majority of EU members to the proposal.

Can we prevent the impending dystopia?

A major trend in all the meetings the deadlock on decisions due to the interests of the fossil fuel companies, be it Trump's support lack of compromise of economic growth fueled by oil giants, or Saudi Arabia's denial of climate science or Central European countries' heavy dependence on the fossil fuel sector. In the similar vein then, the OPEC called climate campaigners the "**greatest threat to our industry going forward**", which satirically, **Greta Thunberg took as a compliment**. Compared to the above cases, Asian giants like China and India seems to be doing better at least in accepting the climate science and renewable energy investment. Although the outcomes of these meetings are disappointing on many levels and point towards a dystopic world, IPCC report is still casts hope in its report published in November 2018, which says that global warming can be contained if definite steps are taken urgently to **drastically reduce emissions in all sectors of the economy** by the end of the next decade. And this goal youth around the world need to fight for.

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Analytical Brief on Climate Ambition and Sustainability Action

The analytical brief series, brought out jointly by the World Sustainable Development Forum and the Protect our Planet Movement, seeks to highlight a topical issue relevant to the realization of the sustainable development goals and ambitious climate actions.

About WSDF

The World Sustainable Development Forum (WSDF) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated separately in Europe, Norway and the U.S. Its North American arm WSDF-NA, headquartered in Washington, DC carries 501c3 tax exempt status. WSDF is a global initiative to promote and mobilize global action for effective implementation of both the Paris agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly. WSDF's relevance and role lies in acting as a facilitator for helping with implementation of actions required under these two sets of agreements.

About POP Movement

Protect our Planet (POP) Movement believes that the impacts of climate change will not affect a single country but the planet, in its entirety. POP believes that the power of the youth of the world will unite and to address this challenge. POP believes that the time to act is now and that knowledge is the true currency of changing the future.



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