

The Paris Agreement: a new beginning for old battles

Talk by Rob Elsworth (Policy Analyst, Climate & Energy, CAFOD)
University of Chester, 2nd February 2016

Chaired by Roy Alexander, Professor of Environmental Sustainability



Note of talk, reference to a selection of the PowerPoint slides

“COP 21” in Paris was part of the “2015 story”: a year of multinationalism that included agreement on the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, with 17 goals and 192 targets), and the publication of Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, addressed to all people across the globe.

COP 21 (COP=Conference of the Parties) relates back to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992). This set up a process of annual meetings to review progress towards the stabilisation of greenhouse gases to a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system. There was catastrophic failure in Copenhagen (COP 15, 2009) because many nations had not been able to collect the necessary data. COP21 was the process to get the “players” back on board.

COP21 was a vast undertaking and succeeded in bringing together the biggest number of heads of state EVER (147 heads present for the opening, 40,000 attendees). A CAFOD team were there. The Holy See there as observers. The aim – to get the world to decide 1 thing: to adopt the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal.

Slide 9 – 4 main “Pillars of Paris”:

- The Paris Agreement - with two very distinct parts – Agreement Text (legally binding) and Decisions Text (descriptive text).
- Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) - with 162 nations agreeing to set out what they were prepared to do.
- Climate Finance – finance arrangements in support of action by developing countries (not fully sorted).
- Paris Lima Action Agenda – an agreed action agenda which brings in other players such as civil societies, districts, cities, communities and organisations who want to contribute. We are “all in this together” – it isn’t just the UN.

What did CAFOD want from COP21? Wanted policy wins which had some longevity. Need opportunities to come back to the table to see how things are changing. Also great concern about vulnerable nations. They came together at COP21 to say they wanted an agreed target of 1.5 degrees. Paris Agreement has all these elements in it (as displayed on the slide) but of course the process is very complex and has enormous implications.

Slide 11 – “A Win for Civil Society” The Agreement included some important additional elements, including the specific recognition that

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The Paris Agreement: A new beginning (for old battles)

Rob Elsworth, Policy Analyst, Climate & Energy
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Pillars of Paris 9

<p>The Paris Agreement (& Decisions):</p> <p>Legally binding agreement containing emissions reduction commitments.</p> <p>A set of decision – applicable pre 2020 – that give direction and clarity to the Agreement.</p>	<p>Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)</p> <p>National mitigation action plans setting out what countries will do.</p>	<p>Climate Finance</p> <p>\$100 Billion per year until 2025, after which set a new collective quantified goal from.</p>	<p>Paris Lima Action Agenda:</p> <p>Additional forum that bring state and non-state actors together on the global stage to accelerate cooperative climate action.</p>		
<p>Agriculture</p> <p>Cities & Subnationals</p>	<p>Forest</p> <p>Private Finance</p>	<p>Transport</p> <p>Business</p>	<p>Renewable Energy</p> <p>Innovation</p>	<p>Energy Access & Efficiency</p> <p>Building</p>	<p>Resilience</p> <p>Short Lived Climate Pollutants</p>

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Additional elements: a win for civil society

Decision text: 11

- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Recognizing that climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies
- Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples
- 134. Welcomes the efforts of all non-Party stakeholders to address and respond to climate change, including those of civil society

Agreement Preamble:

- Emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty

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climate change is a threat to the eradication of poverty.

Slide 12 - Impact of Paris? – It has to prove itself as a robust agreement. Though it was widely welcomed a “reality check” does uncover seemingly conflicting developments: increased coal use in low-lying Bangladesh, increased reliance on fossil energy in Zimbabwe, UK cutbacks on renewable energy subsidies and investment. Some nations not yet moved on. Going to take time for agreement to filter through.

Impact of Paris? 12


Hooray for Paris!

- [Paris climate talks: delegates reach agreement on final draft text](#) *The Guardian - Dec 12, 2015*
- [Climate deal: World praises France's diplomatic efforts](#) *Daily Mail - Dec 13, 2015*
- [COP21: Paris climate deal is 'best chance to save planet'](#) *BBC News-12 Dec 2015*



But

- [Low-lying Bangladesh targets jump in coal use](#) *Financial Times-29 Dec 2015*
- [UK announces cut in solar subsidies](#) *In-Depth-BBC News-17 Dec 2015*
- [Zimbabwe turns to fossil energy, as drought bites](#) *The Herald-3 Jan 2016*



Slide 13 - Paris Agreement is not a single document to save the world. It is part of a journey. It doesn't give solutions but does give a common framework.

