

## US and China agree on climate collaboration despite trade tensions

New envoys first in-person talks in Washington described as 'in-depth and productive'



John Podesta, the US administration's top adviser on international climate policy, hosted his Chinese counterpart and staff for dinner at his home one evening © Allison Dinner/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

Aime Williams in Washington MAY 10 2024

The US and China said they would “intensify” their co-operation on replacing coal with clean power as top diplomats from the world’s two largest polluters met in Washington this week.

The signs of co-operation follow the first substantial meeting between President Joe Biden’s top adviser on international climate policy John Podesta, and his Chinese counterpart Liu Zhenmin, following the retirement of their respective predecessors, John Kerry and Xie Zhenhua.

A US state department readout of the talks said Washington and Beijing had agreed to engage in “technical” exchanges across [climate-related issues](#), including technology to measure greenhouse gas emissions and on methane emissions controls.

The two sides would also “intensify technical and policy exchanges” with each other on the roll out of [renewable energy](#) and the phase down of coal consumption. US officials said they raised the importance of slowing the growth of coal-fired power plants in China with their Chinese counterparts.

The meetings came against the backdrop of [rising trade tensions](#) between Beijing and Washington.

Podesta said the meetings had been “in-depth and productive”. “We have to get the climate problem under control, and there are no more important countries than the US and China to lead the way — even as our overall relationship between our two countries has increasingly been characterised by fierce competition,” he said.



China's new top climate envoy Liu Zhenmin. US state department officials said the meetings were friendly © Bloomberg  
State department officials said the meetings were friendly, with Liu and his staff having dinner at Podesta’s house one evening. During the preceding era of climate diplomacy, Kerry often boasted of his ability to maintain relations with his counterpart even in times of geopolitical strain.

Despite this closeness, climate negotiations between the US and China at times were stalled by broader [souring of the relationship](#) between the two countries.

US and Chinese diplomats were prevented from meeting for about a year when [Beijing cut off climate talks](#) in retaliation for former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s trip to Taiwan in August of 2022.

There was a rapprochement ahead of the UN's COP28 climate summit in Dubai late last year, when the US and China reached an agreement, dubbed the Sunnylands statement for the location of the California meeting. This included a joint pledge to “accelerate the substitution” of fossil fuels with green energy.

At COP28, countries including the US and China reached a deal to transition away from fossil fuels in an attempt to reach global net zero by 2050.

## Climate Capital

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