

E-news update February 26 2007

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CLIMATE

- 1.1. EU backs bold climate change goals

20 February 2007, Reuters

European Union ministers backed ambitious targets on Tuesday to cut greenhouse gas emissions and started the touchy process of determining which states should carry the heaviest burden to combat climate change.

Environment ministers from the 27-nation bloc supported a binding commitment to cut the bloc's emissions unilaterally by at least 20 percent by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

They also backed a call for industrialised nations to reduce emissions of the gases blamed for heating the earth by 30 percent over that period, a goal the EU would match if other rich nations such as the United States joined in.

"So as far as these two objectives are concerned, those are things we agree," said German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency. The targets would be mandatory, he said.

The ministers were preparing for a March 8-9 summit of the 27-nation bloc's leaders, who will have the final say on the EU's climate change and energy strategy.

The targets are expected to form the basis of the EU's negotiating position for a global agreement to cut emissions after 2012, when the first period covered by the Kyoto Protocol on climate change ends.

The unanimous decision was a victory for the executive European Commission, which originally proposed the figures and will represent the EU in international talks.

"I'm ... very encouraged by the fact that all member states strongly supported our proposal and the need for the European Union to continue its leadership in fighting climate change," Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said.

But several countries tempered their support with pleas for concessions to make their national share of the unilateral EU reductions less severe.

Burden sharing

Gabriel said some states were reluctant to sign up to the targets without a clear idea of how the burden would be distributed, while others pushed for a base year other than 1990 to be used when determining the required emissions cuts.

He said 1990 would be the reference year for the overall target, but the EU would look at using other years for some new east European member states' targets.

Newcomers such as Poland want to use an earlier base year because their industries collapsed in 1990 and emissions dropped as a result of the fall of communism. Polish officials said Poland wanted to use 1988 as its base for emissions cuts.

Commissioner Dimas said the EU would come up with a "differentiated approach" on dividing up the targets.

A statement agreed by the ministers called on the Commission to start an analysis of criteria for burden-sharing, including "socio-economic parameters" and other relevant factors.

Finland, which spoke against the unilateral target at the meeting, said the final burden-sharing agreement must take into account different conditions among member states.

"The climate in Finland is cold, distances are long and the share of energy-intensive industries is relatively high," Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen said in a statement, saying his country did not want its share to be unreasonable.

The 15 "old" states that were members before the EU expanded to 25 nations in 2004 and 27 countries in 2007 have a collective target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8 percent by 2012 compared to 1990 levels.

Germany's Gabriel said some countries would be expected to reduce more than others in the strategy for 2020.

Environmental group WWF said the ministers' decision confirmed the EU's intent to meet its international obligations.

Greenpeace urged EU leaders to sign up to a unilateral 30 percent reduction goal, a more ambitious target that also has the support of Sweden and Denmark.

1.2. EU heads for double standards on cutting emissions

20 February 2007, Friends of the Earth Europe

Environment Ministers attempt progressive stance on climate, but forget that reform starts at home.

The EU is heading for a double standard on cutting carbon dioxide emissions, warned Friends of the Earth Europe today after a meeting of Environment Ministers.

Ministers reaffirmed the EU's commitment to build and expand on Kyoto to achieve absolute emission reductions by developed countries, going so far as to acknowledge that developed countries must reduce their emissions by 30 percent by 2020. But paradoxically, they suggested a unilateral target for the EU itself of only reducing emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

Jan Kowalzig, Climate and Energy Campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe said: "Setting a target to reduce emissions by only 20 percent by 2020 is in dire conflict with scientific findings and political wisdom. The Environment Council notes that a 30 percent cut is necessary but announces to do less. This will send the wrong signal to the international community, casting a dubious light on how serious the European Union is about fighting climate change."

Even the 20 percent target was difficult to agree on, obstructed by Finland, Poland and Hungary. Sweden and Denmark were the only countries that supported a 30 percent unilateral target, while most other EU Member States were content with the lower unilateral target of 20 percent. A final position for the EU will be agreed by Heads of States at the Spring Summit in Brussels on March 8th and 9th.

