

E-news update February 19 2007

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CLIMATE

- 1.1. Global leaders reach climate change agreement

16 February 2007, Guardian Unlimited

Leading world politicians and industrialists have reached a new, non-binding agreement at a meeting in the United States on tackling climate change.

Delegates agreed that developing countries would have to face targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions as well as rich countries.

The meeting in Washington of the G8+5 Climate Change Dialogue also agreed that a limit should be decided for maximum acceptable carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, the NBC reported. A global market should be formed to cap and trade carbon dioxide emissions, they also said.

The group is a discussion forum that is part of the British-led environmental group Global Legislators Organisation for a Balanced Environment (Globe). Globe was set up to encourage discussion of environmental issues between politicians and business leaders of the world's leading industrialised nations.

Although the talks were informal and did not represent official government policy, analysts said they provided a good indication of current political thinking on climate change.

The announcement will be seen as a coup for the British government because the discussion forum was launched at the House of Commons in February 2006 and its president, the MP Elliot Morley, is a special representative of the prime minister.

"I'm very happy with this outcome. This is the most detailed statement that has ever come out of a Globe meeting," Mr Morley told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. "It contains a number of broad principles that all the countries here are generally supportive of in terms of the way forward.

"I think it is a great step forward in terms of building confidence and it is a very clear message from legislators ... that we want to see progress."

The US senator Joe Lieberman told the forum yesterday that he believed the American government would introduce greenhouse gas-cutting laws in the near future "after many years of denial and inaction" on global warming.

"I want to make a prediction, which is that the Congress of the United States will enact a nationwide law mandating substantial reductions in greenhouse gases before the end of this Congress or early in the next," he said. This session of Congress ends late in 2008.

Senator John McCain said the push to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that spur global climate change was a national security issue, and that voluntary efforts to limit these emissions from vehicles, power plants and other human sources "will not change the status quo".

Jim Rogers, the chief of Duke Energy, applauded the mandatory cap-and-trade approach, and stressed that if the United States did not act soon to cut CO2 emissions, fast-developing China and India probably would not participate in any global emissions-cutting programme.

The forum's closing statement yesterday said man-made climate change was now "beyond doubt".

"Climate change is a global issue and there is an obligation on us all to take action, in line with our capabilities and historic responsibilities," Globe said in a statement.

The declaration carries no formal weight but it is considered to indicate a real change in mood of the world's most powerful nations.

The two-day meeting brought together politicians from countries including the Group of Eight rich nations plus Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

The former cabinet minister Stephen Byers took part in the forum along with the Virgin boss, Sir Richard Branson; the German chancellor, Angela Merkel; and Paul Wolfowitz, the president of the World Bank, who all gave keynote addresses.

The round of discussions aims to agree on a post-2012 climate change policy and present a consensus statement from the participants to the G8 heads of state in Japan next year.

Delegates want to improve understanding between politicians, business leaders and key organisations about different countries' priorities and how future deals can be reached.

1.2. JRC releases report on plight of European coastal and sea waters

14 February 2007

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) has drafted a report detailing the effects climate change has on Europe's coastal waters and regional seas. The report deals with the effects of climate change and the human impact on European coastal and marine habitats. It also identifies gaps in the current scientific and technological knowledge base regarding climate-related impacts, along with policy recommendations to address them. The report stresses that any policies designed to mitigate climate change impacts will have to address human exploitation of the seas and coasts, to ensure sustainable management of marine resources. The report was presented at the "Climate Change and the European Water Dimension" symposium organised by the German EU Presidency in Berlin (12-14 February).

Mounting scientific evidence illustrates how climate change and variability can harm coastal and marine habitats, and the JRC report, entitled "Marine and Coastal Dimension of Climate Change in Europe: A report to the European Water Directors", makes it clear that Europe's waters are not immune to its effects. The research, carried out by international experts under the co-ordination of the JRC, demonstrates that global warming is influencing different European ecosystems in different ways.

