

Other than Lima summit, domestic climate change legislation is advancing rapidly

Andrew Hammond



The annual UN climate summit of 194 nations, scheduled to conclude Friday in Peru, finally finished in overtime on Sunday. The modest agreement that was reached keeps the process alive.

However, while a deal was concluded, including agreement for the first time that all countries (not just developed states) must cut greenhouse gas emissions, many of the hard issues have been deferred. With prospects for a comprehensive, global treaty with the required ambition remaining uncertain in 2015, there is growing consensus that a better and faster response to climate change is badly needed.

Unlike talks at the international level, domestic climate change legislation and regulation is advancing at a rapid pace. Indeed, since Kyoto was negotiated in 1997, almost 500 domestic climate laws have been passed across the world covering almost 90% of global greenhouse emissions.

This is particularly the case in developing countries, which will probably provide the motor of global economic growth in coming decades. In 2013 alone, as documented in a study released earlier this year by the Grantham Institute at the London School of Economics, there was substantive legislative progress in almost 10 countries and positive advances in around 20 others.

In Asia-Pacific, for instance, China published its national adaptation plan and made progress in drafting its national climate change law; Indonesia extended its forest moratorium; Kazakhstan introduced a pilot emissions trading scheme; and Micronesia passed its climate change law.

In the Middle East and North Africa, Jordan passed its national climate change policy and UAE launched a mandatory energy efficiency standardisation and



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labelling scheme. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya adopted a 2013-2017 climate change action plan, Mozambique embraced a 2013-2025 national strategy for climate change, and Nigeria's legislative council approved the adoption of a national climate change policy and response strategy.

In the Americas, Bolivia passed its framework law on Mother Earth and integral development to live well and El Salvador adopted a national climate change strategy. In Ecuador, Decree 1815 established the intersectoral strategy for climate change while Costa Rica has approved a general law on climate change.

Despite this sea change there remains a significant gap between the cumulative level of ambition of national action and that required to limit global average temperature rise to the agreed UN limit of 2°C above pre-industrial levels, the level many scientists say we must not breach if we are to avoid the worst risks of climate change.

As difficult negotiations continue in coming months, a key danger is that some countries might lower their long-term ambition. At a time when the climate change debate is undergoing profound change, this would be ill-timed. Indeed, now is exactly the right time for countries to invest more in climate diplomacy and practical international cooperation, to help expedite a comprehensive global treaty in 2015.

The writer is an Associate at LSE Ideas at the London School of Economics.