

CLEAN ENERGY WILL SAVE CLIMATE, NOT PARIS

Carmine Difiglio, an energy advisor from the Obama administration, has begun to work at his new position at Sabancı University. Difiglio said the secret of saving the climate and reducing emissions is clean energy technologies, explaining: "There has been a big increase in renewable energy in the United States and also the use of natural gas after the shale gas revolution. Coal is down. None of these changes will be affected by the fact that the United States will not stay in the Paris Agreement."

Dr. Carmine Difiglio, who was one of the advisors to the U.S. Minister of Energy during the Obama Administration, has become the Director of Sabancı University Istanbul International Center for Energy and Climate (IICEC) as of January. Difiglio, who gave his first interview to Hürriyet, talked about the effect of the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement. "There has been a decline in the use of coal in the United States and there has been a huge increase in natural gas and renewables. None of these changes will be affected by whether the United States would stay in the Paris Agreement or not. Renewable energy is preferred by the energy sector because it is economically sensible. It is not logical to build new coal plants or maintain an existing coal plants if they are more costly than the alternatives when natural gas and renewables are more competitive. It is impossible to say how the decision to pull out of the Paris Agreement will affect U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, but I expect the U.S. emissions to continue to improve." Difiglio said that the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement is very important in terms of negotiations between governments but he expects the impact on U.S. greenhouse gas emissions to be limited.

"If you look at the automotive sector, U.S. companies have already announced that they have no intention of changing their plans to improve energy efficiency or to introduce electric vehicles," And in the U.S. energy sector, there are federal incentives for renewable energy. They are not affected. Regulation of the energy sector in the United States is mainly the responsibility of the states. More than half of the states have ambitious renewable energy targets. For example, California requires 50 percent renewable energy by 2030 and is well on the way to achieve that.

Most importantly, technology is changing. Photovoltaic (PV) efficiency is improving very fast. PV costs are decreasing. There are technologies that enable large wind turbines to be built. Renewable energy is increasingly preferred by the energy sector because it is economically sensible. After the shale-gas revolution, the price of natural gas in the U.S. declined and there was a decline in the use of coal. These changes will remain unaffected by the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement."



RENEWABLE ENERGY WILL BE THE CHEAPEST RESOURCE

"The real secret of being successful in saving the climate is clean energy technologies being the best economic choice, making clean energy the logical choice," said Difulio. "Clean energies will happen in the near future because clean energy is cost-effective and competitive. When we ask "Are they so today?" Difulio answers "Renewable energy is growing faster than any energy source in the world. For example, as the cost of solar cells decreases, the growth of distributed energy increases, so there are a number of technologies that strengthen each other. Information technology and digital technology enable competitive electricity networks that bring many suppliers to many consumers. These rapidly changing technologies will change the energy industry much more than government regulations and standards."



TURKEY CAN BE GAS PRICING POINT

When we asked about Turkey's energy strategy, Difulio said: "I think Turkey has an excellent energy strategy including diversification of energy importing countries, development of renewable energy, and diversification of energy sources. All of these will improve Turkey's energy security. And they also improve energy security for Europe. Given Turkey's geographical location, the opportunity to become an energy center is very important, not only for Turkey but for Europe. It is important that Caspian, Middle Eastern and Russian natural gas passes through Turkey. There are natural gas pricing points in the UK and the United States, but Turkey would be a perfect place to have a pricing point in this region."