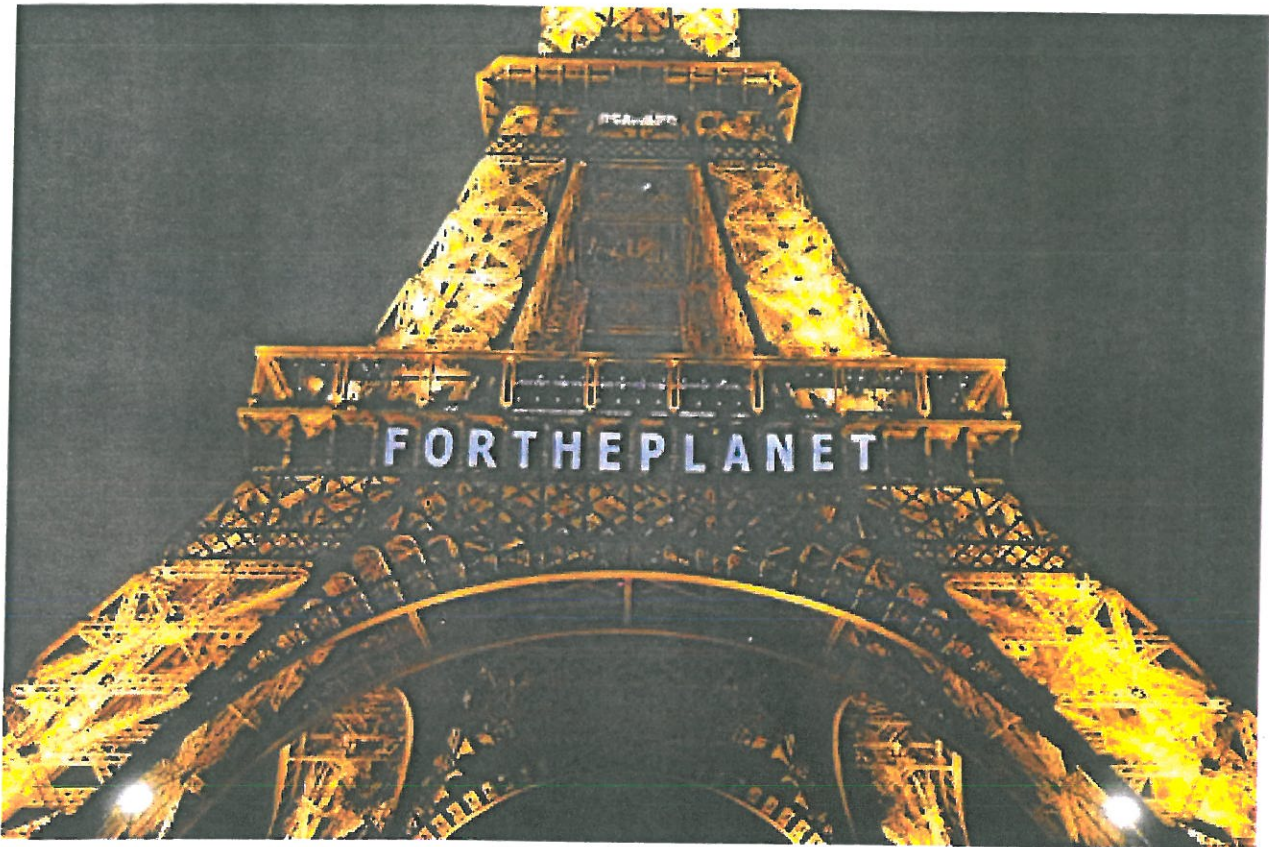


## WHY PARIS

Sergey Zilitinkevich (/personalities/experts/sergey\_zilitinkevich/)

# CLIMATE DEAL MATTERS, EVEN AS CARBON EMISSIONS ARE ONLY A 'DIAGNOSTIC TOOL'



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*The slogan "FOR THE PLANET" is projected on the Eiffel Tower as part of the COP21, United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)*

**Although climate change is an objective process, many scientists object to how it is being sold to the general public.**

On December 12, 196 nations signed in Paris a milestone agreement to curb global warming, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and use of carbohydrates.

Sergey Zilitinkevich, a renowned specialist in atmospheric sciences, research professor at

the Finnish Meteorological Institute, commented on the importance of the deal, which is to replace the 1997 Kyoto protocol, in an interview with the Valdaiclub.com.

Zilitinkevich believes the agreement is an important step to protect the global climatic system and shows that politicians realize its fragility and dangers that can result from its destabilization.

The scientist said the consequences of warming can already be felt all over the world, primarily in the large cities. "Humanity is concentrating in megacities with population above 10 million people at an astounding pace," he said. "These cities heat themselves, and even without [global] warming, temperature there is several degrees higher than it should have been".

In the recent years, large cities have been facing new challenges, Zilitinkevich said. For instance, during a recent anomalous summer heat in Moscow mortality rate increased by dozens of thousands people. Up to 3 million people die every year because of disastrous air pollution in the large cities, he added.

Global warming leads to unexpected security challenges, too, the scientist said. "Take, for example, Syria. The warming has made the Syrian desert even more arid. Disastrous living conditions led to an increase in the number of impoverished urban residents who ended up in the ranks of terrorists," he said.

Although climate change is an objective process, many scientists object to how it is being sold to the general public, the scientist said. In particular, they resist the fixation on carbon emissions.

According to Zilitinkevich, this criticism is misplaced. "Professionals know that the picture is more complicated. But treating journalists with technicalities about how the climatic machine works would be absurd," he said.

"It would be terribly expensive – and unthinkable on a global scale – to gauge concentrations of various aerosols in the air. Concentration of different substances can be different literally around the corner. Meanwhile, carbon dioxide is a natural air component and is rather easy to measure," he said.

"For the ecosystem, carbon levels are like body heat for the human organism, serving as the simplest indicator of its state, the scientist said. "Of course you don't treat body heat, but when it goes up, you know something is wrong," he explained.

Therefore emissions reduction means more energy efficiency, cleaner industrial

technologies and, ultimately, reduction of air pollution, which is a tremendous problem, Zilitinkevich said.

The scientist pointed out that China's position on climatic issues can become a game changer. "Only five years ago I attended a conference in China, where the mayor of Beijing said it was too early for them to tackle pollution issues, as the priority was to feed the nation. Last year, the same man said pollution was the problem number one". Now China is actively cooperating with the EU and Russia on climate change, he said. In particular, they jointly launched the Pan-Eurasian Experiment, a multimillion-euro scientific programme to study its impact on Northern Eurasia.

China's involvement in the efforts to tackle climate change increase the probability that the Paris agreement targets will ultimately be reached, the scientist concluded.

The UN international climate change conference was held in Paris, France, from November 30 to December 12, 2015. The 196 signatories to the agreement reached during the conference pledged to reduce their carbon output as soon as possible and to do their best to keep global warming "to well below 2 degrees C". Also, the agreement indicates a plan to provide \$100 billion a year in aid to developing countries for implementing new procedures to minimize climate change with additional amounts to be provided in subsequent years.

## 25/43 Sergey Zilitinkevich: Valdai Club Is Highly Beneficial for New Visions



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