

Jana Lippelt* and Lea Mayer**

After the Paris Agreement – What’s Next? Worldwide Implementation

In November 2016, barely a year after the climate conference in Paris, the agreement negotiated there came into effect. Its entry into force required the ratification by at least 55 countries, which together account for 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. By mid-November 2017, 197 countries had joined the agreement, while 170 of them – with a combined emission share of 88 percent – had already ratified (UNFCCC 2017; see also Figure 1a).

RESULTS OF MARRAKECH

In contrast to the Kyoto Protocol, emerging and developing countries in addition to industrialized countries also committed to climate protection measures (in the form of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions – INDC) after signing the Paris Agreement. At the last climate conference in Marrakech (in 2016), an agreement was reached on a regular review of national action plans and the development of transparency plans. In essence, the contracting parties agreed to submit concrete rules to this end by 2018 in order to steadily tighten national climate contributions. The reason for that is the fact that the climate contributions submitted to date by states are not sufficient to reduce global warming to below 2°C, or even to 1.5°C compared to its pre-industrial levels (Hickmann 2017). Let us consider a few examples.

As an association of industrialised countries, the European Union has set common targets under the Paris Agreement. By 2020, greenhouse gas emissions are to be reduced by 20 percent compared to 1990, by 40 percent by 2030 and by 80–95 percent by 2050. Renewables as a share of total energy consumption should reach 20 percent in 2020 and 27 percent in 2030 (European Commission 2017).

In addition to the European Union as a whole and the United States, China and India are among the states with the highest emissions of greenhouse gases worldwide (see Figure 1b). As part of the Paris Agreement, China has set several environmental targets to

be achieved by 2030. CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP, for example, are expected to fall 60–65 percent compared to 2005 levels. By 2030 at the latest, the total CO₂ emissions of China should have peaked and will subsequently decline steadily. In addition, 20 percent of the energy is to be generated by non-fossil energy sources, while the volume of forest land is expected to increase by 4.5 billion cubic meters compared to 2005 at the same time. In order to achieve climate goals even more effectively in future, an emissions trading system was implemented in China. In addition to the pilot projects already running in several cities, the nationwide system is going to be launched at the end of 2017 and fully implemented by 2020 (International Carbon Action Partnership 2017; The Climate Group 2017). India has announced a reduction in emissions per unit of GDP by 33–35 percent compared to 2005 by 2030. Furthermore, 40 percent of energy will be generated from non-fossil fuels and 2.5–3 billion tons CO₂ will be additionally bound by larger forest areas (Government of India 2015).

Another outcome of the conference in Marrakech was the creation of the ‘NDC Partnership’, which aims to help developing countries achieve their climate targets. This network of governments and international institutions aims to exchange knowledge and improve access to technical and financial resources (BMZ 2017). In this context, the industrialised countries also agreed to commit 100 billion US dollars by 2020 in order to secure climate protection in developing and emerging countries, as well as bolster efforts to adapt to climate change.

In addition to decisions on climate financing, Marrakech also focused on achieving the current climate protection targets by 2020 in order to further promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Given that current climate contributions are not sufficient to mitigate climate change, concrete cooperation should be stepped up beyond the national level. In this context, the ‘Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action’ was launched, among other things, to stimulate and bundle climate protection activities at national, regional and private level in the form of initiatives and networks (UNFCCC 2016). To this end, framework conditions and platforms are to be set up to facilitate meetings among the different players involved, as well as the monitoring and documentation of multiple processes.

CLIMATE INITIATIVES WORLDWIDE

In general, the influence of global initiatives at a non-state level has become increasingly important, not least because of the rather sluggish Kyoto process. Numerous examples of regional, national and cross-border cooperation demonstrate the growing resolve of various players to tackle climate change and to further support agreements at the state level. The most well-known city-level associations include,

* ifo Institute.

