

Paris summit on climate change 14 DEC 2015

Adapted from <http://www.sciencealert.com/here-s-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-climate-deal-from-paris> Accessed April 12, 2016

Over the past two weeks, leaders and delegates from 195 world nations have been formulating at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference. They've now reached this agreement, and governments are expected to follow through with their various commitments to make it happen.

The final draft of the agreement was released to the public over the weekend, and outlines the various measures that need The attendees called the agreement, "The single most important collective action for addressing climate change ever agreed upon."

First off, the agreement recognised two fundamental facts:

- "That climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet and" "
- "That deep reductions in global emissions will be required in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention and emphasising" "

The most important thing for the global community to do is, to ward off the most severe effect of global warming. As Justin Gillis reports for *The New York Times*, while we don't know the exact temperature at which the entire Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets will melt, staying below 2°C to avoid this is a good bet. And 1.5°C is an even better bet.

To meet this goal, we need to stop burning fossil fuels and limit the CO₂ we've been releasing into the atmosphere, and the richest nations at the conference have agreed, US\$100 billion a year will be made available to developing nations to help them achieve this.

As it was noted - developed nations have essentially gotten away with using fossil fuels to build themselves up, and can now afford, whereas developing nations never got that chance.

To ensure progress and to enforce the individual goals set for each country, delegates are legally required, with new reduction targets for emissions to be evaluated by committee.

"So the individual countries' plans are voluntary,, are designed to create a 'name-and-shame' system of global peer pressure, in hopes that countries will not want to be seen as international laggards,"

- a. to keep things below that 2-degree mark, the conference delegates agreed
- b. the need for urgency in addressing climate change
- c. to raise enough funds that by 2020
- d. but the legal requirements that they publicly monitor, verify, and report what they are doing, as well as publicly put forth updated plans
- e. to be made to limit the rise in average global temperature to well below 2°C, with 1.5°C being the ideal benchmark
- f. thus requires the widest possible cooperation by all countries
- g. to invest in renewable energy sources
- h. to meet up again in 2023, and then every five years following
- i. a global agreement on the reduction of climate change

3.

Climate impacts and stranded assets

In case of an abolition of the limits, the Czech Republic would extract coal until the year 2120. This is in sharp contradiction with the goal of the EU's Low Carbon Roadmap (pdf) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 – 95% until 2050.

A 2015 UCL study published in Nature concluded that Europe must leave 89% of its coal deposits underground if the world is to limit global warming to below 2°C. The latest IPCC's assessment report (pdf) recommended reducing global emission to zero during the second half of the century and emission from fossil fuels even sooner.

If the government lifted the coal mining limits now it would itself stand in the way of progress – a progress towards a more climate-friendly future. More and more institutions are divesting from fossil fuels, not only for moral reasons, but because investments in fossil fuels may soon become stranded assets.

To not fall behind, the Czech Republic needs a targeted and long-term plan on how to achieve a low carbon economy. Taking decisive action on energy efficiency measures would be an easy and effective first step – also for providing employment.

<https://bankwatch.org/blog/czech-coal-mining-communities-are-under-threat>

4.

During the course of the 20th century, the North Bohemian Basin, an area of over 1100 km², was heavily mined from Kadaň to Ústí nad Labem for brown coal for burning in a large number of thermal power stations, electrical power stations and factories. In the 1970s and 1980s, the mining increased on a massive scale, and because of the expansion of mining operations whole villages, towns and even cities (Most) were demolished to extract the coal that lay beneath,^[Note 1] their inhabitants were rehoused in large-scale new prefabricated panelled apartment buildings.

The low quality technology used for large-scale burning of brown coal led to a sharp increase in the content of harmful sulfur dioxide and aerosols in the atmosphere. The result was wholesale damage to the environment (such as the die-back of the forests in the Ore Mountains from acid rain) and human health. In view of the unsustainable situation, the first post-communist Czechoslovak government decided to resolve the situation by introducing desulphurization and aerosol removal from major state-owned power plants, and the setting of limits which specific mines should not go beyond in future. In areas that had already been mined, support was also given to the reclamation of damaged landscape. The limits hence served as a government guarantee to North Bohemian communities that their environment would no longer continue to deteriorate and that their very existence has a long-term future, i.e. that it is worth purchasing property there, building and renovating houses, reconstructing roads and utilities, establishing businesses, etc.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_coal_mining_limits_in_North_Bohemia

1.

All over the world, people living near fossil fuel deposits often face pressure to make room for more extraction. Whether it is shale gas in Argentina, oil in Albania, coal in Mongolia or lignite in Serbia, local residents may lose their homes or livelihoods. If they protest, they are too easily portrayed as being in the way of progress, as opposing the national development and – even worse – the nation’s energy security.

An ongoing debate over coal mining limits in the Czech Republic shows that also in countries of the European Union local communities are facing similar struggles. It also illustrates how “securing energy supply” has become a catch-all argument even when the energy demand in no way justifies it.

Coal mining limits in the Czech Republic

Since the early 1990s limits to coal mining are protecting dwellings in the North Bohemia against demolition. A government decree from 1991 guarantees to the towns and villages that are situated on coal deposits that they will not be pulled down to make room for mining.

Yet this might change soon. In July the Czech government is to decide on a possible extension of mining. As part of its Energy and Raw Materials Strategy, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade opened (once again) a discussion about lifting the coal mining limits. The Ministry has prepared four scenarios of resolving the issue of mining limits – an entire lifting of the limits, their entire preservation and two options with a partial lifting of limits (of which one would have an effect on populated dwellings and one would not).

