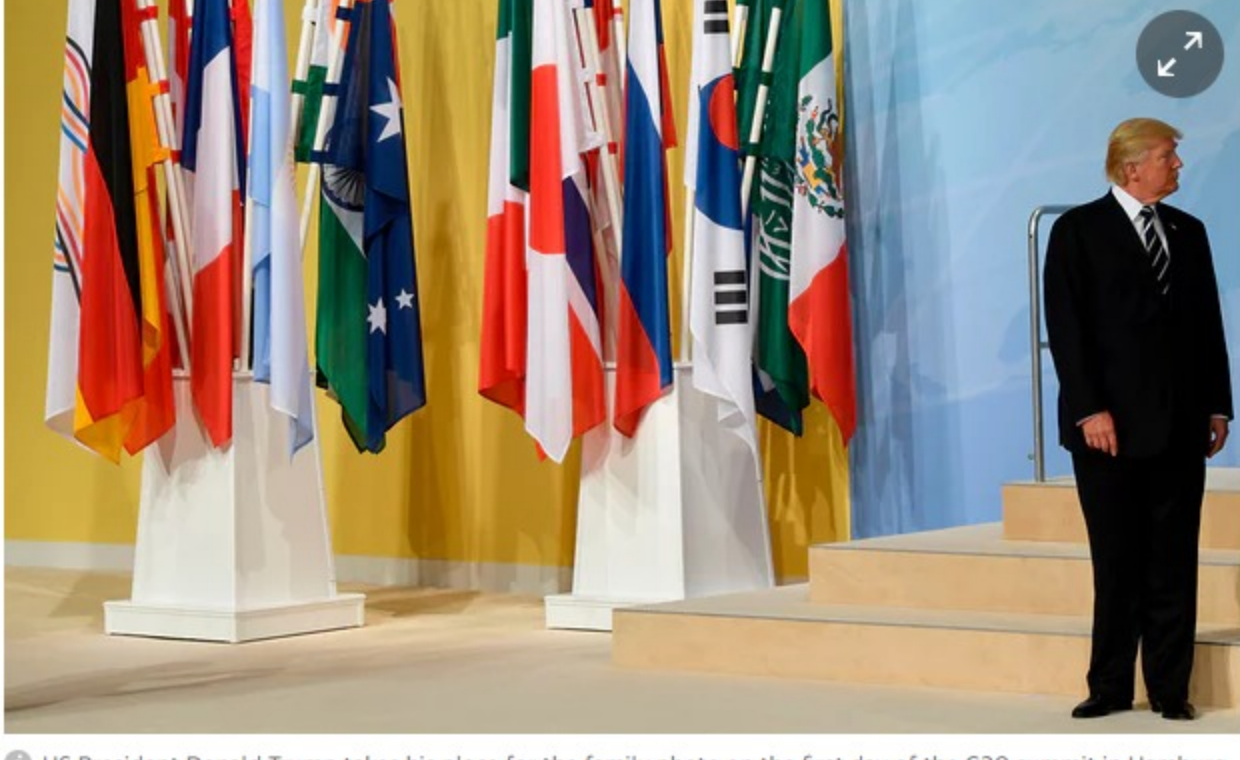


Greenhouse gas emissions

US trying to water down G20 text on lowering emissions, say charities

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/07/us-trying-to-water-down-g20-text-on-lowering-emissions-warn-charities>

Donald Trump wants to remove wording from a draft communique that would commit the US to agreed reductions of fossil fuel emissions, it is claimed



US President Donald Trump takes his place for the family photo on the first day of the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, on 7 July. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Donald Trump is being accused of trying to water down the wording of a G20 draft communique about climate change, with US and EU officials expected to clash over the issue in talks expected to stretch through the night.

One section of the draft, seen by the Guardian, took note of the US decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement on climate change, but added: “The United States affirms its strong commitment to a global approach that lowers emissions while supporting economic growth and improving energy security needs.”

That sentence has since been removed and the US is trying to introduce a new phrase that has angered other countries, and also campaigners, because it refers to fossil fuels.

It says: “Given the importance of energy access and security in the nationally determined contributions of other countries, the United States of America will endeavour to work closely with other partners to help their access to and use of fossil fuels more cleanly and efficiently and help deploy renewable and other clean energy sources.”

