

Headline: Obama, in Asia, seeks late momentum on climate deal

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MANILA, Philippines — With a high-stakes deadline two weeks away, President Barack Obama hopes to build momentum on Wednesday for a broad and potentially legacy-burnishing global climate change agreement.

At a meeting of chief executives in this Southeast Asian capital, Obama was expected to urge business leaders to reduce emissions in their operations and use their sway to pressure governments to sign on to the international pact. Obama and dozens of other leaders are slated to convene in Paris at the end of the month to finalize the carbon-cutting deal.

The CEOs gathered on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, an annual forum for 21 member nations typically used to hash out the region's overlapping economic interests.

This year security issues seeped onto the agenda. In the wake of the brutal attacks in Paris, talk of a response and containing the spread of Islamic radicalism filled both the formal meetings and hallway chatter.

But while Obama privately discusses ways of ramping up pressure on the Islamic State group, he came ready to use his public spotlight to zero in on the landmark climate deal. The president has made the issue a top priority as his term in office winds down. With no hope for passing legislation through Congress, Obama has shifted to international lobbying.

The White House points to some success. On his last trip through Asia, Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping issued in a joint declaration that set a 2030 deadline for carbon emissions to stop rising in China. The deal seemed to mark a shift in China's approach to carbon reduction, and a diplomatic win for the president.

Xi is also slated to speak to the chief executives on Wednesday, along with Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla and Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto. Alibaba Chairman Jack Ma will welcome the leaders.

Some critics say that in an effort to clinch a deal, Obama and US negotiators have already acquiesced to an agreement that will be too weak to prevent the worst effects of climate change. The White House says it's searching for "significant commitments" that will ratchet up over time. The US has pushed for each nation's contribution to be revisited every five years.

US President Barack Obama, left, and Philippines' President Benigno Aquino III participate in a news conference in Manila, Philippines, Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2015, ahead of the start of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. AP

"It's going to require countries making good on promises to cut carbon pollution, and to doing so in a transparent, verifiable manner," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, as Obama left for a string of summits in Turkey and Asia. "That is our goal."

In Washington, the Senate approved two GOP-sponsored resolutions disapproving of Obama's plan to force steep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from US power plants and rendering the rules inoperative. Both measures were narrowly approved under a little-used law that allows Congress to block executive actions it considers onerous with simple majority votes. The maneuver is subject to a presidential veto and has rarely been successful in overturning executive branch rules.

In Asia, Obama also plans to ramp up his global lobbying campaign on another front during the trip. The president is slated to meet with leaders from the 11 other countries backing the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade deal and urge them to quickly ratify it.

READ: Obama takes climate drive to Alaska

As with climate, Obama faces his own hurdles at home on trade. Large portions of the president's party — including the leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, Hillary Rodham Clinton — oppose the deal. Meanwhile, many Republicans appear willing to deviate from their past support for free trade to avoid giving Obama a major campaign-year win.

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