

President Trump Announces to Withdraw U.S. from Paris Climate Accord

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On June 1, U.S. President Donald Trump in his address at the Rose Garden of the White House officially announced that the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, an international framework to prevent global warming. President Trump's decision on the accord was a global matter of concern since his inauguration. Particularly after discussions at a Group of Seven summit in May, interest in the decision grew even greater. In such circumstances, President Trump officially clarified his willingness to withdraw the United States from the Paris Accord that he said is unfair to the United States, fails to meet U.S. interests and affects the U.S. economy and jobs.

Since the presidential election campaigns, Trump has harshly criticized the Paris Accord and made remarks indicating his plan to exit from the accord. Just after his victory in the presidential election, however, he said he would prudently consider the Paris Accord, leading observers to view his attitude on the accord as changing a little. On the other hand, Trump appointed Scott Pruitt, a critic of the Paris Accord, as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, adopting the basic attitude of opposing the previous Obama administration's legacy policies including the Paris Accord and the U.S. Clean Power Plan. His final decision on the accord thus attracted global attention.

President Trump was expected to make an earlier decision on the accord. According to media reports, however, State Secretary Rex Tillerson and presidential adviser Ivanka Trump urged President Trump to remain in the Paris Accord and relax the U.S. greenhouse gas emission reduction target, confronting White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon and EPA Administrator Pruitt who strongly recommended the president to withdraw from the accord. President Trump reportedly took time to coordinate between them before making the latest decision and announcement at last. Seemingly, Paris Accord defenders' assertion that the withdrawal from the accord would damage the United States' prestige and credibility in the international community eventually failed to overcome a view that it would be important for the president to remain steadfast to his basic policy or stance on the matter since the presidential election campaigns.

Given President Trump's basic policy line including opposition to Obama policies, the "America First" approach, priority given to the U.S. economy and jobs, and the emphasis on fossil fuels, the decision cannot be taken as any pure surprise. However, the decision came after G7 leaders other than Trump gave priority to the Paris Accord and called for U.S. cooperation in promoting the accord at the summit. Therefore, the decision gained global media coverage and caused repercussions in the world, as did earlier policy announcements and remarks by Trump. So far, many other major countries including Japan, European countries and China regretted and deplored the

Trump decision and vowed to comply with the Paris Accord. In this sense, the decision has failed to be understood sufficiently in the world and could lead the United States to be isolated.

Even at such "costs", President Trump decided to exit from the Paris Accord for the reason that the accord is unfair to the United States and would affect the U.S. economy, industries and jobs, as described in his address. Behind the decision might have been his political judgment that he should demonstrate the implementation of his policy promises during the campaigns to U.S. voters, particularly Trump supporters. As U.S. domestic criticism against the Trump administration grew through the "Russiagate" scandal, it might have become more important for Trump to steadily put into practice his basic policy stance since his inauguration.

The impacts of the U.S. exit from the Paris Accord may be discussed from various viewpoints. In this report, I would like to focus on two impacts. The first impact is on the Paris Accord itself. In conclusion, any immediate impact on the accord may be limited. Under the Paris Accord that has already taken effect, any party to the accord will be officially allowed to make a notice of withdrawal from the accord after the passage of three years from the effectuation and take one year for later withdrawal procedures. The United States will thus be allowed to exit from the accord in November 2020 at the earliest. (If the United States makes a notice of withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change positioned above the Paris Accord, however, it may be able to exit from both the convention and the accord in one year.)

As major countries other than the United States are willing to comply with the Paris Accord as noted above, their voluntary efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions may not be stalled. Even if the United States withdraws from the accord, the requirements for its effectuation (including accord participants' share of global GHG emissions) will remain fulfilled, allowing the accord to stay in effect. However, there is a medium-term problem that the U.S. withdrawal could discourage other Paris Accord parties from toughening their GHG emission reduction targets when they revise their voluntary targets for submission in 2020 under the accord.

The second impact is on the United States' own GHG emission cuts and relevant initiatives. President Trump in his June 1 address indicated that the withdrawal from the accord is required for American industries, particularly the coal industry. This suggests that the withdrawal would lead to the revival of the coal industry. However, coal's share of U.S. power generation dropped significantly from the past top position of around 50%, to be positioned as the second place after natural gas in 2016 at last, because of price competition from natural gas of which prices plunged under the shale gas revolution. Coal's setback is attributable not to the Obama administration's environmental regulations or the Paris Accord but to pure market competition.

In this sense, it is difficult to expect coal's revival even if the United States exits from the Paris Accord. Given market realities, however, U.S. GHG emissions are expected to decline naturally thanks to market forces irrespective of whether the United States withdraws from the Paris Accord, as natural gas replaces coal for power generation steadily. Also irrespective of the withdrawal, renewable energy expansion will make progress in the United States thanks to policy initiatives in more than 20 states. Anyway, U.S. GHG emissions will decline moderately. The offer to withdraw from the Paris Accord will not necessarily lead to an immediate increase in U.S. GHG

emissions.

Given the two abovementioned points, President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Accord may have no major immediate impact on global climate change measures. As warned by those defending the accord, however, the decision's adverse effects on American prestige and the United States' isolation from the international community could seriously affect global governance as a body blow. A decline in the prestige of the United States as global leader could shake global governance and accelerate moves toward a new governance regime. From the viewpoint of spillover effects on important issues beyond environmental and energy problems, we will have to pay attention to future moves involving the United States.

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