



# The 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Paris Agreement

## Conversation with Honorable Laurent Gallissot

### Consul General of France in Miami



Hon. Laurent Gallissot  
Consul General of France in Miami



Laurent Gallissot, the Consul General of France in Miami, sat down for an interview with the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence at FIU to discuss the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Paris Agreement, which will be celebrated on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020. He also reflected on what can be done in Miami to combat sea-level rise and climate change, and to protect the environment.

**MFJMCE: The Paris Agreement formally entered into force on November 4, 2016. In a few words, can you tell us what the Paris Agreement is, and what the countries involved are?**

The Paris Climate Agreement aims to fight global warming. It is a universal roadmap for a possible better future encouraging States to **cut greenhouse emissions by half by 2030** and to **end carbon neutral by 2050**.

In a nutshell, its main objectives are:

- 1/ to engage its 194 countries to agree on legally binding climate targets;
- 2/ to set a limit to global warming to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius compared to the current further global warming of 3 degrees and to reach a zero-carbon world, which means that our global economies would have zero net emissions by 2050.

The Agreement has been regarded as one of the most successful and the most rapidly ratified agreement in history: for the first time, countries joined forces to get a universal agreement. **188** (now that the U.S is temporarily out) **have** already **ratified it** into their national law, making it for them **legally binding**. For more information about the Parties to the Convention and the Status of Ratification, you can consult the UNFCCC website here: <https://unfccc.int/process/the-paris-agreement/status-of-ratification>.

Each and every single country's role in this agreement is crucial: from big polluters, whose engagement is essential in order to get a quick impact on current emissions, to islands countries and emergent countries that are particularly exposed to the consequences of centuries of uncontrolled industrialized growth.

There is an "esprit de Paris": Policymakers, the civil society, and business leaders do all agree that teamwork is key to achieve results.

**MFJMCE: What is the role of France in the Paris Agreement?**

France has constantly worked to raise the "mitigation" bar and to increase EU's climate ambition as well as all parties involved.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*



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Within the European Union, France advocates for **at least 55% net reduction of emissions in 2030** compared to 1990 levels. On December 10 and 11, 2020, the European Council, will review climate change engagements and will hopefully agree on new ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. **It will confirm EU leading-by-example role.**

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, which marks the **5th anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement**, France will convene a **UN Climate Ambition Summit** to strengthen its international cooperation.

Because **France believes also in a bottom up approach putting the young generation at the forefront**, we are also engaged with the civil society by supporting local initiatives and organizations that are – for instance – part of the **Citizen's Climate Convention**.

The 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary serves as a springboard to raise awareness and transform words into actions.

**MFJMCE: Can you tell us what the status of the Paris Agreement is now?**

2020 is an important milestone. The Paris Agreement asks its States parties to set every 5 years a more ambitious target in order to reach the global goal.

It is a time to review the existing rules and identify successes and failures: on finance capacity, technological innovation, and emission reductions.

States parties have to communicate their new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by December 31st, 2020. On that basis, a platform dedicated to countries' commitments and summary reports will be launched in 2021.

**MFJMCE: What obligations do countries have under the agreement to reduce their emissions?**

Countries that have ratified the agreement are legally bound to take action for:

- 1 – Making sure to push back the temperature rise to below 2° Celsius (above pre-industrial levels) by 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by 2050;
- 2 – Improving their reduction of greenhouse emissions.

**MFJMCE: How did the Paris conference engage stakeholders such as states, cities, and business?**

What is amazing with the Paris Agreement, is that it has spread what has been called « the spirit of Paris », namely bringing together not only the international community and individual states but also as you named them cities, businesses, and communities.

**« Think global, act local » takes on its full meaning.** In the United States for example, public leaders, private organizations, and private industries committed themselves to reduce their own negative footprints on climate. Emissions were reduced by 15%! Still more than 10% points below the 2015 U.S. goals of reduction levels by 2025, but it marks a real improvement.



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**MFJMCE: President-elect Biden has promised to rejoin the Paris Agreement once he takes office. What happens next?**

The United States of America have formally withdrawn from the Paris climate agreement on November 4, 2020. Being the second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, after China, the U.S. is a key player for the success of global climate policies. President-elect Joe Biden has declared that the U.S. will be reentering into the Paris Climate Agreement. The process would take only 30 days after the notification has been sent to the United Nations.

France has already welcomed the nomination of John Kerry as the Special envoy for the Climate; in 2015, he was a key negotiator during the Paris Agreement talks and he speaks perfect French!

This nomination is a great sign of the U.S. comeback on the scene to fight the dire consequences of climate change.

**MFJMCE: What can we do in Miami to combat sea-level rise and climate change, and protect the environment?**

There are numerous projects that are developed locally to mitigate sea-level rise, to protect the coast, fight water pollution, and preserve the beautiful and rich Florida's environment.

Just to name a few:

[Friends of the Everglades](#), who work tirelessly to restore this unique ecosystem,

[Miami Waterkeeper](#), whose mission is to defend, protect, and preserve South Florida's watershed through citizen engagement and community action rooted in sound science and research,

or, the [Sea-Level Solutions Center](#) (which is now part of the FIU Institute of Environment), an interdisciplinary hub of Florida International University, that conducts international research involving experts from all over the world to develop sea level and other climate change-related responses.

Thanks to Mayor Suarez, Miami became also the first city in Florida and 96th in the world to join C40 cities, an international climate organization that helps cities lower their carbon footprint. The Mayor recently lead a climate forum with the local community and this clearly is a proof that Miami is committed to addressing the climate crisis and that projects are moving forward.

**MFJMCE: What else can we do to protect the environment in Miami?**

Miami aims to reach carbon-neutrality by 2050 with a mid-term strategy for 2030. Like the other large and populous cities involved in the C40, as Paris is, Miami takes on a pro-active and leading role to show how to transition to a carbon neutral economy that is resilient, innovative and inclusive. Besides the essential issues that are resilience and carbon neutrality, the fight against climate change encompasses also the preservation of biodiversity, another issue of importance in Florida.

The preservation of the biodiversity is directly linked to the wellness of our communities. In Miami and Florida, those are highly dependent on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism.





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The protection of the environment can no longer wait: invest in green businesses, support local initiatives, and get people involved! Protecting the environment is an everyday business and everyone can and has to participate: from households to businesses.

**MEUCE: We have a large French population here in Miami and Florida. The partnership between the United States and the European Union is essential. Do you think that the Biden administration will bring a change in the relationship between France and the United States in terms of environmental policies?**

By 2021 both our countries will have common ambitions in terms of environmental policies. We want to strengthen our cooperation with the U.S. to promote ambitious environmental policies at the global level.

I cannot finish this interview, without talking about the current health crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has pushed France to associate its plans for the climate to the post-Covid-19 economic recovery (« France relance ») with two main pillars that are social justice and environmental justice.

**MFJMCE: Do you have any last thoughts you would like to share with us?**

I invite you to participate in our Climate Action webinar and to get in touch with us if you are the initiator of a local initiative for climate here in Florida or in the Caribbean!

\*To mark the 5th Anniversary of the Paris Agreement, the Consulate General of France is organizing a [webinar](#) addressing Florida's environmental challenges with local solutions on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 11 am to 12 pm with Miami Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava as a keynote speaker. ► To register, [click here](#)

And of course, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) @FranceinMiami.

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More information on the Consulate General of France in Miami:  
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