

UN secretary-general warns climate change point of no return approaching



Madrid, December 2 (RHC)-- The world's efforts to stop climate change have been "utterly inadequate" so far and there is a danger that global warming could pass the "point of no return," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Sunday ahead of the international climate conference (COP25) which began Monday in Madrid.

"The point of no return is no longer over the horizon," Guterres told reporters. "It's in sight and hurtling toward us." The U.N. chief recalled the devastating effects of man-made emissions of greenhouse gases including record temperatures and melting polar ice are already affecting the planet and having dramatic consequences on humans and other species.

He denounced the lack of political will to address the issue, noting it is the main hindrance to effective actions, as the world has all the scientific knowledge and technical means to react and limit global warming.

"What is still lacking is political will," he said, adding "political will to put a price on carbon. Political will to stop subsidies on fossil fuels. Political will to stop building coal power plants from 2020 onwards. Political

will to shift taxation from income to carbon. Taxing pollution instead of people.”

Guterres reminded that around 70 countries, many of them among the most vulnerable to climate change, have pledged to stop emitting more greenhouse gases by 2050.

“But we also see clearly that the world’s largest emitters are not pulling their weight. And without them, our goal is unreachable,” he said.

The U.N. leader expressed his hopes that the COP25 would see governments make more ambitious pledges ahead of a deadline to do so next year. He also said that creating a worldwide market for emissions, which is a key element of the sixth article of the Paris accord, remained one of the most contentious issues for negotiators.

“We are here to find answers for article 6, not to find excuses,” Guterres said, before announcing that outgoing Bank of England governor Mark Carney will become his new special envoy on “climate action and climate finance” from 2020.

The Paris Accord signed four years ago was meant to limit the global rise in temperature attributed to emissions. Average temperatures have already increased by about 1C, leaving very little margin for more ambitious goals to be met.

Delegates from some 200 countries will try to put the finishing touches on the rules governing the 2015 Paris climate accord at the meeting expected to last two weeks in the Spanish capital, including how to create functioning international emissions trading systems and compensate poor countries for losses they suffer from rising sea levels and other consequences of climate change.

The United States, China, and India, the world’s largest carbon emitters will be represented by ministers or lower-level officials.

The U.S. administration of President Donald Trump, which has started the process of withdrawing from the Paris agreement will be represented by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Marcia Bernicat. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is leading a delegation of Democratic lawmakers to the talks.

The conference was initially scheduled to be held in Santiago de Chile. In mid-October, however, Chile's President Sebastian Piñera announced that his country which has been rocked by recent mass protests against his government, would not host the summit.

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