Rebalancing Global Climate Governance and China's Endeavor

Yu Hongyuan

Abstract: In December 2018, the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Katowice, Poland, and reached a package of agreements. It provided a new opportunity for the promotion of global climate negotiations and new momentum for the transformation of global climate governance as well. The Katowice conference continued the tradition of the previous conferences in enhancing policy coordination and contribution among various actors. The success of the conference depends on scientific reports of climate disasters, coordinated efforts by major countries, and the contribution of various non-state actors. However, as an ongoing process, global climate governance is still faced by many difficulties, such as weak synergy, staggering development of global environmental governance, daunting challenges to least developed countries (LDCs) in climate actions, and lack of fairness, which need to be tackled through joint endeavor by both developed and developing countries. As

Yu Hongyuan is Professor and Director of the Institute of Comparative Politics and Public Policy, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). His mailing address is: 195-15 Tianlin Road, Shanghai 200233, China. He can also be reached at yuhongyuan@siis.org.cn.

© 2019 World Century Publishing Corporation and Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3, 417–435
DOI: [10.1142/S2377740019500246](https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740019500246)

This is an Open Access article, copyright owned by the SIIS and WCPC. The article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 (CC BY-NC) License which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited and is used for non-commercial purposes.

the second largest economy and biggest greenhouse gas emitter, China's future engagement in global climate governance will be focused on promoting green competitiveness, enhancing its institutional power in the governance process, and strengthening pragmatic multi-stakeholder climate diplomacy, so as to promote common understanding among countries and help with their policy coordination for climate actions.

Keywords: Global governance; climate change; Katowice conference (COP24); China.

This research is funded by the National Social Science Fund (16AGJ006), as well as the China Clean Development Mechanism Fund (2014093).

Climate change has presented the world with potentially devastating challenges that must be tackled with collective efforts of all countries. However, global climate governance has been proceeding quite slowly over the past decades; and there remains much uncertainty about the transition of climate governance leadership after the U.S. withdrawal from the *Paris Agreement on Climate Change* (hereafter *Paris Agreement*). On December 15, 2018, the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was concluded in Katowice, Poland, and adopted a set of guidelines and rules contained in the package for implementing the *Paris Agreement*, making the Katowice climate negotiation an important success in the increasingly complex global climate governance process.

COP24 was expected to take stock of the collective progress of all parties toward the long-term goals of the *Paris Agreement* and provide information for countries to prepare their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), so as to encourage them to strengthen efforts by 2020 to make up for the current emission gaps. The agreed “Katowice Climate Package” sets out how countries will provide information about their NDCs that describe their domestic climate actions, including mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as the details of financial support for climate actions in developing countries.

It is noteworthy that the Katowice climate negotiation, under the background of the withdrawal of the United States from the *Paris Agreement*, has deepened the disagreement within the EU on climate change issues. The EU intends to exert influence on the joint efforts of climate

leaders and cooperate with China and other partners to lead future climate negotiations. Yet, many complicated situations — such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel handing over power, the “Brexit” and the French “gilets jaunes (yellow vests)” — make it difficult for Germany, Britain, and France, as major players in EU climate negotiations, to make any progress. In the meantime, differences between developing and developed countries over the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)” have gradually narrowed in the climate negotiations.

This paper holds that the 2018 Katowice Climate Change Conference provides a new opportunity for the advancement of global climate negotiations and injects new momentum into the transformation of global climate governance. The Katowice conference carries on the tradition of the previous conferences by promoting the policy coordination of various actors and highlighting their contributions. And the success of the conference lies in the scientific reports on climate disasters, coordinated efforts by major countries to promote climate governance, and the positive contributions of many non-state actors.

Global Climate Governance at a New Stage

After the Copenhagen conference in 2009, global climate change has undergone historical development, and the global climate governance mechanism has been in major transition. In this context, the Katowice conference in December 2018 brought new changes and opportunities to global climate governance.

Global Climate Governance in Transition

The international regime, as Stephen Krasner defines it, refers to the “principles, norms, rules, and policy making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area.”¹ To strengthen the international climate regime based on principles, rules, norms and institutions has been the primary goal of global climate governance. Nowadays, studies on the climate regime are dominated, to a large extent, by Western

¹Stephen D. Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regime as Intervening Variables,” in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Régime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1.

neoliberalism represented by the EU and the United States. Although there is no clear theoretical guidance, most studies on climate issues are subtly influenced by neoliberalist thinking that advocates the role of the private sector in the control of economic factors while trying to minimize government spending, regulation, and public ownership.

