

**Statement by Congressman Eliot I. Engel, Ranking Member of the
House Foreign Affairs Committee, US Congress
on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of
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Right now, President Obama is in Alaska as part of an 11-day climate change tour. Leaders from across the globe are preparing to come together for climate talks in Paris. This is an issue drawing the focus of powerful leaders for good reason: climate change is a threat to security and prosperity around the world. It's a threat that affects us all.

Now, some of my friends in Congress like to say that they don't have an opinion on climate change because they're not scientists. Well, I'm not a scientist either. That's why I pay close attention when scientists are talking. And scientists are saying that the evidence is in: greenhouse gas emissions are warming our planet.

Last month was the hottest month in recorded history. Last year was the hottest year in recorded history. Fourteen of the 15 hottest years have occurred in the 21st century. And if we don't curb greenhouse gas emissions, global temperatures will continue rising, and we will face drastic, deadly, and potentially irreversible consequences.

What will that look like? Even higher global temperatures; warmer, more acidic oceans; higher sea levels; and more severe changes in weather patterns.

We're already seeing major impacts around the world. The hottest 12 months on record in Australia have led to wildfires burning out of control. The strongest cyclone ever to make landfall recently crashed into the Philippines, affecting more than 11 million people. Drought in Russia is rendering once fertile land useless, threatening the Russian food supply.

Here in the United States, we're also feeling the effects firsthand. When Superstorm Sandy barreled across the northeast in 2012, it left in its wake tens of billions of dollars in damage. One reason it took such a heavy toll was that the sea level in New York Harbor had risen 12 inches in the previous century. Warmer ocean temperatures and higher sea levels were also a big factor in the damage and destruction that Hurricane Katrina caused in the American South a decade ago.

This problem is real. It's getting worse. And we have a responsibility to respond. After all, the United States accounts for roughly 16 percent of the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions.

And the global price of inaction is dire compared with investing in renewables. Recently, Citibank found that investing in low-carbon energy to address climate change would save the world \$1.8 trillion through 2040, but not acting will cost an additional \$44 trillion by 2060.

It's a clear choice, but we cannot meet this challenge alone. Any successful effort to combat climate change must involve all the world's emitters working together. That's the aim of this year's international climate talks.

Governments have been testing the waters on this issue for decades, starting with the World Climate Conference in 1979. We've made some progress, like the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2009 Copenhagen Accord. But global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to rise.

I think this time could be different.

Last year for the first time, the global economy grew but global carbon emissions didn't. In Lima, Peru, 196 governments committed to developing plans to address greenhouse-gas emissions. As of Friday, more than 50 countries accounting for 70 percent of global emissions had submitted those plans. Greenhouse gas emissions from the United States will be more than 25 percent lower in 2025 than they were in 2005. The EU intends to reduce its emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. And China's emissions will peak by 2030.

These are serious commitments, and hopefully in the years ahead, governments will live up to their word.

But we can all play a role. We need to rethink how we create and use energy to fuel our cars, power our homes, and heat our buildings. Because this is still a solvable problem - if we act now. We need to be able to look back to this time and say we did enough to protect our planet for future generations.

Thank you.