"In public actions across Europe, people are calling for a real commitment to fight climate change. The EU should unilaterally set itself a target of reducing domestic emissions by at least 30 percent compared to 1990 levels. This would not only match the urgency of the climate crisis, but also give confidence for the energy industry when planning investments," Mr Kowalzig added.

In the weeks before the Spring Summit, European citizens are calling for dramatic reductions in emissions and a clean safe energy policy based on renewable and energy efficiency.

In thirteen countries across Europe, people are adding their signatures to 2m-high golden stars symbolising sustainable energy options. These stars, provided by Friends of the Earth, will be incorporated into a large installation of a mock-EU flag outside the EU Summit on 9th March.

Also, in Georgia, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, Friends of the Earth groups have organised public actions in which people built snowmen as poignant symbols of the victims of climate change.

1.3. Europe Can do More on Climate Change - UNEP Head

19 February 2007, Reuters

European nations are not doing enough to fight climate change and should show more leadership before they criticise the United States and Asia, the head of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said on Saturday.

Achim Steiner said in an interview with Bild am Sonntag newspaper that climate change has been caused primarily by carbon dioxide emissions from Western industrialised nations and it was thus their responsibility to lead the fight against it.

He said the United States and Asia were now moving faster in the fight against climate change than Europe, which he said has grown complacent.

"The Americans and Asians are catching up quickly and are becoming strong business competitors (with green technologies)," Steiner said, in excerpts of the interview released ahead of Sunday's publication.

"But in Europe we've cherished the illusion in recent years that 'we've done enough'," he added.

He praised Germany, which holds the European Union presidency, for "showing initiative" but said it was not enough.

"It's important that Germany move forward," he said, referring to Europe's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases.

The European Union's environment commissioner earlier this month said Germany's lack of progress in cutting greenhouse gas emissions was holding back international efforts to combat global warming.

Chancellor Angela Merkel has vowed to make fighting climate change a centrepiece of Germany's twin EU and G8 presidencies.

But Germany's recent track record on cutting carbon dioxide emissions is poor. It vowed to cut these by 21 percent from 1990 to 2012 under the Kyoto Protocol but has slipped away from the target.

"Yes, we favour ecology and responsibility for the future, but let us stick to what we can do," said Kurt Beck, chairman of the Social Democrats who share power with Merkel's party, in a speech on Saturday. Beck has opposed more ambitious CO2 cuts.

"Let's stay reasonable, yes, but let's use our technology worldwide so that other countries can grow with less CO2."

Don't blame China

Carbon dioxide (CO2), produced by burning fossil fuels, traps heat in the atmosphere. Scientists say if emissions are not curbed sea levels will rise, while drought and floods will have more dire consequences.

The European Commission last month presented a new more ambitious target of cutting CO2 in the 27-nation bloc by at least 20 percent by 2020 from 1990 levels with the possibility of going to 30 percent if other developed countries joined in.

Steiner also said it was a myth for Europeans to think China had no interest in the environment.

"We have a historic responsibility," Steiner, a German national who was born and raised in Brazil, said when asked why Europeans should cut CO2 emissions when "hundreds of millions of Chinese were switching from bicycles for cars."

"The climate problem of today was not caused by China but above all by Western nations. So the first step has to come from us. Moreover, it's wrong to assume that China is not interested in climate protection."

Steiner pointed out that the Chinese government last year launched a US\$180 billion renewable energy programme.

"We've only been looking at China through brown smog coloured glasses," he said. "But there are already cities being planned (in China) that will have zero CO2 emissions."

1.4. International Group Sets Plan To Curb Global Warming

21 February 2007, Planet Ark Reuters

More than 100 corporate heads, international organizations and experts set out a plan on Tuesday to cut greenhouse gas emissions, calling on governments to act urgently against global warming.

