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CLIMATE POLICY

- 1.1. Bonn UN meeting moves world closer to comprehensive negotiations on post-2012 climate change regime

18 May 2007, UN

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol concluded two weeks of negotiations and talks in Bonn, Germany today.

The conference, attended by around 1,800 participants, involved an analysis of climate change mitigation potentials of policies and technologies by the 173 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and a focus on realizing the full potential of technology and addressing action on adaptation on the part of the 191 Parties to the Convention.

Alluding to the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Indonesia in December 2007, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer said: "This meeting has served to resolve a number of issues ahead of the Bali conference. We have come closer to broadening negotiations on a post-2012 regime by resolving some of the outstanding issues and clarifying which building blocks of a future agreement need to be put in place."

Issues dealt with by the 26th session of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) were for example how to enhance the transfer of clean technologies, how to adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change and how to avoid deforestation, estimated to account for more than 20% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

"The fact that European, American and Australian business groups here in Bonn have been calling on governments to adopt long-term, legally binding emission reduction targets is as strong signal that they feel the carbon market will be an important part of any 2012 agreement, " said Mr. Boer.

The conference was also the first opportunity for delegates to react to the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report. According to the third installment of the report, released in Bangkok on the fourth of May, climate change can be mitigated at relatively low cost provided the appropriate policies and incentives are put in place.

Parties to Kyoto Protocol took note of IPCC conclusions that greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments between 25 and 40% below 1990 were needed on the part of industrialized countries for the period beyond 2012 to limit a mean global temperature increase, with greenhouse gas emissions peaking within the next 10 to 15 years before going down.

"Developing countries meeting in Bonn have been making it very clear that the problem - the current high level of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere - was caused by the North and should not be pushed onto the South," Mr. de Boer said. "They are insisting on their right to economic growth and poverty alleviation. This is why the issue of economic incentives to green investments in developing countries is so important," he added.

At its next session in Vienna (27 to 31 August), the "Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol" will continue its analysis of mitigation potential of policies, measures and technologies, and initiate the identification of possible ranges of emission reductions by industrialized countries after 2012.

"This meeting will be an opportunity for industrialized countries to show real leadership by looking at the type of emission reductions which science is telling us is needed to stabilize greenhouse gas emission in the atmosphere, reductions on the order of 50% by the 2050 against the baseline of 2000," the UN's top climate change official said.

At the same time, the "Dialogue on long-term cooperative action" under the UNFCCC will conclude its analysis of strategic approaches to address climate change in Vienna. The conference in Bali will then determine what action needs to be taken to react to the proposals presented in the Dialogue.

1.2. UN climate change debate expected Sept. 24

17 May 2007, Reuters

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon plans a high-level meeting on climate change on Sept. 24, on the fringes of the General Assembly's annual session of world leaders.

Ban said the international community's awareness has grown rapidly since this year's reports by the U.N.-organized Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which said efforts to rein in carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases would have to start now to limit the impact on humans and nature.

In making global warming one of his top priorities, Ban, in an interview with Reuters Television on Wednesday, said the expected date for a high level meeting was the day before prime ministers and foreign ministers address the General Assembly.

"It has not been announced yet but it is tentatively for Sept. 24," Ban said.

The secretary-general, a former South Korean foreign minister who took office on Jan. 1, said the international community largely agreed the United Nations "should take a leading role in galvanizing much needed actions."

Still, last Friday, the key U.N. intergovernmental body on the environment ended a conference among ministers from around the world without coming up with a document after the European Union blocked a final paper because it did not include targets for energy efficiency or global warming.

Ban said he was not discouraged by the failure of the Commission on Sustainable Development but had received enough indicators of "growing support on the climate change issues." Ban has appointed three advisers -- former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Chilean President Ricardo Lagos and former South Korean foreign minister Han Seung-soo -- to sound out government leaders ahead of the September event and subsequent conference.

The U.N. meeting in September will likely provide a prelude for the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in December in Bali, Indonesia, where U.N. officials hope to launch formal negotiations on a new treaty.

So far the annual U.N. climate conferences have made little progress in devising new treaty obligations once the Kyoto Protocol on the reduction of carbon emissions expires in 2012, possibly leaving the world without global warming regulations.

The issue remains contentious for several governments, including the Bush administration, which has fought mandatory caps on greenhouse gas emissions that spur climate change.

Washington points to China and other large developing nations, like India not part of the Kyoto treaty, to cap their emissions first. Beijing contends that its emissions per person of carbon dioxide from fossil burning fuel, are less than a sixth of U.S. per capita emissions.

Ban also intends to push the issue in June when he attends a meeting in Germany of the Group of Eight major industrialized nations.

1.3. US Says No Shift in Climate Change Stance

18 May 2007, Reuters

The United States will fight climate change by funding clean energy technologies and will continue to reject emissions targets or cap and trade schemes, its chief climate negotiator Harlan Watson said on Thursday.

Germany wants G8 countries at a meeting it hosts next month to agree to halve climate-warming carbon emissions by 2050 and promote carbon trading as a way to penalise greenhouse gas emissions.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair also wants the United States to take a tough stand, and global warming featured at his farewell summit with US President George W. Bush in Washington on Thursday.

But such demands on the world's biggest carbon emitter are set to fall on deaf ears.

