

## **COP24: The EU's moment of truth**

Written by Jo Leinen on 25 October 2018 in Opinion  
Opinion

Action to tackle climate change is now an imperative rather than an objective, argues Jo Leinen.



Jo Leinen | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

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This year's UN climate summit will undoubtedly represent a moment of truth for international climate action.

There are high expectations of a strong reaction from the global community to the recent Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which highlights the disastrous damage a 2°C rise and above would have on global warming.

In addition, developing regions anticipate major economies to accept their responsibility for climate action and fulfil their financial commitments.

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For global climate action to progress successfully, it will be decisive whether the EU can form a global alliance to implement the Paris Agreement.

One of the most striking aspects of the IPCC report was the following statement: “The likelihood of an Arctic Ocean free of sea ice in summer would be once per century with global warming of 1.5°C, compared with at least once per decade with 2°C.”

This means that 2°C warming could have disastrous consequences, making the Paris goal to stay “well below” 2°C an imperative rather than an objective.

In fact, to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, global warming must be limited to as close to 1.5°C as possible.

“Europe needs to be one of the leaders in ensuring success at COP24, demonstrating its readiness to live up to expectations”

The so-called Talanoa Dialogue on increasing national contributions is already ongoing and should be concluded in Poland.

The Katowice summit needs to send a strong signal that the Paris signatories are prepared to increase their contributions, as the current submissions would still allow global temperatures to rise to 2.7 to 3.2 °C above pre-industrial levels.

As the first official stocktake, the IPCC report, along with the Talanoa Dialogue, will highlight the urgency of additional action.

As well as readiness to reduce emissions, COP24 will be decisive for implementing the Paris Agreement with binding rules that ensure a high level of transparency of states’ actions.

Three years after agreeing to the Climate Accord and two years after its entry into force, finalising the Paris Rulebook will be the next milestone in international climate action.

It will also be the next test for the global community’s commitment and ability to sign up to clear rules that go beyond political statements.

Europe needs to be one of the leaders in ensuring success at COP24, demonstrating its readiness to live up to expectations to bring its own climate commitments in line with a well-below 2°C scenario.

“Making COP24 a success will only be possible with an alliance of states and actors pushing together for strong implementation of the Paris Agreement”

COP24 represents a test for Europe. There is growing pressure on the Commission and member states to increase the EU's 2030 climate target and to set an ambitious 2050 long-term climate path.

Only two days after the publication of the IPCC Report, the Parliament's Environment Committee called for an update of the current goal of 40 percent to 55 percent emission cuts compared to 1990.

While the ministers in Council dared not specify an increased target, the Conservatives in the Environment Committee even voted against the resolution when the plea for 55 percent passed.

However, 2018 is not yet ill-fated for EU climate policy. Europe has overcome its pre-Paris Climate Framework and has agreed to higher renewable and energy efficiency targets in June.

Following a disappointing agreement on the so-called Climate Action Regulation on member states' efforts at reduction, forest sector and land use regulation in Europe was improved in the final stage of negotiations.

This will set clear precedents for the role of emission sinks. The price for an EU emission allowance has tripled since January following the approval of the reforms to the trading scheme earlier this year.

Parliament has also made another clear call to the Council and Commission, asking for higher CO2 targets for new cars, setting European industry on the right track.

These developments have already eased a higher 2030 sector-wide target. Clearer language on increased ambition by negotiators of the Council and Commission in Katowice would send an important signal to the partners of the developing regions that will pressure major economies to accept their responsibility.

With the Commission's draft 2050 climate plan expected in late November, there is yet another opportunity for the EU to demonstrate its commitment to the Paris objectives before heading to Poland.

For the Environment Committee, it is clear that the EU needs to become climate neutral by 2050 at the latest.

This 2050 strategy can become a genuine future plan for Europe, its economy and its society. It is a chance that should not be missed.

However, Europe is not alone in this. Making COP24 a success will only be possible with an alliance of states and actors pushing together for strong implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The EU needs to actively seek its strategic partners in climate action, with ambitious actors like Canada and important economies like China and India.

It needs to open the door for all non-state actors to help send a clear message from Katowice.

There is worldwide support for action on climate change and we are ready to turn the political commitment of the Paris Agreement into real world emission cuts.

**About the author**

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