



News Release

Important Step, Some Missed Opportunities

Administration Submits Commitment to Reduce Greenhouse Gases to U.N.

March 31, 2015—In a sign that the Obama Administration takes an international climate deal seriously, the White House met the March 31 deadline to submit its plan to cut domestic greenhouse gases, known in U.N. jargon as its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), to the United Nations Forum Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The U.S. plan represents a critical step in crafting an ambitious, global deal to stop climate change.

With the addition of the U.S. INDC, countries responsible for 50 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, including the 28 members of the European Union, Switzerland, Norway, Russia and Mexico, have announced emission reduction targets.

"The Administration's plan is smart and achievable," said Carol Werner, EESI's Executive Director. "Now, we as a nation need to make sure all the outlined steps and goals are met and exceeded as the world accelerates its transition to a clean energy economy. However, the plan should recognize more of the opportunities that bioenergy solutions can provide in helping us reduce dependence on fossil fuels, especially oil, in the transportation sector." In addition to the solutions included in the INDC, there are opportunities for agriculture to play a significant role through sequestration and conservation practices, as well as through sustainable biofuels and bio-based products.

The United States, currently responsible for 17 percent of global emissions of greenhouse gases, previously committed to reducing domestic greenhouse gases 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 in a joint announcement with China in November 2014. The U.S. INDC formalizes that commitment, which is based on an analysis of which cost-effective greenhouse gas emission reductions are possible under existing laws. The plan depends on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations on carbon emissions from power plants (currently being finalized), EPA fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas standards for vehicles, and Department of Energy (DOE) energy efficiency standards. The INDC also includes specific action on methane emissions and hydrofluorocarbons, two highly potent greenhouse gases, through the use of voluntary reductions from the private sector, common-sense regulations, and potential reductions through an international agreement, the Montreal Protocol.

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