



What effect might President Trump have on US and Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions?

1) Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

On 1st June 2017 President Trump announced that he intended to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement.

Although the Agreement's rules mean that the US can't actually withdraw until 4th November 2020, each country's pledges on emissions reductions are voluntary. The President had already started unpicking some of the environmental regulations brought in, or planned, by President Obama.

So what might happen?

2) Possible Effect on US Emissions of President Trump's Decision

At Paris, the United States volunteered to reduce its emissions by 17% by 2020, and by 26-28% by 2025, relative to 2005 levels.

One view (see the [carbonactiontracker briefing here](#)) is that the President's decision will mean that US emissions in 2025 will be at roughly the level they are now, instead of showing the planned reduction of approximately 13% from now.

3) Effect on Global Emissions

If, as suggested above, the United States emissions stay at their present value until 2025, instead of achieving its Paris pledge of an approximately 13% reduction compared to now, its CO₂ emissions will be higher than they would have been by about 650 megatonnes, or about 2% of current global emissions.

This may not seem much, but:

- other countries will be aiming to reduce their emissions in the long term, and so if the United States' emissions don't reduce then the effect will become more and more significant;
- The Paris Agreement explicitly calls for each country in future to negotiate *increases* to the initial reduction offers they made at Paris.

June 2017: Explore the Facts

The most recently available data for the top 6 emitters of CO₂ emissions are for 2015, produced by the EC Joint Research Centre:

Country	Annual CO ₂ Emissions (Megatonnes/year)	% of Global Total
China	10,642	30%
USA	5,172	15%
European Union	3,470	10%
India	2,455	7%
Russian Federation	1,761	5%
Japan	1,253	4%
Total of top 6 emitters	24,750	71%
Global Total	35,000	

4) Conclusion

At present, the pledges made in the Paris Agreement will limit the global temperature rise to about 3°C relative to pre-industrial levels, compared with the ultimate aspiration at Paris of 'well-under' 2°C.

It's therefore clear that achieving the Paris aspiration relies on countries improving on their initial Paris pledges.

It is likely that the effects of the United States' decision will gradually become more and more significant, unless a future President reverses President Trump's decision.

5) Questions to explore

Here are several 'unknowns' - questions that can be explored further to find out their potential impact on the US emissions predictions:

- a) To what extent might legal challenges in the US slow down the effect of the President's decisions on abandoning the various planned environmental policies?
- b) How much action will be taken unilaterally by individual States, cities, and large companies, many of which have said they want to continue with emission reductions initiatives?
- c) Might a new President be elected in November 2020 (just when the United States plans to actually leave the Paris Agreement)? If he or she quickly reversed the decision, would policy reversals mean that US emissions in 2025 ended up somewhere in between where they are now and the level pledged at Paris?

References

- 1) Climate Action Tracker, March 31 2017 [accessed 20 June 2017]
http://climateactiontracker.org/assets/publications/briefing_papers/CAT_2017-03-31_US_Briefing_Trump_Executive_Order.pdf
- 2) European Commission Joint Research Centre, EDGAR – Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research, *2015 CO₂ Emissions from Fossil Fuels and Industrial Processes* [accessed 20 June 2017]
<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2ts1990-2015>

ICN, June 2017