

Bonn (Germany): Support the protests at COP 23

Wednesday 8 November 2017, by [DAVIES Alan](#) (Date first published: 6 November 2017).

The 23rd UN global climate summit, known as COP 23, opens today in Bonn Germany and runs for two weeks until November 17 , writes Alan Davies.

Already thousands have protested in Bonn demanding Germany immediately phase out its use of coal. Around 25,000 protesters on last Saturdays climate march on Bonn carried banners with slogans such as 'Revolution, not pollution,' 'Climate or coal chancellor?' and 'Frack off our land,' aimed at the German government's reliance on coal-fired power plants for the country's energy.

Demonstrators also highlighted the irony that this year's conference is being held 50 kilometres from Europe's biggest source of CO₂ emissions: the large open-cast mines near Cologne.

Speakers warned that Germany is on course to miss its 2020 climate target spectacularly if it does not phase out coal soon. This, they say, will further risk the country's reputation as a leader in the global fight against climate change. The chair of Germany's version of Friends of the Earth, the Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND), Hubert Weiger, told those gathered that Germany must renounce its 150-year industrial extraction of the fossil fuel if it is to meet its share of the UN's climate rescue targets set in Paris in 2015. Around 1,000 cyclists rode 30 kilometres from Cologne to support the protest.

The summit takes place as the pace of global warming is accelerating. 2016 saw the sharpest rise in the CO₂ content of the atmosphere since records began. Sixteen of the 17 warmest years in the 136-year record argued that an increase in the global average surface temperature of 2°C above the preindustrial level—we are already at 0.99°C and rising—will trigger irreversible feedbacks that could spin the global climate system out of control. The Paris COP adopted a more stringent target of a 1.5°C limit. Even this is sufficient to melt a major portion of the world's ice sheets and set the course towards an ice-free world.

COPs are run by designated nations and for the first time this will be run by one of the small island nations that are most at risk from the sea-level rise and extreme storms that climate change is bringing. Fiji's prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, is the COP president, though the summit is being held in Germany for practical reasons. It was a coalition of island nations that are about to disappear under the sea that forces the 1.5°C limit on to the agenda at Paris under the slogan '1.5 to stay alive'.

The Paris agreement was an important landmark but the implementation of its provisions and target remains a serious problem that the Bonn summit will have to address. Trump has announced that he is pulling the USA out of the Paris agreement but he is seriously isolated. Not only is he being defied at state level in the USA (even the coal bosses don't want to dig more deep mines) but the former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg has said he will pay \$15m US share of the administration costs if the US government does not.

The big challenge of Bonn is to make the Paris agreement meaningful. The pledges of the individual nations in Paris were entirely inadequate and would add up if implemented to a disastrous 3°C rise in the global average surface temperature over pre-industrial times. The Paris agreement, however, included a mechanism for the pledges to be reviewed and ratcheted up, but without setting the rules. The first steps of this are due to be set out in Bonn and finalised in 2018.

There are also, quite rightly, longstanding tensions over the issue of loss and damage'. This is the idea that developing nations should be compensated by the rich nations of the Global North, for destruction resulting from extreme weather events generated by climate change which they did little or nothing to cause.

Rich nations had already pledged, in Paris, to provide \$100bn a year by 2020 to help poorer nations restrict their emissions as they grow and adapt to climate change but there is quite rightly ongoing resentment that this is not enough. The US was expected to be a big contributor and so a question to be asked in Bonn is who will meet the short-fall.

This is what makes the mobilisations and activities around Bonn so important. The most significant outstanding event will take place on November 11 [1] and a full calendar is here [2].

Alan Davies

P.S.

* November 6, 2017:

<http://socialistresistance.org/support-the-protests-at-cop-23/11069>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.no-climate-change.org>

[2] <http://climate-protest-bonn.org/de/events/>