

## China Ramps Up Coal Power Capacity As UN Climate Talks Kick Off

Michael Bastasch

November 7, 2016

China's government announced plans to increase the country's coal-fired power capacity by as much as 20 percent over the next four years as United Nations delegates meet in Morocco to implement a major global warming agreement.

China's new five-year plan would "raise coal-fired power capacity from around 900 gigawatts last year to as high as 1,100 gigawatts by 2020," which is "more than the total power capacity of Canada," according to The Wall Street Journal.

Officials said they would increase the percentage of its electricity mix it gets from non-fossil fuel sources to 15 percent by 2020. Coal's share of electricity production would fall to 55 percent, down from more than 65 percent in recent years, though coal-fired power use could rise in absolute terms.

China's announcement has environmentalists fuming and comes the same day UN delegates meet in Marrakech, Morocco to figure out how to implement an international agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"This is indeed a disappointing target," Greenpeace activist Lauri Myllyvirta told WSJ. "Given that there is already severe overcapacity and demand for coal-fired power is going down, we would have expected a cap on coal power capacity much closer to the current capacity level."

China was one of the countries to sign onto the UN climate agreement hashed out in Paris last year. China pledged to "peak" emissions by 2030, while the U.S. pledged to cut emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025.

The so-called Paris agreement officially entered into force in early November after it got enough high-emitting countries to ratify it.

While China increases its coal capacity, most politicians and activists see a Republican presidential victory on Tuesday as the biggest threat to the Paris agreement.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has promised to pull out of the Paris agreement if elected, and the real estate mogul recently promised to "cancel billions in global warming payments to the United Nations."

Top UN officials, however, have argued Trump could not unilaterally pull out of the Paris deal — despite it not being ratified by the U.S. Senate.

“The agreement has entered into force and we are all obliged to deliver on those commitments,” said UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa, according to Reuters.

But a Trump victory means little if the pledges made to ratify the Paris deal end up not being feasible.

China ramping up its coal use isn't the only thing that could derail the Paris deal. The U.S. may not be able to meet its own pledge.

Chip Knappenberger, a climate scientist at the libertarian Cato Institute, said the U.S. should pull out of the Paris deal.

The Supreme Court delayed Obama's key global warming rule, and regulators have underestimated methane emissions, which means more there's greenhouse gases than previously thought.

“All of this —the stayed Clean Power Plan, growing methane emissions, and overly optimistic projections—undermine the viability of Obama's pledge,” Knappenberger wrote in Newsweek in April.

“Add to the mix energy efficiency measures which don't work as well as advertised, low gas prices and a growing economy that is still tightly linked to fossil fuels, and you arrive at the unimpeachable conclusion that we are not going to come close to meeting the emissions pledges made by the president,” he wrote.