

G-7 Leaders Gather in Italy for Talks on Trade, Climate and Security



Rome, May 27 (RHC)-- Leaders of the world's major industrialized nations began talks on Friday at a G-7 summit in Sicily, Italy, with discussions on trade and climate change.

The G-7 consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K and the U.S. Four of the group's leaders took part in the two-day summit for the first time, including U.S. President Donald Trump.

Trump, who was elected in November, ran a campaign in which he rejected many of the tenants that the group has stood for, such as free trade, multilateralism and climate change.

European leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and new French President Emmanuel Macron, had hoped to use the summit to convince Trump to soften his stances on certain issues.

A day before the summit, Trump criticized the German trade surplus as "very bad" in a private meeting with EU officials in Brussels. Trump also complained about the large number of German cars being sold in the United States, officials said.

Besides a potential clash on trade, climate change is also the most contentious issue. Trump had called the global warming as a “hoax” during his election campaign and is threatening to pull the United State out of the 2015 Paris climate change deal. Officials of his administration have said Trump will wait until after the summit to decide.

French President Macron urged Trump not to take any hasty decisions on the Paris agreement when they first met in Brussels before the G-7 summit.

"I reminded him of the importance these agreements have for us," Macron said, adding that the pact was also important for job creation and economic development. "My wish in any case is that there should be no hasty decision on this subject by the United States because it is our collective responsibility to retain the global nature of this pledge, which was a first."

Italy chose to host the summit in Sicily to draw attention to Africa, which is 225 km from from the island at its closest point across the Mediterranean.

“Climate change is not a distant future threat: it is helping fuel a humanitarian disaster in Somalia and other countries in the Horn of Africa,” organization Oxfam International said in a press release. “The G-7 members must make it clear that they are committed to implementing the Paris Agreement. It is vital that the summit produces a clear and strong outcome on climate change action – no excuses.”

G-7 leaders are also discussing terrorism, Syria, North Korea and the global economy at the summit, which wraps up on Saturday.

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