After the unfulfilling Copenhagen conference, the focus of global climate governance was shifted to the common emission reduction of all countries and the bottom-up reduction model. In 2011, the Durban conference in South Africa established the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, which decided to end the original “dual track” negotiations and promote the joint commitments of both developing and developed countries.² In 2013, The Warsaw conference emphasized the need to reach an agreement applicable to all the 195 negotiating parties. In 2014, the Lima conference required all countries to submit their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs); and the bottom-up climate governance model was widely adopted by the passing of the *Paris Agreement* at the 2015 Paris conference.

The transition in global climate governance is further strengthened by the negotiation and implementation process of the *Paris Agreement*. Low-carbon competition and cooperation have replaced mandatory greenhouse gas reduction as the core of global climate governance. The combination of global responsibility sharing and voluntary emission reduction has renewed the meaning of the CBDR-RC (common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities) principle. The calls for various types of international leaderships are also louder at the domestic, transnational and multilateral levels (see Table 1).

Low-carbon competition and cooperation have become the core of global climate governance.

The main contribution of the *Paris Agreement* to the multilateral climate regime is that it infuses the highest authority into the new global climate governance obligations that have been evolving ever since the Kyoto

²Jonathan Watts, “Durban Conference: China and India Cautiously Upbeat,” *Guardian*, December 13, 2011; and N. R. Krishnan, “The Climate Turned Against India at Durban,” *The Hindu*, December 21, 2011.

Table 1. Main Outcomes of United Nations Climate Conferences (2009–2018).

Time	Event & Location	Main Outcomes
December 2009	COP15, Copenhagen	The <i>Copenhagen Accord</i> , which is not legally binding and is often referred to as a “note”
December 2010	COP16, Cancun	The <i>Cancun Agreement</i> urged all countries to work together to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Developed countries had pledged to set up a Green Climate Fund by 2020 to assist poorer countries in financing emission reductions and adaptation. Annex I parties were also required to reduce emissions by 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020
December 2011	COP17, Durban	A new negotiation process, the “Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP),” was launched, authorizing negotiations on the global emission reduction framework that includes all parties. Negotiations were to end in 2015 at the latest and take effect in 2020
December 2012	COP18, Doha	COP18 built an inter-linkage between the ADP and the KP2 (the second commitment period for Annex I parties under the Kyoto Protocol) by extending the Kyoto Protocol to the next commitment period
November 2013	COP19, Warsaw	The <i>Warsaw Consensus</i> of COP19 reaffirmed the core principle that there is no distinction between rich and poor countries, which applies to all the 195 UN climate conference negotiators in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol
December 2014	COP20, Lima	The <i>Lima Agreement</i> , which required all countries to submit their INDCs
December 2015	COP21, Paris	The <i>Paris Agreement</i> ; and the INDCs were thereafter fixed by international law
November 2016	COP22, Marrakech	COP22 discussed the implementation of the <i>Paris Agreement</i> and launched the “Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action”
November 2017	COP23, Bonn	A consensus was reached on “the driving force for Fiji implementation” and a “promotional dialogue mechanism” was proposed
December 2018	COP24, Katowice	COP24 adopted the program document “Katowice Climate Package” and the “Paris Rule book”

Source: UNFCCC website, <http://www.unfccc.int>.

Protocol. Above all, it makes an innovative interpretation of the CBDR principle, taking the national conditions of each country — rather than the simple dichotomy between developing and developed countries — as the basis of “differentiated responsibilities.” Next, it has renounced the

top-level design model in the Protocol and adopted a flexible responsibility-sharing model based on NDCs and global participation. Finally, it combines the top-level pressure mechanisms, pushing different countries' independent emission reduction efforts towards emission reduction targets with political and international reputation pressure.

In the long run, the change of the CBDR principle and the emphasis on the top-level pressure mechanism will enhance the certainty of global climate governance: the *Paris Agreement* has made all participants aware that developing countries will eventually be required to undertake quantitative emission reduction obligations, and that the consideration of efficiency in global climate governance will gradually overwhelm the insistence on fairness. However, in the short term, the institutional arrangements specified in the *Paris Agreement* on global emission reductions by the NDCs have greatly increased the uncertainty of global climate governance, since the bottom-up negotiating mechanism undermines the multilateral institutional structure that is used to deal with climate change, leading to a fierce contest among countries in negotiating their respective contributions, thus weakening the stability of the global climate regime.

