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U.S. Causes Climate Dissention at G20 Summit

Posted by **News Editor** *in* **Air/Climate, Latest News, RSS** *on July 10, 2017 11:26 pm /* **no comments**

HAMBURG, Germany, July 10, 2017 (ENS) – President Donald Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement on climate overshadowed this year's G20 meeting in Hamburg, but did not change the determination of the other 19 members to limit damaging greenhouse gas emissions.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said the G20 nations would not try to conceal the dissent in their ranks. "With a view to the fields of climate and energy, discussed at the G20 summit," Merkel said, "Where no consensus can be achieved, the Declaration must reflect dissent."



German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the final news conference of the G20 meeting, Hamburg, Germany, July 8, 2017 (Photo by Bundesregierung / Gungor)

The leaders of the other 19 members declared that the Paris Agreement is "irreversible," and reinforced their commitment to help developing countries cope with the changing climate.

"We reiterate the importance of fulfilling the UNFCCC commitment by developed countries in providing means of implementation, including financial resources to assist developing countries with both mitigation and adaptation actions in line with Paris outcomes," they state in the **G20 Leaders Declaration.**

Adopted by consensus in 2015, the Paris climate accord holds the increase in the global average temperature to less than 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. To date, 195 countries, have signed the agreement, and 153 have ratified it, including the United States.

Under the Paris Agreement, each country determines, plans and reports its own nationally determined contribution to mitigating global warming. No country is forced to take any action it doesn't want to take, a feature of the agreement that has contributed to its near universal acceptance by world governments.

While acknowledging disagreement with the United States, the 20 most industrialized nations tried to put a good face on it saying, "The United States of America states it will endeavour to work closely with other countries to help them access and use fossil fuels more cleanly and efficiently and help deploy renewable and other clean energy sources, given the importance of energy access and security in their nationally determined contributions."

After the first face-to-face working session in which President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin both participated, the Russian leader told reporters Saturday, "A very big and very sensitive issue is climate change. I think in this respect the Federal Republic of Germany chairing the G20 has managed to reach the best compromise in a difficult situation the chairing nation has found itself in, namely due to the US quitting the Paris Climate Agreement."


U.S. President Donald Trump, left, shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 meeting, Hamburg, Germany, July 7, 2017 (Photo by Bundesregierung / Kugler)

"An agreement was reached, a compromise, when all the countries have recorded that the United States pulled out of the agreement but they are ready to continue cooperating in certain areas and with certain countries on addressing climate change challenges," Putin said. "I think this is a positive result in itself, which can be credited to Chancellor Merkel."

British Prime Minister Theresa May said at the close of the G20 meeting on Saturday, "Like other world leaders here, I am dismayed at the U.S. decision to pull out of the Paris Agreement and I have urged President Trump to re-join it."

"The UK's own commitment to the Paris Agreement and tackling global climate change is as strong as ever," said May. "Not only will this protect the environment for future generations, it will keep energy affordable and maintain a secure and reliable supply in order to protect the interests of businesses and consumers."

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said as the meeting closed, "I strongly welcome the G20's focus on climate change, the sustainable development goals, and the challenges facing low-income countries."

The G20 Declaration welcomed the May report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, "**Investing in Climate, Investing in Growth.**"

The report describes the structural, financial and political changes that can enable transition to a low-carbon world. That is the path the other 19 members of the G20 say they will take, regardless of the position of the Trump administration.

They agreed to the **G20 Hamburg Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth**, which states, "Innovation in sustainable and clean energy technologies is a top priority for G20 members."

The Plan excludes the United States, noting, "The United States is currently in the process of reviewing many of its policies related to climate change and continues to reserve its position on this document and its contents."

But the other 19 members of the group state their urgency to limit climate change as soon as humanly possible because the dangers are real and increasing.

"The impacts of climate change such as changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level rise and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are already noticeably impacting global ecosystems, economies, and societies. This puts at risk past and future progress towards the 2030 Agenda, including the goals of ending poverty and hunger," warns the Hamburg Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth.

"Whilst these impacts will be felt by all countries, poor and vulnerable people will be disproportionately affected. Faster and more effective responses for affected poor and vulnerable people, in particular women and children, are required. Therefore, taking appropriate steps to enhance adaptive capacity, including through support to adaptation planning, is becoming increasingly pressing," the 19 group members warn.


