

## PRESS RELEASE

# South Korea's carbon neutrality plan prioritizes industry interests over future generation, say activists

**South Korea's latest carbon neutrality roadmap draft proposes reliance on vague offset plans and unverified carbon capture technology.**

**March 21, 2023 (SEOUL)** – The South Korean government's carbon neutrality roadmap draft, released Tuesday, proposes easing the burden on high-emitting industries.

Despite growing climate urgency, the draft proposes to relax South Korea's industry and hydrogen emissions reduction targets, while expanding the use of carbon capture storage (CCS) technology and offsets from overseas.

The plan allows the industrial sector to emit 231 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>eq), up from the previously suggested 223 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq, noting technical challenges in the petrochemical industry's energy transition.

In addition, hydrogen-related emissions are increased from 7.6 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq to 8.4 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq, due to the proposed expansion of LNG-based [blue hydrogen](#).

In recent years, major South Korean fossil fuel companies have faced several legal challenges for [greenwashing](#) that involves blue hydrogen, offsets and CCS. Globally, there is still a limited number of operational CCS projects, and the technology has been referred to as a "[decarbonization pipe dream](#)."

The roadmap draft also reflects a lowered renewable energy target as proposed in the government's latest electricity plan published in January this year. This comes a day after a group of South Koreans [sued](#) the government to revoke the plan that backtracked on the country's renewable energy ambitions.

"South Korea's so-called carbon neutrality plan will not help it achieve net-zero," said **Joojin Kim, the executive director of Seoul-based Solutions for Our Climate**. "Simply put, the country is offloading its climate duty to other countries and future generations."

"South Korea needs at least a [60% domestic reduction](#) in emissions below 2018 levels by 2030 to do its fair share under the Paris Agreement. The fastest and cheapest way to achieve this is through a renewable energy transition. The world doesn't have time for dubious technologies when effective solutions already exist," Kim said.

The latest synthesis published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Monday also states solar and wind as the most cost-effective mitigation options for energy supply, while nuclear and CCS straggle in last.

Major South Korean companies, including Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motor, have signed up for RE100—a global corporate initiative to procure 100% of its electricity from renewable sources. However, only 2 percent of South Korean RE100 members’ electricity use meets this goal.

“The South Korean industry has to quickly adapt to renewable energy. The very ministry that should be supporting industrial competitiveness is announcing misaligned plans,” added Kim. “Allowing companies to emit more breeds complacency, which will come back in the form of stronger international regulations and unfavorable market conditions.”

The roadmap is set to be finalized following a public hearing held by the National Assembly’s Carbon Neutrality Committee on Wednesday, one day after the release of the draft.

The process has been criticized as “[undemocratic](#)” by activists due to the lack of procedural mechanism to properly address the opinions of different stakeholders.

**ENDS.**

*Solutions for Our Climate (SFOC) is a South Korea-based group that advocates for stronger climate change policies and transition towards a fossil-free society. SFOC is led by legal, economic, financial, and environmental experts with experience in energy and climate policy and works closely with policymakers.*

**For media inquiries, please reach out to:**

Euijin Kim, Communications Officer, Solutions for Our Climate,  
[euijin.kim@forourclimate.org](mailto:euijin.kim@forourclimate.org)

**Notes**

		2030 Targets (million tons CO2eq)		
		2018 level	Previous NDC [Oct 2021] (Reduction compared to 2018 level (%))	Updated carbon neutrality roadmap [Mar 2023] (Reduction compared to 2018 level (%))
	<b>Total</b>	<b>727.6*</b>	<b>436.6 (40.0%)</b>	<b>436.6 (40.0%)</b>
<i>Emissions</i>	Power	269.6	149.9 (44.4%)	145.9 (45.9%)
	Industry	260.5	222.6 (14.5%)	230.7 (11.4%)
	Building	52.1	35.0 (32.8%)	35.0 (32.8%)

	Transportation	98.1	61.0 (37.8%)	61.0 (37.8%)
	Agriculture, livestock, fisheries	24.7	18.0 (27.1%)	18.0 (27.1%)
	Waste	17.1	9.1 (46.8%)	9.1 (46.8%)
	Hydrogen	(-)	7.6	8.4
	Other	5.6	3.9	3.9
<i>Absorption or reduction</i>	Carbon sink	(-41.3)	-26.7	-26.7
	CCUS	(-)	-10.3	-11.2
	Overseas	(-)	-33.5	-37.5

\*Net emissions considering absorbed emissions was 686.3 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq (727.6 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq - 41.3 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq). If 686.3 million tCO<sub>2</sub>eq is used as the baseline figure, South Korea's 2030 emissions reduction target is 36%.