

COP26 President concludes constructive discussions with China on climate action

- Visit focused around discussions with Special Representative for Climate Change Affairs of China, Xie Zhenhua on China's central role in addressing the global climate crisis, in their first face-to-face meeting
- COP President stressed the need for China and all countries to take urgent action over next decade to pursue efforts to keep the 1.5 degree temperature goal within reach, including on coal, finance, deforestation and zero emissions vehicles
- The pair underscored their commitment to multilateralism and a safe and COVID-secure COP26 which accelerates climate action and addresses gaps in climate ambition in this critical decade

Alok Sharma has completed constructive talks with Special Representative Xie Zhenhua during his first visit to China as COP26 President-Designate.

With less than two months to go before the UK hosts the crucial UN climate change conference, COP26, Mr Sharma travelled to Tianjin for two days of discussions, to accelerate action ahead of the Glasgow summit.

The COP26 President pointed to recent warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which China is party to, as evidence that all countries needed to pick up the pace and take urgent action over the next decade to deliver on the Paris Agreement and pursue efforts to keep global temperature rise to 1.5C. This is a message he has been taking around the world over the past eight months.

During a series of meetings with Special Representative Xie Zhenhua, the pair discussed President Xi Jinping's commitments to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, peak emissions before 2030 and reduce China's use of coal. Mr Sharma welcomed China's intention to outline detailed policy plans to meet these, following on from commitments made at the G20 for countries to publish enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions ahead of COP26.

They discussed opportunities for China to go further and build on its world-leading position as the largest investor in renewable energy, and the largest domestic market for zero emission vehicles. The COP President Designate also highlighted in discussions how China could demonstrate global leadership by ending overseas coal financing. The pair also discussed the vital importance of protecting nature and China's presidency of CBD COP15.

The COP President and Special Representative also discussed the detailed Covid measures to hold a safe and secure event in Glasgow, which was welcomed by the Chinese delegation.

During his visit Mr Sharma met other senior ministers virtually including Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng, as well as the Governor of the People's Bank of China Yi Gang and UK and Chinese business representatives to encourage greater ambition for decarbonisation and participation at COP26.

Speaking at the end of his visit, Mr Sharma said:

I have had constructive discussions on my first visit to China in the COP26 role, but time is running out to prevent a climate catastrophe, and so the discussions I have had here are nothing short of crucial.

The commitments President Xi has made over the last year are welcome and China's pledge to tackle climate change as a shared mission for humanity is encouraging. The choices that China makes, on their energy mix, and on coal specifically, will shape our shared future.

The question that remains is how fast they put these into action, along with other major emitters. I look forward to more detailed plans being published setting out how China's targets will be met.

The clock is running down fast and the next decade will be decisive. All countries need to pick up the pace on driving down emissions and safeguarding people and nature from the worst effects of climate change.

Ends

- Some meetings were held virtually so as to reduce numbers inside the Covid-19 secure bubble
- Strict Covid-19 protocols were followed by all members of the delegation, including regular testing