



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

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Op-Ed: COP21



From rising seas across the globe and the melting of Greenland's sheet ice to the bleaching of coral reefs around many coasts, the signs of climate change are all around us. As a global society, we are at a critical juncture where the decisions we make today will help shape the climate into which our children and children's children will be born.

But this is not just about the future. There are immediate benefits to keeping pollutants out of our environment: cleaner air, lower energy costs, and new growth industries.

These are the stakes at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris, where representatives from almost 200 nations will gather from November 30 to December 11 to negotiate a comprehensive climate agreement for the post-2020 world. Now more than ever, there is social and political will to do something about the rise in global temperatures and its ripple effect through the environment. More than 160 countries, responsible for around 90 percent of global emissions, have announced climate targets ahead of the conference. This is a clear step forward. As a reference point, only about 30 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions were addressed under the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.

The United States is taking bold action on climate change at home as we work with partner nations to do the same. Since President Obama took office, the United States has reduced carbon emissions, tripled domestic wind energy production, and increased solar power twenty fold. We've put in place stringent new fuel economy standards so that our cars use less gas, energy is used more efficiently, and an historic amount of land and water has been protected for future generations. At the same time, the U.S. economy has expanded, proving that addressing climate change can go hand-in-hand with economic growth.

Going forward, President Obama's Clean Power Plan will cut emissions from the U.S. power sector – which makes up a third of our nation's carbon emissions – by 32 percent by 2030 and will save more than \$50 billion in climate and health-related costs in the process.

With countries like China, India, and Brazil now pledging to reduce emissions, we have a serious chance to put in place a transformative plan. In Paris, the United States will push for an effective agreement that continues to drive ambitious climate action by all countries, while recognizing the differences among them. We believe this agreement should provide a long-term framework – with high standards of transparency and accountability – that encourages nations to

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ratchet up their targets over time. And it must provide countries in need with financial and technical support for low-carbon development and adaptation to a changing climate.

Here in Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom has led the world as a reliable global energy supplier for decades. Saudi Arabia has unique capacity to lead investment into innovations that turn existing and new technologies and fuels into the cleanest possible sources of power. We commend the Saudi Arabian government for announcing its own plan to avoid the annual emission into the atmosphere of up to 130 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. From the magical desert to miles of coastline to the jobs that come from powering our global economy, Saudi Arabia has so much to gain by protecting the Kingdom from the damaging effects of global climate change.

With leaders and representatives from almost every nation on earth convening in Paris, there is an historic opportunity to strike a far-reaching and durable climate agreement. We have the political will and groundswell of social support to make it work, but we will need to come together and be pragmatic in order to reach a deal. For brighter skies today and a more secure tomorrow, now is the time for the nations of the world to act.

By Joseph W. Westphal, U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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