

Transcript

Conversations on Climate Change & Energy Policy

November 30, 2021

Guest: Laurence Tubiana

Robert Stavins: Well, I'm delighted to welcome all of you to this session of Conversations on Climate Change and Energy Policy. A virtual forum from the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements. I'm your host, Rob Stavins, professor here at the Harvard Kennedy School, and director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program, and the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements, which is hosting this webinar.

As many of you know, in this series we're featuring leading authorities on climate change policy. Whether they're from academia, from the private sector, from NGOs, or from government. And today we're very fortunate to have with us someone with solid experience in at least three of those realms, academia, government, and the NGO world.

But before I introduce today's guest, let me just say a few things about the logistics, particularly for those of you who may not have been in this webinar series before, or don't remember how we run it. So, first of all as you just heard, we're recording these webinars, and a link will be posted on the website of the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements. If at any point during the webinar, including right now, you wish to pose a question, then use the Q&A function.

The button at the bottom of your Zoom screen. And about halfway or so into our time together, I'll begin to take questions from the list as it accumulates. But you don't have to wait until then, the questions can be posed in there, you can type them in at any time. We're going to adjourn several minutes before 10:00 AM, Eastern Time in the United States.

And with that, I'm very pleased to turn to today's guest, Laurence Tubiana, who of course needs little, if any, introduction to people who actually follow global climate change policy. But nevertheless, for the record, let me point out that Dr. Tubiana is an economist, with her PhD degree from the Sorbonne.

A former diplomat, having served as France's climate change ambassador during COP21, where of course the Paris Agreement was signed. And is now the CEO of the European Climate Foundation. Now, I could easily fill all of our available time if I were to go through her complete resume but instead, I will simply say, welcome Laurence to this conversation on climate change and energy policy.

Our major purpose today is to get your candid assessment of COP26, which of course took place last month in Glasgow. So let's start with the outcome. In particular, some of the big issues, at least what were the big issues as portrayed

in the press, do the old and the new NDCs add up to consistency with the two-degree C target, let alone the 1.5 degree C target from the Paris Agreement?

Laurence Tubiana: Thank you Rob for this invitation, I'm very pleased to exchange ideas with all of you. Just responding directly to your first question, the NDCs presented in Glasgow, in particular the one ... The NDCs timeframe which is 2030 for the moment, of course are not in line with anything close to well below two degrees C temperature range.

And of course, even less from the 1.5 global warming range. So even the climate difference ... These temperature scenarios by the way, are complicated to understand sometimes. And we probably should not ... They are important, but we should have a nuanced approach to them. But what we see is that, at least the average estimations go from ... After Glasgow, fully for all these 2030 targets, go from 2.4 degrees to 2.7 degrees.

Remembering that before Paris, we were ... In a way the temperature scenario were pointing to a four degree scenario. After Paris, we went back to these two point something, even three. And we're making slow progress, but slow progress. It's not a quick progress. So from this point of view, we can see that the 2030 target what we present as a decided decade, is not there.

If we want to be consistent with something, consistent with the Paris goal and net zero by 2050 or soon around that, or even negative emission by the end of the century. So from this point of view, we are not there. That's why maybe the more important result even if it's somehow frustrating is that, the countries agreed two things.

We need to in a way reduce emissions by 45% globally in 2030, which is the first time at least we haven't done a number like this. And the second time they said, "Finally, we are not there and we have to present better results next year." Which is in a way an acceleration and in a way the recognition of the Rochester mechanism, which of course it's part is a very important part of the Paris agreement has to work.

And we have to work quicker because we have lost the six last year. Mostly, not totally, but mostly. And finally, I wanted to point out that one of the good news but it is a semi good news, ambivalent, 130 countries have committed to a target of net zero by 2050, or soon after. The Chinese 2060, the India 2070.

Very few almost none of these commitments are backed or substantiated by any precise pathway to get there. So that's why this short term action is more important than ever. And on the US side I'm sure you will have your own views Robin, I will be curious to listen to you on that.

For the moment, the plan for even getting the 2035 or 2030 targets are quite still and with a lot of uncertainty. So that's where we left classical. A lot of

uncertainty and the promise to come with better, more serious results next year.

