

Most popular

- 1.** Gas-less building mandate coming to NY
- 2.** Body found in area of Niskayuna park
- 3.** Top restaurants for outdoor dining
- 4.** 50 years ago, town gave returning POW a rousing reception
- 5.** Waiter's

OPINION

N.Y.'s energy for change

Account

Nov. 28, 2021



Photo illustration by Jeff Boyer / Times Union
Associated Press

The most urgent United Nations climate summit in history, COP26, ended with notable progress toward addressing the climate crisis. In Glasgow, world leaders secured commitments to reduce methane emissions, end deforestation, and

advance a US-China climate agreement.

ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

But they fell short where it counts most, on phasing out fossil fuels, establishing concrete targets to limit temperature rise to 1.5-degree Celsius goal, and ensuring financial support for the hardest-hit developing nations.

Fortunately, leaders will meet again in Egypt next year to complete the job at COP27.

As representatives of New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, we were fortunate to attend the summit and stand with other government representatives and citizen leaders to urge global

action.

ADVERTISEMENT
Article continues below this ad

New York, with the 10th largest economy on the planet, doesn't have a seat at the nation-level negotiating table. But together with other sub-national states and provinces around the world, we wield considerable influence and are the durable backbone upon which global action can be built.

For a sense of the sub-national scale of commitment on climate, the Climate Group's Under2 Coalition, in which New York is a member, boasts 260 states and regions, representing 50 percent of the global economy and 1.75 billion people. We're often going farther and faster than our own nations.

Take Australia, where every territory pledged net-zero emissions as of last year, but the national government did not join the commitment until last month.

Here in America, the U.S. Climate Alliance, which New York co-founded when the prior

Legislating data privacy, Diocese bankruptcy top letters

Letters: Congressional Republican debt scheme won't work

Submit a letter to the editor

SIGN UP FOR THE OBSERVATION DECK NEWSLETTER

Read the latest Times Union opinion, perspective and letters to the editor on Mondays by signing up for our Observation Deck newsletter.

federal administration withdrew from the Paris Accords, now consists of half the states. The alliance held the line over the last four years and serves as the ready-made foundation for President Joe Biden's boldest-ever climate commitment.

ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

Back in New York, we're implementing one of the nation's most ambitious climate laws. Signed into law in 2019, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act requires the state to be net-zero economy-wide by 2050. And while we and the dozens of members of our Climate Action Council are still developing the transition plan, we're not waiting to put shovels in the ground. New York's shift to a fossil-free future is well underway.

We offer some lessons from New York's experience in the climate action trenches to world leaders as they prepare for COP27.

Set ambitious targets but start transitioning away from fossil fuels—now. The transition to net-zero means saying no to fossil fuel projects

whenever possible. New York banned fracking, shuttered coal-fired power plants, deployed the latest technology to plug abandoned gas wells, and mandated electric vehicle-only vehicle sales in 2035. Recently, New York for the very first time denied applications for two gas-fired power plants because they were inconsistent with the state's climate law.

Put shovels in the ground right away. Saying no to fossil fuel now means saying yes to renewables now. Climate action must be about creating the jobs of the future, today. New York's bold climate goals are matched only by the massive scale of our clean energy investments, with more than \$21 billion in 91 large-scale renewable projects like solar and wind, \$6.8 billion to reduce building emissions, and more than \$1 billion for clean transportation. This is just the start, but these early projects alone will produce tens of thousands of jobs.

Be inclusive and develop a careful plan to transition jobs. The climate justice movement was a major force behind the passage of New York's climate law. Now, frontline communities have a powerful role in its implementation and are helping to direct 40 percent of the benefits of climate investments to historically disadvantaged communities. This same energy is being directed into a just transition for New York's workforce to ensure all New Yorkers are represented in a cleaner energy future. The voices of the climate justice, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and youth communities must be

part of international discussions.

The benefits will exceed the costs — by a long shot. New York's transition to net-zero emissions will produce a net benefit of \$80 billion to \$150 billion and produce hundreds of thousands of new jobs, as well as improve air quality and public health in communities historically overburdened by environmental pollution. Our climate leadership is already also reducing energy consumption and utility bills while making New York a hub of clean energy and economic growth.

The climate crisis produced some of the most destructive damage in 2021, from record heat, drought and wildfires in America's west, to unprecedented flooding in Northern Europe, and to thousand-year killer storms in New York. We have become more aware than ever that the great damage we have done to our planet is now harming our very existence.

One of the most valuable outcomes of COP26 was that it focused the world's attention on national governments that have the ability to reverse course. They have the technology. They have the resources to finance the commitments. Sub-national governments like New York are showing how it can be done. All that is needed is the courage, optimism and sense of urgency to rise to the challenge.

Basil Seggos is Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental

Conservation and Doreen Harris is President and CEO of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Seggos and Harris serve as co-chairs of New York's Climate Action Council.

Sign up for the Daily Headlines newsletter

Stay informed with a daily digest of top headlines.

Email

SIGN UP

By signing up, you agree to our Terms of Use and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our Privacy Policy.

Written By
Basil Seggos and Doreen Harris

This Year's Kia Lineup Is Turning Heads -- And Finally On Sale!

Best Kia Offers + Deals

Best Kia Deals | Search Ads | Sponsored

Learn More

3 Toxic Foods for Dogs: the One Meat You Should Never Feed Your Dog

★★★★★

DogFoodDiscovery.com | Sponsored

Learn more

Forget Retinol, Use This Household Item To Fill In Wrinkles

Beverly Hills MD | Sponsored

Learn more

These travel vans have done it again. These vans have left us speechless

Camper Van Deals | Top Searches | Sponsored

Search Now

Roofers Tested 17 Gutter Guards... Here's What They Discovered

Here's What Gutter Guards Should Cost You In 2023

LeafFilter Partner | Sponsored

Learn More

A Teaspoon On An Empty Stomach May Burn 12 Lbs Of Fat A Week

Older women may burn extra fat by doing this.

Women's Health News | Sponsored

Learn More



RETURN TO TOP

ABOUT

- Our Company
- General Standards and Practices
- Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures
- Advertising
- Interest Based Ads
- Terms of Use
- Privacy Notice
- Your California Privacy Rights
- Jobs at the Times Union

CONTACT

- Contact Us
- Weather
- School Closings
- Events Calendar
- Celebrations
- Obituaries
- Online Store
- Puzzles Palace

SERVICES

- Subscriber Services
- Home Delivery
- Become a Carrier
- e-Edition
- Corporate Subscriptions
- Mobile App
- Copyright and Reprint
- Archives

HEARST newspapers

©2023 The Hearst Corporation