"Failing to act now would lead to far higher economic and environmental costs and greater risk of irreversible impacts," the Global Roundtable on Climate Change warned in a statement, announcing their first major agreement since they began talks in 2004.

The group, which includes executives from a range of industries including air transport, energy, and technology, called on governments to set targets for greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

The agreement urged governments to place a price on the carbon emissions released by power plants, factories and other sectors to discourage emissions.

"Of course, addressing climate change involves risks and costs. But much greater is the risk of failing to act," said Alain Belda, chairman and CEO of the world's top aluminium producer Alcoa, who signed the pact.

The group includes General Electric, Ford Motor Co., Toyota Motor North America, investment bank Goldman Sachs, and Wal-Mart among its major corporations.

President George W. Bush's administration has rejected mandatory caps on emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases in the United States that contribute to a documented rise in world temperatures -- which is linked to more severe storms, worse droughts, rising seas and other ills.

But the White House has recently been on the defensive, especially since the Feb. 2 release of a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which called global warming "unequivocal" and said with 90 percent probability that human activities help cause it.

CO₂ emissions rising

The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide is about 30 percent higher than in 1900 and nearly half of this increase has occurred since 1980.

Given fast-rising emissions from developing nations, the group estimated that a "business-as-usual" path could put the planet at three times the carbon dioxide levels seen before 1900.

The largest carbon-emitting sector is power generation, responsible for more than 40 percent of global energy-related emissions.

Industry accounts for more than 18 percent of emissions, transport contributes another 20 percent, and the residential and services sector roughly 13 percent.

The group estimates that technology to head off mounting carbon dioxide concentrations would cost about 1 percent of global gross domestic product. Costs would fall as technologies become more established, it predicted.

"If we delay too long in beginning the changeover to increasingly de-carbonised energy systems, the eventual costs will only rise and the impact of climate change will only become more severe," the group wrote in its agreement, warning that poorer nations would see the worst impact from climate change.

ENERGY

2.1. Israel has taken a significant step today towards becoming a solar-leader

21 February 2007, Greenpeace

Greenpeace welcomes the announcement today from the Ministry of Infrastructure that the proposed solar power plant in Eshalim, originally proposed in 2001, will finally be put out to tender to private contractors.

Greenpeace Mediterranean has led the campaign for renewable energy power plants to be constructed in the region. In 2005, the organisation submitted a report to the Ministry of Infrastructure, which proved that the construction of solar power stations would generate a profit of NIS 810 million annually, would create 5,000 new jobs, and would turn Israel into a world leader in the export of renewable technology to help combat climate change. The decision today is a good first step in this direction.

"Greenpeace welcomes this positive announcement by the Ministry of Infrastructure, to finally build a first solar plant. Israel has taken a significant step forwards today in becoming a world leader in solar power," said Nili Grossman, Greenpeace Mediterranean Energy Campaigner. "Israel has immense potential to create a lucrative market in the export of renewable energy and free itself from its dependence on oil and coal."

Concentrated Solar Thermal Power Plants can play an important part in the Middle East and on the Global level. The recently launched report: 'Energy [R]evolution: A Sustainable World Energy Outlook', produced by Greenpeace International and the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC), is a

practical blueprint for how to cut global CO2 emissions by almost 50% by 2050, whilst providing a secure and affordable energy supply and, critically, maintaining steady worldwide economic development.

Notably, the plan takes into account rapid economic growth areas such as China, India and Africa, and highlights the economic advantages of the energy revolution scenario. It concludes that renewable energies will represent the backbone of the world's economy. The energy blueprint for the Middle East concludes, that 36% of the region's electricity needs in the year 2050 could be produced by solar thermal power plants, while on the global level 9% of the required electricity would be produced by this technology.