The focus of global climate governance has shifted from target setting to implementation.

Common Governance After COP24

In December 2018, delegates at COP24 in Katowice agreed on the "Katowice Climate Package," which defines how the *Paris Agreement* will be implemented globally. It includes provisions on: what information needs to be communicated in the NDCs; how the enhanced transparency framework (ETF) will be operationalized; the process for establishing new targets for climate finance; how to conduct the Global Stocktake; and how to assess progress on the development and transfer of technology. One major element of the Package is the adoption of ETF modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPGs). These apply to all parties, while providing flexibility for those developing country parties that need it in the light of their capacities. Such flexibility is self-determined; and countries making use of it will need to explain how they apply it and what the capacity constraints are, as well as to provide timeframes for improvements in relation to those capacity

constraints. Information on how a country will improve its reporting is also part of the biennial transparency report.

At COP24, all the parties have linked efforts to address climate change and sustainable development, emphasizing that developed countries should play a leading role in climate actions and provide financial and technical support for developing countries. In addition, economic cooperation is emphasized, where the implementation of actions by all parties is to be promoted through market and non-market regulations, and investment is gradually tended towards the green economy.³ COP24 expands the existing methods of reducing emission commitments, provides financial assistance to poor countries, and replaces “clean development” in the Kyoto Protocol with the rules of Article 6 of the *Paris Agreement* on managing carbon markets on the international scale. COP24 also discussed such issues as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s 1.5 Degree Celsius Special Report (on the impacts of global warming of 1.5° above pre-industrial levels) and formed relevant resolutions.

In general, achievements of COP24 are mainly reflected in the following aspects⁴:

First, *different actors around the world have begun to take coordinated actions*. For example, C40 Cities, a network of the world’s megacities established in 2005 committed to addressing climate change, announced that they would collaborate with the IPCC to determine whether related global greenhouse gas emission pathways are applicable to urban climate action. The Powering Past Coal Alliance, launched by Canada and the UK at COP23, have involved over 80 countries and regions in accelerating the development of clean energy and eliminating the use of traditional coal. Invest4Climate, a new platform set up by the World Bank Group and the United Nations, aims to bring together governments, financial institutions, investors, charities and multilateral banks to identify climate investment opportunities, support policy reforms and attract private sector investment in climate actions. The Beijing-based Global Energy Interconnection Development Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO) and the UNFCCC

³David Waskow *et al.*, “COP24 Climate Change Package Brings Paris Agreement to Life,” World Resources Institute, December 21, 2018, <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/12/cop24-climate-change-package-brings-paris-agreement-life>.

⁴UN Climate Summit, <https://unclimatesummit.org/>.

secretariat jointly issued the “Global Energy Interconnection Action Plan for Promoting the Implementation of the Paris Agreement,” and jointly established the Global Energy Internet Think Tank Alliance. The UNFCCC Secretariat also launched the “Sports for Climate Action Framework” with the International Sports Agency, which aims to expand the climate action impact by identifying a clear trajectory for the global sports community to combat climate change.

Second, *enterprises are making more active contributions*. For instance, Maersk, the world’s largest shipping company, has pledged to completely eliminate its carbon impact by 2050. Shell will link its short-term carbon targets to executive pay in 2020. Moreover, the Climate CEO Alliance has issued an open letter, including more than 50 global corporate leaders generating \$1.3 trillion in revenue, calling on world leaders to implement carbon pricing mechanisms, stimulate low-carbon financing and investment, and develop policy tools to increase demand for low-carbon solutions.⁵ A total of 43 major brands, retailers and supplier organizations in the global fashion industry have also signed the “Fashion Industry Climate Action Charter,” setting specific targets (such as a total reduction of 30 percent by 2030), eliminating coal energy from enterprises and direct suppliers from 2025, and achieving net zero emissions by 2050.⁶

Third, *interaction between developed countries and emerging countries has changed from “zero-sum game” to a “stag hunt” model*.⁷ Indeed, climate change and other international environmental issues can be better explained by the “stag hunt model”: most countries would implement responsible policies in global climate governance; yet, as long as one country

Global climate governance has become more pragmatic since COP24.

⁵“Climate CEOs Managing \$1.5 trillion Call for Action,” UNFCCC, November 29, 2018, <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-ceos-managing-15-trillion-call-for-action>.

