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In the Run-Up to the Climate Summit: Can the USA Set the Tone for International Climate Protection with its New Claim to Leadership?

The US President Joe Biden invited over 40 heads of State and Government to a virtual climate summit on 22 April 2021. The climate summit will be decisive for the future role of the US in international climate politics. Already during the electoral campaign, Biden declared climate protection to be a priority of his political agenda. How the US' renewed claim to leadership in climate protection is being perceived worldwide is summarised below for the regions of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Anja Berretta, Daniela Diegelmann, Dr Christian Hübner, Nicole Stopfer

Climate protectors worldwide have welcomed the election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States with open arms; after all, Biden had declared climate protection to be a priority of his political agenda as early as during the electoral campaign. Shortly after his election, Biden put words into action and appointed a team of experts to his climate and environmental advisory staff.¹ What's more, Biden appointed the former Foreign Minister, John Kerry, who is also a member of the National Security Agency, as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. A decision that underlines how the impact of climate change affects national security. President Biden has announced several ambitious measures at the national level to combat climate change and its repercussions, such as the United States becoming climate neutral by 2050. But his ambitions also have international reach: one of the first official acts by the President was the US' re-entry into the Paris Climate Change Agreement, from which his predecessor in office had withdrawn. This has rekindled hopes among the international community for stronger commitment from the US in international climate diplomacy. The following provides an overview of how these expectations are specifically articulated in various regions around the world. Once again, it is evident that climate and environmental policy has long been one and indivisible with international trade and economic policy, and whose geopolitical implications could soon be reflected in the G20 nations reorganising themselves.

¹ Duke University, Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions 2021: Climate 21 Project, in: <https://climate21.org> [19 April 2021]

Asia and the Pacific

In view of the US' own claim to leadership in climate protection, it can be said that most countries in the Asia and Pacific region are waiting to see what happens. Whereas the US largely withdrew from multilateral climate policy over the last four years, an expansion of renewable energies as well as the introduction of CO₂ pricing approaches continued to progress in the Asia and Pacific region. This development temporarily culminated in the announcement of CO₂ neutrality targets on the part of China, Japan, and South Korea. China, above all, took pains to be perceived as a driving force for more climate protection within the region. The world now eagerly waits to see whether India will tighten its climate protection goals, too.

Regardless of this, the re-entry of the US into the Paris Climate Change Agreement received a positive response in the Asia and Pacific region. Still, to what extent the US can actually be perceived as a credible actor in climate protection with a claim to leadership in the Asia and Pacific region, will depend on whether it succeeds in decarbonising its own energy supply. The announcement of a US-CO₂ neutrality target could be a persuasive factor for countries in the Asia and Pacific region. However, growing transpacific relationships between the US and the Asia and Pacific region in the energy sector could pose a specific challenge. For instance, the export of oil, gas (LNG) and coal from the US to Asia had already increased under the Trump Administration and is currently experiencing a fresh boost in the new phase of economic recovery. The current Chinese ban on imports of Australian coal is resulting in even greater imports of US coal, too.

The new US government will scarcely be able to separate climate politics from other environmental policy issues in Asia. In particular, the global policy on waste has come to the fore in recent years, with the Basel Convention on the Reduction of Plastic Waste at the heart of this. The US have yet to sign this agreement, such that US companies continue to export waste to countries that do not have the technical infrastructure to ensure correct and environmentally friendly disposal. In Asia, a few countries have started to ban the import of plastic waste, which, in turn, is resulting in other countries importing more. If the US and the Asia and Pacific region wish to enforce a claim to leadership in climate protection, they need to visibly lead the way when it comes to environmental policy at home.

What's more, in Asia, relations between the US and China will play a key role in any claim to climate policy leadership. These relations are characterised by strong geopolitical rivalries in almost all areas. A mutual willingness to cooperate in climate protection appears to be emerging, however. Hence, in China, the former Climate Diplomat, Xie Zhenhua, who played a key role on the Chinese side in concluding the Paris Climate Agreement, was brought out of retirement to sound out opportunities for collaboration with his US counterpart, John Kerry. Both met briefly in Shanghai to exchange ideas in the run-up to the US climate summit. However, the extent to which this will give rise to further initiatives, remains to be seen.

