



PRESS RELEASE

Bonn climate talks: as temperatures soar, countries must feel the heat to respond to the climate crisis

Civil society groups call for a concerted political push to raise ambition and deliver support in the coming months

27 June, Bonn: In a week of record-breaking heatwaves here in Bonn, civil society groups excoriate governments for their weak political positions on responding to the climate crisis. The signals emerging from inside negotiating rooms and outside suggest that countries are ready to cave to the short-term interests of a few powerful polluters. They are willing to dismiss the concerns of their citizens who show up in massive numbers at marches, and wilfully ignore the large-scale suffering from impacts and loss and damage to maintain a business-as-usual attitude.

With the adoption of the landmark IPCC 1.5C Special report last year and the Paris Rulebook at COP24, the direction of travel was clear: escalating rapid and transformative actions to stop emissions and limit dangerous warming to 1.5C within the next decade. What we see so far is woefully inadequate.

It is unconscionable that the relevance of climate science is put under the spotlight by Saudi Arabia and some others at a time when all governments must be responding to the climate emergency and using the IPCC 1.5C Report to plan for a zero-carbon future. It is important that more countries defend the IPCC and are outspoken in their condemnation of those making a concerted effort to undermine the best available science and the Paris Agreement.

The discussions on the technical themes have seen uneven progress overall : on Article 6 and market mechanisms, the process towards the review of the Warsaw International Mechanism on loss and damage, common timeframes and in addressing the influence of vested interests in UN talks.

While the UK has enforced a new net-zero law and Denmark has committed to ambitious climate targets this week, the inability of the G20 countries to find agreement on climate change

as the leaders' summit approaches in Japan is an alarming sign of backsliding on previous promises to phase out fossil fuel subsidies.

In the next months we call on countries to submit bold and actionable climate plans at the UNSG Climate Summit in September. Contributor countries must come to the Green Climate replenishment meeting later this year with pledges that double on existing individual contributions. A failure to substantially enhance national climate targets and deliver the support to implement them will be seen as a conscious decision to abandon the 1.5C goal.

Members of Climate Action Network react:

Mark Lutes, Senior Global Climate Policy Advisor, WWF said: 'While there was some action outside of the UN climate talks this week – with the UK putting net-zero emissions by 2050 into law, Denmark committing to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 70 per cent by 2030 – and inside things were more procedural. What did catch attention at the meetings were heated exchanges about how Parties will respond to the IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C. The dispute is a sign of what's at stake in responding to the climate crisis and the science of 1.5°C. Parties have to take on board the substance of this and other IPCC science reports in revising their national climate plans.'

Sven Harmeling, CARE's Global Policy Lead on Climate Change and Resilience, said: "In the wake of the UN Climate Action Summit and COP25, outcries sound from the public demanding climate justice amidst fears of catastrophe and a climate apartheid. While more than 20 countries announced in Bonn to improve their national climate plans, now, more than ever, the big emitters must follow their lead. We continue to reiterate the same message to decision makers: heed our warning before it's too late. Government leaders must now step up and provide the emergency action required and stop making empty promises."

Harjeet Singh, global lead on climate change, ActionAid international, said: "Some governments are finally waking up to the threat of catastrophic climate change by setting vague, faraway net-zero carbon targets for 2050. But they are forgetting those already struggling to cope with the devastating effects of global warming. Communities are losing their livelihoods as cyclones tear through Africa, facing water shortages in India and losing farmland to sea level rise in Bangladesh at an alarming rate.

"Despite six years of negotiating, the UN process has failed to face the fact that a new funding mechanism is desperately needed to support people to recover from climate disasters. This process needs to be urgently rebooted in a way that responds to the terrifying reality facing those on the frontline of climate change."

Catherine Abreu, Executive Director, Climate Action Network Canada, said: "2019 has so far been characterized by two trends: people losing their homes and their lives at unimaginable rates thanks to the floods, fires and famines caused by climate chaos, and; governments beholden to fossil fuel interests teaming up to hijack these climate talks and multilateral events like the G20 with destructive anti-climate agendas that betray the people who depend on them. It is sickening. Germany shattered its all-time heat record for June yesterday as Parties sat in air-conditioned rooms debating how to receive the best available science on climate change - proof positive that suppressing climate science won't make the problem go away. Governments of the world listen up: either we confront climate change with you or without you. Act now or become irrelevant."

Ulriikka Aarnio, International Climate Policy Coordinator of Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, said:

“It was positive to see the EU making efforts to defend science and environmental integrity at the Bonn climate talks. However, the EU's failure to agree on reaching net zero emissions by 2050 was clearly a big disappointment for many vulnerable countries who are relying on the EU to show leadership.

We call upon the EU to organise a Climate Emergency Summit to agree on a substantial increase of its 2030 climate target. Otherwise, its empty-handed participation at the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit next September will undermine its role as a global climate champion.”

Alden Meyer, Director of Strategy and Policy, Union of Concerned Scientists, said:

“As superstorms, floods, wildfires, and other climate-related extreme events continue to wreak devastation on communities across the world, people across the world are looking for leadership to address the climate emergency. The United Nations Secretary General has called for a leaders' summit in New York this September to galvanize much greater political will to decarbonize the global economy, to enhance resilience to climate impacts, and to spur the major shifts in finance and investment needed to achieve these goals. Meanwhile, a growing number of governors, mayors, business leaders, investors and others around the world are committing to transformational climate action.