** ifo Institute.

Figure 1a
Paris Agreement: Status of Ratification

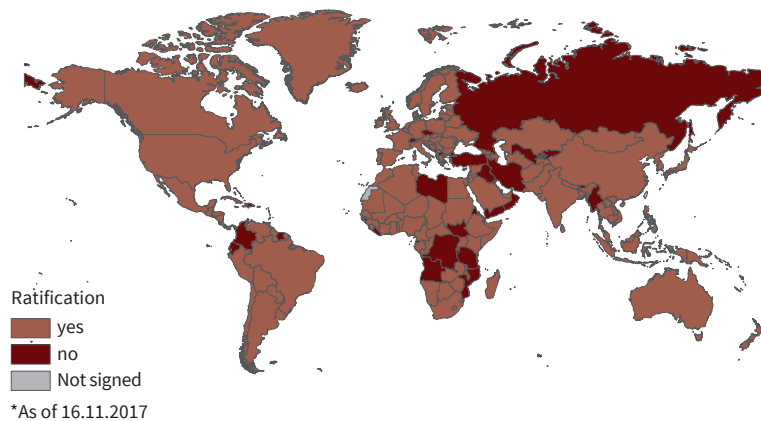
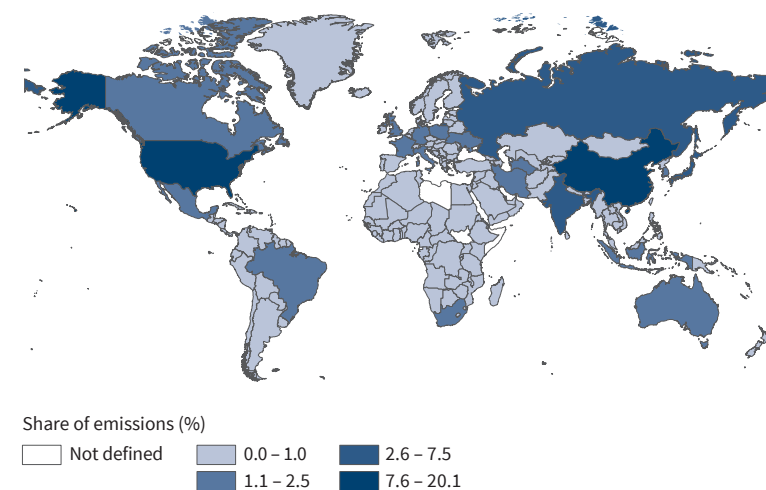


Figure 1b
Global Share of Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Source: PIK Potsdam: Paris Reality Check (2017).

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for example, the EU-level ‘Convent of Mayors for Climate and Energy’ and the ‘C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group’ (Konvent der Bürgermeister 2017; C40 Cities 2017). Furthermore, a whole series of initiatives for companies has been launched in recent years including the WWF’s Climate Savers Initiative. Here companies that achieve particularly ambitious emissions targets are recognised by the WWF as ‘climate savers’. Other enterprise-level networks include 3C – Combatting Climate Change, which have been campaigning for a political change since 2007, as well as the Carbon Disclosure Project (Handelsblatt 2017).

Even against the backdrop of the current political situation in the United States, all-party alliances are becoming increasingly important. In June, US President Donald Trump announced that the United States will exit the Paris Agreement after ordering a move away from the Clean Power Plan under Barack Obama in March (The Guardian 2017; New York Times 2017). He describes the agreement as unfair to the United States, as it would have to take more action than other countries and would have to pay a disproportionate contribution into the climate fund. According to

him, a withdrawal from the agreement is therefore necessary to keep jobs in the United States and to provide the country with enough money (The White House 2017). Hardly any other US politicians agree with the President and this decision. The democratic governors of New York, Washington and California founded the ‘US Climate Alliance’ on the same day. The members have decided to comply with the Paris Agreement, thus continuing the US goal of saving over 26 percent of greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 to 2025, or achieving its own equivalent or higher target. The states of California and New York, for example, aim to reduce CO₂ emissions by 40 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (State of California 2017; New York State 2017). The alliance has no legal ties, but only bundles the states that want to achieve this goal (Brown and Serve 2017). However, 14 states are

already members, including several states with republican governors. The alliance embodies over a third of the American population (US Climate Alliance 2017).

However, these initiatives are not an absolute novelty in the United States. Under the Kyoto Protocol, various states had already joined forces, such as the ‘North America 2050’ or the ‘Pacific Coast Collaborative’, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by means of energy efficiency measures and improvements in the transport sector. Moreover, regional emissions trading systems such as RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) and the WCI (Western Climate Initiative) have also been established.

Ultimately, the success of all global efforts crucially depends on how effectively the agreements reached will be implemented in the future. In the forthcoming climate negotiations of Bonn (end of 2017, under the Fiji presidency) and Poland (Katowice in 2018), the focus will be on creating appropriate instruments to implement the Paris Agreement (IWR 2017). The purpose is to create a rulebook specifying the details of the application of the Paris Agreement, which should be adopted at the end of 2018 in Poland.

PERSPECTIVES

To date, it is still unclear whether and to what extent the US plans to defuse the country's withdrawal. However, it will only continue to abide by the Paris Agreement under conditions that are more favourable to the United States (Zeit Online 2017). The recent Nicaraguan and Syrian declarations on accession to the agreement highlight the global isolation of the United States on this issue.

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