

Will President-Elect Trump derail the Paris accord? Perry Sioshansi's letter from America

The one certain thing that can be said about the Conference of Parties (COP22) that was held in Marrakesh, Morocco in November 2016 is that it was ill-timed.

Opening immediately after the 8 November US presidential elections, it was doomed before it even started. And despite attempts by the likes of the outgoing US secretary of state John Kerry, who sought to reassure attendees at the United Nations conference that President-elect Donald Trump – who has vowed to nix President Barack Obama's climate agenda – would not affect the global efforts to address climate change, did not cheer the dispirited crowds.

During the long and bitter election campaign, the President-elect repeatedly called climate change a hoax, promising to walk away from the Paris agreement while withdrawing US support from a \$100bn global fund to help developing countries to cut down emissions.

He also said he would roll back virtually all energy and climate-related regulations including Obama's proposed clean power plan (CPP), aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.

Like much else promised during the election campaign, it remains to be seen how and how much of what was promised will in fact be implemented. Needless to say, so far, the environmental community is not thrilled about what they have heard.

First came the announcement that the President-elect has picked a chief opponent of the Obama administration's climate agenda with strong ties to fossil fuel industry to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

While subject to confirmation by Senate, the mere idea of putting a climate change denier in charge of the agency that is supposed to protect the public against the worst effects of climate change does not bode well.

The EPA nominee, Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt, is best known for suing the EPA to overturn President Barack Obama's CPP.

His claim to fame is fighting against regulation to cut greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and claiming that the EPA lacks authority to define carbon dioxide as a pollutant endangering public

health and welfare; a decision previously supported by the US Supreme Court.

As if that was not bad enough, it was announced that Rex Tillerson, the CEO of ExxonMobil would be nominated to head the State Department. Needless to say, neither Tillerson nor Exxon are particularly well-liked by the environmental community.

Exxon has been embroiled in accusations that it kept the results of its own research on the potential impacts of climate change secret, while supporting organizations that denied the link between greenhouse gas emissions and warming climate.

Commenting on the nomination of Exxon's CEO, May Boeve, the executive director of 350.org, an environmental advocacy group said, "Covering up climate science and deceiving investors qualifies you for federal investigation, not federal office." It will be interesting to see how the confirmation process proceeds given the fact that Republicans have a majority in the US Senate.

Under Tillerson, Exxon has acknowledged that humans cause climate change, but the company maintains that oil use is essential – nobody denies that.

Tillerson reportedly told *Fortune* magazine, "To say that you're addicted to oil and natural gas seems to me to say you're addicted to economic growth." What else would you expect from the CEO of an oil company?

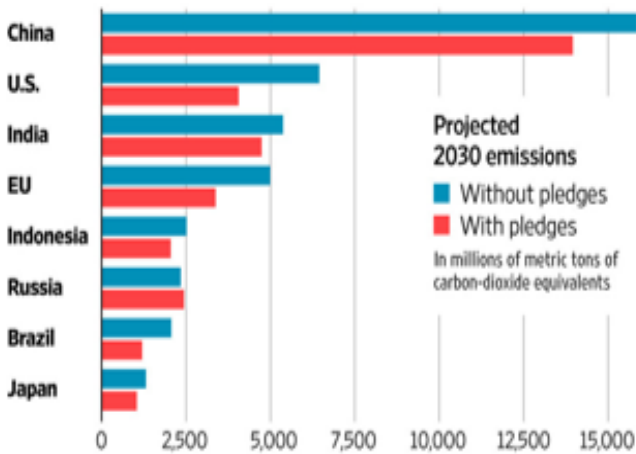
Another famous quote of Tillerson is, "What good is it to save the planet if humanity suffers?" Nobody wants the humanity to suffer, and nobody says that oil is not essential. But such statements suggest the arrogance and the insensitivity that puts Exxon on top of every environmentalist's list of companies to hate.

The nominations of both Tillerson and Pruitt are expected to face strong opposition from the environmental community.

But the story gets worse. The president-elect's choice to head the Department of Energy (DOE) is Rick Perry, former governor of Texas, who during the 2012 presidential campaign said, if elected President, he would eliminate three departments,

Stepping Back

Projected impact of carbon-cutting pledges made at the Paris climate conference. President-elect Donald Trump said he would pull the U.S. out of the pact.



Source: The Wall Street Journal, 16 Nov 2016

including the DOE – although he famously could not remember which.

Looking for a silver lining in all this? Trump’s obvious ignorance and apparent lack of interest in climate science may in fact galvanize everyone outside his inner circle to push a bit harder. And those in a position to do things unilaterally and without a government mandate are likely to be emboldened to act. Desperate times call for desperate measures – that is what some are predicting.

Anecdotal examples abound. At the latest gathering of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group – a global initiative that brings cities together to plan and share best practices – mayors of Paris, Madrid, Athens, and Mexico City announced that they will ban diesel engines by 2025.

While it is not entirely clear how they will manage to enforce such a ban, the symbolic announcement was noteworthy and may prompt other cities suffering from congestion and urban pollution to follow.

Diesel engines are particularly harmful to those who have to breathe the dirty air and the fine particles emitted from diesel fumes.

“Mayors have already stood up to say that the climate change is one of the greatest challenges we face,” said Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, chair of the C40.

“Today, we also stand up to say we no longer tolerate air pollution and the health problems and

deaths it causes—particularly for our most vulnerable citizens. Big problems like air pollution require bold action, and we call on car and bus manufacturers to join us.”

The group released a petition calling on global car manufacturers to stop making diesel cars and trucks.

In similar vein, Mayors of 35 American cities serving nearly 30 million citizens, recently sent an open letter to the president-elect stating their collective commitment to tackle climate change. They said, in part, “We write today to ask for your partnership in our work to clean our air, strengthen our economy, and ensure that our children inherit a nation healthier and better prepared for the future than it is today.”

In early December, the European Commission proposed a 30% energy efficiency target for 2030, up from the current target of 27%. This would lead to a 23% cut in energy consumption compared to 2005 levels, helping the European Union to meet the objectives contained in the Paris climate agreement. It could also lead to a 0.4% increase in GDP.

The Trump administration may not believe in climate science and may not wish to lead or even actively participate in the implementation or funding of the Paris Accord, but this does not stop others from carrying on.

Perry Sioshansi is founder and president of Menlo Energy Economics and is the editor and publisher of *EEnergy Informer*, from which we have sourced this article, and which we commend.

Nutwood contains occasional pieces from Cornwall team members and guest contributors on key industry and policy issues.

If you have a point of view that you would like to see featured, please contact Tom Crisp. His contact details are 01603 604421 or t.crisp@cornwall-insight.com