

CLIMATE:

Much at stake if the world sticks to 'business as usual'

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Despite the failings of the 2015 Paris Agreement, China has been a solid supporter of the agreement's principles on climate change.

Chinese Special Representative on Climate Change Affairs Xie Zhenhua has said China will continue to play a leading role in global climate efforts.

Xie made the remarks on Sept 14 at a news conference following the conclusion of a three-day Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco.

During the summit, 10 Chinese philanthropic organizations, foundations and research institutions launched the Global Climate Action Initiative with a view to giving full support to the Chinese government as it acts to honor a series of climate change commitments made by China's President Xi Jinping, *China Daily* reported.

These commitments include making a national contribution to the global effort to curb climate change, promoting South-South cooperation in curbing climate change, and building a "green" Belt and Road Initiative, the report said.

"The initiative also calls on the entire Chinese society and the international community to respond actively to climate change and take immediate action to encourage sustainable development in order to achieve a global ecological civilization," the paper said.

"China has overcome enormous difficulties and made enormous contributions (to global climate efforts)," said Xie.

China pledged to peak greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by around 2030; lower GHG emissions per unit of gross domestic product by 60 to 65 percent from the 2005 level; increase the share of non-fossil energy in total energy consumption to around 20 percent; and increase forest stock volume by around 4.5 billion cubic meters from 2005 levels.

According to Xie, China has invested \$127.7 billion to develop renewable energy, ranking it first in the world for six consecutive years. Its renewable power installed capacity reached 650 million kilowatts in 2017, accounting for 30 percent of the world's total, he said.

"China has made remarkable achievements in renewable energy development. Its new technologies and large-scale manufacturing have greatly reduced the cost, allowing the renewable energy sources to compete with traditional energy sources," Xie said.

China has acknowledged that the climate is changing and changing rapidly.

In July, alerts were issued for parts of China as a heat wave swept much of the country. Scorching high tem-



Charles Bedford, regional managing director for Asia-Pacific, The Nature Conservancy.

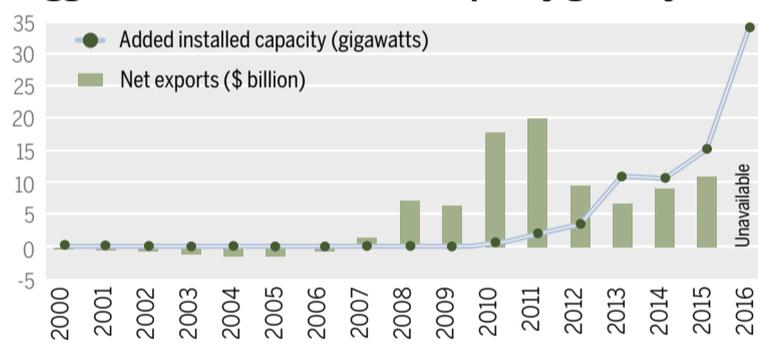


Liu Sifang, senior consultant, Wood Mackenzie.



Nicolas Pechet, partner, Solidiance.

The growth of China's solar sector has triggered a boom in installed capacity globally



peratures were recorded in a vast area including Liaoning, Jilin and Hubei provinces, Chongqing, and the Xinjiang Uygur and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions, Xinhua reported on July 31.

The China Meteorological Administration said July was hotter and wetter than usual, *China Daily* reported on Aug 3.

Shanghai had an 11-day heat wave in July, the longest recorded in the city in 145 years, Xinhua reported on July 29. The city saw a temperature of 40.9 C on July 21, the highest since local meteorological records began.

For countries like China, climate change has become a major challenge, especially in urban centers where air pollution has reached critical levels.

"China's central government leadership is keenly aware that poor environmental conditions can severely affect social stability and emigration of its wealthiest citizens," according to Shanghai-based Nicolas Pechet, a partner at Solidiance, an Asia-focused corporate strategy consulting firm.