For example, water temperature trends in northern regions have progressed differently from those in the Mediterranean. In areas around Scotland, water temperatures have risen approximately 1°C over the last 20 years, whereas the change in the Mediterranean is closer to 0.5°C. Rates of sea level change have also varied, ranging from 0.8 mm per year to 3.0 mm per year, according to the report. Such changes in sea level interfere with other critical processes including tide behaviour, changes in sea ice conditions, evaporation and various tectonic developments on land such as rising land masses due to melting of glaciers, which require careful attention and continuous monitoring, the authors of the report say.

The report discusses how nuances in sustained environmental pressures, e.g. rising greenhouse gases, increasing surface temperature, rising sea level, etc., have led to increased episodes of catastrophic weather such as downpours, droughts, storm surges and floods - all of which come at high human and environmental costs. In just one example, the report says that the frequency of

winter storms and extreme weather conditions has doubled over the past 50 years in northern regions of the UK.

Specifically, the report shows that climate change has altered: water characteristics and circulation; the carbon cycle and carbonate system (acidification); and whole ecosystems forcing warm-water species northward leading to a related decline in cold-water species. For example, dominant zooplankton species have declined by 70% since the 1960s as a result of water temperature increase, thereby deeply changing the structure of fish assemblages in the North Sea – in addition to over-fishing - with an almost complete disappearance of the economically-important cod population. Other environmental changes included in the report concern phenological cycles and trophic associations; coastal recession and erosion rates along the Western European coast as a result of sea level rise and storm surges; and incidence of coastal flooding and other environmental hazards/disasters due to tidal/storm surges.

Additionally, the report deals with the human impact on European coasts. It points to ever-increasing human activity as having adverse effects on marine habitats. Authors of the report list fisheries, energy production, trade and tourism, among others, as examples of ways in which humans are altering marine environments. Anthropogenic pressures can compound the effect of climate change by reducing the resilience of marine and coastal systems, leaving them even more vulnerable to climate forcing.

To download the full report, please visit: <http://ies.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>.

1.3. Climate change: scientists warn it may be too late to save the ice caps 19 February 2007, The Guardian

A critical meltdown of ice sheets and severe sea level rise could be inevitable because of global warming, the world's scientists are preparing to warn their governments. New studies of Greenland and Antarctica have forced a UN expert panel to conclude there is a 50% chance that widespread ice sheet loss "may no longer be avoided" because of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Such melting would raise sea levels by four to six metres, the scientists say. It would cause "major changes in coastline and inundation of low-lying areas" and require "costly and challenging" efforts to move millions of people and infrastructure from vulnerable areas. The previous official line, issued in 2001, was that the chance of such an event was "not well known, but probably very low".

The melting process could take centuries, but increased warming caused by a failure to cut emissions would accelerate the ice sheets' demise, and give nations less time to adapt to the consequences. Areas such as the Maldives would be swamped and low-lying countries such as the Netherlands and Bangladesh, as well as coastal cities including London, New York and Tokyo, would face critical flooding.

The warning appears in a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which assesses the likely impacts of global warming and will be published in April. A final draft of the report's summary-for-policymakers chapter, obtained by the Guardian, says: "Very large sea level rises that would result from widespread deglaciation of Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets imply major changes in coastlines and inundation of low-lying areas, with greatest effects in river deltas.

"Relocating populations, economic activity and infrastructure would be costly and challenging. There is medium confidence that both ice sheets would be committed to partial deglaciation for a global average temperature increase greater than 1-2C, causing sea level rise of 4-6m over centuries to millennia." Medium confidence means about a five in 10 chance.

The revelation comes as a new report points out that greenhouse gas emissions running into hundreds of millions of tonnes have not been disclosed by Britain's biggest businesses, masking the full extent of the UK's contribution to global warming. According to a report by Christian Aid, only 16 of Britain's top 100 listed companies are meeting the government's most elementary reporting guidelines on greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, almost 200m tonnes of damaging CO₂ is estimated to be missing from the annual reports of FTSE 100 companies. The figure is more than the annual reported emissions of Pakistan and Greece combined.