Robert Stavins:

So, that's very interesting. Let me follow up on one of the things you mentioned Laurence, which is the ratchet mechanism in the Paris agreement, which is a very important element of the agreement. The ratchet mechanism was originally to be effective every five years, which was the reason why this particular COP with the one year off for the pandemic was viewed as being particularly important, of course.

But now there is this statement in the decision I believe, the Glasgow climate pact as it's called. That countries would ... Are urged, I think the word was urge, are urged to increase the ambition of their NDC next year at the COP in Egypt. Two questions on that for you.

One, is that apply ... Is that urging only for the countries that did not do an updated NDC for this year, or is the urging for all countries, including the United States, the European Union that did put in place new ... That did submit new NDCs to do it?

That's one question. My other question is, is this a movement away from the five year updating under the Paris agreement to an annual updating?

Laurence Tubiana:

So very important question. Next year is really in my view, there is of course some ambiguity left like normal in this text. But of course, it's for the countries and it's a majority of country. More half of 2020 for example, that has not presented short term targets, or short term the 2030 targets that are in line with Paris agreement at all.

Of course, they missed today, they missed 2020, and they missed 2021. So they have to deliver. And I can think you, there is a long list. You take Mexico or Brazil for example, they presented NDCs that are backtracking from the one they presented in 2015. Let's take Australia, no news from Australia. There's for all these countries and now many more that hasn't really presented something better.

On the good pupil, the good scholars that has done the job, of course there will be a gentle pressure in particular on finance by the way, to present more. Because the ratchet mechanism is not only about mitigation, it's about adaptation, it's about of course delivery of finance, so ... And transparency, et cetera. So I think that's where I see the US and EU would have to deliver one.

Of course, we hope that US could deliver a reasonable scenario to get to their target for 2030. And that EU can do better maybe on finance and adaptation. We can imagine that a number of these voluntary commitments that have been taken in the ... On the first week of Glasgow, me saying for example, deforestation, coal phasing out, could be integrated in the new version of NDC.

I think on me saying, it would give a little bump to the EU target, but not really because mostly was integrated already. But it could be improving a little bit. It could improve even the US commitments. That I don't know and you know better than me. So first thing, next year is about the once who had ... Didn't do the job mainly and in particular, among the G20 countries.

The second element, I don't think we can hope and maybe will not make sense, to have [crosstalk 00:11:06] mechanism of climate policy every year. That doesn't make any sense. And everybody recognize that. So the five years in a way, making more pressure, having really a peer to peer review, what we are delivering each year is good.

Inventories when we can, but no country can do a proper inventory each year. You know how data collection is complex. So it's not a revision of the five years, it's a pressure to do better in this particular timeframe of 2030.

Robert Stavins:

Thank you, that's actually very helpful. Before we continue, I should take note of the fact that someone pointed out that we're using acronyms that not everyone may know. And particularly I think I'm the one that may have introduced the phrase NDC. So let me just say that NDC stands for, Nationally Determined Contribution.

Which is an important element of the Paris agreement structure, in which each country states what it anticipates it will achieve over a specific timeline compared with some base line year in most cases. And that that is intended to be consistent with feasibility, domestic politics, national circumstances, and everything else.

I think that's the only one we've used. If we've said COP, like COP21 or COP26, that's the annual Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. So with that catch up Laurence, let me take note of the fact that at least in the press in the United States, I don't know about in Europe, a great deal of attention was given after the adjournment on Saturday of the Glasgow conference.

To the fact that the COP decision did not call for a phase out of coal, but for a phase down of unabated coal. What's your reaction to that?

Laurence Tubiana:

Every time in a negotiation, finalizing one because probably we would not have to negotiate so much in the years after, the issue is how you trade depending on the different elements. We have of course, one element which was adaptation and in a way the losses, the damaging that are inflicted on in particular, less developed country by climate events.

There was another block of issues about the ambition, how in a way we put 1.5 as a goal more central, into in a way the objective of the global community. And there of course, another one on finance. And the British presidency wanted to

have more elements to where to start, which was having concrete result on coal. And the mantra of Boris Johnson was ... Because he likes this phrases.