Great importance will be attached to the Chinese Belt-and-Road-Initiative (BRI) in view of a possible US claim to climate leadership. Over the past few years, a number of Chinese companies have transferred the development of coal plants to the BRI states in Central, South West and South East Asia, but also to other global regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa partly due to rising environmental standards in China itself – the largest expansion of renewable energies in the world is currently taking place there. Even if an argument against a Chinese claim to climate leadership can be inferred from this, it does not mean that such a role will be ascribed to the US. For many countries across the region, the comparatively cheap Chinese aid represents a key component for securing their domestic energy supplies, which cannot be easily dispensed with.

Moreover, China has already begun to expand its capacities as a funder and technology supplier in the renewable energy sector. Today, it is the world's largest provider of cheap solar panels.

This is the backdrop against which the US President Biden announced his intention to establish a Western alternative to the BRI that explicitly targets clean energy providers and sustainable infrastructure. The US would join forces with other Western countries in order to raise the necessary funds. We cannot yet ascertain whether that will suffice to clip the wings of the growing Chinese sustainability industry. Over the past few years, China has gained deep expertise in "clean energy technologies". This includes the production of batteries, renewable energy plants in the wind and photovoltaics sector, electromobility as well as the use of hydrogen. If China can produce all this cheaper than the US and its Western allies, then a Western BRI alternative under the leadership of the US will face an uphill struggle. On the other hand, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily interrupted several energy supply chains in Asia, has demonstrated the clear desire to become less dependent on Chinese goods production. In solar panel production above all, there are those in Japan, South Korea, and India to name a few, who would even consider tariffs so as to promote domestic production.

Current attempts by the US to forge partnerships in Asia for more climate protection largely focus on India, which is the biggest energy consumer in the region besides China. Both countries already have extensive bilateral relations in many different areas. These also include initiatives for jointly developing cleaner sources of energy. However, the extent to which India, with financial aid from the US, is willing to adopt a binding CO2 neutrality objective, is not yet clear.

It currently looks like the US will have a hard time separating its claim to climate policy leadership in Asia from geopolitical rivalries prevailing with China, despite the wish to cooperate independent of this. It is likely to be tantamount to a full-scale geo-economic competition for the climate change economy and could pave the way for the wholesale decarbonisation of Asian economies. Still, this could also have negative repercussions if it comes to blow-outs in the form of trade policy tariffs or disputes on access to new resources necessary for decarbonisation owing to geopolitical tensions. It is likely that many states across the region will stay away from economic policy rivalries between the US and China, as recently witnessed during the trade war under the Trump Administration. The US' claim to climate protection leadership in Asia will thus prove to be no easy feat.

Latin America

After four years of frozen political relations, a number of Latin American Heads of State and Government are extending an olive branch to Washington once again. With the new US government, Latin America above all hopes for a return to multilateralism² and new direct investments, which could benefit the region, especially due to an economic crisis triggered by the Corona pandemic.

The enthusiastic stance adopted by many countries towards the new US Administration is also manifested in climate policy: since Biden assumed office, some heads of State and Government have publicly advocated for Latin America to become a focus of the US as regards climate policy alliances, too. During the first bilateral phone calls, presidents of Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica, among others, have demonstrated a

² Gedan, Benjamin N., 2021: In Latin America, U.S. Popularity is already bouncing back, in: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/19/latin-america-united-states-diplomacy-regional-cooperation/> [19 April 2021]

willingness to jointly pursue goals stipulated in the Paris Agreement.³ This narrative goes hand in hand with a wave of national and regional declarations, initiated as early as 2020, to transform Latin America into a sustainable and environmentally friendly region. However, the Corona pandemic has impeded many countries from updating their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) agreed in the framework of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and to adhere to their climate policy commitments.

Concrete points of contact for intensified cooperation between Latin America and the US could be in renewable energies. After all, President Biden's promise to create new jobs in the sustainable energy sector at national level, and to overtake China as a technology supplier, could primarily be brought to bear through relations with Latin America. Latin America has been in a state of energy policy upheaval for some time: Costa Rica and Uruguay are already sourcing up to 95 per cent of their electricity from renewable energies; in Chile, the production and export of hydrogen has gained momentum; and several other countries are in the process of reorientation towards long-term use of renewable energies, especially in the transport and electricity sector. Against this background, Latin America has now developed into the primary market for Chinese electric buses and solar panels, and will have a high demand for new technologies, battery storage systems and renewable energy plants in future as well. Although it remains to be seen to what extent the US government will become more involved in international climate financing, international financing mechanisms and US direct investments could play a key role in deploying the necessary technologies in Latin America. With China as the main player in the region regarding energy production and the supply of technologies, stronger commitment by the US could, if nothing else, also provide geopolitical benefits for the new administration.