⁶“Fashion for Global Climate Action,” UNFCCC, <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/sectoral-engagement/fashion-for-global-climate-action>.

⁷“Stag hunt game (SHG),” or “stag hunt model,” describes the situation in which game players, in the absence of a credible cooperative guarantee mechanism, abandon the pursuit of the best outcome (stag hunt) and pursue the second-best outcome (hare hunt) instead, due to their consideration of self-interest and distrust of others.

does not cooperate, the environmental security of other countries and the whole world will be threatened. Since varying national conditions lead to different responses and contributions of countries to global collective actions, the NDCs highlighted in the *Paris Agreement* and the networked governance model behind the bottom-up governance are clear recognition of the self-interest and distrust of countries as well as the pursuit of sub-optimal results in this context. Thus, the past “zero sum game” between developed and emerging countries under the CBDR principle has been replaced by the more rational and realistic “stag hunt model”; and global climate governance is steadily advancing in a more pragmatic manner.

Fourth, *countries are better mobilized to fulfill their emission reduction responsibilities*. Sharing responsibilities allows different actors to be involved in the endeavor. The submission of NDCs after the *Paris Agreement*, as well as a number of supporting rules and guidelines developed by the Katowice conference, established a series of “green incentives” from transparency-enhancing actions to supporting frameworks. The focus of all actors has thus shifted from evading responsibilities and commitments to making trade-offs through contribution, which will effectively facilitate the global green process.

In 2019, the focus of the climate process is the UN Climate Change Conference (COP25) to be held at the end of the year, which will be crucial for global climate governance to fully step into common governance. For now, it is hard to say what outcomes will be reached at the conference due to the U.S. withdrawal from the *Paris Agreement* and other ongoing political events in Europe.

Rationale Behind the Common Governance at COP24

There are many practical factors behind the global climate governance pattern formed by the Katowice climate negotiations. An in-depth analysis of the rationale behind the common governance may help us find the crux of the global climate governance reform.

Climate Disasters and Scientific Reports

2018 is a critical year for the international climate process, as well as a year of frequent extreme weather events. Yet, the 4th UN Environment

Adaptation Gap Report, released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), shows that there is a wide gap between what countries are prepared to do to combat climate change and what they should actually do about it, and that current adaptation efforts are by no means sufficient to minimize the impact of climate change.⁸ Against this backdrop, the IPCC issued the 1.5 Degree Celsius Special Report in Incheon, South Korea in early October, 2018. Linking climate science with politics, this Report contributed to the momentum of the Katowice conference held two months later by pointing out that the world is already witnessing the consequences of 1°C of global warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice, among other changes. As the Report states, every extra bit of warming matters, especially since warming of 1.5°C or higher increases the risks associated with long-lasting or irreversible changes, which requires all countries to achieve rapid and far-reaching transformation in land, energy, industry, construction, transportation and cities.⁹ In response to climate change, most countries have already affirmed their national laws and policies. However, in terms of practical actions at the national level, how to set quantifiable indicators in the NDCs requires not only political will and necessary financial resources, but also the formulation and implementation of broader development issues.

The IPCC 1.5°C Special Report provided much scientific evidence for COP24.

Major Countries Coordinating Climate Governance Efforts

As the Trump administration was considering withdrawing the United States from the *Paris Agreement*, China, the EU and India played a key role in facilitating the global climate governance process at COP24. China not only contributed much to the negotiation of the mechanism and detailed

⁸“UN Environment Adaptation Gap Report,” UNEP, December 2018, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27114/AGR_2018.pdf?sequence=3.

⁹“Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Approved by Governments,” IPCC, October 8, 2018, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>.

rules for the implementation of the *Paris agreement*, but it also conducted the Taranoa Dialogue, where the parties introduced their domestic best practices on climate change to increase mutual understanding and enhance cooperation. While advocating the transformation of all parties in line with the green and low-carbon development model, China took stock of the implementation of the 100 billion-RMB financial support pledged by developed countries to developing countries every year.

At the conference, the EU agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. The European Commission set up a strategy of "A Clean Planet for All," a long-term strategy to confirm the EU's commitment to lead in global climate action and to present a vision that helps achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 through a socially-fair transition in a cost-efficient manner.¹⁰ This goal manifests the EU's resolution to upgrade the member states' NDCs.