German Chancellor Angela Merkel makes a point to U.S. President Donald Trump, Hamburg, Germany, July 8, 2017 (Photo by Bundesregierung / Bergmann)

The G20 leaders declared, "We recognise the opportunities for innovation, sustainable growth, competitiveness, and job creation of increased investment into sustainable energy sources and clean energy technologies and infrastructure."

"We remain collectively committed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through, among others, increased innovation on sustainable and clean energies and energy efficiency, and work towards low greenhouse gas emission energy systems," they said.

Nevertheless, U.S. President Donald Trump views the G20 meeting as a success for the United States. "The G 20 Summit was a great success for the U.S.," Trump tweeted at 4am on July 9. "Explained that the U.S. must fix the many bad trade deals it has made. Will get done!"

At the G20 meeting European President Jean-Claude Juncker described climate change, not trade, as "the biggest challenge for the future."

Juncker said, "We regret the decision by the U.S. Administration to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Agreement remains a corner stone for global efforts to effectively tackle climate change and implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and we consider that it cannot be re-negotiated."

"It is still important for us that we do not fall behind what we had arranged in Paris in terms of climate protection," said Juncker on the first day of the G20 meeting.

"What we do today for climate protection prevents the causes of tomorrow's future; What we leave today, accelerates flight from the areas affected by drought," Juncker said. "To this extent, the issue of climate change must be pursued here with all intensity and seriousness. It is the great future, and Europe must make a contribution."

Environmental groups naturally praised the 19 members of the group who remained steadfast on climate protection.

World Wildlife Fund senior vice president of climate change and energy Lou Leonard said, "The G20 was a gut check moment where the world stood firm on continued climate action, despite pressure from the Trump administration. By reaffirming the Paris Agreement as irreversible and offering a concrete plan to implement it, world leaders made clear that they are looking forward, unwilling to retreat from gains made."

"These leaders stand with thousands of American businesses, colleges and universities, and state and local governments, who have made clear that they too remain committed to climate action, a clean energy economy and a safer future, regardless of what Washington does," said Leonard. "Together, the leaders of the real economy in the United States and political leaders of the world's other largest economies are united in saying 'We Are Still In.'"

G20 Supports Empowerment of Women

At the G20 leaders' summit, the World Bank Group announced the creation of a new facility with more than US$1 billion to advance women's entrepreneurship and help women in developing countries gain access to the finance, markets, and networks necessary to start and grow a business.

The United States initiated the idea for the facility and will serve as a founding member along with other donor countries.


W20 panel on Inspiring Women: Scaling Up Women's Entrepreneurship, from left: Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland; Ivanka Trump, daughter of the U.S. president; International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; Berlin, Germany, April 25, 2017 (Photo by Bundesregierung / Bergmann)

"This incredible facility will have a significant impact on women's economic development around the world," said President Trump. "It will help increase opportunities and economic growth while addressing unique barriers women entrepreneurs face. I am proud the United States is helping to lead support of this unprecedented initiative."

World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said, "Women's economic empowerment is critical to achieve the inclusive economic growth required to end extreme poverty, which is why it has been such a longstanding priority for us."

"This new facility offers an unprecedented opportunity to harness both the public and private sectors to open new doors of opportunity for women entrepreneurs and women-owned firms in developing countries around the globe," said the World Bank leader.

"Everyone benefits when women have the resources they need to participate fully in our economies and societies," said Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. "Our government is determined to help women gain the tools they need to be successful entrepreneurs and leaders. This important investment will help women in developing countries to create jobs, build economies that work for everyone, and have a real and fair chance at success."

"I am happy that this initiative for women presents real added value," said Chancellor Merkel. "I want to sincerely thank everyone who worked on it especially the President of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim and Ivanka Trump and others. We can see from the example of this Women's Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative that the G20 is not just a two-day Summit, but that the G20 is a process."

The World Bank Group was invited to create the facility by the United States and Germany. The initiative received strong donor support from Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States, enabling the Bank Group to take the facility from concept to Board endorsement within the year of the German G20 presidency.

"It's remarkable how quickly the international community has mobilized support for this new initiative, which has exceeded our target by nearly $100 million," Kim said. "This demonstrates not only the importance of increasing women's economic empowerment, but it scales up our efforts to help women open and grow businesses."

The G20 includes: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States and the European Union.

The G20 leaders will meet next in 2018 under an Argentinian Presidency. The G20 leaders will travel to Japan in 2019 and to Saudi Arabia in 2020.

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