"The decision from the Israeli Government comes as the world is crying out for a plan on how to tackle the dilemma of how to provide the power we need, without fuelling climate change," said Sven Teske, Climate & Energy Campaigner, Greenpeace International. "We welcome this project and urge all Governments of the "sunbelt regions" to invest in solar thermal power stations."

2.2. Cheap solar power poised to undercut oil and gas by half

18 February 2007, The Telegraph

Within five years, solar power will be cheap enough to compete with carbon-generated electricity, even in Britain, Scandinavia or upper Siberia. In a decade, the cost may have fallen so dramatically that solar cells could undercut oil, gas, coal and nuclear power by up to half. Technology is leaping ahead of a stale political debate about fossil fuels.

Anil Sethi, the chief executive of the Swiss start-up company Flisom, says he looks forward to the day - not so far off - when entire cities in America and Europe generate their heating, lighting and air-conditioning needs from solar films on buildings with enough left over to feed a surplus back into the grid.

The secret? Mr Sethi lovingly cradles a piece of dark polymer foil, as thin as a sheet of paper. It is 200 times lighter than the normal glass-based solar materials, which require expensive substrates and roof support. Indeed, it is so light it can be stuck to the sides of buildings.

Rather than being manufactured laboriously piece by piece, it can be mass-produced in cheap rolls like packaging - in any colour.

The "tipping point" will arrive when the capital cost of solar power falls below \$1 (51p) per watt, roughly the cost of carbon power. We are not there yet. The best options today vary from \$3 to \$4 per watt - down from \$100 in the late 1970s.

Mr Sethi believes his product will cut the cost to 80 cents per watt within five years, and 50 cents in a decade.

It is based on a CIGS (CuInGaSe₂) semiconductor compound that absorbs light by freeing electrons. This is then embedded on the polymer base. It will be ready commercially in late 2009.

"It'll even work on a cold, grey, cloudy day in England, which still produces 25pc to 30pc of the optimal light level. That is enough, if you cover half the roof," he said.

"We don't need subsidies, we just need governments to get out of the way and do no harm. They've spent \$170bn subsidising nuclear power over the last thirty years," he said.

His ultra-light technology, based on a copper indium compound, can power mobile phones and laptop computers with a sliver of foil.

"You won't have to get down on your knees ever again to hunt for plug socket," he said.

Michael Rogol, a solar expert at Credit Lyonnais, expects the solar industry to grow from \$7bn in 2004 to nearer \$40bn by 2010, with operating earnings of \$3bn.

The sector is poised to outstrip wind power. It is a remarkable boom for a technology long dismissed by experts as hopelessly unviable.

Mr Rogol said he was struck by the way solar use had increased dramatically in Japan and above all Germany, where Berlin's green energy law passed in 2004 forces the grid to buy surplus electricity from households at a fat premium. (In Britain, utilities may refuse to buy the surplus. They typically pay half the customer price of electricity.)

The change in Germany's law catapulted the share price of the German flagship company SolarWorld from €1.38 (67p) in February 2004 to over €60 by early 2006.

The tipping point in Germany and Japan came once households twigged that they could undercut their unloved utilities. Credit Lyonnais believes the rest of the world will soon join the stampede.

Mike Splinter, chief executive of the US semiconductor group Applied Materials, told me his company is two years away from a solar product that reaches the magic level of \$1 a watt.

Cell conversion efficiency and economies of scale are galloping ahead so fast that the cost will be down to 70 US cents by 2010, with a target of 30 or 40 cents in a decade.

"We think solar power can provide 20pc of all the incremental energy needed worldwide by 2040," he said.

"This is a very powerful technology and we're seeing dramatic improvements all the time. It can be used across the entire range from small houses to big buildings and power plants," he said.

"The beauty of this is that you can use it in rural areas of India without having to lay down power lines or truck in fuel."

Villages across Asia and Africa that have never seen electricity may soon leapfrog directly into the solar age, replicating the jump to mobile phones seen in countries that never had a network of fixed lines. As a by-product, India's rural poor will stop blanketing the subcontinent with soot from tens of millions of open stoves.

