

Unit 1

Climate Talks

Preparation

Prepare yourself for this unit by doing research on the given terms or other necessary background information through the Internet and other sources.

Terms	Information	Chinese Version
global warming		
United Nations Climate Change Conference		
Kyoto Protocol		
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change		

Brain-storming

- 1 What do you know about climate change?
- 2 What is the relationship between environmental projects and economic development?
- 3 What actions have been taken to mitigate climate change?
- 4 What are the difficulties in tackling this problem?

Text At Climate Talks, a Familiar Standoff Between U.S. and China

From *New York Times*, December 7, 2011

By John M. Broder



China's lead negotiator at the United Nations climate change talks here, Xie Zhenhua, said that China was prepared to enter into a legally binding agreement after current voluntary programs expire at the end of the decade, seemingly a major step. China has always contended that because of its rapid economic

growth and the persistent poverty of millions of its citizens, it cannot be bound by the same emissions standards as advanced industrialized nations.

Mr. Xie outlined five conditions under which China would consider joining such a treaty as a full partner, the major one being that China and other rapidly growing economies must be treated differently from the so-called rich countries. But that has been a deal-breaker for the United States for years and is the central reason that the Senate refused to even consider ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, a 1997 agreement whose goal, still unmet, is to limit global greenhouse gas emissions.

"These conditions are not new," Mr. Xie acknowledged at a briefing here where more than 190 nations are gathered for the 17th annual conference of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. "These have been negotiated for the past 20 years."

"What is most important so far is to implement existing commitments and review efforts undertaken by the parties, and after that we can think about what

should be done after 2020 and beyond.”

Todd D. Stern, the American climate change envoy, said that the United States would be happy to discuss a formal treaty and then spelled out his conditions, which also were not new and appeared to rule out any sort of deal like that envisioned by Mr. Xie.

For a legally binding agreement to take hold, “it’s going to be absolutely critical that it applies to all the major players, and China obviously is one of them,” Mr. Stern said at a briefing.

“All the major players are going to have to be in with obligations, with commitments that have the same legal force,” he added. “And that means there’s no conditionality, they’re not conditional on receiving technology or financing, there’s no trap doors, there’s no Swiss cheese in that kind of an agreement.”

The dispute between the United States and China, the two largest sources of the carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming, has come to be an enduring feature of these negotiations and a source of deep frustration for the other players.

Jo Leinen, the German Social Democrat who leads the delegation from the European Parliament, lashed out at both superpowers on Wednesday afternoon.

“What is really frustrating to see is this conference is again hijacked by the Ping-Pong game between the U.S. and China,” he said. “It is unacceptable and no more tolerable that this game is blocking the overall process. Now that China has done some moves, let’s test their seriousness. I don’t see the same commitment, the same signals from the U.S. The one is not yet ready; the other is not willing. We really have a problem.”

The standoff has threatened to derail the process in each of the past several years, but at the end of the two-week session the parties usually pull back from the brink and announce an incremental, face-saving deal. This year’s talks appear headed for the same sort of conclusion.

Negotiators appear close to agreeing on how to structure a fund that is supposed to generate \$100 billion a year in public and private financing for climate change programs by 2020. They have also made progress on programs to save tropical forests from clear-cutting, transfer clean-energy technology to emerging nations and refine systems for verifying that countries are taking steps to cut emissions.

The holy grail of these talks, a global treaty encompassing all nations and limiting temperature rise to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial levels, appears as elusive as ever.

Wearied of the inconclusive jousting on a treaty with teeth, many delegates and observers say that small progress may not be a bad thing.

Elliot Diringer, executive vice president of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, a private research and advocacy group in Washington, said that while a legal treaty remained an important prod to action, it should not get in the way of more immediate steps.

“This preoccupation with ‘binding’ has become more an obstacle than a means of progress,” he said in an e-mail. “The reality is that key players including the United States and China are not prepared at this stage to take on binding commitments to reduce their emissions.”

“Rather than arguing over that year after year, we should focus on strengthening the international climate framework step by step.”

I Points and Structure

Task 1 Listen to the audio clip and note down the information about the given items. Then recap it to your classmates.

Items	Infomation
Todd Stern	the American climate change envoy
Xie Zhenhua	
Jo Leinen	
Elliot Diringer	
\$100 billion a year	
3.6 degrees Fahrenheit	

Task 2 Listen to the audio clip for a couple of times and answer the following questions.

