
Carbon Neutrality as the New Threshold for Joining Global Climate Governance

All the G7 members committed to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 at the just-concluded Cornwall Summit, where “carbon neutrality” got its emerging presence further highlighted on the agenda of global climate governance. According to data available, 30 countries and regions at present have pledged to hit net zero, while their goals related vary obviously from region to region.

Such regional differences were inevitable since they were rooted in the global climate-governing framework and path travelled in the last 30 years. For a long time, roles of the participants in global climate governance have been defined by whether they are developed or developing countries. The *Kyoto Protocol* adopted in 1997 was the first international convention in the form of regulations to limit greenhouse gas emissions, laying a basic framework for all participated countries. The *Protocol* has not only shaped a long-term practice of developed countries providing support to developing countries for climate mitigation, but also imposed profound impacts on participants formulating their own policies and voices during the process. To some extent it has forced European countries to adopt a series of policies and establish national and regional emission reduction trading mechanisms, thus to fulfill their obligations to reduce emissions and gain the upper hand in their right to speak internationally.

As the United States successively withdrew from the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement*, and as some developed countries attempted to dramatically revise the expired *Protocol* to evade their once stipulated responsibilities, the roles of the developed and developing countries in global climate governance as well as their consensus disintegrated, competition intensified in this field on the world stage. It was in this reshaped context that carbon neutrality initiative was put forward, and very quickly many countries announced their corresponding targets. Carbon neutrality has gradually become the threshold for countries to enter into the new phase of global climate governance.

The race for hitting net zero is supported by a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation. Although countries have their respective focuses on different areas like energy, transportation, infrastructure, green technology and etc. to achieve the final goal, in general, the key strategic direction is to accelerate the implementation of zero-carbon solutions and R&D of zero-carbon technologies. Technically speaking there are several main measures including withdrawing from coal, developing new energies, developing coal capture technology, pushing forward technological transformation, and lifting the cost of emissions by legislative regulations and the coal-emission trading market.

China's target time for achieving carbon neutrality is close to that of most countries, but its transition period from reaching carbon peak to hitting net zero will be much shorter than that of developed countries. European and American countries are expected to spend 50-70 years on the average, while China aims for 30 years. China has proactively made its commitments as a responsible big country, which means it will strive forward more vigorously in the future in industrial restructuring, economic transformation, new energy development and utilization and etc.

It is worth noting that despite the obvious regional differences in the goals of reaching carbon neutrality, the underlying consensus on tackling climate change through international cooperation remains unchanged. Although there were some rebukes against China on the G7 Summit, combating climate change together was still taken as an important agenda. Both France and German after the summit called for joint efforts with China regarding to climate change and international economy and trade. In the long run, China also takes international cooperation as one of the key rules for realizing carbon neutrality. China will actively participate in international dialogues and cooperation to develop emission reduction technologies and standards, build the system of voices and etc., so as to adapt to and integrate into the new phase of global climate governance focusing on reaching carbon neutrality.