“By contrast, here in Bonn, there wasn't much ambition to be found. While some headway was made on several technical topics, sharp political differences remain on issues such as carbon markets, ramping up finance to help developing countries cope with climate impacts, and even on the role of science in informing policymaker understanding of the urgent need for climate action. On this last point, Saudi Arabia blocked the substantive discussions called for by a large number of vulnerable developing countries on the implications of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees Celsius that was released last October. But while they may have succeeded in short-circuiting formal discussion of the report, the Saudis can't prevent it from continuing to drive the heightened awareness amongst governments, the business community, and the public of the need for an urgent response to the climate crisis.

“All countries must come to the leaders' climate summit in New York and COP25 in Santiago prepared to indicate how they intend to increase the ambition of their national actions, as is required to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Developed countries must also provide greater confidence on how they'll meet their commitment to mobilize \$100 billion in annual support for developing country actions, and to ramp up assistance to the most vulnerable countries that are already experiencing devastating climate impacts.”

Sriram Madhusoodanan, climate campaign director, Corporate Accountability, said:

“What happened here was an injustice – not only for governments and civil society – but for people around the world who desperately need real climate action. Trump's delegation, Australia and other Global North countries went to new lows to prevent the undue and proven influence of the fossil fuel industry from even being acknowledged – let alone addressed. Time and again, the U.S has gone out of its way to undermine the talks on behalf of the fossil fuel industry.

This is what corporate capture looks like and why a conflict of interest policy is so vital for the future of this process. But, the call to kick polluters out is not confined to the walls of the UNFCCC. Following the call from countries collectively representing more than 70% of the world's population, over 600,000 people and hundreds of organizations in more than 130 countries are ensuring this call is inescapable from the UN Climate Summit in September to COP25 in December.”

Erika Lennon, Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), said:

As the climate crisis continues to escalate, climate emergencies are declared, and students take to the streets, it is unconscionable that a handful of countries continue to question climate science. Increasing ambition to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C is essential to the integrity of the Paris Agreement. So too is ensuring that Article 6 mechanisms have strong human rights-based social and environmental safeguards, including meaningful public participation of indigenous peoples, local communities, and women, and an independent grievance body that can address harms if they occur. Anything short undermines the promises made in Paris and further harms communities who are the least responsible for the climate crisis.

Mohamed Adow, Christian Aid's Global Climate Lead, said:

“While a record breaking heat wave causes mayhem across Europe, melting roads and buckling train tracks in Germany, key polluting countries at the climate talks in Bonn have attempted to water down scientific warnings and stall progress. Thankfully attempts by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia and the USA were opposed by most other countries, and especially by vulnerable nations and it's good to see the findings of the IPCC's 1.5C report will be used to inform the next round of national pledges to strengthen the Paris Agreement.

"Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia and the United States are rogue nations. These four major fossil fuel producers are working together against the interests of the rest of the world and jeopardising our chances of a safe climate. These countries hardly agree on anything other than undermining climate science. Because their short-term economic interests rely on fossil fuels are at risk this is their last kick back at the rest of the world by suppressing scientific warnings.”

Rixa Schwarz, Team Leader International Climate Policy, Germanwatch, said:

During the UN climate talks, the negotiators remained unaffected by the European heat wave and the youth movement, which at the same time brought 40,000 people onto the streets. Germanwatch considers the pace of negotiations to be insufficient to promote the speedy implementation of the Paris Agreement. This lack of speed at the UN climate talks must be compensated outside the negotiating context. On 23 September, the world will turn its attention to the UN Secretary-General's climate summit in New York. Germany and the EU must respond to the UN Secretary-General Guterres' call for concrete plans. After the failure to agree on a net-zero climate target in June, Germanwatch calls for this decision to be taken at a special EU Council meeting in September. Germany must play a driving role in this.

Jean Su, Energy Director, Center for Biological Diversity, said:

“It's unconscionable that countries have failed this week to make any meaningful progress to combat the climate emergency. As undertaking the clean energy revolution is now technologically and economically viable, the major obstacle to real climate action is the sheer lack of political will. We urge world leaders to listen to the millions of people in the streets and act with humanity and courage to turn this crisis around.”

Gilles Dufrasne, Policy Officer, Carbon Market Watch, said:

“Article 6 negotiations progressed marginally, but there is no real sign indicating that countries are ready to adopt rules which will actually safeguard the environmental integrity of the Paris Agreement. At this stage, everything is still on the table, including many proposals which are nothing but foolish accounting tricks which will do nothing to actually reduce emissions.”

Carlos Rittl, executive secretary, Brazilian Climate Observatory, said:

“World governments are still procrastinating on climate even when they are literally feeling the effects of the crisis on their skin, as we saw this week in Bonn. This meeting has started amidst stern warnings of a climate emergency, and you don’t treat an emergency by promising to go carbon-neutral in 35 years. Science is yelling that “now” means “now”, but some parties have chosen to shoot the messenger. “

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About CAN

Climate Action Network (CAN) is a global network of over 1100 NGOs in more than 120 countries working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. More information on www.climatenetwork.org