He said, "I want something on coal, car, trees and cash." Something like that. He likes these formulas. So he tried to get some commitments on that. That's why the coal was mentioned really in the text. Which is useful because we know we have to phase out coal, but at the same time it was beyond ... Of course, you could not have something on 1.5, which was already a move as an orientation for the emerging countries.

We remember that China was tied to the changing of the ... As the center of gravity of the Paris goal. It hasn't been changed, but was it reinforce the idea that 1.5 after the IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, the scientific bodies that is advising the government, we should really aim at 1.5. So they get that more or less what the maximums they could get in the text.

But they have of course to trade something. And of course you could not have in my view the two elements, the coal phase out, and the 1.5, even if it's a contradiction, of course. It is totally contradictory, but it's just a logic of political compromise. I know that journalist loves this discussion about last minute.

Really, I think the content is not so much important because in a way it's good that the coal, which is coal consumption was still very high. The pipeline of project on coal powered utilities is still very high. The pipeline is full of new projects, so phase down is already something good we need to have.

And on the other side, national sovereign is very important in this context, but even more in this actual geopolitical context. So the idea that we make a choice for countries. So, striking that to say, "We abandon that particular source of energy in front of everybody seems of course, no [inaudible 00:16:24]." You didn't want that. So what finally is a result of this last minute conversation?

It was a fact that unfortunately in a way, the decision was led by the big emerging countries in vis-à-vis the United States. And it was not the best image we could have at the end, because less developed countries or small islands and even Europe in a way was sideline compared to the conversation between the G2 and together with India.

Robert Stavins:

So perhaps this is incorrect, but my understanding from having read things in the press, I was already back in the US by the time ... By Saturday, and I was just reading about things.

My understanding was that, India was particularly effective and vocal on the phase out being changed to phase down because their perception, which does not seem unreasonable to me, was that at their stage of economic development again, going to national sovereignty, to sign on to something that said phase

down as opposed to phase out was something that was just not acceptable to them. Is that incorrect as far as you

Laurence Tubiana: Totally. The role of China is ... Anyway, China has signed just a few days before a declaration with US mentioning this phase down and not phase out as you'll remember. So in a way, the China, US designs the sailing or the floral, or whatever you want to qualify it. So India just was a vocal arm to that.

But really it was a question of sovereignty. We have to decide what we want to do. We cannot be imposing, you know very well how important is national sovereignty demand is important in a way, taking into account in these discussions.

Robert Stavins: Right? I mean, the whole structure of the Paris agreement is one which places national sovereignty at the very center, because of the use of nationally determined contributions. Before we go to the ... Another question for you Laurence, let me remind everyone who is viewing this.

Some questions have come in, but you're welcome to add additional questions at any time, just type them into the Q&A and I promise that I will get to as many of those as we can. Now Laurence, very big issues for I'd say most of the delegations, which after all the majority are from developing countries, not from the OECD, important issues for them were finance.

And you've already touched upon that. In particular, this very well known commitment from the Copenhagen days of the hundred billion per year to begin flowing by the year 2020. Let's put off loss and damage, just focus on that for a moment.

And my understanding is that, although the a hundred billion was not met in 2020 nor now, that nevertheless the decision urges countries to double their commitment, I think is the phrase. And I would really value your thoughts on that.

Laurence Tubiana: Well, it's of course nuance because it's one to double the contribution under that question in this framework, and try to make for the gap of what was missed for this 100 billion. So one is really recognizing that it needs to Rob. Nobody has paid a lot of attention in the last six years on how and when and where on the 100 billion.

And that's why we were floating between 75 and 80 billion now for a number of years. And mainly public finance composition between mostly multilateral development banks and national bilateral aid. So the question now is, fill the gap. So that was said that by 2023 we will ... Should be there.

And there will be in my view, a particular effort of course, because of the US commitment to try to [inaudible 00:20:46] the gap by ... And to close it by next

year to later. So this notion of the 100 billion keeps a proof of the trust that developing country can still have vis-à-vis developed one. Which I consider probably has declined during this last six year.

In a way, was the I mean factor of the absence of real solidarity for vaccines. And you cannot just forget that element. That people felt that in the developing countries ... I don't know the numbers now still Rob, but it's maybe ... it's under 10%. I think also people in developing countries vaccinated, isn't it?