This month the IPCC published a separate study on the science of climate change, which concluded that humans are "very likely" to be responsible for most of the recent warming, and that average temperatures would probably increase by 4C this century if emissions continue to rise. Even under its most optimistic scenario, based on a declining world population and a rapid switch to clean technology, temperatures are still likely to rise by 1.8C.

The new report is expected to say this means there is "a significant probability that some large-scale events (eg deglaciation of major ice sheets) may no longer be avoided due to historical greenhouse gas emissions and the inertia of the climate system". Scientists involved with the IPCC process cannot talk publicly about its contents before publication. But a senior author on the report said: "It's not rocket science to realise that with the numbers coming out from the IPCC [science report], the warming by the end of the century is enough to do that." The report's conclusion poses a conundrum for governments of how to address a problem that is inevitable but may not occur for hundreds or thousands of years. "That's for the policy makers to decide but it really is a very difficult question," the source said. "Those are moral questions and the answer you give will depend very much on which part of the world you live in."

Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist at the University of Arizona, said the key question was not whether the ice sheets would break up, but how quickly. Some models suggest rapid melting that would bring sea level rises of more than a metre per century. "That would be much harder for us to cope with," he says.

The IPCC science report predicted sea level rises of up to 0.59m by the end of the century. But that does not include the possible contribution from ice sheets, because the experts judged it too unpredictable to forecast over short timescales.

ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

2.1. EU States Divided over Energy Shake-up

16 February 2007

Plans for a radical shake-up of European Union energy markets look set to be watered down after several states declined on Thursday to back a break-up of giant utilities or make targets for renewable fuels mandatory.

In their first discussion of proposals on climate change and the bloc's internal market in electricity and gas, EU energy ministers agreed to require biofuels make up 10 percent of the petrol and diesel used in vehicles by 2020.

The European Commission proposed measures last month to cut greenhouse gas emissions, boost energy production from renewable fuel sources and spur competition by separating distribution networks from the generation activities of big utility groups.

The 27 EU leaders meet next month to discuss a broad common energy strategy that the executive Commission aims to turn into legislative proposals later this year.

Ministers supported the Commission's call for some form of action to break the stranglehold that large energy companies have over gas and electricity distribution, which keeps prices high by shutting out new entrants.

But they differed over the best way to do that.

EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs and Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes pushed their proposal for "ownership unbundling", which would require power giants such as Germany's E.ON and RWE to split their generation and distribution activities by selling off one business.

The Commission's alternative option would allow utilities to hand over management of grids to independent operators while retaining ownership.

Ministers called in a unanimous statement for "effective unbundling" but declined to endorse either option.

Change track?

German Economy Minister Michael Glos, whose country holds the EU presidency, said nothing had been ruled out. Piebalgs said the discussion represented progress. "At this stage, the (ministers') council is ready to endorse strengthened unbundling, so it is already a huge step forward," he said.

But he acknowledged the Commission might have to change tack on the ownership issue.

Belgium, Britain, Denmark and Sweden supported ownership separation, while France, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic opposed it, one EU official said.

Piebalgs sought to reassure countries such as France, where the issue is acutely politically sensitive, that Brussels was not pressing for privatisation of energy companies.

The Commission also proposed that low-polluting renewable sources, such as wind and solar power, should make up 20 percent of the bloc's energy mix by 2020. But ministers could not agree whether to make that target compulsory. They endorsed the goal but omitted the word binding. Glos said EU leaders would tackle the issue in March.

The Commission contends non-binding targets do not work. The EU already has a voluntary goal to raise renewable fuels to 12 percent of the energy mix by 2010 but it is likely to be missed.

Germany supports a mandatory target. But Britain says it would prevent nations determining their energy mix and France wants to maintain its priority for non-carbon nuclear energy.

Environment groups called for binding renewable targets.

"This is the worst possible signal that energy ministers could send to investors in clean energy technologies and the environment," Greenpeace said in a statement.

"Their decision can only be interpreted as evidence of a worrying lack of resolve to combat climate change through encouraging the earth's most sustainable energy sources."

The Commission has also proposed cutting EU greenhouse gas emissions unilaterally by at least 20 percent by 2020 from 1990 levels, rising to 30 percent if other developed nations join in.