India spoke highly of the outcomes of COP24, stressing that the *Paris agreement* is non-negotiable and that the basic principles cannot be compromised. India also confirmed that it would manage to meet the deadline for emission reduction even as some developed countries were reducing their contribution to climate change. Since India is the third largest greenhouse gas emitter (only after China and the United States), such commitment is of great significance to the progress of global climate actions.

Contribution of Non-State Actors

The diversity of stakeholders at the Katowice conference reflects a profound change in current global climate governance. The withdrawal of the United States from the *Paris Agreement* and the Trump administration's stubborn support for traditional fossil energy and related industries have hindered the global low-carbon process. However, the U.S. state and local governments have become powerful supporters of global climate governance and

¹⁰"COP24 — Addressing the Paris Agreement & EU's Pledge for Climate Neutrality, European Union External Action," December 4, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54779/cop24-addressing-paris-agreement-eus-pledge-climate-neutrality_bs.

green policies.¹¹ This indicates the reality of the obstinate opposition against the current climate governance process; yet at the same time, it highlights the important role of local governments in global climate governance.

Meanwhile, the importance of other non-state actors — represented by international organizations, companies, and global scientific communities — is increasingly prominent in the global governance agenda. For example, the Green Bank Network mobilized \$41 billion for global clean energy projects. The World Health Organization (WHO) published a report claiming that the health benefits of achieving climate change goals far outweigh the costs. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) are working together to support low-carbon, climate-resilience development. Academia has also joined in the governance process by striving to eradicate global warming skepticism and mending the weaknesses of the COP24 commitment.

Challenges to Future Global Climate Governance

Under the bottom-up emission reduction framework with NDCs established by the *Paris agreement*, the effective interaction among multiple stakeholders, the process of working out NDCs, and the expanding network between developed and emerging countries have all indicated a new trend toward common climate governance. In this new context, COP24 focused on implementing the details of the *Paris agreement* and urging countries to reduce their emission gaps by 2020. In particular, the conference agreed on a unified climate progress tracking and reporting system for the parties as well as many financing arrangements for climate actions.

Nevertheless, the lack of strong commitment to reduce emissions in the final document of COP24 and the relative contempt for the urgent adaptation needs of developing countries to some extent downgraded the outcomes of this conference. Such media as Yahoo and some activist groups doubted that the final report of the conference would be sufficient to cope

¹¹“At COP24 Climate Talks in Katowice, 300+ Elected Officials from 40 States Call for Phasing Out Fossil Fuels, Green New Deal Approach,” EOPA, December 14, 2018, https://protectingamerica.net/press_release_12-14-18/.

with the accelerating climate change. That also reflects several major challenges to the current global climate governance regime.

The first is its weak synergy. There is limited expression at the national level regarding climate actions. Only a quarter of the parties at the General Assembly signed the ministerial declaration entitled “Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration,” emphasizing the need for the fossil fuel community to develop emission reduction policies to ensure a workforce transformation. The declaration was not hailed by consensus, but was only “noted” in the final text of the conference. Besides, although the Polish President announced the “forest-promoting climate” policy, highlighting the important role of forests in solving climate problems, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) expressed concerns that the announcement showed that Poland wanted to use forest carbon offsets to delay emission reductions, for it did not include any specific near-term targets. Moreover, dozens of countries in the High Ambition Coalition, such as the EU, UK, Germany, France, Argentina, Mexico and Canada, pledged at COP21 to raise their targets by 2020, but more than three years later, there are still no real ambitious goals.

COP24 failed to induce a strong ambition to reduce emissions.

The second challenge is the staggering development of global environmental governance. As mentioned above, COP24 did not induce a strong ambition to reduce emissions, and the concerns of developing countries on climate adaptation have been largely marginalized, weakening the final

outcomes of the conference. Meanwhile, developed countries are unable to further promote the global low-carbon process; they even act against the process at times due to domestic political considerations. Developing countries such as Brazil also question the importance of climate change issues, which makes the current governance situation less optimistic.

The gap between developed and developing countries on climate issues is also more prominent in the new global governance pattern. On the one hand, developed countries are reluctant to execute more ambitious emission reduction plans; on the other hand, different voices are emerging on climate issues within developing countries. What cannot be ignored is that developed countries still occupy a dominant position in the global

climate governance agenda, shown in the neglect of climate change adaptation in the final outcome document.

