

**19
89** | **OVER
TWENTY
FIVE
YEARS**



Paris – je t'aime - by Victoria Tsamis

December 22, 2015 - Green Buildings

Victoria Tsamis, Edwards & Zuck

Much like a child awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus, I eagerly anticipated the final outcome of COP21 held in Paris. The weeks of discussion culminated last Saturday evening in a monumental accord between the representatives of 195 nations. The unprecedented pact is an international commitment by nearly every country to cut planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions.

The heart of the agreement is 2° Celsius (3.6° Fahrenheit). The impact of this number far

exceeds its value. It is the increase in warming above pre-industrial times that scientists regard as dangerous and an irreversible level of devastating consequences. To give some perspective to this figure, as a planet we are nearly halfway there at almost 1°C. The deal, as analyzed by climate specialists, will cut greenhouse gas emissions by half of what is necessary to keep our planet well below 2°C. Several nations, particularly low-lying ones that would be most impacted by raising sea levels, pushed for a tougher target of 1.5°C. Although 2°C won out, the deal keeps a more ambitious goal on the table with the promise to “endeavor to the limit” in terms of global temperatures. The accord sets into motion a long-term plan to reach a peak in greenhouse emissions as soon as possible and achieve a balance between output of man-made greenhouse gases and absorption – by forests or the oceans – “by the second half of this century.” In order to reach these milestones, countries agreed to set national targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions every five years. More than 180 countries have already submitted targets for the first cycle beginning in 2020. Only developed countries are expected to slash their emissions in absolute terms; developing nations are “encouraged” to do so as their capabilities evolve over time. Furthermore, the agreement requires wealthy nations to maintain a \$100 billion annual funding pledge beyond 2020, and to use that figure as a “floor” for further support agreed by 2025. This financial support will help poor nations adapt and cope with climate change.

Even though the deal is only the starting blocks in our race towards a low-carbon world, I remain optimistic in that, as a planet, we have made the commitment to running. In the wake of the tragedy that shook the city of lights last month, the venue for such a global agreement could not have been better. Paris, je t’aime.

Victoria Tsamis is a sustainable engineer at Edwards & Zuck, New York, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540