

COP25 in Madrid

Turning people power into political action

Expectations for the UN Climate Conference in Madrid, December 2019

Despite ever worse real world impacts and increasing public momentum, global political action remains low

2019 was a pivotal and powerful year for climate activism. Last year's IPCC report was a wake-up call, and since then the energy and momentum behind the movement has built radically yet peacefully, culminating in a record-breaking seven million people in the streets this September.

The climate movement, and especially the youth, is changing the conversation.

But unfortunately, this so far has not translated into the necessary political action.

This year's COP comes on the back of the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit, where leaders were asked to come with plans not speeches. Despite mounting calls for action, countries failed to step up with a level of ambition that met anywhere near the scale of the 1.5°C challenge, and the Summit delivered little to no progress.

Current country commitments are insufficient to limit heating to even 3°C. In a climate of global uncertainty and increased political polarisation, against a backdrop of global protests from communities feeling the pressure of inequalities that will be exacerbated by climate change, international cooperation is increasingly coming under pressure.

At COP25, Greenpeace expects that decision makers:

- Act urgently to enhance their climate action targets. Listen to the science, and outline a roadmap for NDC submissions in 2020
- Avoid riddling the Paris Agreement with carbon market loopholes
- Listen to the people, not to powerful extractive industries that block climate progress
- Ensure the costs of the energy transition are not passed down to the people, and that vulnerable communities are supported to react to climate impacts

We need courageous commitments, now

Current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) will lead to at least 3 degrees warming, which will in turn lead to significantly worse impacts suffered the most by vulnerable communities.

Parties must use COP25 as a springboard to enhance their commitments ahead of 2020.

They should firmly recognise the gap between their current action and climate science, collectively commit to enhance their NDCs next year, and set a clear timeline for the submission of these NDCs.

What about Article 6?

In Madrid, negotiators will be focused on finishing the Paris Agreement Rulebook. This means the highly complex Article 6 is up for discussion -- future carbon trading markets.

Trading ourselves out of the climate crisis offers nothing other than false hope. Our climate is confronted with a profound ambition deficit. We cannot afford the luxury of carbon offsets, creative accounting and the recycling of hot air credits.

In order for any positive impact at all, future carbon markets will have to follow tight rules, a key test to the commitment of the global community to the Paris Agreement.

It's the science, stupid

Governments must submit substantially increased near-term national climate targets by early 2020 that will limit warming to 1.5C, taking into account the latest IPCC reports on land and oceans and ice systems.

The IPCC land report in August 2019 found that the temperature above land has already increased 1.53°C above pre-industrial temperatures, driving desertification and land degradation.

The report revealed the urgent need to protect and restore our forests, and drastically reduce our global consumption of meat and dairy products. However, if we delay decarbonisation and put more pressure on the land sector, this will only increase the risk of climate impacts and food insecurity.

Governments must commit to ramping up their climate targets while at the same time moving to address the challenges laid out in the IPCC's land-use report.

The IPCC special report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in September 2019 found that sea-level rise by 2100 could be close to one metre if global warming exceeds 3°C – which is where current global government policies are heading.

It also found that climate action and building the resilience of our oceans need to go hand in hand. Widespread permafrost thaw is projected for this century. Arctic and Sub-Arctic Permafrost contains 1460-1600 Gigatons of organic carbon - equivalent to almost twice the carbon currently in the atmosphere.

COP25 has been dubbed as the 'Blue COP' and it is also the last Ministerial Summit ahead of 2020, where both the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be making commitments for the next decade, and beyond.

The climate and biodiversity crisis are interlinked, it's vital we preserve our forests and oceans.

Third time lucky

While COP25 now may be in Madrid, after it moved to Santiago when newly-elected Bolsonaro declined to host it, the presidency remains with Chile.

It therefore comes to Chile's President Piñera and Environmental Minister Carolina Schmidt to show leadership and lead by example by driving ambition through COP25.

Confronted by social unrest brought on by increasing inequality and the country's worst drought in 60 years, Piñera's decarbonisation plan so far lacks the ambition needed to address the worsening crisis. A historic opportunity awaits Piñera: oversee a just transition and shut down the oldest and most-polluting plants, help protect Chile from climate impacts, and spare communities in the so-called 'sacrifice zones' from the poisonous emissions from the country's coal sector.

The Chilean Presidency has however so far not shown the necessary ambition or understanding of both the policy and political dimensions of the COP. Piñera is not alone, however. He must drive other leaders forward towards a rapid phase out of all fossil fuels through a just transition which ensures no-one is left behind.

We stand with the millions of people who have taken to the streets of Chile in peaceful protest for justice. Addressing the climate crisis is an integral part of addressing social inequality.

This COP, we want to see the plan for delivering on the Paris vision -- that means clear, ambitious climate targets by 2020.

We want to see the urgent prioritisation of an energy transition that leaves no one behind and supports vulnerable communities affected by climate impacts.

We want to see power for the people, not the fossil fuel industry.

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