

Rich nations pledge to unlock billions of dollars for climate fight

Multilateral development banks like the World Bank are expected to find \$200 billion in extra firepower for low-income economies by taking on more risk, a move that may require wealthy nations to inject more cash, world leaders said on Friday.

The leaders, gathered at a summit in Paris to thrash out funding for the climate transition and post-COVID debt burdens of poor countries, said their plans would secure billions of dollars of matching investment from the private sector, Reuters reported.

An overdue pledge of \$100b in climate finance for developing nations was also now in sight, they said. Many in attendance, however, said over the two-day summit that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were increasingly ill-suited for tackling the most pressing challenges and needed a broad revamp.

"We ... expect an overall increase of \$200b of MDBs' lending capacity over the next ten years by optimizing their balance sheets and taking more risks," the summit's final statement obtained by Reuters said.

"If these reforms are implemented, MDBs may need more capital," it added, recognising in a final

summit document for the first time that wealthy nations may have to inject more cash.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, whose country is the largest shareholder of the IMF and World Bank, had said ahead of the summit that development banks had to first squeeze out more lending themselves before the possibility of capital increases was considered.

The final summit document called for each dollar of lending by development banks to be matched by at least one dollar of private finance, which analysts said should help international institutions to leverage an additional \$100b of private money in developing and emerging economies.

The announcements mark a scaling up of action from the development banks in the fight against climate change and set a direction for further change ahead of their annual meetings later in the year.

However, some climate activists were critical of the results.

At the summit, the United States and China – long at odds on how to tackle debt restructurings for poor countries – sought to strike a more conciliatory tone after a landmark deal was reached on Thursday to



restructure \$6.3b in debt owed by Zambia, most of it to China.

"As the world's two largest economies, we have a responsibility to work together on global issues," Yellen said on a summit panel shared with Chinese Premier Li Qiang among other leaders.

However, differences remain. China – the world's largest bilateral creditor – has been pushing for lenders like the World Bank or the IMF to absorb some of the losses, which the institutions and Western countries oppose.

"China is ready to be engaged in debt relief efforts in an effective, realistic and comprehensive manner in keeping with the principle of fair burden sharing," Li said.

The summit statement said there was a "good likelihood" of finalising this year a \$100-billion climate finance pledge to developing countries.

Many of the topics discussed in Paris took up suggestions from a group of developing countries, led by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, dubbed the 'Bridgetown Initiative'.

"We leave Paris not with speeches simply, but a commitment to get down into the granular details to make sure that what we agree here can be executed," Mottley said at the summit's closing panel.

The \$100 billion pledge falls far short of poor nations' actual needs, but has become symbolic of wealthy countries' failure to deliver promised climate funds.

"If we can't shape the rules in this time like others before, then we will be accountable for what potentially can be the worst re-



World leaders and finance leaders attend the closing session of the New Global Financial Pact Summit, in Paris, France, on June 23, 2023.

● LEWIS JOLY/POOL/ AFP via GETTY IMAGES

NEWS IN BRIEF

France estimates up to 35k heat deaths since 2014

AFP – Between 30,000 and 35,000 people have died from the effects of summer heat in France since 2014, the country's public health agency said in an estimate released Friday.

Although heat deaths are often associated with the elderly, "a significant proportion – one-third – were of people aged under 75," Sante Publique France (SPF) found in a study.

France has seen more frequent heatwaves in recent years, especially in 2019 and 2022, as the effects of climate change make the phenomena more frequent – without it being possibly to directly attribute any individual episode to global warming.

Financial crime watchdog adds Croatia to 'grey list'



REUTERS – The FATF international financial crime watchdog on Friday said it had added EU member state Croatia to its so-called "grey list" of countries under special scrutiny, adding that Cameroon and Vietnam were also added to the list.

The move makes Croatia the only EU country on the list, which also includes the United Arab Emirates, Panama and Mali, and comes in response to deficiencies in the country's prevention of money laundering and terrorism financing.

Greece holds final party rallies ahead of vote



AFP – Greece on Friday entered the final day of campaigning the weekend's national election, with conservative frontrunner Kyriakos Mitsotakis aiming to consolidate the gains he made in last month's inconclusive ballot.

This poll is being held under a different system, meaning he stands to gain a larger share of seats in parliament if he repeats – or betters – his May performance, as polls suggest he will.

UK hospital doctors to stage longest strike in NHS history



● DANIEL LEAL/AFP

Hospital doctors in England on Friday announced the longest strike in the history of the state-funded National Health Service (NHS), in an ongoing row over pay.

Junior doctors – those below consultant level – will walk out for five days from 7:00 am (0600 GMT) on July 13 until the same time on July 18, the British Medical Association said, AFP reported.

The stoppage – just after the NHS marks its 75th anniversary – follows a 72-hour strike this month in opposition to the government's refusal to budge on its offer of a five-percent pay increase.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman said the new strike was "extremely disappointing".

"It puts patient safety and our efforts to cut waiting

lists at risk," he told reporters, insisting the government's offer was "fair and reasonable".

But medics say they have seen a 26-percent pay cut in real terms in the last 15 years, as salaries have failed to keep pace with inflation.

They want pay restored to 2008-2009 levels but the government says this would mean an average pay award of about 35 percent this year and is too costly.

Robert Laurenson and Vivek Trivedi, who jointly chair the BMA junior doctors' committee, said the government seemed intent on letting the NHS "decline to the point of collapse".

They highlighted a BMA survey that said more than half (53 percent) of the nearly 2,000 junior doctors who responded had

received offers to move abroad in the past four months. The government of South Australia state had even paid for advertising trucks to be sent to picket lines offering better pay if doctors emigrated, they claimed.

Laurenson and Trivedi said the government was refusing to reopen talks on pay, forcing them to stage "the longest single walkout by doctors in the NHS's history".

The strike could be averted if the government comes up with a "credible offer" on pay restoration, they added.

A series of strikes by doctors, nurses and other medical staff over below-inflation pay rises and conditions has hit patient care, forcing the cancellation or rescheduling of appointments.

Russia says bars entry to more EU officials over fresh sanctions

Russia said Friday it was barring entry to more European officials in response to the EU's decision to slap new sanctions on Moscow over the conflict in Ukraine.

"In response to these unfriendly actions, the Russian side has significantly expanded the list of representatives of European institutions and EU member states who... are prohibited from entering the territory of our state," the foreign ministry said in a statement, AFP reported. It did not specify the number of officials that were being sanctioned or give their names.

The European Union this week agreed an 11th package of penalties against Russia over its large-scale "military operation" in Ukraine, including measures aimed at clamping down on evasion of restrictions already in place. "We confirm that any unfriendly actions taken by Western countries will continue to receive a timely and adequate response," Russia's Foreign Ministry added.

Ukraine is in the early stages of its most ambitious counterattack since Russia's full-scale operation in February 2022 and says it has retaken eight villages, its first substan-

tial gains on the battlefield for seven months, Reuters reported.

Ukraine's armed forces have halted a Russian offensive towards the cities of Kupiansk and Lyman in the east of the country, and are advancing in the south, a senior Ukrainian defence official said on Friday.

"We had very fierce battles in the Kupiansk and Lyman directions, Maliar told Ukrainian television. But Russia still holds swathes of territory in eastern and southern Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces have yet to push to the main defensive lines that Russia has had months to prepare.

Reuters said it was unable to verify the situation on the battlefield. Each side says the other has suffered heavy losses since Ukraine began its counteroffensive, and Moscow has not acknowledged Ukraine's recent military gains.



● REUTERS