The third challenge is the lack of funds and expertise of LDCs in climate action. As the crisis of energy resources driven by climate change is looming large, LDCs need to step up their efforts in implementing specific rules to deal with the crisis. On top of that, increasing poverty in some LDCs may give rise to such crises as epidemics, political instability and chaotic immigration, making climate risk management more difficult. This is especially true for the 34 LDCs in Africa. The outcomes of COP24 call for NDC information to bring together governments, businesses and the civil society through the Talanoa Dialogue to consider current urgency and opportunities for growing economic and technological action. In addition, all countries should develop and disseminate long-term decarbonization strategies and developed countries should expand their support to enable all parties to achieve greater goals. Unfortunately, this can hardly be done in the current political and economic situation of the world.

The fourth challenge is the lack of fairness. Countries have very different views on how to prioritize their actions. For many developing countries, it is imperative to ensure immediate assistance to people suffering from floods, storms and other disasters; only after that will they be able to invest in adaptation actions to better prepare for future disasters and, if there are sufficient resources, begin to withdraw from fossil fuels, so as to reduce emissions. Yet, having a different starting point from developed countries, developed countries are more interested in mitigation measures and transparency and often neglect the CBDR-RC principle, leaving little flexibility for developing countries. Hence, the current global climate governance regime is sometimes regarded “unfair” by both developed and developing countries. To bridge this gap, non-state actors like enterprises, NGOs and individuals should be encouraged to measure and reduce their emissions and support climate actions through the purchase and cancellation of certified emission reductions (CERs).¹²

Although the program document “Katowice Climate Package” and the “Paris Rule book” adopted by the Katowice conference indicate a

¹²“CDM Passes New Milestones in Cooperative Action on Climate Change,” UNFCCC, October 8, 2019, <https://unfccc.int/news/cdm-passes-new-milestones-in-cooperative-action-on-climate-change>.

“rebalancing” of global climate governance, the above-mentioned challenges must be tackled to ensure effective response to global climate problems. The global governance system centered on climate change negotiations is a complex, versatile and continuous process of interaction among actors. With regard to the lack of strong commitment to reduce emissions by many countries and the relative neglect of the urgent adaptation needs of developing countries, all actors should seriously consider the consequences of accelerating climate change and make new contributions to global climate governance to ensure the fulfillment of the *Paris Agreement*.

China's Endeavor in Global Climate Governance

China is experiencing one of the world's fastest growing urbanization, and is in the process of low carbon modernization, the result of which is of utmost significance to the future of our planet. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has set clear goals concerning sustainable development, including, among other things, an ambitious decrease of CO₂ emissions and an increase of the use of non-fossil fuels. As President Xi Jinping announced, China will “foster new growth areas and drivers in green and low-carbon; promote a sound economic structure that facilitates green, low-carbon, and circular development; build an energy sector that is clean, low-carbon, safe, and efficient; and encourage simple, moderate, green and low-carbon ways of life.”¹³

China has set ambitious goals to decrease emission and promote green economy.

China has been even more determined to tackle climate change vis-à-vis the U.S. withdrawal from the *Paris Agreement*. At the Katowice conference, China reiterated its position and showed unwavering support for climate change actions as well as for the institutions of UNFCCC and the *Paris Agreement*, maintaining that the trend of green and low-carbon development is irreversible.

¹³“Full text of Xi Jinping’s report at 19th CPC National Congress,” *Xinhua*, November 3, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm.

In 2019, China helped complete the negotiation of implementing rules of the *Paris Agreement* and establish related mechanisms, to which China made such great contribution as launching the Talanoa Dialogue to enhance common understanding; promoting the transformation of its economy toward green and low-carbon development; monitoring the implementation of the 100-billion RMB financial commitment; calling on developed countries to take the lead in emission reduction; reaching a compromise with the United States on the transparency issue, laying the foundation for a consensus on transparency at the conference; establishing trilateral coordination with the EU and Canada, as well as collaboration with India, in urging the implementation of climate funding supported by developed countries; and helping improve the implementing rules and enhance supervision for each country's NDCs.

At the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit held in Buenos Aires in December 2018, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi pointed out that the multilateral process is the best option for combating climate change, calling for all nations to fulfill their political commitments, take due responsibilities and firmly adhere to cooperation. Wang also expressed China's determination in devoting itself to global climate governance, deepening South-South cooperation on climate change, and promoting a "greener" Belt and Road.

To be more specific, China's future engagement in global climate governance will be focused on the following three areas.

