

China Pursues Dual-Track Climate Strategy: Renewable Expansion Amidst Coal Reliance

March 6, 2025



China, the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, is implementing a dual-track climate strategy, balancing rapid renewable energy expansion with continued reliance on coal. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has outlined plans for significant offshore wind farms and desert-based energy megaprojects, aiming to achieve its 2030 carbon peak and 2060 carbon neutrality targets.

While China leads global clean energy growth, accounting for 60% of new renewable capacity worldwide in 2023 and achieving nearly 40% renewable electricity generation, coal remains a critical component of its energy mix. The NDRC has signaled ongoing increases in coal production, alongside pilot projects for low-carbon technologies at coal-fired plants. This approach follows China's failure to meet its 2023 carbon intensity reduction goal, attributed to high energy demand and extreme weather.

"Despite the world record expansion of renewables, an inconvenient truth is that China's economy hasn't become much more energy efficient in recent years," stated Yao Zhe, Global Policy Advisor at Greenpeace.

China's commitment to renewable energy is evident in its expanding forest coverage, now at 25%, and its decade-long leadership in the electric vehicle (EV) market. The nation has also reduced energy intensity by 26% since 2012.

Beyond its borders, China is driving green energy projects in developing nations through initiatives like the China-Ethiopia-Sri Lanka Renewable Energy Technology Transfer Project and major infrastructure developments such as the Zhanatas Wind Farm in Kazakhstan and the Gouina Hydropower Station in Mali. China also dominates clean tech exports, supplying a substantial percentage of global solar and wind

power equipment, contributing significantly to global carbon emissions reduction.

“Through initiatives like BRI, China is not only promoting its influence but also accelerating the global green transformation,” said Anna Malindog-Uy, Vice President of the Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, China has committed substantial climate-related funding to developing nations and partnered with over 40 countries on green development through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, the nation faces the challenge of balancing economic growth with its climate commitments, with uncertainty surrounding its ability to meet future carbon intensity reduction goals. Despite these challenges, China’s continued investment in renewable energy indicates a sustained commitment to long-term green development.