

Opening Statement

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Pitfalls of Unilateral Negotiations at the Paris Climate Change Conference

December 1, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and welcome to our witnesses. I would first like to thank Dr. Steer for his testimony today. I understand that he changed his flight to Paris at the last minute to accommodate the Committee's invitation. Your expertise and opinions are as appreciated here as they will be in Paris.

As we speak, representatives from more than 190 countries are meeting in Paris to reach a historic agreement to achieve reductions in global carbon emissions. I am pleased and proud to support the efforts of this Administration, and now the rest of the world, in taking meaningful steps to address climate change.

Every day, more and more people are waking up to the reality that the climate is changing. Over the weekend, my constituents in Dallas woke up from the Thanksgiving holiday to find streets submerged and homes flooded, due to extreme rainfall that is only now showing signs of subsiding. Sadly, eight people lost their lives in North Texas as a result of these floods. These same circumstances played out six months ago, with equally tragic consequences.

These kinds of extreme precipitation events are predicted to become more common with a changing climate, and they serve as a reminder that we must not forget how high the stakes truly are, and what the true costs of inaction will be.

The United States has been a leader on the world stage before and should be again. When faced with a difficult task, our nation has historically risen to the challenge. Our efforts to reduce carbon emissions through the Clean Power Plan and the Climate Action Plan have helped to motivate other nations to act in a similar manner. Climate change is not the problem of any one country; it is a problem facing **all** nations and only through a combined effort can we be successful.

Climate plans submitted ahead of the Paris talks are a clear indication that we are not alone in our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and to finding solutions to the impacts of climate change. These plans are already expected to reduce emissions substantially and reduce the average rise in global temperature to around 2.7 degrees Celsius.

Ideally, the final agreement should have mechanisms in place to allow nations greater flexibility to change emission goals over time that will ultimately bring the average global temperature rise down to 2 degrees Celsius or less.

Support for this kind of international agreement can also be found domestically, among U.S. companies and leaders of industry. 81 companies, including Coca-Cola, AT&T, and the Walt Disney Company signed on to the “American Business Act on Climate Pledge.”

Despite what some of my colleagues have been fond of saying, the long-recognized reality of good environmental regulation is that it helps – not hinders – the growth of economies.

Further evidence of that fact was on display yesterday, as leaders of China, India, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and more than a dozen other nations joined the United States in launching “Mission Innovation,” a pledge to double investments in clean energy R&D over the next five years. At the same time, a group of 28 influential investors from 10 countries led by Bill Gates has formed “The Breakthrough Energy Coalition.” These business leaders are committing billions of dollars of their own money to commercialize promising early-stage technologies developed in countries that are part of the Mission Innovation initiative.

This powerful public-private partnership is just the most recent sign that the entire world is prepared to act meaningfully to address climate change.

The global climate system is complex. Solutions to address these problems are equally complex. However, I am confident that the enthusiasm for change going into the Paris Conference will lead to a meaningful agreement to reduce carbon emissions.

Thank you and I yield back.