



# “We'll Always Have Paris”

Victory for a New Diversity Coalition-  
Now the Hard Part Begins

So one thing is clear: Paris was *not* Copenhagen. Nor was it Valhalla. But it is a real start of an urgent process. Paris was also a success for a new "High Ambition Coalition". This is the first time that countries from the Marshall Islands to the Maldives united with Brazil, the European Union, the United States, and 79 countries from the Global South, with a joint proposal that won the day.

[Inset: [A Slide Show of People's Actions for a Paris Agreement](#)]

By contrast, in Copenhagen 2009 the Global North countries tried to high-pressure the Global South, and things quickly went awry, ending in no agreement. The Paris Agreement, December 12<sup>th</sup>, did not achieve everything we hoped-- but it took several major steps down a path which if followed can lead to victory for a 1.5° Celsius global temperate increase, and prevent very dire results. We've seen climate activists and others take a glass-half-empty attitude to Paris

2015. Our analysis is a glass-half-full. So how did it happen?

First, was the French secret sauce-- congenial hosting, and yes, great food-- many delegates commented on the difference between good food and cold sandwiches. This can make a big difference, during two weeks with little sleep, in an unfamiliar place. Second, and most important—honest diplomacy; everyone's opinion was solicited, and there were not "great power caucuses" dictating the agenda. The key to this was the High Ambition Coalition, which was chaired by elder statesman Tony De Brum of the Marshall Islands. De Brum for years has been known as a strong advocate for the Marshall Islands, and all climate-vulnerable countries, and commanded great respect among the delegates. Laurent Fabius and John Kerry, among others, worked closely during all of 2015, with Tony De Brum—it clicked in Paris, with over 100 countries (Brazil was the biggest surprise member) joining the Coalition, a working majority.

What De Brum and other Pacific and coastal states wanted was recognition by the world of the urgency—climate change is not only real, as most statespersons recognize outside of the United States, but it is already here, and we cannot wait any longer. Remarkably, in the end 195 nations listened, and agreed.

### Setting Ambitious Goals:

These are the specific goals coming out of Paris:

- Keep the rise in global average temperatures to 1.5° Centigrade.
- By 2030, have a system in place that is carbon-neutral, such that no added CO<sup>2</sup> enters the atmosphere, than what goes back in, by way of forests, plants, and back into the oceans.
- Climate financing: This can only happen, if the world contributes \$100 Billion/ year, by 2020, to cover the costs of transition to a carbon-neutral energy system—a tall order, but doable. The top economies must do the most.<sup>1</sup>
- Keep the icecaps and glaciers from further melting; the seas from rising even more than they have been; long-term droughts and flooding from

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<sup>1</sup> The two biggest carbon emitters—China and the United States—have a combined annual GDP of some \$25 Trillion. If they invested just \$100 Billion, this would be only 0.025% of that amount. But they're not doing it alone—if the top 50 countries all invested, that would be a much smaller % each. The question is: Is there the political will to spend even that small fraction? So far, not at all certain—but it needs to be. One way would be if each country cut 10% from the \$1.2 Trillion global arms budget. That alone would save \$120 Billion we can invest not in war-making, but in making the Earth stay cool and habitable. If 100 billionaires contributed \$100 million each, that would amount to another \$10 billion, for clean energy research and production. It can be done!

worsening in arid zones, and coastal states.

- Set new, more ambitious goals (hence “High Ambition Coalition”) in 2020, and every five years beyond, to get closer to the 1.5° Standard, via a 5-year review process. Right now we’re headed to 2.5°, which is unacceptable.
- Every country, wealthy and poor, will have a plan to cut carbon pollution. This will help not just the climate, but child and adult health, everywhere.
- 150 major corporations and foundations signed on—we need many more.

Now, some climate advocates say that this is all too little, and possibly too late. Maybe. But we view this as a glass half-full, not 3/4 empty. Paris is a first step—but if it is followed, can be a strong framework. Consider just the New Standard of a 1.5° C. limit. If we’re serious, that means we have to set about working NOW for a redoubled promotion of clean energy standards in each country—the only way this can work.

In the final analysis, we’ll always have Paris, to remind us when the world woke up—and if so, when we gained the political will, and courage, to really get to work to overcome climate change, before it can overcome us.

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