At the same time, re-entry into the Paris Climate Agreement and the Biden Administration's intention of focusing foreign policy on the joint fight against climate change, could put some Latin American countries under economic pressure if they fail to fulfil their commitments to reduce greenhouse gases and undertake initiatives to combat climate change. The US are among the most important trading partners for many countries throughout the region; Argentina, Mexico and Brazil are members of the G20. Biden's announcement to reinforce border adjustment mechanisms and climate policy criteria in trading relations, especially with the G20 states,⁴ therefore meets with both high levels of excitement and tension within the region.

The greatest potential for conflict is certainly with Mexico and Brazil; these countries emit the highest levels of greenhouse gas across the region. While the perpetually backward-looking energy policy adopted by the Mexican President Andrés Lopez Obrador has led to initial disagreements with US companies and repeatedly gives rise to concerns about compliance with the United States-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement (USMCA),⁵ Brazil will once again be confronted with the Amazon rainforest problem by the new US administration. As early as during the electoral campaign, Biden and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro came to blows because Biden threatened Brazil with economic sanctions if they failed to crack down on deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. In the run-up to the climate summit in late April 2021 convened by the US, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, sent an unequivocal message to Brazil, and

³ Viscidi, Lisa, 2021: Let's work with Latin America to fight climate change, in: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/11/opinion/biden-climate-change-latin-america.html> [19 April 2021]

⁴ Calle, María Clara 2020: ¿Cambia el escenario ambiental en Latinoamérica con la llegada de Joe Biden a la presidencia de Estados Unidos?, in: <https://es.mongabay.com/2020/11/joe-biden-medio-ambiente-y-cambio-climatico-latinoamerica/> [19 April 2021]

⁵ Herrera, Carolina, 2021: Mexico energy law goes against North American climate action, in: <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/carolina-herrera/mexico-energy-law-counter-north-america-climate-action> [19 April 2021]

emphasised his conviction that “Brazil will get its deforestation under control”⁶. Bolsonaro has demonstrated an initial, albeit hesitant, willingness for cooperation; however, it remains to be seen how Brazil will deal with the new US claim for leadership in climate and environmental protection. At the same time, the US focus on the Amazon rainforest could also lead to other Amazon riparian countries, such as Columbia, Peru, or Ecuador, concluding new partnerships with the US. Following the US’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement under former President Trump, both Mexico and Brazil appeared to no longer be under pressure to comply with their international obligations. For a short time, Brazil even threatened to withdraw from the Agreement itself, and Mexico reversed its energy reform to continue building on fossil fuels. Now the US has announced its target to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, these countries no longer appear to have an excuse for backward-looking climate policies.

Over the coming months, it is highly likely that the entire region of Latin America will closely follow the US narrative on climate and environmental policy with a mixture of enthusiasm and tension alike. At the same time, the region faces the challenge of offsetting economic and social repercussions of the ongoing pandemic, which has placed many countries’ climate policy ambitions on the back burner. If the US were to now use their new-found claim to climate leadership as a political instrument and economic lever to coerce Latin America to take more climate policy action, the need for sustainable economic recovery in Latin America would be an inevitability. The region has strong potential to become a trailblazer in climate protection and in renewable energies. To actually harness this potential, first and foremost a regulatory framework coupled with the political will as well as an active intra- and interregional exchange are necessary. It appears as though the climate narrative espoused by the newly elected US Administration could have a forward-looking effect on efforts taken in the Latin American region.

Financial incentives from the US play a crucial role here. And finally, the extent to which civil society in Latin America will exploit the US’ claim to climate policy leadership to exert political pressure on their governments remains to be seen. Ultimately, Brazil and Mexico might not be the only ones interested in making changes to their environment policy to preserve bilateral relations with the US. The climate summit convened by the US that takes place in late April could shed first light on how seriously announcements made by the US are to be taken, and whether Latin America’s hopes for a renaissance of (climate) relationships will become a reality.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Climate activists in Sub-Saharan Africa were practically euphoric about the election of Joe Biden as US President. Experts associate this election with the hope that climate protection and measures for adapting to the impact of climate change in Africa will receive strong support from the US Administration and be declared a priority of US-Africa policy.⁷

Just like other industrialised nations, the US have committed themselves in the Paris Climate Agreement to common but differentiated responsibility of countries in realising climate goals. This means that the

