



THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

China's opportunities and challenges in the post-Paris era roundtable

Beijing, P.R. China

Friday, July 15, 2016

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Introduction

Thank you Qi Ye for your hospitality. It is a great honor to be here at this event and address you and this esteemed group of people. I have learned a great amount from you and your work over the years and am so excited to be here.

This trip to China is my first international visit as the Executive Director of Greenpeace International. The work of Greenpeace in China is of the utmost importance to the global organization and the role of China in the world, particularly in the case of how China moves forward on its own development pathway post-Paris, is of great interest to me and the organization as a whole, and the world. So it is great to be here!

Today I thought I would share with you my reflections and analysis around the Paris Agreement, the lead-up to it and some of the factors of success, the Agreement itself and where we need to go now, with a particular focus on the role of China. I will just touch on highlights so we can get straight into conversation.

Pre/In Paris

Let me start by saying that I believe that Paris was a success for multi-lateralism and for climate action. We are now in a new era of international cooperation. I believe the world shifted slightly through this process in a number of ways I will outline for

you today. This does not mean, however, that the problem is solved. We all understand the gravity of the situation and the science reaffirms that almost every day with new studies. Having recently been in the Arctic on a Greenpeace ship, I have seen with my own eyes what is happening and let me inform you that the size of the ice in the Arctic is the real world example of the change we are reading about in the literature. But Paris was a turning point. Why? What were the elements of success?

In the lead-up to Paris and in Paris I count five factors of success:

- 1.) Shifts in the real economy were taking place in a way that made a low carbon economy real and possible and more beneficial than the old economy. The drop in the price of renewables, thanks in great part to both Germany's national policies and China's national policies, the coal decline in China and other countries, and the increasing awareness of the externalities of fossil fuels, were large factors in the mindset shift from Copenhagen to Paris. What was seen as a threat to development before became a core part of good development and economic policy and that enabled intended nationally determined contributions to be credible from an emissions reduction perspective. Additionally the understanding of the real costs of the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, on agriculture on people was much deeper than in the past and this shifted economic understanding as well.
- 2.) There were domestic political shifts in key countries that made a real difference. I can speak most specifically about my own country, the United States, which went from having no real domestic policies on climate change to having a clear Climate Action Plan backed up by binding national regulations and a President who was finding every angle he could to move the issue forward nationally and internationally. Although the US needs to do more, the fact that it was decarbonizing major sectors of its economy meant that other countries could not hide behind it and that it could be a more credible international force to move things forward because it had more credibility.

- 3.) There were some key dynamics amongst countries. Clearly the US-China relations were a key factor in making Paris a success. This was important scientifically, due to the large size of their emissions, but also politically. I think each country needed the other for domestic reasons to move forward and each had to take risks to do so. I would also mention the role of small countries in the Paris outcome – this includes Vulnerable Countries Forum that joined together and pushed larger countries to go further than they had planned to do so – and I think this was the case for all large countries actually.
- 4.) The diplomatic skills of the French Presidency and the support of the UNFCCC were critical – creating a transparent, clear process for countries to negotiate, but also keeping the urgency of the issue front of mind. Christiana Figueres brought hope and determination. The atmosphere in Paris was one of getting things done well. People like Laurence Tubiana was an expert and understood the situation in many countries, while also seeing the international needs. Magnifique.
- 5.) The effort of CSOs was fundamental to success. I define NGOs quite broadly to include organizations that work with the public, with business, think tanks etc. The non-state actors in the process were important. There are a couple of roles they played that I can enlighten you on:
 - a. Good research and ideas into a safe space: There was a consortium of think tanks that consulted countries, NGO, business etc around the world in person and drafted concrete proposals for what the agreement could look like. WRI led that consortium and Tsinghua participated. It brought independent ideas onto the table in a way all Parties could discuss and showed how it could all fit together.
 - b. Progressive business groups got together and encouraged their national governments to do more for their INDCs, but also made the case how a low carbon economy made good business sense – and focused on the need for a strong long-term goal.
 - c. Cities around the world came to Paris and showed how it could be done

- d. Environmental NGOs engaged people in key countries. In the US it was hugely important that the NY march was such a success because it showed the Obama Administration that people really cared. NGOs such as Greenpeace contributed new ideas to the negotiations, helped explain to the media what was happening in the negotiations and even helped governments understand each other's positions. They were sophisticated in approach and dogged in making Paris a new moment for international cooperation.