Robert Stavins: Something like that. Yeah.

Laurence Tubiana: Yeah. Six to eight, I don't know now the last numbers. But people felt that that was how you can trust the international system when something like this happen. And by the way, we don't have a reasonable response because I think as I'm sure you think, it was crazy not to try to vaccinate everybody as fast as possible. So that's where it is.

I can say that, I think during this ... All this year, and because of the dynamic of the discussion of the private finance dynamism at the supposed one, to go ... To be available for funding this energy transition, which finally most of the question of climate action is about. The focus was for Glasgow on the private finance side.

And the 100 billion came very late in the preparation of Glasgow, maybe less than seven ... Six or seven months before. So there was no miracle we could not do. And of course we have the US gap which of course is huge. So that's why I think it was not the strongest point by far. It was really a disillusion on the developing country side. Because they're struggling for many reason now.

Robert Stavins: Now, you mentioned just now public finance, an issue going back to Copenhagen is, what part of individual countries contributions to this \$100 billion would be leveraged private sector finance, foreign direct investment, which can be leveraged in various ways by domestic policies?

And so one of the questions that's come in and in fact focuses on that and ask, what can be done? So I'm interested in your answer to that, but I'm also interested to know the following. My recollection is that historically, some developing countries did not want to count foreign direct investment leveraged private sector finance, as part of this fund for mitigation and adaptation.

That they wanted it all to be public finance government. Can you tell me where that stands? And also any ideas you have about leveraging private sector?

Laurence Tubiana: So this notion, this concept, this in a way battle, has evolved over the last ... Before Paris even and after. And so there is much more now acceptance and recognition that the problem is, the leveraging of private finance is really interesting for developing countries.

So the barrier between public and private is less acute or there is no ... So there is more recognition that it would be good if we could include some private finance. The problem is, that the leverage is absolutely absurdly low. Now these official numbers that has been circulated is for \$1 coming from the public finance in climate, is leveraging 20 to 30 cents by dollar.

So just no, that doesn't work. And so that's why my reflection really looking at Glasgow elements and the secular discussion we have on leveraging private finance, that the international financial system nowadays is not fit for the problem of the climate challenge we face. We are talking about three to four trillion a year in additional investment at global level for this energy or ecological transition.

The international financial system is not responding and maybe cannot respond in this actual form. And for the moment what so-called green finance is less than ... Is around 2% of the global financial markets. So with that, we cannot respond to the challenge. So there is limits in this discussion within the framework of the UNF as you can see frankly.

But at the same time, doesn't mean that we need ... We don't need to address that. We need to, because we need this transition to happen. And when you talk to World Bank folks or even DFIs they say, "We don't have the mandate to leverage private capital. Nobody has puts that in our KPI. Our KPI information you get doesn't include mobilization of private capital."

So, I think there is a massive efforts on those ... The stakeholders of these institutions to say, "Look, we cannot do without them, and we have really to find ways to leverage these private capital." There are rules, there are maybe benchmarks, it's not about taking all the risk on the public side and letting the private ... Doing its own privatization of the benefits only.

But the system doesn't work well, that's very evident. The problem is the stakeholders for the moment, don't consider that their job. Meaning the ones who are sitting at the board of IMF, or the one who also [inaudible 00:26:59] as the one sitting at the board of the Word Bank.

And they are not doing the jobs, they are just considering that is something else. That climate is in a corner, when climate is everywhere in the economic system. So not to be too excited, but for me it's really an impasse we are facing.

Robert Stavins:

So another aspect of the discussions and debates and negotiations on finance are associated with the phrase loss and damage. And we have a number of questions, which I'm going to now combine into the following. And for those who don't know what loss and damage refers to, it's an element of the discussions that go back now eight years or so, that refer to the fact that there are certain impacts of climate change that will not be mitigated or adapted to.

So think of a small island state for which it's not just increase in costs but is existential. And so some countries, in particular the most vulnerable countries, wanted a new fund for this purpose. The notion of loss and damage was finessed beautifully in the Paris agreement in which it's given attention in article eight. And then article 51 says, that it's not a basis for compensation or legal liability.

