



## China's climate commitment



### Context:

- Speaking at the UN General Assembly, Chinese President Xi Jinping made two promises that came as a welcome surprise to climate change watchers.

### What has China announced?

- First, Xi said, China would become carbon net-zero by the year 2060.
- Also, China now aims to have CO<sub>2</sub> emissions peak before 2030 (earlier China had committed to peak by 2030). That means China would not allow its greenhouse gas emissions to grow beyond that point.

### What is Net-Zero State?

- Net-zero is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- Absorption can be increased by creating more carbon sinks such as forests, while removal involves application of technologies such as carbon capture and storage.



## Why is net-zero an important target?

- Scientists and climate change campaign groups say global carbon neutrality (net-zero) by 2050 is the only way to achieve the Paris Agreement target of keeping global temperatures from rising beyond 2°C compared to pre-industrial times.
- At the current rate of emissions, the world is headed for a 3° to 4°C rise in temperatures by 2100.

## How significant is China's commitment?

- Getting China to commit itself to a net-zero target, even if it is 10 years later than what everyone has in mind, is a big breakthrough, especially since countries have been reluctant to pledge themselves to such long term commitments.
- The Chinese goal, if realised, would lower global warming projections for 2100 by about 0.2° to 0.3°C, the most impactful single action ever taken by any country.

## What is the Politics behind China announcing such measures?

- The announcement gives China an opportunity to show environmental leadership at the same time as the United States retreats from the issue.
- The 2060 pledge reflects China's desire to showcase itself as a "responsible international player" after a storm of negative attention (spats with India over borders, the EU over rights abuses, Australia over security and the US over everything from trade and technology).
- Xi's pledge plays into his larger agenda of promoting China as a global standard setter. If the global direction of travel is away from coal and towards cheap renewables and green tech, China could put itself at the forefront of a new economic order.
- Taking coal plants offline, meeting stringent emissions targets and pleasing the population by curbing pollution could also deliver a strategic win to the Chinese Communist Party, which prevents incentive to rebel for Democracy.
- European Union and 70 other countries (that have relatively low emissions) have committed itself to a net-zero emission status by 2050. Leadership by

06.10.2020

Tuesday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

China in Environmental Initiatives puts pressure on other two big emitters – USA and India.

## What is India's commitment?

- India has resisted pressure to make a long-term commitment, citing the fact that developed countries had utterly failed in keeping their past promises, and never delivered on the commitments they made earlier.
- India has also been arguing that the climate change actions it has been taking are, in relative terms, far more robust than those of the developed countries.
- If one looks at the pledges that have been made in the Paris Agreement, India is the only G20 country whose actions are on track to meet the 2° goal. The other developed countries actually have to make efforts towards a 1.5° world, but they are failing even to do enough to meet the 2° target.
- Climate Action Tracker puts India's actions as "2°C compatible", while the US, China and even the European Union's current efforts are classified as "insufficient".

## Conclusion:

- The announcements by China was a great one in the fight against climate change. Now we need commitments to the challenging objective of big emissions reductions over the next decade.