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Brazil ratifies Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gases

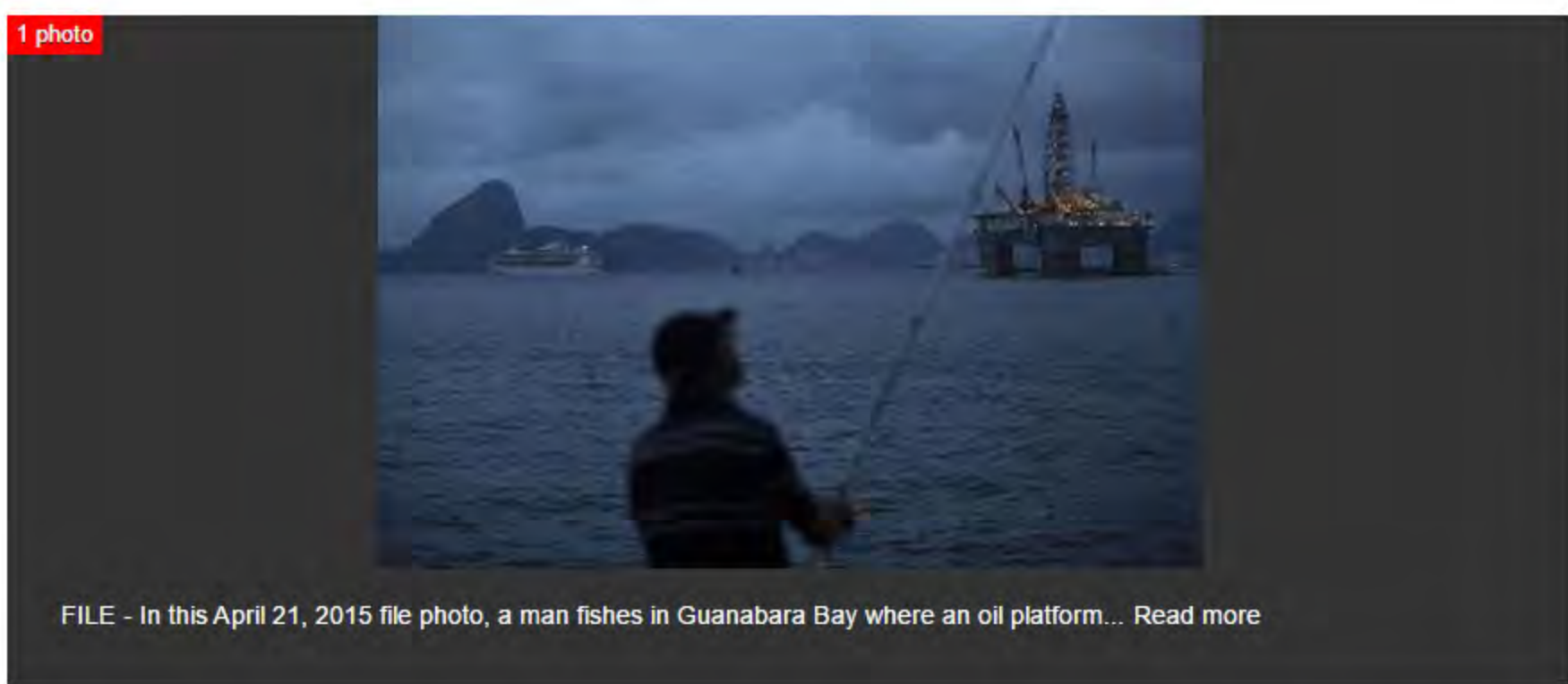
By **PETER PRENGAMAN** Sep. 12, 2016 5:15 PM EDT

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RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The Brazilian government on Monday ratified its participation in the Paris Agreement on climate change, a significant step by Latin America's largest emitter of greenhouse gases that could spur other countries to move forward.

With a landmass a little bit larger than the continental United States, Brazil emits about 2.5 percent of the world's carbon dioxide and other polluting gases, according to United Nations data.

"Our government is concerned about the future," said President Michel Temer during a signing ceremony in Brasilia. "Everything we do today is not aimed at tomorrow, but rather at a future that preserves the living conditions of Brazilians."

Temer said Brazil's ratification would be presented formally to the U.N. later this month.

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The Paris Agreement will enter into force once 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions have formally joined it. Climate experts say that could happen later this year.

Countries set their own targets for reducing emissions. The targets are not legally binding, but nations must update them every five years.

Using 2005 levels as the baseline, Brazil committed to cutting emissions 37 percent by 2025 and an "intended reduction" of 43 percent by 2030.

In the last decade, Brazil has achieved significant emissions cuts thanks to efforts to reduce deforestation in the Amazon and increase in the use of energy from hydropower and other renewable sources including wind, solar and biomass.

The Paris accord got a boost earlier this month when U.S. President Barack Obama and China's President Xi Jinping sealed their nations' participation.

"Brazil is now the next major country to move forward. It will add even greater momentum," said David Waskow, director of the International Climate Initiative at the Washington, D.C.,-based think tank the World Resources Institute.

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