

Economic growth no longer requires rising emissions

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Now this decoupling must accelerate (leader)

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Good news on the fight against climate change can be hard to find. Targets are [missed](#), promises are broken and the planet gets hotter. But as worthies from across the world meet in Sharm el-Sheikh for the latest UN conference to pledge to do more to tackle this enormous problem, there is at least one reason for optimism. A large and growing group of mostly rich countries has severed the link between economic growth and rising emissions of greenhouse gases.

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For the three centuries or so since the fossil-fuel age began in earnest, living standards and emissions have risen hand in hand. Coal, then oil and natural gas, all brought prosperity while also raising global temperatures. This link has led some environmentalists and scientists to argue that only a programme of “degrowth”—reducing the pace of improvements in overall prosperity, or reversing them altogether—would avoid the worst effects of climate change.