⁶ Agence France-Presse, 2021: EEUU espera “más pasos concretos” de Brasil contra el cambio climático, in: <https://www.france24.com/es/minuto-a-minuto/20210403-eeuu-espera-m%C3%A1s-pasos-concretos-de-brasil-contra-el-cambio-clim%C3%A1tico> [19 April 2021]

⁷ Wasike, Andrew, 2020: African wish list for US President-elect Joe Biden, in: [African wish list for US President- elect Joe Biden \(aa.com.tr\)](https://www.africanews.com/2020/11/19/african-wish-list-for-us-president-elect-joe-biden/) [19 April 2021]

contribution of individual countries will be guided by their standard of development.

At the same time, industrialised nations have committed to supporting countries with a lower standard of development in realising their climate goals in various ways. This includes capacity building, technology transfer and innovations as well as financial support. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), founded to this end, is the most prominent tool for guaranteeing financial transfer. Trump's predecessor in office, Donald Trump, had refused to transfer the remaining payments at two billion USD that were promised under President Obama. Electing the new president raises hopes on the continent that the US will now make this payment, and generally provide more financial resources for adapting to the repercussions of climate change and to climate protection. After all, most of the so-called Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are located on the African continent, which is why they stand to benefit most from international financial mechanisms for climate protection and climate adaptation.

Despite President Biden having addressed climate protection on various occasions, and designating climate change as an "existential threat of our time"⁸, as well as his Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change, John Kerry, having in January pledged to significantly increase the US' contribution to international climate financing⁹, no concrete commitments have been made to date. An increase in US payments to the GCF amounting to 1.2 billion USD, as promised by Joe Biden, has not yet been adopted by the Senate; the amount also falls far short of that which African climate activists had hoped for.¹⁰ It is therefore not clear how and in what context the US government will participate in international climate financing. The United States' re-entry into the Paris Climate Agreement has been Joe Biden's only effective official act in international climate policy to date. All other measures presented by the president have a clearly national character.

In other areas of development cooperation, too, such as the health sector, or food security, as well as from UN organisations operating in Africa in general, the latter will expect greater financial commitment from the US¹¹. Ultimately, Biden's predecessor not only cut the budget for global climate protection, but also the budget of other UN programmes across Africa. Having said that, the Covid-19 pandemic has hit the US economy hard, such that national recovery programmes are likely to be a political priority at first. The target announced by Biden to achieve climate neutrality at the national level by 2050, will also require high levels of seed capital and will tie up financial resources in the US itself.

Against this background, the expectation of many Africans that the Biden Government will mitigate the impact of climate change on the continent through financial aid is rather unrealistic and could soon lead to disappointment; perhaps even during the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow. Furthermore, African countries will not be able to adapt to the impact of climate change or improve climate protection exclusively through

⁸ Dlouhy, Jennifer A., Wingrove, Josh, Bloomberg, 2020: Biden introduces his environment team, calling climate change the existential threat of our time, in: [Climate change: Biden introduces his picks to head the EPA and the Interior and Energy departments | Fortune](#), [19 April 2021]

⁹ Farand, Chloé, 2021: John Kerry promises significantly more climate finance at adaption summit, in: <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/01/25/john-kerry-promises-significantly-climate-finance-adaptation-summit/> [19 April 2021]

¹⁰ Lo, Joe, 2021: Joe Biden's \$1.2bn budget for Green Climate Fund falls short of campaigner demands, in: <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/04/13/joe-bidens-1-2bn-budget-green-climate-fund-falls-short-campaigner-demands/> [19 April 2021]

¹¹ Wasike, Andrew, 2020: African wish list for US President-elect Joe Biden, in: [African wish list for US President-elect Joe Biden \(aa.com.tr\)](#) [19 April 2021]

financial support. The debate raging in the US and other industrialised nations about striking a balance between sustainability and economic growth, needs to be held with greater urgency in Africa, a continent where millions of people are living below the poverty line, and enormous population growth is predicted for the next two decades. To date, Africa has only been responsible for a small share of global CO₂ emissions. This will change with the projected population and economic growth, however.