1. Under what conditions would China join a legally binding agreement?
2. Why did the U.S. Senate refuse to ratify the Kyoto Protocol years ago?

3. What were the conditions for the U.S. to consider such a treaty?
4. What were the comments from the E.U.?
5. What were the achievements of this round of talk?
6. How many perspectives are presented in this article? What are they?

II Words and Expressions

Task 1 Blank Filling: Fill the blanks with appropriate variations and phrases of the given words.

legally binding	legal force	teeth	conclude
obligation	condition	face-saving	open
increment	expire		

1. China was prepared to enter into a(n) _____ agreement after current voluntary programs _____ at the end of the decade, seemingly a major step.
2. This week, the nation's top climate envoy said that China would be _____ to signing a formal treaty limiting emissions after 2020—but laid down conditions for doing so that are unlikely ever to be met.
3. “All the major players are going to have to be in with _____, with commitments that have the same _____,” he added.
4. “And that means there’s no _____, they’re not conditional on receiving technology or financing, there’s no trap doors, there’s no Swiss cheese in that kind of an agreement.”
5. The standoff has threatened to derail the process in each of the past several years, but at the end of the two-week session the parties usually pull back from the brink and announce an _____, _____ deal.
6. Weary of the _____ jousting on a treaty with _____, many delegates and observers say that small progress may not be a bad thing.

Task 2 Cloze

China has always ____1____ that because of its rapid economic growth and the ____2____ poverty of millions of its citizens, it cannot be ____3____ by the same emissions standards as advanced industrialized nations.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. A. contended | B. believed | C. said | D. clarified |
| 2. A. lasting | B. chronicle | C. tenacious | D. persistent |
| 3. A. coerced | B. imposed | C. bound | D. forced |

But that has been a(n) 4 for the United States for years and is the central reason that the Senate refused to even consider 5 the Kyoto Protocol, a 1997 agreement whose goal, still unmet, is to limit global greenhouse gas emissions.

4. A. deal-breaker B. deal-closer C. excuse D. headache
5. A. verifying B. approve C. ratify D. ratifying

Todd D. Stern, the American climate change envoy, said that the United States would be happy to discuss a formal treaty and then 6 his conditions, which also were not new and appeared to 7 any sort of deal like that 8 by Mr. Xie.

6. A. stressed B. lay out C. spelled out D. gave out
7. A. rule out B. bear out C. underpin D. resonate
8. A. criticized B. rejected C. envisioned D. enabled

The standoff has threatened to 9 the process in each of the past several years. A person in a private research and advocacy group in Washington said that while a legal treaty remained an important 10 to action, it should not get in the way of more 11 steps.

9. A. stall B. stun C. derail D. delay
10. A. prod B. pull C. power D. drive
11. A. urgent B. important C. immediate D. fundamental

III Application

Task 1 Presentation

- Identify the key words of the text in your own way as suggested by the given ones and make a presentation based on one or more of the key words.



Task 2 Translation

► English to Chinese Translation

Though Mr. Xie said his conditions were “not new”, the sight of the world’s largest emitter of carbon pollution talking openly about what appears to be a softer position threw negotiators into a round of debate about what the move actually meant.

The E.U., which is pushing hardest for a new global deal, seized on Mr. Xie's remarks, saying they showed that a strong outcome was possible.

"There are real signs from some of the things the Chinese are saying publicly that there may be a flexibility in their position," said Chris Huhne, the U.K. climate secretary. He said if that was the case there could be "a tremendous outcome in Durban".

► Chinese to English Translation

和以往的气候大会不一样，本次德班大会在两个关键问题上取得了实质性突破，当地时间11日凌晨，德班气候大会通过决议，建立德班增强行动平台特设工作组，决定实施《京都议定书》第二承诺期并启动绿色气候基金：一是通过决议要求发达国家完成在《京都议定书》第二承诺期的减排指标；二是启动绿色气候基金，使发达国家兑现承诺，在资金、技术方面切实支持发展中国家应对气候变化。

大会所获成果对发展中国家总体有利。在中国和印度等国的力争下，大会通过的文件没有使用欧盟提出的“路线图”“法律效力”等词句，而改为“进程”和“法律框架”；明确了绿色气候基金的资金来源将以西方的政府资金为主，企业投资为辅，而发展中国家将在自愿的原则下提供力所能及的援助。

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