Paris Agreement: Is... and Isn't... 13

The Paris Agreement is...	The Paris Agreement is not...
A diplomatic success: culmination of years of work.	A single document to 'solve' or 'fix' climate change.
An important step to bring in more actors, i.e. non state actors (cities, businesses, regions, NGOs).	A guarantee the agreement's principles will influence other actors.
An international framework or 'rule book' for continued engagement.	A narrow list of solutions / policies.
A powerful signal to global inventors that business as usual is about to change.	A top down agreement setting out a robust global decarbonisation pathway.
Just the beginning.	The end of the story.



Key messages 14

- **The Paris Agreement signals a new beginning for international cooperation to tackle climate change. That's worth celebrating!**
- **1.5°C language a victory for the most vulnerable countries. It will refocus minds, development models and investment decisions.**
- **Resets the agenda and shifts the focus to national level action. How with UK implement Paris Agreement / SDGs?**
- **We're all part of the solution! Keep campaigning.**



Slide 14 – Key Messages. Paris Agreement worth celebrating – signals a new beginning for international cooperation. The 1.5C target is hugely challenging – the current trajectory is towards 3C! How will the UK implement the Agreement and the SDGs?

We are all part of the solution: Keep Campaigning!

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Comment made by member of audience that there is a great deal of scepticism surrounding the Agreement. It is said it lacks backbone. Rob replied that we have to keep beating governments with this stick i.e. there is an agreement on 1.5 degrees. We need to continue putting pressure on. He acknowledged that we might exceed 2 degrees.

Question: How are outcomes being reported? Reply: There will be synthesis in 2018 following reporting back from nations

Question: Re the “4 Pillars” – there is concern over corruption and finance. This could make whole thing collapse. Reply: All based on trust. Have to make sure that everyone on board and have to deal with problems of inertia.

Question: Where is \$100 bn per year coming from? Reply: There are national mitigation demands which can be viewed on line. You can see what nations asking for. The Green Climate Fund is meant to be transforming. 50% is to go on mitigation and 50% on adaptation. Re UK fund – it comes from ODA (Official Development Assistance) not new money.

Question: Issue of car usage in rural areas in UK. Regions are looking at it and are trying to be transformative. Policy makers are aware of problem.

Question: What is prognosis on future COPS? Reply: COP process will go on, including their highs and lows. Vulnerable countries now have a say and are in the negotiating blocks. This a first.

Question: Were there any climate change sceptics at Paris? Reply: Rob didn't come across any. There was overwhelming global consensus amongst scientists. (Comment from a member of the audience that there were a number of well-informed sceptics whose views should not be dismissed. This prompted a response from the Chair, Prof Roy Alexander, that the scientific consensus about human influence on climate change was overwhelming.)

Question: What about CAFOD's stance on "adaptation/mitigation"? Reply: There needs to be additional clarity on funding. UK is spending lot of money on mitigation. Adaptation policies nationally need a lot more work.

Question: What about nations who were missing - any plans to get them involved? Reply: 50-odd nations were missing. The door is open for them to submit plans at any time. Some cannot for various reasons e.g. Syria.

Question: How are we going to stop inertia when next meeting not until 2025? Reply: Keep talking to policy makers. Collectively we need to keep on working on it

Question: What about development of geo-engineering techniques? Reply: Paris doesn't give prescriptive solutions, and there are going to many different approaches to finding solutions and all these approaches will need to prove their worth. It is unlikely that CAFOD or its partners will themselves go down the geo-engineering route.

Comment: How will UK move forward to use alternative sources? Seems that government is talking the talk but its energy policies are not following through.

Comment: CAFOD should stop sitting on the fence. Their mandate is development overseas. It needs to recognise that the overwhelming priority of our right-wing government is profit – which will not bring green benefits. The system has to change!

Final comment from Rob – Remember that Paris Agreement is not the end. It is just the start, and the process will continue.

Vote of Thanks – Prof Roy Alexander invited CWDF Chair Terry Green to give the vote of thanks. Terry paid tribute to way in which Rob had set the context of the Paris Conference and its enormous scale. He had given us a very good understanding of the breadth and complexities of the Agreement – and left us in no doubt about the demands that it places on all sectors of government and society.

This link takes you to the pdf version of Rob Elsworth's full PowerPoint presentation:
http://www.chesterwdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/COP21_Chester_Event_020116.pdf

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