The economic change to be expected in African countries will result in higher greenhouse gas emissions on the continent. The only way to halt this development is through low-emission and innovative infrastructure, as well as the use of clean energy technologies. The energy sector, among others, harbours great potential for this. This also applies to access to electricity, which is still denied to just under half of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa. To mitigate against an increase in CO₂ emissions, it is therefore essential to supply green technologies and transfer knowledge on climate protection as part of a potentially greater US engagement in Africa. The US can boast a high level of expertise in the technology sector in general, as well as in the specific area of renewable energies and energy storage. However, this also requires capacity building in the field of education and training in African countries, with private sector participation being of utmost importance. The ambitious national climate policy under Joe Biden could certainly play an important role here: Biden's goal is to make the US a world leader in green technologies, and to boost the domestic economy by exporting green technologies.¹²

African markets afford enormous sales opportunities for green technologies and could present a win-win situation. Still, political reforms need to be initiated if more private business is to be attracted to the continent. These include clear and transparent tendering and regulations in the electricity sector, as well as good governance and transparency. An improved partnership between the US and African countries with dialogue on an equal footing could lend greater weight to these demands. What's more, the geopolitical repercussions of decarbonisation for African countries could be addressed in the framework of improved US climate diplomacy. It is here that the United States need to exercise diplomatic skill, since many crude oil exporting countries, primarily Nigeria, have so far only made little effort to diversify their economy. The transfer of technology and knowledge are crucial for this. This, too, has a price, but the prospect of the American economy also benefiting from it would be attractive to both sides over the long term. Africa boasts enormous potential for raw materials in order to achieve sustainable growth. If the government under President Biden succeeds in tapping into this potential, then they could certainly make a relevant contribution towards climate protection in Africa.

Middle East and North Africa

The US' new claim to leadership in climate protection offers states in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Arabian Gulf with many a starting point for bilateral and regional cooperation; with these states being seriously affected by the impact of climate change. This applies both to extreme increases in future temperatures to up to 60 degrees Celsius, especially in Iraq and the Gulf states, and generally to prolonged periods of drought across the region, as well as to extreme weather events with heavy rain, storms and floods, or land loss due to rising sea levels, such as in the Nile Delta, where even a minor increase would

¹² Löhle, Nora, 2021: Bidens Klimapolitik: Nur Hoffnung oder doch Segen für den Kampf gegen den Klimawandel? In: <https://www.boell.de/de/2021/01/06/bidens-klimapolitik-nur-hoffnung-oder-doch-segen-fuer-den-kampf-gegen-klimawandel> [19 April 2021]

destroy the livelihoods of millions of people.

A focus of US American climate policy is on promoting emission-free energy projects on a global scale. In addition to wind and solar energy, in particular the production of green hydrogen is increasingly coming to the fore. This also applies to a series of Arab states, which have already built large-scale plants themselves or are at least in the planning stages, such as Morocco or the Gulf States. Whereas Morocco strives to become independent from energy imports, the medium-term goal of the Gulf States is to decarbonise and diversify domestic fossil economies, which are experiencing an increase in energy demand, for instance due to the expansion of seawater desalination plants or the growing need for room air conditioning. In this model, oil and gas are predominantly intended for export and thus foreign exchange earnings, even though global market prices tend to be falling due to the expansion of shale gas extraction in the US, and, most recently, due to declines in demand caused by pandemic-induced recessions.

Many countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean are completely reliant on international financial aid to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions (NCDs). The most recent promise made by President Biden, to make 1.2 billion US Dollars available for the Green Climate Fund, and a further 1.3 billion for bilateral and multilateral climate protection projects, will therefore be interpreted by the MENA region as a step in the right direction, despite their financial needs being far greater than this. In addition to the above-mentioned energy projects, specific hopes are also placed on investments in water infrastructure in financially weaker countries, where increasing water stress threatens economic losses, especially in agriculture, and distribution conflicts as well as internal and regional migration could come to a head.

Here it is important to not only invest in technical equipment, but also in education and training so as to prevent mismanagement and thereby strengthen local resilience. Investments in the education sector, particularly in universities and research centres, may strengthen the development of human capital in the region, providing the young generation with the tools to diversify the local economy. This especially applies to the Gulf States, Iran, Iraq, or Algeria that are strongly orientated towards gas and oil exports. Besides expert knowledge, which there is often no lack of in the Gulf States, it is also necessary to impart entrepreneurship and to promote fledgling companies. Integrating the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as civil society, may prevent a mostly unsustainable top-down approach to the energy and environmental restructuring of national economies.