Which was the concern of the countries that have contributed the largest amount to the existing stock, the United States, China, European Union. And now, what came out after I believe the fund was blocked by the United States and perhaps by Europe, I don't know, the decision instead sets up a research process and a future dialogue on the subject.

And when I read that a future dialogue on the subject was set up, that was the moment at which I resonated with what Greta Thunberg had said during the first week, when she said, "It's all about blah, blah, blah." What's your assessment of the status of this whole loss and damage issue?

Laurence Tubiana: I think in a way the blah blah issue is exactly totally adequate to qualify what was the result. And EU in a way agreed with US on this defensive attitude. And for our participant to the talk, I recommend listening to the speech of the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley. An incredible charismatic leader, really impressive.

And by the way, the Barbados team including the Minister of Finance is really totally impressive. And this Prime Minister called for responsibility for everyone in a very really convincing manner. And not just because of the ... In a way it was not pleading for compassion or ... It was just responsibility and leadership. So just go and listen to it. It's worth the three minutes.

I do think that we can postpone but we will not be able to avoid. When you look at images that we ... Again and again, that was my Mia monthly remembered us, that we are seeing this image of destruction in every COP or not only in cop, many times a year. And you see people that are now in tents, in refugee settlement, two, three, four years after the extreme event happen.

And because there is no way to be able to mobilize so much capital to rebuild every time when you have every year extreme event destroying your infrastructure. And that combined with the depth that is induced by all these catastrophes and the in capacity, even countries that are not under developed, meaning these islands in particular of course, are a very active economy.

But you can't [inaudible 00:31:15] destruction is absolute destruction of the infrastructure capital. And you cannot repay it when you have to rebuild it every year. So we will not be able to ignore that much longer. That's why in a symbolic gesture, philanthropies and foundation like mine and the Scottish government decided to create a small fund.

Just to say, "look at one day, we'll have to recognize." And that maybe within the IMF scoping activities to say, "There is a collective responsibility. We cannot let the depth on the shoulders of really these countries, and we have to manage question of solidarity in particular, in the management of their depth, vis-à-vis this rebuilding of their society." So do think that the way out, the blah, blah cannot go much longer.

Robert Stavins: That was interesting Laurence. Were you saying that quite possibly the way forward on the loss and damage issue, might be for it to be removed from the UNFCCC process and to go to another multi lateral institution such as the IMF, the World Bank, whatever?

Laurence Tubiana: I think it'll be again, because of financial system as I mentioned previously, cannot respond to the challenge, it's not in there. Then on the debt management, it's clearly not in the climate convention framework. You can deal with that. And what loss and damages are very much related with this problem of the debt to GGP ratio or even the ... Just the capacity and not to be bankrupt for countries.

So this is really IM ... It's a macroeconomic concern. So, that's really IMF job. And that's what Mia Mottley was referring to when these sustainable special drawing rights sorry, mobilized for COVID and scenes could be mobilized more regularly for [inaudible 00:33:23] the impact of climate change. And the ecological transition, the energy transition.

So in my view, certainly it's ... Now climate is macro critical, it has to find it's ... Some application in the IMF realm. World Bank has to do the job, it's doing for the moment of very modestly 35% addressing climate change in portfolio. I think it should be aligned totally with Paris goal. So we have a lot to do on the financial system actually.

Robert Stavins: So, I'm going to move out outside now of the Paris agreement in the UNFCCC, because something that a number of the questions that have come referenced is that, a reality of what happened in Glasgow is that there was increasing attention to some multilateral agreements such ... Among governments.

Such as the methane emissions reduced by 30%, by the end of the decade, a hundred plus countries, there was some on deforestation, there were a number of these. And then there were also a number of commitments announcements, sometimes by consortia of private industry, some by individual companies, but by non-state actors.

And something that you've written about in an op-ed that was raised in fact by one of our participants, are the risks of this because of a lack of accountability mechanisms? Can you elaborate on that?

Laurence Tubiana:

I think this is a fascinating topic for the next ... For the years to come. And certainly very adequate to your research center Rob, and your activity of the Kennedy School. Why? Sorry, when I built this architecture of Paris agreement, I built that with four pillars. One was the, in way the element of top down the regulation, the legal obligation of countries, that is the Paris framework, which is about processes and regulation.

