

## **COP 21: Parliament to serve as 'EU's watchdog'**

Written by Jo Leinen on 2 December 2015 in Opinion  
Opinion

Countries have been afforded exceptional momentum ahead of crunch COP 21 talks, but the work is far from over, writes Jo Leinen.



Over the past few years, a lot of work has been done to create momentum for COP 21 to finally result in a comprehensive agreement at global level. Yet despite huge support from governments, civil society and business, not all is settled yet. Uncertainties will remain up to the very end. This year's presidency will have to bear the challenge of both maintaining an ambitious level, while involving all delegations.

The European Parliament expects the Paris summit to deliver an agreement with four important characteristics. First, it should entail a legally binding framework for political action to reach the two degree target.

Second, the agreement should be binding for all countries. For the first time, we can get all major economies on board, as well as smaller, vulnerable states that are most impacted by climate change. Countries such as the US and China sent a clear signal ahead of COP 21 to commit to a new

international protocol. Even if we would like to see more significant promises to reduce emissions or turn away from fossil fuels, their will to integrate into a common framework is already a big step forward.

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China is more aware of necessary emission reductions; not only did it announce plans to set a national emission trading scheme by 2017, it has also pledged to increase its renewable energy production mix significantly over the next 15 years.

Third, Parliament wants Paris to result in an ambitious text. Provisions for future engagement in climate protection should aim at an early decarbonisation. A phase out of carbon emissions towards the end of the century would be too late to keep temperature rise below two degrees.

Fourth, the agreement should leave some leeway for increasing ambition over time. Countries should commit to a regular process to renew their reduction commitments. This will make climate action easier over the next decades and allow for flexibilities that some countries ask for.

With this exceptional momentum in Paris, it is even more important for the EU to speak with one voice. If there are too many different interests among the member states, the success of the negotiations may be at risk. Parliament might not sit at the negotiation table itself, but it will surely be the EU's watchdog at COP 21.

## About the author

Jo Leinen (S&D, DE) is Chair of Parliament's delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China

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