Promoting Green Competitiveness

The primary focus of China will be on the linkage between domestic governance and international governance. China is exploring successful paths to building low-carbon cities while trying to apply its experience to international norms. The essence of a country's influence and leadership in international institutions lies in how well it has done domestically; only when China has optimized its development model and strengthened its own green competitiveness, will other countries begin to benefit from its lessons. Since the tide of low carbonization of global economy is inevitable, China's strenuous efforts in promoting the low-carbon transformation of its economy are valuable. In the meantime, China needs to adapt to the new situation of low carbonization of the supply chain in international trade.

Given that an economy which requires a higher standard for CO₂ emission can promote the global standards thanks to the “California effect,”¹⁴ China must encourage more funding flow to low-carbon economy and enhance the combination of capital and technology on the basis of market rules. In other words, the state-market relations matter in the low-carbon economic field. Moreover, China can foster new economic competitiveness by a “pilot-promotion” approach — experimented at some localities first, then promoted widely — to innovate its low-carbon policy. Considering that global low-carbon economy is still at an early stage without sound technologies, institutions and rules, China and developed countries are almost on the same starting line, but China’s “pilot-promotion” approach may better facilitate the development of low-carbon technology and policy, and thus help enhance its international competitiveness.

However, one of the crucial bottlenecks of China’s low-carbon competitiveness is its high-carbon energy structure. Coal takes up nearly 60 to

70 percent of China’s energy source composition; meanwhile, more than 75 percent of electricity comes from coal plants. Since coal reduction, which is the essence of energy revolution, will present a lasting challenge, China needs to try its best in clean coal production for now, while gradually reducing the proportion of coal energy.

China will prioritize clean coal production while trying to reduce the use of coal.

Enhancing China’s Institutional Power Through Major-Country Coordination and South-South Cooperation

Strengthened major-country coordination and South-South cooperation have become two main pillars for building China’s institutional power in global climate governance. The former helps to overcome the difficulties in collective actions under the anarchy of global environmental governance, whilst the latter enables China to interpret the CBDR principle in a more acceptable way and thus helps foster consensus between developed and developing countries.

¹⁴The “California effect” refers to a situation where environmental regulations adopted by one locality are very likely to be adopted by other localities, especially when the spread is due completely to free market forces.

Climate governance calls for better coordination among major countries that shoulder great responsibilities in global climate actions. China's role is indispensable due to its large economic size and huge emissions. The U.S. withdrawal from the *Paris Agreement* requires China to step up coordination with the EU, Russia, India and other major countries. As the world's second largest economy, China should lead the reform of the climate governance framework of the *Paris Agreement* by highlighting the central role of the United Nations and enhancing multilateral cooperation with other international organizations, while making more contributions with its expertise, funds and, most importantly, good domestic practices.

Due to institutional rigidity, South-South cooperation on climate actions has been confined to financial aid and staff training. Such innovation as diversifying the forms of cooperation and setting up new cooperation platforms at different levels is urgently needed to inject new momentum into South-South cooperation. Besides, China should try to integrate the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) into those cooperation frameworks, so as to promote common green economic development through sharing of participating nations' low-carbon experience, innovative paths and best practices.

Strengthening Pragmatic Multi-Stakeholder Climate Diplomacy

Non-state actors like NGOs, think tanks, academic institutions, media, enterprises and even individuals are showing unique advantages in diplomacy today. And a multiple-stakeholder model in global climate governance has prevailed since the conclusion of the *Paris Agreement*. In the future, China is expected to further enhance the role of such non-state actors in climate diplomacy. For example, think tanks and the scientific community will be encouraged to hold more Track 1.5 or Track 2 dialogues, both involving science professionals, policy experts and government representatives, to promote common understanding among countries and help with their policy coordination.

After COP25 held at the end of 2019, China should strengthen such pragmatic multi-stakeholder climate diplomacy. While refraining from claiming to be the "leader" or "spokesperson" of global climate actions, China needs to continue emphasizing the central role of the United Nations and advocate multilateral climate cooperation. At the same time, China should offer more talents, expertise and innovative ideas to the global

governance process. For instance, a country's contribution to the IPCC assessment report largely reflects its voice in climate research and negotiation, and thus China should work more closely with other developing countries to improve their capabilities in scientific assessments of climate change, strengthen the connection between domestic climate research and the working mechanism of the IPCC, and to provide more wisdom to the IPCC's scientific assessment process. To this end, China must spare no effort to pursue its low-carbon, green and sustainable development. Only with that will China become a good model for other countries in their common pursuit for a better world to live in.