The other one was this nationally determined contribution, the sovereignty piece of the Paris agreement. And then I added two ones, which was how we align finance, which is the goal of temperature and the carbon budget. And then how we have the first one was, how we have the non-state actors and mainly the local authorities and the businesses participating.

Because we know that we are talking about a complex, not a place that one decision can make it all. Climate decision is everywhere. And that now more ... One, now more understand ... Understood, sorry. Second, the goals of Paris, the net zero by 2050 is now beginning to be a norm. For the moment not really seriously substantiated by anything serious, what most ... In most of the case, but it's there as a norm.

So my plea and the thought of campaign I did during the year before Glasgow and I will continue to do that, and that is, if we create serious accountability mechanism for all these commitments that actually pretend or want to be aligned and we contribute to the Paris goal, and be recognized for that. If we create the accountability mechanism, then we could now maybe connect the two phases of these conferences or the parties.

Where you have the government on one side and in a way, all the flourish of initiative on the other side, which in a way begin to be quite confusing. Because we don't know which initiative is really delivering to whom and where is the seriousness of all this? And we need that in my view, because again, we don't have any ... What sanction or enforcement mechanism we have at global level expectations, name and shame, and expectation is everything.

If you feel that the economy is going in that direction, you prefer to go in that direction and not to oppose it. And that's for the non setting in general. So I do think there is a challenge. Can we create an additional layer in the governance of the climate regime.

Where in each of these actors, and maybe it's one, maybe it's different accountability mechanisms, that can check by your third party with adequate data, that the ones who have committed deliver. And then gives them a more integrated role in the climate implementation. And it's a challenge, it's of course a totally different governance of what we are accustomed to see.

But I think we need that. And by the way, I think it's even more important than ever. Because when you look at the country, let's take Australia or Brazil

without talking about United States. Australia, all the provinces of Australia have plans to decarbonize their provinces. That's the case for most of the states in Brazil.

Why don't these people who are doing a good job and express the willingness of the society as well, are not represented more equally and more meaningfully in the global scene? When I saw your colleagues Rob, from US saying, "We stay in, we are staying in, we are still in the Paris agreement."

For me, it was a new world on the international law discussion. And I think we need to elaborate on that. And by the way, it could cushion the high end laws of the climate politics. We need that, we need across spectrum politics, we need the long term politics.

And why don't we use these different level of authority and decision makers to continue the route, and not just to be submitted to the next US election or new ... The new Brazilian election. So that's my view and ... But again, I don't have a total remedy. But we could improve that in my view.

Robert Stavins:

Well, Laurence it's certainly true that in quite a few countries of the world, ambition and action at the sub-national level states or provinces, is sometimes more ambitious than at the national level. That was certainly true in the United States during the Trump years. And it's been true in a number of countries. But in some countries, it turns out to be the opposite.

We're currently engaged in preparing for a workshop we're doing in India, although it's remote. But on sub-national climate change policy. And one of the striking realities is that, the national government is more aggressive on climate change policies than other states, which are much more focused on economic development.

And so that one goes the other way. But speaking of India, I want to turn to China actually, quite a few questions have come in naturally about China. And one thing that I took note of when I arrived, which was early over the weekend between the first and second week in Glasgow was, countries, various parties but also NGOs, commenting on what was missing.

And one of the things they said was missing was in the pre-Trump days, during the Obama administration in the lead up to the Paris agreement. That the co-leadership as they saw it of China and the United States was so important. And here are these ... The two major emitters, they're out in front, and they said that was lacking.

And then on Wednesday of the second week, there was this surprise announcement of a joint press conference. Right? By the two delegations. But afterwards, although it got a lot of press attention, it didn't seem that it had any

particular effect. Or I'm I wrong about that? Did that have any kind of a effect on the pace of the negotiations?

Laurence Tubiana: It was a something really well choreography, with I think John Kerry presented first and she ... Then [inaudible 00:41:59] the Chinese Roy presented after. Because that's where the geopolitical tension are, and they did their best to mitigate them. So I think no, the signal was very positive.