China's economy has already entered a "new normal," featuring more moderate economic growth, a greater focus on the quality of growth, and a move away from heavy manufacturing, Pechet said.

China's industrial sector has underpinned its modern economic development, which accounts for more than 70 percent of its total energy consumption.

China's 13th Five-Year Plan, which runs through to end-2020, specifies a 15 percent reduction in energy consumption intensity and an 18 percent drop in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions intensity, while boosting forest cover to over 23 percent of total land area.

"If these targets are met, China will make significant progress toward its commitments under the Paris Agreement on climate change to peak carbon dioxide emissions in 2030 or sooner," Pechet said, adding: "This progress must be applauded."

He was speaking to *China Daily Asia Weekly* shortly after the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) delivered its most dire warning yet on the future of the world's climate.

In the IPCC report released on Oct 8, some of the world's leading climate scientists warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5 C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

The authors of the landmark report say urgent and unprecedented changes are needed to reach the target, which they say is affordable and feasible although it lies at the most ambitious end of the Paris Agreement pledge to limit the global temperature rise to between 1.5 C and 2 C.

The *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 C* was approved by the IPCC at its meeting in Incheon, South Korea, and it will be one of the major scientific papers presented at the ongoing Climate Change Conference in Katowice, from Dec 2 to 14, where most governments from around the world are reviewing the Paris Agreement.

"The report is a wake-up call and a reminder for everyone on what's at stake if we stick to business as usual," said Charles Bedford, regional managing director for Asia-Pacific with global environmental organization The Nature Conservancy.

As a global leader in tackling climate change, the Chinese government has long been proactive and focused on its own climate change targets and commitments, with policies that the country has already moved forward on, he told *China Daily Asia Weekly*.

He said China has for many years said the country will stay "focused" on working toward its own low-carbon development goals regardless of what other countries like the US decide to do.

The IPCC report followed the release on Oct 1 of a study by the Chinese Academy of Sciences warning economic losses caused by drought could cost China \$47 billion a year — more than double the current estimate — if global temperatures rise by 1.5 C above the pre-industrial baseline.

"Drought losses have significantly increased in recent years across the globe," said Jiang Tong, lead author of the Chinese study and a research-

er with the National Climate Centre at the China Meteorological Administration in Beijing.

The Paris Agreement proposes to keep the global mean temperature increase to well below 2 C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the warming to 1.5 C, to reduce the risk and impacts of a warming climate.

One area the Chinese government has focused its attention on has been the metals and mining sector, including steel mills, aluminum and copper smelters.

In July the Chinese government published a three-year 'blue sky defense' action plan aimed at improving the air quality in China.

"The government is attaching increasing importance to environmental protection," said Liu Sifang, a senior consultant with the global energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie.

Inspection groups have been sent out to different regions to make sure industries are meeting the requirements to reduce pollution, he said.

"More importantly, stricter regulations have been introduced."

Liu said every major city in China has been assigned targets to reduce pollution — regardless of the source.

A group of leading British and Chinese scientists launched a groundbreaking report in London on Oct 17 to show potential worst-case risks of climate change and to encourage politicians to increase mitigation efforts.

The 150-page report is the first to highlight some "disturbing scenarios" of climate change impact on both a global and Chinese scale, *China Daily* reported.

Ye Qi, director of the Brookings-Tsinghua Center for Public Policy at Tsinghua University, said the report is particularly significant "in bringing our attention to what kind of impact climate change will have on our cities, our economy, our lives and our society as a whole" so that people globally can better relate to the importance of climate change mitigation.

The scientists started to work on the report following an agreement between the United Kingdom and Chinese governments, signed during President Xi's 2015 visit to the UK.

The report is also to be presented at the current Katowice conference.

The potential impact on China includes a possible threefold rise in the number of heat waves by the end of the 21st century, and glacier mass could be reduced by almost 70 percent, affecting water resource availability in water-stressed parts of western China, the report said according to *China Daily*.

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