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New China, US, EU post-2020 plans reduce projected warming – Climate Action Tracker

Lima – 8 December 2014--For the first time since 2009 the Climate Action Tracker has calculated a lower projected warming over the 21st century than before - because of the new proposed post-2020 actions from China, the US and the EU. However, this is still not enough to limit warming below 2°C.

The Climate Action Tracker is an assessment by four research organisations: Climate Analytics, Ecofys, NewClimate Institute and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, assessing government pledges and actions against what's needed to limit warming below a 2°C increase above preindustrial levels, and against the goal of bringing warming below 1.5°C by 2100.

If China, the United States and the European Union, who together comprise around 53% of global emissions, fully implement their new, post-2020 plans, they would limit global temperature rise to around 3°C by 2100, between 0.2°C and 0.4°C lower than it would have been prior to their announcements. These announcements are more ambitious than previous commitments, and represent significant progress, but remain insufficient to limit warming below 2°C.

"China, the US and the EU are proposing additional action that, if implemented, would reduce projected warming to around 3degC, which is better than it would have been but still substantially above the almost universally-agreed goal of holding warming below 2°C," said Bill Hare, Executive Director of Climate Analytics.

"In the context of increasing momentum towards a global agreement to be adopted in Paris in 2015, this represents a very important first step towards what is needed. Tempering this optimism is the large gap that remains between the policies that governments have put in place that will lead to warming 3.9°C by 2100, compared to the improvements they've made in their promises.

"These new developments indicate an increasing political will to meet the long-term goals, and it is encouraging that the EU and US are putting their pledges closer to a direct path to their 2050 goals, rather than relying on delayed, rapid action post-2030," said Hare.

China, US, EU

"We estimate that China will likely achieve its 2020 pledge and the objectives stated for 2030, reaching 20% share of non-fossil fuels in a manner that is consistent with peaking CO₂ emissions by 2030. Levelling emissions off after 2030 has a major positive effect on global warming in the 21st century," said Niklas Höhne, Founding Partner of the NewClimate Institute.

"However, China's post 2020 emissions levels remain unclear and difficult to quantify - an important point when considering rules and ways to measure the climate action governments have to table next year on the way to Paris.

"China's peak by 2030 falls somewhat short of a 2°C pathway. However, if emissions peak just five years earlier, this could make a very big difference and move them very close to a 2°C pathway," said Höhne.

He noted that with its current and full implementation of its proposed policies, the US appears likely to meet its 2020 goal of 17 percent. However, further measures will be needed to meet its newly-proposed 2025 goals.

The EU's current policies put it on a good trajectory toward meeting its 2020 target. However, with current policies the EU is not on track to meet its more ambitious conditional target of 30% emissions reduction below 1990 levels by 2020 and the 40% reduction target by 2030.

Other governments need to step up

The Climate Action Tracker noted that Governments like India could take further action. Recent discussions indicate that India could be considering putting forward in 2015 a peak year for emissions between 2035 and 2050 which, depending upon the level at which this peak occurred, could be consistent with a 2°C pathway.

In today's update, the CAT has also assessed multiple countries and made them available on its website.

The assessments find that China, the EU and Brazil's currently implemented policies will be sufficient to meet their pledge, even though the all of these pledges could be much improved.

Japan, Russia and Ukraine are also achieving their pledge, but this is primarily due to the lack of ambition in their targets. At the other end of the scale, Australia, New Zealand and Norway are far away from achieving their pledges. Most other countries also still have to implement additional policies or purchase international emission units to achieve their pledges.

"There is considerable diversity between countries both in terms of the ambition level of their reduction pledges and the actual translation of these pledges into policy action on the ground. If all countries followed the leading country on both tasks, the goal of limiting warming to below 2°C could be within reach," says Professor Kornelis Blok, Director of Science at Ecofys.

Of the 22 countries the Climate Action Tracker analysed, only five are projected to meet their 2020 pledges, with 13 exceeding (an assessment of the remainder has not been possible). Very few of the pledges are consistent with limiting warming below 2°C. The overview below shows, for the first time, the emergence of a decline in emissions (if pledges to 2050 were fully implemented) compared to the previous continuous increase in a pathway based on current policy projections. This decline, however, is still small.

Carbon budget

"We only have a very limited amount of carbon that can be burnt by 2050, and we calculate that, current policies would exceed this budget by over 60 percent by that time. We clearly have a lot of work to do," said Hare.

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Climate Analytics

Climate Analytics is a non-profit organisation based in Potsdam, Germany. It has been established to synthesize climate science and policy research that is relevant for international climate policy negotiations. It aims to provide scientific, policy and analytical support for Small Island States (SIDS) and the least developed country group (LDCs) negotiators, as well as non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders in the 'post-2012' negotiations. Furthermore, it assists in building in-house capacity within SIDS and LDCs. Contact: Dr. h.c. Bill Hare, +49 160 908 62463

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Ecofys – Experts in Energy

Established in 1984 with the mission of achieving "sustainable energy for everyone", Ecofys has become the leading expert in renewable energy, energy & carbon efficiency, energy systems & markets as well as energy & climate policy. The unique synergy between those areas of expertise is the key to its success. Ecofys creates smart, effective, practical and sustainable solutions for and with public and corporate clients all over the world. With offices in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, China and the US, Ecofys employs over 250 experts dedicated to solving energy and climate challenges.

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Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

The PIK conducts research into global climate change and issues of sustainable development. Set up in 1992, the Institute is regarded as a pioneer in interdisciplinary research and as one of the world's leading establishments in this field. Scientists, economists and social scientists work together, investigating how the earth is changing as a system, studying the ecological, economic and social consequences of climate change, and assessing which strategies are appropriate for sustainable development.

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NewClimate Institute

NewClimate Institute is a non-profit institute established in 2014. NewClimate Institute supports research and implementation of action against climate change around the globe, covering the topics international climate negotiations, tracking climate action, climate and development, climate finance and carbon market mechanisms. NewClimate Institute aims at connecting up-to-date research with the real world decision making processes.

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