

Paris climate talks, day 9: What we're reading

The United States cancels plans to auction off land for oil and gas exploration, Beijing's air is thick with smog, and activists in Paris protest against climate sceptics.

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08 December 2015

Greetings! It's day nine of the Paris climate talks, which means that there are just three days left for negotiators to ink a new global climate deal. (Whether they will make their self-imposed deadline is another question; UN climate talks are notorious for running late.)

Here's what we're reading from around the web ...

1. United States calls off controversial sale of oil and gas leases

US President Barack Obama came under fire from critics for plans to hold an auction of leases that allow oil and gas exploration on 10 December, a day before the climate talks are scheduled to wrap up. Leases for fossil-fuel production are a major source of revenue for the US government, [says the *International Business Times*](#), and this month the government planned to auction off 200 hectares of land in Arkansas and Michigan. In a surprising move, the [US Bureau of Land Management said](#) on 7 December that it will postpone the auction until mid-March.



2. Beijing choking on smog

Thousands of kilometres from the streets of Paris, Beijing is experiencing its first ever 'red alert' smog warning. [The BBC reports](#) that the Chinese capital could be in for three consecutive days of unhealthy air, with the smog in some areas limiting visibility to a few hundred metres. The red alert is the top warning level, reserved for air pollution more than 24 times safe levels, [according to *Wired*](#).

3. 2 °C or not 2 °C

Some of the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases — including the United States, Canada, China and the European Union — now say that they are open to trying to limit warming to 1.5 °C above preindustrial levels, [The Guardian reports](#). Parties to the UN climate talks set 2 °C as their goal before the talks began, but small-island states and other vulnerable nations have pushed for the stricter 1.5 °C target.

4. Activists call out climate-change "criminals"

Outside some of the poshest hotels in Paris, environmental activists displayed more than 1,000 posters showing the faces of 7 people who are climate-change sceptics or have ties to the fossil-fuel industry, labelling them "criminals". "These lobbyists have come to Paris to sabotage a global deal for ambitious climate action," an activist who helped to organize the protest [told *The New York Times*](#).

Nature | doi:10.1038/nature.2015.18982