

Now is not the time to run from climate change

By: Rachel Kyte – *Rachel Kyte is the Vice President and Special Envoy at the World Bank Group for Climate Change. In her UN role and as CEO of SEforAll, Kyte led efforts to promote and finance clean, affordable energy and low-carbon growth as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the Paris Agreement.*

It is no secret that we are in need of great change. A change in the way we use our resources, a change in the way we view our role in this crisis, and a change of the way in which we approach the issue of climate change. The Paris Agreement charts a new course in uniting all nations in the global climate effort.

I have come to care greatly about climate change through my role at the World Bank Group, where we have a goal to end extreme poverty by 2030. This goal is simply not possible without aggressive action to change the impacts of climate change, which are already driving economic prosperity backwards and devastating countries around the world. The meaning of climate change has undergone a great shift in the last 20 years, moving from a pollution control treaty to a re-engineering of the global economy.

On Earth Day in 2016, the Paris Agreement opened for signature at the UN Headquarters in New York. So far, 189 of the 197 Parties to the Convention are Parties to the Paris Agreement. This, of course, does not include the United States, whose government notified the Secretary-General that it would be withdrawing from the Agreement on November 4, 2019. The central aims of the Paris Agreement are to hold the increase in global average temperature to below 2°C, to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C, and to achieve net zero emissions in the second half of this century. The Agreement will also require that all Parties regularly report statistics, including their emissions and implementation efforts. This will help to build an enhanced transparency framework that encourages action and support.

While these temperature goals might seem slight, the effects of them could be extreme. According to [CarbonBrief](#), a 1.5°C warming on our planet could result in a 9% reduction in freshwater availability in the Mediterranean Sea, a 5% increase in heavy rainfall intensity, a 9% decrease in wheat production, and the sea level could rise by 40cm. The consequences of 2°C would then be even more severe, and the Mediterranean would lose 17% of its freshwater, rains would increase in intensity by 7%, wheat production would drop by 16%, and the sea level could rise by 50cm.

At this point, in order to offset the impact of climate change, individual action is not enough. Though it is important that individuals take up this cause as their own, there are several key policy initiatives that need to be adopted on a global scale in order to adapt and build resilience. The specific rules that are to guide operations of the Paris Agreement have yet to be finalized, but many hope that this will be rectified during the coming United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2021 in the United Kingdom.

The cost of inaction is much higher than the costs of action. It is important that we build low-carbon development and more resilient development. The Paris Agreement is a major piece of this. It's time to listen to the experts and commit to change.