



As the UN Holds Global Climate Talks, Climate Consensus is Crumbling

By Steve Goreham

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The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24), a United Nations-led effort to fight global climate change, [began](#) Monday in Katowice, Poland. More than 15,000 attendees from 190 nations are expected to participate. But as delegates arrive at Katowice 2018, the global climate consensus is crumbling.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has held annual [conferences](#) since COP 1 in Berlin, Germany in 1995, attempting to establish obligations on nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Delegates and observers travel each year by carbon-emitting aircraft to exotic global locations, such as Bali, Geneva, and Nairobi, to haggle over the timing and amount of emissions reductions.

[COP 3](#) in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997 was the first notable Conference of the Parties. COP3 adopted the Kyoto Protocol treaty, which obligated developed nations to reduce emissions 6 to 8 percent below 1990 levels. More than 190 nations adopted the Protocol, with the United States being the major exception.

[COP 16](#) in Cancún, Mexico in December, 2010 established the “Green Climate Fund (GCF),” calling for \$100 billion per year to be contributed by developed nations to fund climate projects and programs in the developing nations. COP 16 also adopted the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2°C warming over pre-industrial temperatures.

[COP 21](#) in Paris adopted the Paris Climate Accords on December 12, 2015. The Paris Agreement was a non-binding agreement signed by 196 nations, pledging to reduce emissions from 2020 according to each nation’s own “nationally determined contributions.” The Paris Agreement reaffirmed commitments to the GCF and to limiting

global temperature rise to “well below 2 degrees C.”

But as delegates arrived for this year’s conference in Katowice, it’s clear that efforts to fight climate change are in trouble. Almost all major nations are behind on their 2015 commitments to reduce emissions.

On June 1, 2017, US President Trump [announced](#) that the US would withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords. Subsequently, the US government [slashed](#) funding for UN climate efforts from \$1.7 billion in FY 2017 proposed by the Obama Administration to only \$160 million. Most of the cuts were from the amount proposed for the GCF.

Although [established](#) at COP 16 in 2010, funding for the Green Climate Fund has always been shaky. But the lure of \$100 billion in annual payments from wealthy to poor nations was a major reason for China, India, and other developing countries to support UN global warming efforts.

In 2014, contributors [pledged](#) \$10.3 billion to the GCF, with \$3 billion pledged by the Obama Administration. But only \$1 billion of the US pledge was delivered prior to the Trump Administration cuts. GCF projects today total less than \$5 billion in value. GCF Executive Director Howard Bamsey of Australia [resigned](#) after a meeting in July when no new projects were approved.

In addition to the collapse of the Green Climate Fund, rebellious citizens are forcing governments to scale back efforts to “fight” climate change in key nations. On August 24, Scott Morrison [replaced](#) Malcolm Turnbull as the new Prime Minister of Australia. Power outages and rising electricity prices from green energy policies played a key role in forcing the change of administration.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who led opposition efforts to change the government, [called](#) for Australia to abandon the Paris Accords in July. Threatened with trade sanctions, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced in October that Australia would not leave the Paris Accords, but would no longer contribute to the GCF.

In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continues to strongly support UN climate efforts, but his provincial governments are revolting. The provinces of Alberta, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Saskatchewan now [oppose](#) Trudeau’s carbon tax. In Ontario, where electricity prices have skyrocketed, Doug Ford was elected Premier in June. Ford immediately cancelled hundreds of renewable energy contracts and eliminated the \$14,000CN electric car subsidy.

Jair Bolsonaro, [elected](#) President of Brazil in October, declared in campaign speeches that he would pull his nation out of the Paris Climate Accords. After Bolsonaro’s election, France’s President Emmanuel Macron [threatened](#) not to sign the EU-Mercosur trade deal if Brazil withdrew from the Paris Agreement. Last week Bolsonaro stated that Brazil will remain in the agreement, but Brazil also [withdrew](#) its offer to host the 2019 COP 25 conference.

Last week, President Macron [encountered](#) a climate revolt in his own nation. More than 100,000 people took to the streets in Paris to protest his new fuel tax. Yellow-vested demonstrators clashed with police and scaled the Arc de Triomphe. Macron implemented the tax to reduce vehicle use to try to combat global warming.

Global climate efforts are crumbling. If the United Nations has its way, we may get to see the 50th Conference of the Parties. But on the other hand, citizens may force governments to stop foolish efforts to try to control global temperatures.

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