

EU's Climate Tsar Cancels Visit to Russia Ahead of COP26

The European Commissioner for Climate Action Frans Timmermans will not travel to Moscow to discuss climate action ahead of the crucial COP summit in Glasgow next month.

By [Pjotr Sauer](#)

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European Commissioner for Climate Action Frans Timmermans. **Julien Warnand / EPA / TASS**

The European Commissioner for Climate Action Frans Timmermans will not travel to Moscow to discuss climate action ahead of the crucial COP summit in Glasgow next month, an EU Commission spokesperson told The Moscow Times.

“Due to agenda issues which meant it was not possible to meet all the relevant counterparts on the dates available, and the coronavirus situation, it was decided to postpone Mr Timmermans’ visit to Moscow until a later date,” the spokesperson said.

The visit was supposed to take place on Oct. 25.

“Mr Timmermans is looking forward to meeting with the Russian representatives at COP26 in Glasgow in the coming weeks.”

The EU’s climate tsar Timmermans earlier [told](#) Reuters that he was planning to visit Moscow prior to the landmark climate change summit to discuss Russia’s climate action and its plans to cut carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

Timmermans' cancellation is another setback for Western attempts to engage Moscow ahead of the summit. It comes after the Kremlin announced Wednesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attend next month's landmark UN climate summit.

"Unfortunately, Putin will not fly to Glasgow," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding however that climate change was "one of our most important priorities for foreign policy."

Peskov on Thursday said that Putin will scrap all upcoming face-to-face meetings due to the “epidemiological situation” in the country.

Russia, which heavily relies on fossil fuels exports, is currently the fourth-highest emitter of carbon, and some experts say the country isn’t doing enough to tackle the environmental crisis. The EU sees Moscow as a key part of reducing global emissions and stemming the effects of climate change, but the Kremlin feels proposals such as a carbon border tax, currently under consideration in Brussels, would [unfairly](#) target Russia.

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Russia has vowed to cut its emissions to 70% of 1990 levels by 2030 — a target it is expected to meet because of the de-industrialization the country has undergone since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Putin recently pledged Russia would reduce its emissions below the EU level, and said the country would “aim” to become carbon neutral by 2060.

Speaking at the annual Valdai business forum on Thursday, Putin said it was “impossible” to deny climate change when disasters became “almost a norm.”

The president has also talked up the opportunity of using Russia’s vast forests to offset carbon emissions and to tap into the fledgling global market for carbon trading.

Jake Cordell contributed reporting

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