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U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry speaks during an interview with Reuters after meeting with Pope Francis, near the Vatican in Rome, Italy, June 19, 2023. REUTERS FILE PHOTO

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BEIJING — John Kerry, the U.S. special envoy on climate issues, will visit China from July 16-19, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment said on Wednesday, the latest senior U.S. official to travel to Beijing in recent weeks.

Kerry's trip follows a visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken last month and will come a week after the departure of Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

Given the scale of their economies, cooperation between the U.S. and China is considered vital to international efforts to avert the worst impacts of climate change. While in Beijing, Yellen stressed that both countries need to work closely together on the issue.

China and the United States are the world's two biggest sources of carbon dioxide emissions and their cooperation has been seen as a vital part of global efforts to curb global warming.

But while Kerry has sought to insulate climate from broader diplomatic tensions between the two sides, formal talks were suspended last August following the visit of U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, a self-ruled island that China claims.

Climate experts have said they do not expect Kerry's trip to add much momentum to climate negotiations, given ongoing political tensions between the two sides, but there are potential areas of cooperation on issues like the abatement of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

"First and foremost, it's just very important that it is happening," said Joanna Lewis, an expert on Chinese climate policies at Georgetown University.

"I think it is important that some sort of positive agenda comes out of this meeting, even if it is simply an agreement to continue to meet," she said during a webinar on U.S.-China climate cooperation on Tuesday.

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