EU environment ministers will address those goals next week.

2.2. Germany Air Industry Embraces CO2 Trading – Paper

13 February 2007, Planet Ark Reuters

Germany's aviation industry has dropped its resistance to carbon dioxide emissions trading schemes and says it is ready to be included, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily reported on Monday.

The heads of all airline and aviation industries as well as companies in the sector reached an agreement on Friday to overturn their objections to emissions trading, the newspaper reported, citing a decision document from the meeting.

The move brings the industry in line with demands from the European Commission and the German transport ministry.

The document said that trading carbon dioxide emissions certificates was "correct and is expressly welcomed".

In contrast to a system of taxation, emissions trading was more effective and made more sense economically, the industry said.

The document was written by airlines operating in Germany, airport operators, the German federation of air and space travel as well as the German tourism authority. It was also backed by Lufthansa.

CONFERENCES

3.1. Conference "What jobs in a low carbon European economy?"

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is delighted to invite you to the conference "What jobs in a low carbon European economy?" that will take place at the ITUH auditorium in Brussels, Belgium on 20 and 21 February 2007.

Please consult also www.etuc.org for the latest version of the conference programme (under the page "events").

3.2. Workshop National adaptation strategies

7 march 2007, Netherlands

The dutch ministry of VROM (Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) will organise a workshop on 7 march 2007 from 9.30 till 16.30 in The Hague in the Netherlands. The main objective for this workshop is the exchange of experiences concerning building national strategies with a spatial dimension, the challenges which have to be met and the problems or dilemmas which are faced.

The workshop is meant for those -within or outside the EU- who are actively involved in building national adaptation strategies or closely related to this subject:

The programme for the workshop will as soon as possible be drawn up and sent to all interested persons.

More info: Marieke Soeters and Fincent van Woerden, Ministry of VROM, 0031-70-3394939 / 0031-70-3398005, marieke.soeters@minvrom.nl, fincent.vanwoerden@minvrom.nl

3.3. CDM/JI workshop

The German Environment Ministry is hosting a CDM/JI workshop at the TerraTec environment technology fair in Leipzig. The workshop will be held on 6 – 7 March.

Some of the main topics on the agenda will be the initial experience gained with Track 2 JI and the potential for linking the EU emissions trading system to emerging emissions trading systems in the USA. The ministry will also report on the current status regarding its CDM initiative. Further talks will cover energy efficiency in JI, the programmatic CDM and price signals on carbon markets.

The workshop is being organised by the Wuppertal Institute on behalf of the German Environment Ministry. For more information see: www.wupperinst.org/jiko -> Workshops

3.4. CO2 Capture and Storage, the cornerstone of the energy-climate challenge

International conference held in Le havre in France, March 8th and 9th 2007.

All information at: <http://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/ProgrammeENG.pdf>,
<http://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/CHARBON-PROPRE-mythe-ou-realite.html>.

3.5. European Conference on the Future of Energy Certificate Systems

Brussels, 9 March 2007, 9.30 - 16.30.

For further information please see the conference leaflet, which is available online: <http://www.e-track-project.org/events.php>.

Participation in the conference is free of charge. However, participants are asked to register online before 28 February 2007 via the E-TRACK project website: <http://www.e-track-project.org/conference>.

3.6. "Strategies for a Climate Compatible Society"

International Climate Alliance Annual Conference 9 to 11 May 2007 in Zurich.

Additional information about the location of the event, accommodations, registration and the program as pdf-file please find on the website: <http://www.climatealliance.org/aktuell/mv2007-uebersicht.htm>.

3.7. International Workshop on Numerical Modelling - Policy Interface (NMPI 2007)

Stuttgart, Germany, 12th - 13th of March 2007.

The workshop is expected to improve the dialogue between modellers (mostly physical scientists / engineers) and policy (mostly social scientists) in the water environment. The NMPI scientific committee believes improving the interface between policy analysis / development and modelling is a necessary step towards better policy formulation especially at the international level (not mention within the context of adaptation to the vagaries of climate change). Participants are invited from both the social sciences, environmental sciences and numerical modelling disciplines. The aim of the workshop is to build an international network of interested parties to create a research agenda for this evolving science area.

