

Businesses face patchwork of rules under Paris climate deal

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Businesses in the US and the EU face much tougher regulations to combat global warming than their rivals in China, Japan and Australia under the UN [climate change accord](#) due to be struck in Paris at the end of the year.

The offers [Washington](#) and [Brussels](#) are making to cut greenhouse gas pollution for the agreement amount to nearly four times the effort of [Beijing](#) and 1.5 times that of [Tokyo](#), according to research commissioned by the FT.

Australia is [also proposing](#) to do less than either the US or the EU, even though the average amount of carbon dioxide each of its citizens produces is about [the same](#) as people in the US and more than double that of those in the EU.

And [Russia's plan](#) to reduce its pollution is the most feeble of any from a major economy, according to analysis by Dr Jeremy Woods of Imperial College London and Dr Rajiv K. Chaturvedi of the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

Their data, which the FT has used to create a global climate change calculator, shows the combined pledges countries have made so far will bring down greenhouse gases, but not by enough to prevent risky levels of warming in future.

The findings underline the difficulties confronting delegates from nearly 200 countries who are due to meet in Paris in December to finalise the first new global climate change agreement in 18 years.

The Paris accord is aiming to break new ground

The accord is supposed to deliver what more than two decades of UN climate talks have failed to achieve: a permanent cut in planet-warming greenhouse gases that mostly come from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas.

Average temperatures have already risen by nearly 1°C since the industrial revolution and the Paris agreement is supposed to make sure warming does not exceed an internationally-agreed limit of 2°C.

Beyond that threshold, [scientists say](#) severe and irreversible changes in the climate are likely, from searing heatwaves to more fierce storms and flooding.

Recognising it is impossible to force countries to cut their emissions, the Paris negotiations have taken a new tack.

Throughout 2015, countries have been tabling voluntary plans showing how they propose to cut their pollution from 2020, the year the new agreement is due to start. Some countries are cutting fossil fuel subsidies and ramping up renewable energy generation. Others are putting a price on carbon dioxide emissions, clamping down on coal power station pollution, making buildings more energy efficient or conserving forests.

The UN will shortly issue a report on the 146 plans countries published up to October 1. But this report will not assess the adequacy of each pledge, a politically fraught task that would highlight the relative fairness of each nation's commitment.

The research by Dr Woods and Dr Chaturvedi tries to fill that gap by calculating the effort each nation is making.

To do this, they have assessed the cut in emissions each government's plan is likely to produce and compared it to what would have happened if virtually nothing had been done, and what scientists say is needed from each country's region to meet the 2°C goal.

For some, it's two steps forward, one step back

They conclude that Moscow's plan, for example, is weak because it proposes a cut in Russia's greenhouse gas pollution of up to 30 per cent by 2030, but only from what it was in 1990, shortly before the country's emissions started plunging in the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

That means that by 2030, Russia's emissions are likely to be the same as they were in 2010.

However, the latest report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests countries such as Russia should be cutting their pollution by up to 40 per cent by 2030 from 2010 levels to reach the 2°C target.

The researchers caution the widely differing ways in which countries have expressed their pledges makes it hard to interpret their plans precisely, and there are many uncertainties about the exact extent to which emissions will change in the absence of any climate change action.

But Dr Chaturvedi said: "What is clear from our analysis is no country is doing enough but some countries are doing far less than they are capable of doing."

Researchers at other groups monitoring countries' pledges, such as Climate Action Tracker, have said that if the commitments made up to October 1 were met, it would lead to warming of [around 2.7°C](#) by 2100, a 0.4°C improvement on what was expected in December last year.

Dr Woods and Dr Chaturvedi's findings are slightly more pessimistic because they include a larger range of possible temperature increases, not just those that are more probable. "Average global temperatures are still likely to rise by up to 4°C in 2100, compared to 6°C without any action," said Dr Woods. "So it is imperative the Paris agreement includes a system requiring countries to drastically ramp up emissions cuts beyond their current promises."

The two academics work with [Climate-KIC](#), an EU group that last year helped design an [online calculator](#) for the UK energy department showing how global emissions can be cut.

The FT has used their new data to create the COP21 Climate Change Calculator showing how the Paris pledges made so far are likely to affect global temperatures and what more needs to be done to prevent 2°C of warming.