Sources said that diplomats from France, Italy and the EU more generally were working to block the addition, while Angela Merkel admitted that discussions on climate change and trade would be difficult. The German chancellor said they would stretch “through the night” but that was not unusual for such negotiations.

Max Lawson, a senior policy adviser at Oxfam, said: “Ending climate change is about ending harmful fossil fuels. The US is attempting to force language into the communique on planet-destroying, dirty energy. Clean coal is a myth. The remaining G19 should show some backbone and stand up to him.”

Jennifer Morgan, the executive director of Greenpeace International, added: “The G19 needs to stand together and make it very clear it will implement Paris and strengthen their climate action no matter what Trump says or does. They have a responsibility and an opportunity to move forward swiftly.”

All world leaders gathering at the G20 Summit in Hamburg with the exception of the US plan to assert the irreversibility of their decision to commit to carbon reduction targets under the Paris accord.

The news came as it emerged Trump was holding his high-profile bilateral meeting with Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, at the same time the G20 group will be having a formal session on climate change.

Many leaders have expressed their disappointment at Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement, with Theresa May claiming on Friday morning that she hopes “they will be able to find a way to come back into the Paris agreement”.

Using stronger language than previously, the UK prime minister added: “I believe that is possible. We are not renegotiating the Paris agreement. That stays.”

The joint communique notes, but does not condemn, the US decision to withdraw, instead claiming the US is committed to cutting carbon emissions by other routes. The communique also calls for the commitments made under the Paris treaty to be implemented swiftly.

Angela Merkel, the German host, has said there are clear differences between the US and the rest of the G20 on climate change, adding that there is no point in disguising them.

There have been suggestions that the Chinese did not want the disagreement to be highlighted in a communique that the US would feel it was impossible to sign. The Chinese vice-minister of finance, Zhu Guangyao, said the aim should be consensus among all members.

There were also fears that some of the less enthusiastic supporters of the Paris treaty might backtrack and join the US in pulling out. Russia and Turkey, for instance, have signed the agreement but not ratified it. Saudi Arabia, which was one of the last countries to hold out, has both signed and ratified.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the European commission president, underlined the threat climate change poses to Africa and alluded to an expected increase in migration, saying “when it comes to Africa I assume the Paris agreement will be supported by almost everyone”.

The European council president, Donald Tusk, also praised Trump’s surprising speech hailing the virtues of the transatlantic alliance, but questioned whether these words will be followed by deeds. He said “I’ve heard yesterday in Warsaw surprising diplomatic words from the American president about transatlantic community, about the cooperation between the United States, Europe, about our common political tradition and civilisation, and about the readiness to protect and to defend the whole western community.

“We have been waiting for a long time to hear these words from President Trump but the real question is whether it was a one-time incident or a new policy. President Trump said yesterday in Warsaw that words are easy, but it is actions that matter - and the first test will be our meeting here in Hamburg.”

The final version of the communique will be negotiated overnight by diplomats from the 20 attending countries.

But Merkel is under domestic pressure not to brush the dispute on climate change under the carpet.

Germany’s federal environment minister Barbara Hendricks, a member of the SDP, had insisted the differences could not be covered up, saying “we must not be stopped from protecting the climate. The climate treaty is not negotiable.”

The German Green party chairman, Cem Özdemir, said: “We need to send a strong signal. The G20 countries produce 80% of global CO2 emissions, so they have a lever in their hands ... I expect the summit to make a clear commitment to the Paris climate change agreement.”

Greenpeace director Morgan added: “Merkel, as the G20 host, must not sacrifice ambition for unity. Instead, we need a G19 commitment to climate action that demonstrates the intent to implement and even go beyond what 195 nations agreed to in Paris.”

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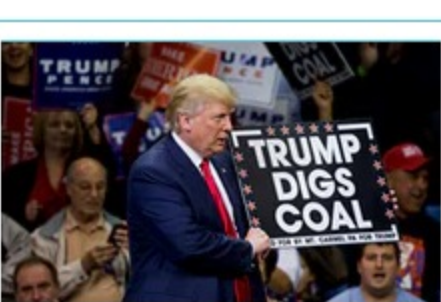
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