

Paris 2015 Climate Change Summit – Making the Difference

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30 Nov 2015

<Singapore> Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and Masagos Zulkifli, Environment and Water Resources Minister will be among the key participants at the 11-day Paris 2015 Climate Change Summit starting today.

To be attended by government heads of 150 nations and 40,000 participants from 195 countries, the Summit has 2 basic goals in layperson terms: to forge a single agreement to tackle climate change by capping the rate of global warming by 2 deg C from pre-industrial level by 2100 and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels while pushing for cleaner energy sources.

Global climate summits begun as far back in 1972 and with a number of non-fulfilment in past summits why many participants, industry experts, law makers are positive that Paris 2015 will be different.

Making the Difference

Unlike other earlier summits, the “bottom-up” approach via the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) gives countries greater flexibility to submit what they viewed as practical and achievable carbon emission targets while managing economic growth of their respective nations. Secondly, more scientific evidences are now available to demonstrate the damages from climate change. In fact, 2014 was declared the hottest year since temperature measurements on a global basis become available.

Moreover, major carbon emitters that include the US, China, Canada and even Saudi Arabia are amongst the 170 countries that have submitted their INDCs to address global warming. In the case of China, the world’s second largest carbon emitter after the US has earlier pledged to reduce its carbon emissions by between 30-50% by 2030.

Challenges Ahead

Firstly, developing countries and skeptics feel that the US\$100B per year commitments from developed countries from 2020 onward are unlikely to be met thus resulting in climate mitigation projects in developing countries being stalled. Secondly, India’s Prime Minister Modi will be arguing for “Climate Injustice” at the Summit.

India’s carbon emissions is projected to reach 4.1% of the world’s total carbon emissions by 2030 but its Prime Minister is leading a charge that developed nations that have been polluting the air for the past 200 years should take up more responsibilities in their contributions to curb climate change. This is not a new line of argument and has constantly surfaced in past summits as the deal-breaker.

Adding to the list, while INDCs give more flexibility to nations, the compilation of the target reductions from 170 countries do not add up to the requirement to curb the

average global warming increase by 2 deg C. As in previous cases while climate negotiators are now equipped with more scientific evidences of the damages from climate changes, these information presented in abstract numbers do not seem to bring forth the message that climate change impact is imminent.

Watch this space to see if Paris 2015 achieves the objectives it set out to do.

Get your Cheat Sheet on “ABCs of Climate Change [here](#).

This article first appeared in EcoInvest (S) Pte Ltd website on 30 Nov 2015 at:
www.ecoinvest.com.sg

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