Applied Materials is betting on both of the two rival solar technologies: thin film panels best used where there is plenty of room and the traditional crystalline (c-Si) wafer-based cells, which are not as cheap but produce a higher yield - better for tight spaces.

Needless to say, electricity utilities are watching the solar revolution with horror. Companies in Japan and Germany have already seen an erosion of profits because of an effect known "peak shaving". In essence, the peak wattage of solar cells overlaps with hours of peak demand and peak prices for electricity in the middle of the day, crunching margins.

As for the oil companies, they are still treating solar power as a fringe curiosity. "There is no silver bullet," said Jeroen Van der Veer, Shell's chief executive.

"We have invested a bit in all forms of renewable energy ourselves and maybe we'll find a winner one day. But the reality is that in twenty years time we'll still be using more oil than now," he said.

2.3. Light bulbs ban to slash emissions

20 February 2007, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/02/19/1171733685061.html>

The inefficient standard light bulb could be phased out within three years to save up to 800,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

The federal Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, is expected today to announce a commitment to phase out incandescent light bulbs by 2009-10, a world first by a national government.

It hopes to convince state and territory governments to introduce energy performance standards that would lead to the replacement of standard light bulbs with more efficient but more expensive alternatives such as compact fluorescent lights. It will also negotiate with manufacturers to phase out the bulbs.

Though the days of supermarket shelves full of 40-cent light bulbs may be numbered, the lighting industry predicts the price shock will not last long. In many cases, compact fluorescent lamps sell for about \$10 each, but typically last six times as long as their predecessors.

Colin Goldman, the head of Nelson Industries, a lighting importer, supported the move.

"These days you can buy a six-pack at the \$10 mark," he said. "The prices are coming down, and as soon as you get volume with greater numbers on the market they come down further."

The Government is under pressure to improve its green credentials. Climate change will be a big issue in the federal election.

Australia was not the first with the idea. Last month legislators in California proposed a "How Many Legislators Does it Take to Change a Lightbulb Act" that would phase out incandescent light bulbs by 2012 in favour of compact fluorescent bulbs.

According to the Federal Government, up to 95 per cent of the energy each standard light bulb uses is wasted, while compact fluorescents use only 20 per cent as much electricity to produce the same amount of light.

EnergyAustralia says by using just one 15-watt compact fluorescent bulb instead of a 75-watt standard bulb, consumers could save about \$10 a year.

In Australia lighting represents about 12 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions from households, about 25 per cent of commercial sector emissions, and a quarter of the emissions associated with public and street lighting.

The Federal Government estimates replacing the old bulbs with compact fluorescents in homes could cut greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 800,000 tonnes a year in 2008-12. Australia's emissions in 2004 totalled 564.7 million tonnes.

Mr Goldman said compact fluorescent bulbs were available that emitted a range of light.

"You can get warm white, which is a yellowish light, or natural, which is white, or day-light, which is more blueish."

The new bulbs would not necessarily require any rewiring of homes or offices, he said.

Greg Bourne, the chief executive of the conservation organisation WWF, said phasing out standard bulbs was a useful step in the transition to an energy-efficient world, but it passed on the cost directly to consumers.

"Architecturally, in some places it is difficult to change over," he said. "It [the federal decision] does feel like a knee-jerk reaction, but it is a step in the right direction."

The marketing director of Thorn Lighting Australia, Ian Wiseman, said he wanted to see government subsidies for importers and distributors.

It is understood there will be no ban on halogen lights, which are more efficient than the old bulbs.

CONFERENCES

3.1. 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

3.2. 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>.

3.3. 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>.

3.4. "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>.

3.5. 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/>.

3.6. 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.

3.7. 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.ames.ucar.edu/activities/YSN/2007_UK/YSN_BRISTOL.shtml.

3.8. 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.

3.9. 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT

4.1. Research Programme on Climate Change Modelling and Policy - Two junior research fellow positions