<https://bankwatch.org/blog/czech-coal-mining-communities-are-under-threat>

2.

While a majority of Czechs, local inhabitants, environmental NGOs and part of the political establishment are opposing the plans, energy companies who own the mines and the miners’ trade unions are for lifting the mining limits. Their arguments are that the Czech Republic will need more coal for its energy demand (mainly heating) and that hundreds of miners would face unemployment if the limits remained.

Feeble arguments

The arguments of the plans’ proponents are as predictable as they are weak. While it is always difficult to argue against securing miners’ employment, it is worth pointing out that the villages and cities under risk by the mines employ more people than the mines themselves.

In particular the reference to energy demand, however, can hardly be taken seriously. The Czech Republic currently exports 16 million tons of coal annually in the form of electricity. And even the Czech Republic’s new draft energy strategy (pdf) confirms that the country does not need the coal behind the mining limits. According to the Strategy, coal consumption will drop by 73% until 2040, even though the Strategy does not take into account the whole energy savings potential.

Rather than just digging out more dirty coal, investments in energy efficiency would be a reliable way to moderate the energy demand. The Czech economy is among the least efficient in the EU. The sole energy saving potential of residential houses is bigger than the amount of energy that could be extracted by lifting the coal mining limits.

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investment	/ɪn'vest(t)ment/	money used in a way that may earn you more money, for example money used for buying property or shares in a company
efficiency	/ɪ'fɪj(ə)nsi/	the ability to work well and produce good results by using the available time, money, supplies etc in the most effective way
to moderate	/ˈmɒdəreɪt/	to make something less extreme, or to become less extreme
sole		only
3		
stranded assets		uvizíá aktiva - something you have at your disposal but you don't use it
abolition	/əbə'liʃ(ə)n/	the official end to a law, system, practice etc
contradiction	/ˌkɒntrə'dɪkʃ(ə)n/	a difference in two or more statements, ideas, stories etc that makes it impossible for both or all of them to be true
climate-friendly		
to divest	/daɪ'vest/	to take away someone's power, rights, or authority
to fall behind		to move more slowly than other people so that you are behind them
to target	/ˈtɑː(r)ɡɪt/	to aim
decisive	/dɪ'saɪsɪv/	making the final result of a situation completely certain
measures	/ˈmeʒə(r)/	an action that is intended to achieve or deal with something
4		
to demolish	/dɪ'mɒlɪʃ/	to deliberately destroy a building
inhabitant	/ɪn'hæbrɪənt/	a person or animal that lives in a particular place
pre-fabricated	/pri:'fæbrɪ,'kertɪd/	built in sections that can be moved and put together quickly
sulfur dioxide	/ˈsʌlfə daɪ'ɒksaɪd/	
aerosol	/ˈeəroʊ ,sɒl/	a cloud of solid or liquid particles in a gas
wholesale	/ˈhoʊl ,seɪl/	large
dieback		a disease of plants characterized by the gradual dying of the young shoots starting at the tips and progressing to the larger branches.
unsustainable	/ˌʌnsə'steɪnəb(ə)l/	not capable of continuing at the same rate or level
reclaim	/rɪ'kleɪm	to obtain things that people have got rid of, so that they can be used again
to deteriorate	/dɪ'terɪəreɪt/	to become worse
to purchase	/ˈpɜː(r)'tʃæs/	to buy something
utilities	/juː'tɪləti/	/juː'tɪləti/

1	extraction	/ɪk'strækʃ(ə)n/	taking something out
	shale	/ʃeɪl/	a type of smooth dark rock that breaks into thin layers (bricks)
	ignite	/'ɪɡnaɪt/	a soft dark brown type of coal
	livelihood	/'laɪvli:hd/	something such as your work that provides the money that you need to live
	to struggle	/'strʌɡ(e)l/	to try hard to do something that you find very difficult
	supply	/se'plaɪ/	an amount or quantity of something that is available to use
	catch all		intended to include a lot of different things
	demand	/dɪ'mɑ:nd/	a very firm statement that you want something
	to justify	/'dʒʌstɪfaɪ/	to show that there is a good reason for something, especially something that other people think is wrong
	dwellings	/'dweɪlɪŋ/	a house, flat, or other shelter in which someone lives
	decree	/dɪ'kri:ʃ/	an official decision or order made by a leader or government
	to pull down		to destroy a building, especially because it is very old or dangerous
	extension	/'ɪk'stenʃ(ə)n/	something that develops from a particular custom, activity, idea etc
	scenarios	/se'no:riəʊ/	a situation that could possibly happen
	to resolve	/'rɪ'zɒlv/	to solve a problem, or to find a satisfactory way of dealing with a disagreement
2			
	NGO	/en dʒi: 'eɪ/	non-governmental organization: an organization which is neither a government department, nor a business operating for profit. NGOs are often paid for by the government and may work with government departments, but they are independent of the government.
	trade unions		an organization of workers that aims to improve pay and conditions of work. Trade unions are often simply called unions .
	to lift	/lɪft/	to officially end a rule or law that stopped someone from doing something
	to remain	/'rɪ'meɪn/	to continue to be in a particular situation or condition
	proponents	/'prɒ'pəʊnənt/	someone who publicly supports an idea, policy, plan etc
	to point out		to tell someone something
	annually	/'ænjuəlɪ/	once every year
	consumption	/'kɒn'sʌmpʃ(ə)n/	the use of something such as fuel or energy, or the amount that people use
	to drop	/'drɒp/	to reduce something to a lower amount or value
	take into account		to consider something when you are trying to make a decision