The Biden Administration affords the opportunity to regain lost trust in the MENA region through strong and longstanding commitment to sustainable development beyond military operations and the petro-economy. Here, opportunities present themselves in areas such as the long-term promotion and expansion of renewable energies and the mediation of regional cooperation between rival national actors. The appointment of relevant positions in the administration such as by John Kerry as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, already reflects how the US will seek to further consolidate its influence through soft power and cooperation as opposed to confrontation and intimidation in future. To no small degree, this manifests itself in the establishment of climate envoys in all US embassies to advance the mainstreaming of the issue in foreign policy. For instance, in late March 2021, the US American Ambassador in Iraq explicitly cited climate change as one of the US' top priorities in their bilateral cooperation, in addition to counterterrorism and supporting economic development. This is a first for US policy in the Middle East.

Observers also positively assess the US' approach of integrating civil society actors from the region in the

further shaping of foreign climate policy. For instance, a regionally active environmental protection organisation in the Middle East conducted briefings for several State Department employees. There is a desire and hope that the United States will advance cross-border cooperation to secure existential needs through the intensive promotion and expansion of regional energy and water projects in the MENA region, especially between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories. Here it is crucial to create synergies, particularly with European actors such as Sweden or Germany, which have demonstrated long-term commitment in this field.

The United States can also play a decisive role in Arabic states' further rapprochement with Israel. Although the previous government took a robust stance towards negotiating the so-called Abraham Accords Declaration between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and the Sudan, as well as brokering Morocco's rapprochement with Israel and the establishment of diplomatic relations, precedents were created which the new government could pursue with more circumspection. Climate policy, in particular, presents itself as a supposedly non-political field for new constellations of cooperation. In this context, Arabic states are likely to be especially interested in the transfer of technologies and expertise, not only from the US, but above all from Israel. This consistently sets standards within the region through technical innovations and their economic implementation, for instance with regard to irrigation technologies, sea water desalination and the multiple treatment and re-use of wastewater.

The United States' return to the negotiating table of the Paris Agreement and the annual climate protection conferences also raises hopes that diplomatic pressure will be increased on states such as Saudi Arabia in multilateral negotiations. The latter had repeatedly delayed agreement to outcome documents by means of blockades. If the US can fulfil their new climate policy claim at national level, they can lend more weight to their leadership role internationally, too. This, in turn, will call on other states to achieve more ambitious climate protection goals, such as Turkey, which has not yet officially committed to its nationally determined contributions, but instead only to the preliminary stage of the intended nationally determined contributions. When it comes to its own energy needs and further increasing emissions over the long-term, Turkey considers itself to be an emerging nation with the right to catch up with the economic development compared to industrial states; while also insisting upon access to the Green Climate Fund, set up for developing countries, to finance climate protection measures. Following years of gridlock, it would also be a welcome development if the United States were to wield influence here as a negotiating actor.

Summary

The re-entry of the US into the Paris Climate Protection Agreement has had a positive reception worldwide, but various hopes and expectations are pinned on it. Whereas the G20 states are unable to view the US' renewed claim to climate policy leadership independently from trade policy implications, Asia and the Pacific are particularly focused on the political and economic relationship between the US and China, in which climate and environmental policy have played a prominent role for some time. In Latin America, the change in direction of US climate policy could exert pressure on various countries to launch their national climate protection strategies and commit to higher environmental standards. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the renewed claim to climate policy leadership is primarily linked to the hope of more financial support for adaptation strategies to climate change impacts.

The US' international claim to leadership has thus far only found expression in its re-entry into the Paris Climate Agreement. Apart from a series of ambitious national measures, since the start of his term of office US President Biden has not realised any concrete financial commitments, such as through the Green Climate Fund, at international level. Concrete plans for trade mechanisms with a climate and/or environmental protection component have not yet been adopted either. We therefore await the climate summit announced by the US on 22 April 2021 with bated breath, to which more than 40 heads of State and Government are invited. The US have announced that they will present their updated NDCs during the summit. We can also expect the US to use the summit as an opportunity to set out their international climate protection ambitions. The climate summit will thus give direction to the future role of the US in international climate policy.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Anja Berretta, Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Sub-Saharan Africa,
Anja.Berretta@kas.de, www.kas.de/de/web/climate-energy-africa

Daniela Diegelmann, Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Middle East and North Africa
Daniela.diegelmann@kas.de, www.kas.de/de/web/remena

Dr Christian Hübner, Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Asia and Pacific
Christian.huebner@kas.de, www.kas.de/en/web/recap

Nicole Stopfer, Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change Latin America
Nicole.stopfer@kas.de, www.kas.de/de/web/energie-klima-lateinamerika/

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