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Climate Week was not Climate Weak: the Road to Paris Now Clearer

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Last week was a busy [week](#) on climate change, and it helped to set the stage for an agreement in Paris.

The week-end of 26-27 September saw [a lunch gathering 30 heads of States to discuss the Paris agreement](#), [the address of the Pope to the UN](#) re-emphasizing his message on climate change, the publication of a dozen of INDCs, not to mention some key new financial pledges, and a joint US-China presidential [statement](#) on climate change. Oh, and the Sustainable Development Goals were also adopted, by all and applicable to

all, and confirmed the (long needed) convergence of the development and climate agenda.

The US China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change

The [US-China Joint Presidential Statement](#) unveiled new domestic commitments to action on climate change and crucial accommodations that can increase the chances of a successful agreement in Paris. Here we highlight a few of them:

- China committed to providing \$3.1 billion in support for climate action. This is a game changer, as China has been reticent of being seen internationally as a provider of climate finance up until this point. Could be a “great leap forward”, breaking the deadlock on differentiation in climate finance.
- More importantly, the China-US Statement committed both countries **to ensuring that their international public investments contribute to a low-carbon transition**. This is hugely important. China has become a massive development sponsor in recent years, and efforts to green international development financing will be ineffectual unless these norms of transparency and ‘climate coherence’ are applied beyond the traditional group of donor countries. The US-China Statement can lay the foundation for this, which can be further strengthened by the Paris agreement.
- China also re-stated that it plans to **start a national emission trading system in 2017**, which links the dots among the regional and local level carbon markets that have been launched since 2013. This will pump up the share of carbon emission globally covered by carbon markets from 10% to 30%, and is **a signal of strong leadership from China to use market based mechanisms for mitigation**.
- The US-China Statement also made progress on a couple of key issues in the negotiations, in particular **the need to strengthen the transparency system** under the Paris agreement. This is a crucial issue and one on which China has been reticent. An outline of the solution emerged from their Joint Statement, namely **a stronger transparency system applicable to all countries** but with some flexibilities for developing countries.

Heads of State Meeting on Climate Change

This weekend the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, convened an “informal working lunch” for 30 leaders to discuss about the COP21 agreement, which led to interesting conclusions and a common [“political understanding of the transformational, long term implications of a new climate change agreement”\(PDF- 285Ko\)](#). While not substituting for formal negotiations, this common political understanding can help lay the foundation for the Paris agreement.

- Leaders concluded that the Paris agreement must “reaffirm, clarify, and operationalize the objective of limiting the mean surface temperature increase to below 2°C, and keep open the option of limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C”. This opens the door to the Paris agreement adopting some kind of long-term target for emissions and/or the transformation of the global economy as its guiding objective. This would send a powerful signal.
- Leaders also concluded that the Paris agreement should recognize the importance of countries **developing long-term strategies to transition their economies to a low-carbon model** (as IDDRI has long argued in its flagship [Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project](#)).
- Leaders converged around the idea that the Paris agreement should be **regularly updated and strengthened, containing “a facilitative process to periodically take stock of progress”**. Many countries argued that this needed to take place every five years, although this timeframe appears not to have been accepted by all in the

room. Nonetheless, the idea of **regular cycles of strengthened action** appears to be gathering more support as a key element of the Paris agreement, as IDDRI has argued in a recent joint paper ([Regular Review and Rounds of Collective Action and National Contributions the 2015 Climate Agreement: A Proposal](#)) with the Chinese think tank NCSC.

- Last but not least, leaders insisted on the need for “immediate, concrete and cooperative actions” between countries, particularly on **climate finance**. Encouragingly, several voluntary national announcements were made on finance this week. Besides China’s \$3.1billion commitment, France has announced to increase its international public climate finance from the current three billion Euros to five billion per year by 2020, including an increase of grants-based finance targeted at adaptation. A part of this finance will be raised from an innovative source: the financial transaction tax. The United Kingdom has pledged to further climate-proofing its ODA budget, with a goal to increase the climate-related part of its aid budget to £5.8 billion between 2016 and 2021, compared to less than £4 billion in the previous five year period. Through these announcements, some more clarity has been provided by developed countries on progress towards the objective of mobilizing \$100 billion in climate aid per year by 2020.

“All hands on deck”

Another important piece of climate action, complementary to what countries are doing and will commit to do, are **the initiatives of Non-State Actors**. Across the different events of last week, we saw a call for further immediate action pre-2020 and a recognition of the “groundswell of climate actions” already underway taken by local authorities, businesses, investors and civil society. The [Paris-Lima Action Agenda's website](#) was launched, highlighting some of these transformational initiatives and more should be announced on the road to Paris, and in Paris during the Action Day on December, 5. The EU, US and China also mention the importance of complementary actions in other fora and processes outside the Convention, such as under the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Montreal Protocol, the G-20, the World Trade Organization or the Clean Energy Ministerial.

Conclusion

It was a busy week which major achievements and long-needed clarifications, several encouraging announcements, including on the finance front. Much remains to be done, in particular the translation of these political conclusions into negotiation text. The next test will be the publication of the new co-chairs text, expected by October, 1st and then a week of negotiations in Bonn from October 19 to 23, before the opening of the COP on November, 30. Few time left to put all these pieces together to reach an agreement in Paris, but, finally, we are starting to see what shape it will take.