



China Carbon Forum | 中国碳论坛

An independent platform to foster trust and cooperation among China's stakeholders for climate action

Marrakech Debrief: How is the Paris Agreement Tracking?

Executive Summary

On 1st December 2016, China Carbon Forum together with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), co-organized "**Marrakech Debrief: How is the Paris Agreement Tracking?**", as part of the China Low Carbon Leadership Network (LCLN). The LCLN events aim to encourage communication among leading local and international experts in China's climate change sector. The event series are funded by the German International Climate Initiative on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).

This event featured a panel of distinguished experts and government representatives who shared their views on the developments at COP22 in Marrakesh. The panel included representatives from both China and Europe, and the audience were enabled to gain an insight into a mix of perspectives, especially during the Q&A session. After the discussion, the guests enjoyed a follow-up networking event.

Record of Discussion

The following is an edited synthesis of discussion that took place at the event among panellists (around 45 minutes) and open Q&A with participants (25 minutes). As per convention, individual's comments are not attributed.

From November 7-18, more than 190 countries gathered in Marrakech for the 22nd Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 22), the 12th Session of the Conference to the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 12) and most notably, the 1st meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 1).

The main topics at the conference centred on the **specific measures and mechanisms needed in order to implement the Agreement, known collectively as the 'Paris rulebook'**, with the intended goal that these will be fully defined and operational when CMA resumes at COP 24 in 2018. The first long-term 'mid-century' strategies proposed by Germany, Mexico, USA and Canada enabled the creation of a new initiative called the '2050 Pathway Platform', with the goal of helping other countries submit their own long-term strategies. Another important outcome from the conference was the launch of the NDC Partnership, co-chaired by Morocco and Germany, which brings together 9 institutions and 33 countries, with the aim of providing a platform to discuss issues related to best practices and tools to support developing countries in achieving their ambitious NDCs.

The Adaptation Fund, established in response to the Kyoto Protocol's ambitions to provide developing countries with funding to help adapt to problems arising from climate change, also **exceeded its funding target**, with Germany providing the bulk of donations at EUR 50 million, as well as Sweden, Italy and regions of Belgium. And, perhaps most significantly, even considering recent events in the US that threaten to undermine goals clarified by the Obama administration last year at the Paris Agreement, it was clear that **all Parties nonetheless were undeterred in their attitudes to inspire climate change action**, with heads of State, Government and Delegations issuing a proclamation to "*signal a shift towards a new era of implementation and action on climate and sustainable development*".

The establishment of the 'Marrakesh Partnership For Global Climate Action', designed in order to build upon COP 21 goals by creating a coherent framework in which Party and non-Party stakeholders can co-operate and establish timelines for progress, was heralded by the panel as being a significant step forward. Significance was placed on the fact that not just Parties, but also the private sector, financial institutions, cities etc. are all involved, and that clear guidelines have been scheduled for regular engagement between stakeholders in the coming years.

The findings from the 'Climate Finance Roadmap', a report jointly issued by the Australian and UK governments using data provided from global climate flows from the OECD, were briefly mentioned by panellists. The report outlines how the \$100 billion a year pledged by developed countries can be met, and concludes that **developed countries are confident they can meet such goals**. Sentiment echoed that of the UN who chose not to officially endorse the report.

With regard to the recent events in the US, the panel agreed that, whilst the US election result will likely be detrimental to efforts to curb global warming, **the global sentiment towards climate**

change action is unfaltering, reflected by the current ratification of 117 countries of the Paris Agreement. The consensus towards what President-elect Trump may actually do, however, was contentious, with one panellist noting how at this moment it is unclear and difficult to know exactly what the president-elect may do with regard to climate change, given his unpredictable viewpoints on a whole range of topics, whilst another expressing that they believe Trump is dangerous, and will deliver fully on his promises. It was agreed however that **because of the decentralised nature of the Paris Agreement, it will be much less vulnerable to such setbacks compared to previous frameworks**, and so it will be considerably more difficult for a Trump administration to dismantle. It was also mentioned how, although being an undeniable setback towards the SDGs, the EU has already started on implementation of legislation resulting the Paris agreement in the form of targets for the ETS and for those sectors outside the ETS in the form of national targets. It was again reaffirmed from the panel that the US election result will likely not have a considerable impact on such targets or ambitions.

With a potential US lead on climate change cast into doubt, considerable interest was expressed regarding side events that took place concerning the **future of global climate governance**. One such event stated how cities and regions should have a large role to play in integrating with global climate governance in the future; indeed this statement looks like it may hold some truth with states such as California adopting their own carbon policies, regardless of what US administration is in power. Moreover, the implications on how the post-Paris climate governance architecture affects the **public domain**, with regard to a more 'bottom-up' approach to implementation and its effects upon meeting with the previous 'top-down' approach – something more typical of previous COP events, was discussed. The panel noted how the architecture that the Paris agreement has facilitated may create new, innovative approaches that span not just traditional parties, but also those parties that in the past were not involved, and that now can help create alliances that may help strengthen the public domain at a **transnational level**.

Some degree of innovation with respect to a new leader or leaders was discussed, with the panel noting how **China is keen to 'take the baton' from the US** in this regard, as was stated firmly by Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin at Marrakech, but noted some degree of uncertainty as to whether or not they could effectively replace the US in its entirety without other countries' support - this may be bolstered however by the fact that Brazil, the EU and India have stated that they are committed to forging ahead with the UN deal. One panellist did express how China's growing leadership is taking shape with efforts such as the 'One Belt One Road' initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The controversial issue at COP 22 of how to best build analytical capabilities with regard to defining **accountability** for different nations was discussed given the 'bottom up' nature of the 2015 Agreement's 'rulebook' on implementation. It was agreed that this is a difficult process, and one that will need regular engagement with many different stakeholders. Provisions such as the 'global stocktake', which will take place every five years, will go some way towards achieving this by acting as a check on progress. Emphasis was placed on **strategic policy improvement** with regard to implementing **transparent** policies and obligations that take into account different parties' common but differentiated responsibilities in implementing NDCs, especially with regard to what, if any, flexible approaches can be taken by developing countries. This may well prove to be a contentious issue through to 2018.

A discussion regarding a low-carbon long-term future, especially with regard to China, proceeded whereby a **pathway for an exit for high-carbon assets was stressed** among panellists, with comparison being made to similar difficulties that have faced EU states when closing old lignite-fuelled plants. Again, experiences related to inadequate **policy design**, with an example given about how difficult it was developing the EU ETS carbon price in phase one.

A question was raised concerning the potential of a future wave of Trump-inspired attitudes to climate change, which may take place in Europe. The panel highlighted that **the situation in Europe is distinctly different because of the nature of the political groups present**, with a far smaller share of climate change deniers compared with the US, even in far-right movements that are currently gaining traction in some member states. Thus, even if these groups were to come to power, there is a much lower risk that they will pursue such policies.