

The Paris Agreement Sans USA



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Rituraj Phukan 4 June 2017 11492 views

The widely anticipated [US](#) withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was announced by [President](#) Donald Trump [as](#) promised during his election campaign and seeks to undermine the gains of the climate change agreement. Although expected, environmentalists and world [leaders](#) were harboring a faint hope that the [US](#) would not shirk from its responsibilities and accountability of being the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in history. With this announcement, [President](#) Trump has surrendered leadership of the environmental movement, with the [US](#) now joining Syria and Nicaragua [as](#) the only countries outside of the global agreement. This is not the first time that the [US](#) has tried to disrupt global climate action; [President](#) George W Bush had spectacularly failed in his attempt to block global action on climate change and history is destined to repeat itself gloriously.

The announcement evoked condemnation from around the world, but the defiance within the [US](#) has been unprecedented. Within hours of the declaration, several American governors, including those of California, New York and Washington, and [over](#) 60 mayors vowed to continue to honour the goals of the accord to reduce global warming. Tesla founder Elon Musk and Disney's Robert Iger quit the president's high-powered business advisory panel after the pull-out decision. Apple, Google, Twitter, Amazon, Facebook, Tesla, Microsoft and IBM are among influential technology [leaders](#) to have expressed resentment at [President](#) Trump's decision.

Former [US President](#) Barack Obama, one of the key architects of the Paris Agreement said that the [US](#) had joined "a small handful of nations that reject the future." He also hoped [US](#) states, cities and businesses "will step up and do even more to [lead](#) the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got". European [leaders](#) quickly dismissed the [US President](#)'s contention that the Paris climate accord can be renegotiated for better terms to suit American interests.

Former [UN](#) Secretary General Kofi Annan, a key contributor during the Paris Agreement negotiations said, “Climate change is the great existential threat of our time. The Paris Agreement was born out of effective multilateralism and a desire to find a cooperative solution to a global problem. No one country can dismantle the Agreement. While the [US](#) withdrawal weakens that international accord, it will not trigger its demise.”

Commentators have been quick to point out that the [US](#) has more to lose than the climate agreement from this pull-out decision. Many have called it a symbolic gesture to appease the coal country constituents that were instrumental in the election of [President](#) Trump. The booming renewable energy sector is driven by plummeting cost of renewables, and even within the [US](#), states, cities, businesses and individuals are leading the transition to a [green](#) economy. With the withdrawal decision, the [US](#) has effectively surrendered its place at the global negotiation table. There is no dearth of leadership and China, [India](#), and the EU have already demonstrated during the past few months that they are committed and capable of steering the world in environmental action.

Nobel laureate and former [US](#) Vice [President](#) Al Gore summed up the mood of the American people- “Removing the United States from the Paris Agreement is a reckless and indefensible action. It undermines America’s standing in the world and threatens to damage humanity’s ability to solve the climate [crisis](#) in time. But make no mistake: if [President](#) Trump won’t [lead](#), the American people will. Civic [leaders](#), mayors, governors, CEOs, investors and the majority of the business [community](#) will take up this challenge. We are in the middle of a [clean](#) energy revolution that no single person or [group](#) can [stop](#). [President](#) Trump’s decision is profoundly in conflict with what the majority of Americans want from our [president](#); but no matter what he does, we will

ensure that our inevitable transition to a [clean](#) energy economy continues.”

The White House’s decision doesn’t change things for the 194 other parties to the Paris Agreement and at last month’s G7 meeting, [President](#) Trump was isolated [as](#) Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the [UK](#) publicly reaffirmed their “strong commitment to swiftly implement the Paris Agreement. There is another consideration that renders this decision ineffective. Technically, the [US](#) can’t leave the Paris Agreement until three years after the accord officially went into effect. So, the earliest possible date for the [US](#) to truly withdraw is November 4, 2020, which, ironically, is one day after the next presidential election. That also leaves room for further ambiguity on the issue.

Rituraj Phukan

Rituraj Phukan is the Chief Operating Officer, Walk For Water; District Manager, Assam, Nagaland & Manipur, The Climate Reality Project India and Secretary General of Green Guard Nature Organization.

BY RITURAJ PHUKAN

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