

REPORT

Paris Agreement and changing geopolitics

Wednesday 21st of June 2017, 16:00-18:00
European House, Jungmannova 24, Prague

- **The pilot debate of the new project Prague Climate Talks took place on Wednesday 21st June at the European House. The project is co-organized by EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and Glopolis, in cooperation with Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Prague and under the auspices of the UN Information Centre Prague.**
- **The topic of the first debate was “Paris Agreement and changing geopolitics” and we had the pleasure to welcome Prof. Benito Müller (Oxford University), Ms Camilla Born (E3G) and Helena Schulzová (Charles University) as our excellent speakers. The debate was moderated by Klára Sutlovičová from Glopolis.**

Our special guest, **Mr. Müller** started off the discussion on a moderately positive note with his presentation on the **future of the Paris Agreement without the United States**. He noted that since we are still in the process of negotiating the rulebook of the Paris Agreement, the global community would be better off if the US now stayed out of the negotiations altogether rather than tried to obstruct the work that is still in progress. Which way the US climate diplomacy will turn, however, remains unknown and unpredictable.

As for the future leadership of global climate negotiations, Mr. Müller stays hopeful that **China will continue to play the central role**, which it embraced during the lead-up to Paris. However, it will insist on keeping its developing country status and as such **will require a partner from the developed**

world. The natural replacement for the United States in this role would seem to be the EU, yet its internal squabbles are hindering its dealings with third parties. **“If the EU wants to take leadership it has to have teeth, not just ideas”**, Mr. Müller remarked. Following China’s reaffirmation of its Paris commitments, it is now up to the EU to step up and show courage. In order for that, the EU needs more internal unity – and as Mr. Müller pointed out: *“It won’t be easy, but we can do it”*.

Ms. Born followed up with further elaboration on the EU’s position highlighting the different levels of fossil fuel reliance among member states as the main obstacle to more consensual EU-wide approach to climate negotiations. Nevertheless, she quoted interesting data, which show that **91 % of EU citizens see climate**

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change as a problem and **93 % think it can only be tackled when working together with other countries.** This public support, coupled with the decreasing costs of solar and wind power, means that decarbonization is in the strategic interest for the whole of EU.

However, in order to live up to the high expectations currently placed at the EU as a re-emerging global climate leader, **the bloc will have to upgrade its 2030 policy ambitions.** And perhaps more importantly, it will have to cooperate with other leading as well as emerging economies, in order for the Paris goals to be met. Mutual trust and transparency will be crucial at this stage of negotiations, Ms. Born concluded. Mr. Müller added that for this reason **it is essential to keep the Green Climate Fund alive** and fill up the hole left by the US, otherwise the trust of the developing countries will be lost.

The last speaker, **Ms. Schulzová,** focused on the uncertain future of America's engagement in climate activities. While Trump's decision to withdraw from

the Paris Agreement, his cuts to the EPA and his cancellation of the Clean Power Plan have dealt a major blow to federal climate policy, **it has also energized the states and cities concerned about climate change and shown how much can be done on a sub-national level.** The economic argument came into play once again when Ms. Schulzová pointed out to the fact that many states (even red states) now produce more energy from renewables than from conventional sources because it is profitable and that **no federal legislative can reverse the trend of increasing employment in renewables and decreasing number of jobs in coal industry.**

The discussion then continued with an engaging questions and answers session with the audience, focusing for example on the engagement of China, its fulfillment of the Paris climate goals or the importance of the inclusion of non-state actors in climate action. The debate ended with a hopeful yet cautious vision for the future.

Prague Climate Talks is a new project aimed at establishing a platform for continued high-level discussion on the complex issue of climate change. Throughout a series of debates it will bring together experts and professionals from varying relevant fields as well as members of the general public.

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