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BBC Presenter: This commitment on coal had been a bright spot in this [COP26 - Climate Change] package, in the words of the delegate for the Marshall Islands; she went on that it hurts deeply to see that bright spot dimmed, pledges watered down from “phasing out” the use of coal to “phasing down”.

I've been talking to Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a long term adviser to China's leaders and multinational corporations. He was awarded the China Friendship Medal by Xi Jinping in 2018. I asked him what China will make of this kind of criticism from places like the Marshall Islands?

Robert Lawrence Kuhn: President Xi Jinping has made the environment a critical part of his overarching strategy for China and for China's engagement with the world. First of all, to see India and China on the same side of the table, nowadays, is kind of interesting. On this issue, they have both made the point that continuing to alleviate poverty is a higher priority than the environment — although the environment is among the highest priorities.

BBC Presenter: When it comes to trying to keep the climate change target alive, coal is crucial, isn't it? And it's watering down the commitment at the last minute, “phasing down” reliance on fossil fuels and changing that from “phasing out” has been greeted with dismay by many countries.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn: Understandably so, but we need to look at the realities of the world. China has reduced its percentage of reliance on coal from 70% about a decade ago to 56.8% last year. But the problem is, as China's economy continues to grow, that's actually a larger amount of coal by 19% between 2016 and 2020. So there are complex issues.

BBC Presenter: That was Robert Lawrence Kuhn. We can talk now John Ashton, former UK climate change envoy, good morning. And what's your assessment of the outcome of COP26?....