The Results and Moving Forward

The Paris Agreement, from an international governance perspective, sets a new paradigm. It combines a foothold in national policy and national circumstances with a balanced set of international rules and norms that drive the process forward towards a common set of goals. If one puts the long-term goals together one can begin to see the picture of a beneficial zero carbon economy that is resilient to the impacts of climate change and where finance is going into that beneficial, resilient economy to keep global average temperature not only below 2 degrees C, but 1.5 degrees C. I hope that the literature can reflect this shift away from what was known before as the top-down, bottom-up debate and instead focus in on the hybrid – the mixture of national and international policy levers to achieve a collective goal, one that keeps the existence of all people and creatures front and center.

So, where to now? As I said in the beginning of this talk, the Paris Agreement does not solve everything. In some ways, it points even more to the science, to the urgency to act and clearly admits that there is an ambition gap in mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation that need to be addressed. On the international level, there is key rulemaking that needs to be done – whether that be on transparency or on finance or on how the key moment of 2018 can be used to increase ambition, those details matter and need to be done in a way that maintains the integrity of the Agreement. We need to maintain international momentum so having a positive outcome at the Montreal Protocol negotiations is

key. My understanding is that a positive outcome there could save a half degree C of warming. This is significant and has to be grasped.

There is much work to be done domestically to demonstrate to the world that things are different after Paris, that it really is material. First of all, let's get this Agreement to enter into force this year! Small islands, China, the US, the G7 are all working for that. Would continue the momentum. Second of all, the trend of reduced coal use globally, and here in China, is going in the right direction and needs to continue to do so. Getting national policies in place, whether that be in the US on the clean power plan, in Germany with a coal phase out, or here with a coal cap in the 13th Five year plan, or in a way that manages the overcapacity of coal, is deeply important. Let's make distributed solar a reality for people around the world without electricity whether they be here, in India or on a small island state. China's work domestically and on South-South cooperation can lead the way here, but we also need smart and bold new business models and financing that makes it happen at scale and quickly. Having countries put forward long-term plans that are transformative and innovative and provide a vision and leadership for people to see what a positive world could look like, while sending clear signals to investors is a top priority.

Finally, a few thoughts on the role of China. China, in my view, played a major role in the success of Paris. The domestic efforts on the energy transition away from coal and towards renewables provided inspiration for other countries around the world to do the same. Its diplomatic efforts with the United States, but also, as importantly, with developing countries through its South-South cooperation efforts were very important. And bringing forth new ideas such as peaking emissions and ways of thinking about equity were just fundamental to shift not only positions but mindsets, which is a key thing in international diplomacy. China showed real leadership in Paris and my hope is that it will continue to do so.

This could take shape in a number of ways. China's near term action is impressive. The 13th Five Year Plan has set domestic carbon intensity target higher than its Copenhagen announcement. This can be built upon. How can we capitalize on the

fact that China, through strong actions, is over achieving its targets? I would be interested in your thoughts on this. With the over-capacity of coal plants right now, can China move away from those plants, not only those that have yet to be built, but those that have been started but not yet completed, those that might be built overseas with Chinese finance? Such a decision would be in line with the long-term transformation we need and would send a signal to the world that China understands that domestic action after Paris has to be different for Paris to be taken seriously, doing so in a way that provides clean air for its people as well as climate benefits.

Additionally, a holistic approach in dealing with mitigation is greatly needed to stay below 1.5 degrees C. Research and action in land-use and forestry, HFCs, cities, R&D to find those sustainable pathways is urgently needed. And research in new economic paradigms where China, and other countries, can provide a good life for its people on a daily basis, including a stable and safe climate. What are those new ideas? Can the circular economy be brought more to life? How can we do things differently since it is clear that the current ways of doing things around the world is not driving the transformation and innovation we need?

Taking such important national policy decisions and providing new ideas to the international community would be very consistent with what I have observed as China's diplomatic leadership in the last years. These next five years are vital to not just make the Paris Agreement come to life, but to set a mark in the history books that we all understood what was at stake and took the hard but correct decisions to turn the corner to create a livable and sustainable future for the world.

Thank you.