



U.N. Climate Negotiations Conclude with Mixed Results U.S. Sub-National Action Provides Glimmer of Hope

December 15, 2019—[The Environmental and Energy Study Institute](#) (EESI) regrets the limited decisions reached at the U.N. climate negotiations in Madrid. Representatives from almost 200 nations met at the 25th Conference of the Parties of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) to address issues left undecided in the Paris Agreement Rulebook, which was developed at last year’s meeting in Poland. The negotiations in Madrid centered on devising a framework for international carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Ultimately, after the longest COP in the history of the process, countries could not deliver a strong agreement on a framework for international carbon markets that would have environmental integrity at its core. Negotiations are set to continue at the intersessional meeting in June 2020. This step reflects a widely shared position that observers and many countries would rather see no decision on Article 6 versus a bad decision. Still, until the issues under Article 6 are resolved, little else can be accomplished, which leaves other important issues in a holding pattern.

“The delegates did agree on several key items: they adopted a decision on addressing loss and damage caused by climate change, as well as a gender action plan. Though these decisions coming out of COP25 are promising, the negotiating process is not keeping pace with the steps that would be required from the international community to address the climate crisis head on,” said EESI Policy Associate Anna McGinn, who attended the first week of the meetings in Madrid.

“But, we cannot give up on this process,” said McGinn. “The Paris Agreement is the best tool we have, at the international level, to have common rules, processes for transparency and accountability, and financing to facilitate greenhouse gas emission reductions. Despite the slower-than-desired negotiations, the COP is still critical because experts and community leaders from around the world use this time and space to build each other’s capacity to implement climate mitigation and adaptation projects and to work for climate-smart policies at the country and sub-national levels while simultaneously encouraging a strong outcome from the negotiating rooms.”

“Being at COP, among the world’s top climate experts and most passionate advocates for action, is always inspiring,” added McGinn. “Addressing climate change is one of the most significant challenges faced by society, but taking action on climate will create jobs, foster innovation, improve public health, and promote environmental justice.”

COP25 also put a special emphasis on the ocean-climate nexus—an area of science and policy in need of more attention. Delegates considered the negative effects of climate change on ocean health and the ocean’s potential as part of the solution.

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“The results of the climate negotiations in Madrid were disappointing. But what was even more disappointing is the lack of leadership from the United States,” said EESI Executive Director Daniel Bresette. “The Administration has relinquished its duty to lead the way on climate action. It is failing to tackle climate change with the urgency it demands. Fortunately, other Americans are taking action. In particular, I would like to thank the Congressional delegation, led by Speaker Pelosi, [who conveyed a message](#) that reflects what [75 percent of Americans](#) know: humans are causing climate change, and we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.”

The U.S. Climate Action Center also stood as a beacon of hope to show the world that U.S. sub-national entities—including cities, states, corporations, faith groups, academia, farmers, and investors—are in full support of reaching the United States’ goals under the Paris Agreement. The Center showcased the work of alliances such as We Are Still In, America’s Pledge, Climate Mayors, and the U.S. Climate Alliance that are all working to keep the United States on a trajectory to meet its Paris commitments.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries agreed to increase their ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the form of revised or resubmitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) in 2020. Updated NDC announcements were not expected in Madrid, though Chile had hoped countries would signal their intent to increase their ambitions. Eighty countries did deliver new commitments; however, collectively those countries represent only 10 percent of global emissions. Among the most significant pledges was the European Union’s, which announced the “European Green Deal.” It is expected to be a legally binding commitment by the European Union, with the exception of Poland, to reach a net-zero emissions target by 2050. EESI is hopeful this will set the tone for increased ambition from countries around the world leading up to COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2020.

For more information, see these EESI articles:

- [The United States at COP25: Congressional Delegations and Civil Society Groups Are Engaged](#)
- [Climate Reports Launched at COP25: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly](#)
- [The Blue COP: U.N. Climate Conference Takes a Close Look at the Ocean](#)

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