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Issue Brief

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US Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Change Agreement: Consequences and Outcomes

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The Paris agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance. The Paris agreement, which recognizes



and supports deliberate carbon-reduction efforts by cities, regions and businesses, has been an important step in the right direction. However, on June 1, President Donald Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, which was adopted in 2015 and signed by 195 countries. The agreement aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and limiting the rise in average global temperatures.¹ Withdrawing from the Paris Agreement is largely viewed as an extremely isolationist and hasty move by the US at a time when the planet needs coordinated strategies to overcome and fight the effects of climate change and help come up with clean energy solutions.

There is no doubt that President Trump's withdrawal will make it more difficult for the world to reach the goals that it set for itself in the Paris Agreement, that is keeping global temperature rises well under 2 celsius. The US contributes about 15% of global emissions of carbon, but it is also a significant source of finance and technology for developing countries in their efforts to fight rising temperatures.² President Trump's announcement to withdraw from the Paris Climate Change Agreement has attracted much criticism at home and abroad. According to President Trump, "The agreement is a massive redistribution of United States' wealth to other countries. It's to give their country an economic edge

¹ Camilla Domonoske and Colin Dwyer, Trump Announces U.S. Withdrawal From Paris Climate Accord, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/01/530748899/watch-live-trump-announces-decision-on-paris-climate-agreement>, June 1, 2017.

² Matt McGrath, Five effects of US pullout from Paris climate deal, <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-40120770>, 1 June 2017.

over the United States.”³ Meanwhile, criticism has also come from the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who has stated that the decision by the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreement is a major disappointment for global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote global security.⁴

One of the strongest voices in favour of the US staying in the Paris deal has been corporate America. Leaders of companies such as Google, Apple and hundreds of other including major fossil fuel producers such as Exxon Mobil have urged the President to continue with the Paris Agreement. For instance, the Exxon chief executive Darren Woods wrote a personal letter to Trump saying the US is "well positioned to compete" with the accord in place and staying in means "a seat at the negotiating table to ensure a level playing field".⁵ Major companies in the United States like, Apple, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Gap and Morgan Stanley took out an ad in a local newspaper, urging President Trump to stay in the Paris Agreement.⁶ Despite President Trump's withdrawal from the accord, US carbon emissions will continue to drop. The projections are that they will fall about half as much as had been planned by President Obama.⁷

However, the announcement of President Trump to withdraw from the agreement, could further lead to undermining global efforts towards reducing global emissions as the United States is the second largest carbon emitting country. According to experts in the United States, this decision means that the United States will miss out on some of the 1.4 trillion dollars of business opportunity that the low carbon economy represents.⁸ The supporters of the Paris Agreement have reacted very strongly, criticising the administration for a lack of forethought about the planet and an irresponsible willingness to shatter longstanding diplomatic relationships. The departure of the United States from the Paris climate agreement is also likely to affect other international negotiations and make them more challenging,

³ Camilla Domonoske and Colin Dwyer, Op.Cit

⁴ UN officially notified of US intention to withdraw from Paris climate pact
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57314#.WZ50KdFRWUk>

⁵ Matt McGrath, Op. Cit

⁶ Bob Bryan, "Trump's pulling out of the Paris climate agreement could be disastrous for the economy"
<http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-leaving-paris-climate-agreement-effect-on-us-global-economy-2017-6> June 1, 2017

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ William A. Galston, Samantha Gross, Mark Muro, Timmons Roberts, Rahul Tongia, David Victor, Philip A. Wallach, Rebecca Winthrop, Christina Kwauk, Nathan Hultman, Todd Stern, and Vinod Thomas
"Trump's Paris Agreement withdrawal: What it means and what comes next"
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/planetpolicy/2017/06/01/trumps-paris-agreement-withdrawal-what-it-means-and-what-comes-next/> Thursday, June 1, 2017.

especially those pertaining to trade. This could also lead to China fulfilling the leadership role that the United States leaves empty, as the Chinese premier Xi Jinping had strongly supported the Paris climate agreement at the World Economic Forum.⁹ The most probable effects and likely consequences of the United States' departure from the Paris climate deal are expected to be on the coal industry, climate issues, US global leadership and the US economy. The Trump administration has also cancelled the Green Climate Fund, set up under the deal to help developing countries cut emissions and develop low emission energy technologies.¹⁰ The Paris Climate Agreement was considered the most promising effort by the developed countries to tackle climate change, a major challenge in the present world, which now faces an uncertain future.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Five Changes That Could Come from Leaving the Paris Climate Deal, <http://www.npr.org/2017/06/01/531056661/5-things-that-could-change-when-the-u-s-leaves-the-paris-climate-deal>, June 1, 2017.