More details can be found at <http://www.ilpoe.uni-stuttgart.de/nmpi/>.

3.8. Workshop: Climate Change in South-Eastern European Countries: Causes, Impacts, Solutions

Graz, Austria, 26th and 27th of March 2007

Information regarding this workshop (accommodation, programme) is provided at the webpage www.joanneum.at/climate. Also, information about possibly granted subsidies will be provided at this page soon.

Although the organization of the workshop is proceeding, we would kindly encourage interested people to attend as speaker, poster or mere participant. Beside to our webpage, please find also information about registration procedure and requirements at http://www.joanneum.at/climate/Docs/pbf07102ief_climate_cfa_v1.pdf.

For further questions please contact me at climate@joanneum.at.

3.9. International Young Scholar Network for Earth Systems Science, Third Workshop

Bristol, UK June 2-5, 2007

This small workshop will focus on understanding decision making on land-use issues, in order to move towards modelling these processes in Earth System Models. We encourage interdisciplinary applicants

from the natural and social sciences, economics, engineers and scholars from the humanities with research interests in the Earth system. The goal of the YSN workshop will be a manuscript reviewing the state-of-art in decision-making in land-use modelling and its impacts on biogeochemistry and climate from an Earth's System perspective, and prioritise future research topics. Participants will be expected to write whitepapers before the workshop, and continue finalizing the manuscript after the workshop.

For more information see the attached flyer and also the web page at: http://www.imes.ucar.edu/activities/YSN/2007_UK/YSN_BRISTOL.shtml.

3.10. IEW meeting 2007: first announcement

The International Energy Workshop (IEW) is a network of global energy experts who meet annually to discuss a wide range of topics, with particular emphasis on global as well as regional energy issues. The annual IEW meetings focus on energy assessments and try to understand the reasons for diverging views of development in the energy sector. This year's meeting will be held 25–27 June 2007 at Stanford University, Stanford, California.

A call for abstracts in the energy-economy-environment field (including Post-2012 Regimes for the UNFCCC) can be found at http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/ECS/IEW2007/index_1stannouncement.html.

3.11. COP 13, COP/MOP3

Venue of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) and the third session of the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 3) Nusa Dua, Bali, 3 to 14 December 2007.

The Bureau of the UNFCCC met on Tuesday, 13 February 2007 and decided to accept with gratitude the offer by the Government of Indonesia to host COP 13 and COP/MOP 3 at the Bali International Conference Centre and the adjacent facilities and services in Nusa Dua.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to complete the corresponding host country agreement with Indonesia in time for the sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies in May 2007.

Further information on the Conference will appear on the UNFCCC website.

PUBLICATIONS

4.1. 'New impetus for climate policy: making the most of Germany's dual presidency'

The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) has released a new policy paper 'New impetus for climate policy: making the most of Germany's dual presidency' which is available for download at http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_pp2007_engl.pdf.

A paper copy can be ordered from the WBGU Secretariat, wbgu@wbgu.de.

4.2. Climate change and water adaptation issues

Technical report No 2, published at: http://reports.eea.europa.eu/technical_report_2007_2.

Abstract: The report reviews the challenges facing Europe to adapt to the impacts of climate change on water resources. Water is a critical sector for people's lives and the economy. Even if emissions of greenhouse gases were stabilised today, increases in temperature and the associated impacts, including those on water availability and flooding, will continue for many decades to come. Using a policy analysis at European level, and a survey, the report reviews practices in countries and concludes that countries are aware of these impacts and have started to adapt to them but there is still much to do. This material is also presented by country in an annex.

4.3. Briefing 1/2007 - Climate change and water adaptation issues

Briefing No 1/2007, published at: http://reports.eea.europa.eu/briefing_2007_1.

Abstract: The impact of climate change on Europe's water resources is a critical issue for people's lives and the economy. Even if emissions of greenhouse gases were stabilised today, increases in temperature and the associated impacts, including water availability and flooding, will continue for