The content of the declaration is, bring ... What the new thing the declaration brings. Me saying commitment to China, that China didn't want to participate to the missing initiatives, but they took an individual one. So that was positive. There is elements positive on deforestation as well, and the value chains.

And there is of course interesting ideas that they want to really cooperate for the 1.5. So this is positive. So content itself is in a way represented finally as floor for the final decision of Glasgow, which of course this phase down thing was prepared by this declaration. And that was a equilibrium of the position of China.

So in this sense, it plays a role an important role in setting the line. Meaning the again, the equilibrium point. On the domestic action, it's a very complex period for China. And there are really different signals. You can interpret one way or the other way. You can interpret the double down on coal pipeline mining and electricity production.

And at the same time, they are accelerating the electrification of transport, and they are in their famous plan one plus N. Designing the precise element of the policy, including the carbon market they want to deploy. It's difficult to know where it goes, because there is a ... Because everything is ... So I would say the problem is not so much a geopolitical tension about that, what will make a difference in climate policy in China.

It's more the problem of the balance between the nature of the economic growth, the concern of the communist party to continue on the growth path and to see what is happening with probably global markets that will behave differently. Maybe trade export that will be more ... In a way more difficult at one point in time, with the willingness on many countries we localize the number of industries.

So it's more these uncertainties that you feel reflected into the discussion when you have different camps in the Chinese discussion. So I'm reading every day by the same people, the same expert in China. Well, I'm not part of this group, but I'm reading them. And I see them pointing to one version.

Finally, they will peak before ... Much before 2030. Or another version that finally they are really betting everything on coal on the short term. So I don't know anybody knows what is happening.

Robert Stavins:

So I want to ask you a final question, which has also come up in several of the questions people have submitted. And it has to do with the grassroots youth activism that we've seen. I know this is a topic on which you have passionate views, because you and I were on a panel together with Youth of the World. Right? And I remember what you had to say.

So, in the year 2019, with some time off for the pandemic, and then again in this year of 2021, we saw a real increase in grassroots youth activism on climate change, both in Europe and in the United States. And I'm very interested to close this out by you telling us of your reactions to that and how you see it going forward.

Laurence Tubiana:

Well, I think this mobilization of the young generation, which now is happening of course, with more constrain, but everywhere in many countries in Africa and Asia, you see young activists stepping up, and you understand why. They are totally, totally, totally legitimate, more than legitimate.

Just come on we are giving them a future that is darker and darker. And not only for climate, but [inaudible 00:46:40] extinction of filling the ocean with plastics is really ... I understand the anxiety. So, I said that before. So what is now possible? I think the moment where they are, at least the young people are more connected with, is that they feel that their demonstration in the street is not working enough, it doesn't work.

Government are not responding to what they are asking for. Some has gone to backup and really ask for more specific action points, and we may see that happening. Some wants to go into politics, some wants to in a way go and litigate, bring the governments in front of the justice, which I think is an interesting evolution to think about the constitutional court decision in Germany, who has had enormous impact when it comes to young citizens.

So they are looking for a way, they don't know exactly. But I cannot but feel that we are failing them. And we are failing them not only because we are not active enough on climate change, but because we don't offer them the political alleys, pathways, to participate and make their voice heard in the political system. And that's even worse.

We can't let them in the street every day, they would not go, they would be despaired or feeling anger, where we should offer the space for them to determine on many question. And these young people are very articulate. So we may need a reform of the way we integrate the young generation in our politic system really. That's I think my feeling.

Robert Stavins:

Well, I think that's a perfect note on which to bring to a close our conversation. So thank you very much Laurence for having taken time from your busy schedule to join us today.

Laurence Tubiana: Thank you Rob, thank you for the invitation.

Robert Stavins: Are guest today has been Laurence Tubiana, the CEO of the European Climate Foundation, former professor, and also former of course, Climate Ambassador for the Nation of France. Please join us again for the next episode of conversations from the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements, which we will announce shortly.

Remember, you need to register separately for each webinar in this series via Zoom. Finally, I'm your host, Rob Stavins. Thanks for joining us.

Laurence Tubiana: Bye, bye.

Robert Stavins: Bye, bye.