"We don't believe targets and timetables are important, or a global cap and trade system," Watson told Reuters, speaking on the fringes of a UN hosted climate change meeting in Bonn.

"It's important not to jeopardise economic growth."

Watson also rejected the idea of a long-term target, say to halve or more greenhouse gas emissions by the middle of the century.

Two weeks ago a major report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said that to avoid climate changes which the European Union says would be dangerous, carbon dioxide emissions should at least halve by 2050.

"That's not on our agenda," said Watson.

"The IPCC came out with a range of scenarios, a long-term target is a political not a scientific objective."

Cost

Cap and trade carbon markets work by requiring the likes of heavy industry to buy permits to emit greenhouse gases.

In this way they drive up the cost of burning fossil fuels such as coal to produce electricity, and so favour low or zero carbon alternatives like wind and solar energy.

"Around half of our electricity is generated by coal and we don't have substitutes so it becomes an energy security issue," said Watson.

"Renewables are growing rapidly but are still only a small percentage."

Technologies which would cut coal's carbon emissions, for example by burying these underground using carbon capture and storage (CCS), were still more than 10 years away from commercial deployment, he said.

"So cap and trade, given our energy mix and the state of our technology, would only drive up the price of electricity."

The European Union has chosen the cap and trade route and says by penalising carbon emissions it will promote potentially lucrative clean energy technologies of the future.

The US approach will remain to fund such technologies through public spending, said Watson, who said such support would rise to US\$5.7 billion in 2008 from US\$5 billion this year.

The United States refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol citing a risk to jobs, but has signed up to the parent Convention on Climate Change whose signatories are meeting this week to discuss extending Kyoto beyond 2012.

Watson rejected any prospect of opening talks later this year at a climate summit in Indonesia on amending the rules of how Kyoto works, a vital step to extend the pact.

"Certainly it would be premature to open negotiations under the Convention," he said.

ENERGY

2.1. Clean Energy Spending Can Curb Climate Change – WWF

16 May 2006, Planet Ark Reuters

The world can avoid the worst effects of climate change with investments in clean energy so long as the wholesale shift from fossil fuels starts within five years, the environmental group WWF said on Tuesday.

In its Climate Solutions report, the Swiss-based body argued that solar, wind and other "benign" power sources could satisfy the world's growing energy needs and keep temperature increases below the critical two-degree Celsius (3.6 F) threshold.

Scientists believe that global warming beyond that point will trigger dangerous storms, floods and droughts that could devastate areas that are home to millions of people.

The WWF said that renewable energy sources, though not yet operating on a large-enough scale to replace petroleum, coal and other carbon-emitting fuels, could do so if governments agree by 2012 to set targets and coordinate investments to develop them.

"In five years it may be too late to initiate a sustainable transition which could avert a breach of the two-degree threshold for avoiding dangerous climate change," it found.

"In that event, dangerously unsustainable options may be forced upon us or we will face more severe interventions which will have significant impacts on the global economy."

During the transition to clean energy reliance, the WWF said rich countries should equip their fossil fuel plants with carbon capture and storage technologies to reduce the heat-trapping greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere.

Natural gas should also be used as "transition fuel" to replace coal in the short- to medium-term, the WWF said, also appealing for innovations to make cars, planes, ships and buildings more energy-efficient.

For poor and developing countries, clean energy tools could be introduced when they become more affordable, ideally allowing some nations to side-step the polluting fuels used for years by their richer peers, the report found.

It said nuclear power was an unacceptable alternative to fossil fuels because of its high costs and concerns over safety and weapons proliferation.

"There are more than sufficient benign technologies available, without embarking further on nuclear power with its many associated risks," it said.

The WWF, formerly called the World Wildlife Fund and now known simply by its initials, said curbing energy demand was also crucial to stave off the worst consequences of global warming, recommending less driving and air travel.

It urged governments to work to stop the destruction of forests, particularly in tropical countries, and warned against growing energy crops on newly-displaced forest land. Large hydroelectricity projects should also be avoided as they can disrupt river systems and flood fertile land, the WWF said.

2.2. UK Plans World's Biggest Offshore Windfarm

18 May 2007, Planet Ark Reuters

Britain's Farm Energy Ltd plans the world's largest offshore wind farm, in southwest England, and hopes an imminent overhaul of Britain's planning system will help speed its development, a company director said on Thursday.

The 3 billion pound (US\$5.93 billion) "Atlantic Array" proposal is for 350 turbines generating a total of 1,500 MW of electricity off the coast of Devon. This would supply enough renewable energy for more than a million homes while avoiding the emission of 2.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.

Farm Energy is already building the world's largest offshore wind farm, the 1,000-megawatt London Array project in the Thames Estuary. It hopes a more streamlined planning system in Britain will help its new plan become a reality more quickly.

"We feel that its very early days... We are consulting early because we understand how long these projects take to come to fruition. The London Array is probably in its tenth or ninth year," Farm Energy director Michael Huntingford told Reuters.

"I think the new planning system would have helped enormously for the London Array and I do hope that there is a more sensible approach for projects of national significance."

On Monday, Communities and Local Government Minister Ruth Kelly will set out policies to ease a planning process that has held up several big wind power projects at a time Britain wants to reduce its carbon emissions.

The change should take years off planning applications and remove a major obstacles to private investment in important energy projects.

Local councils and opposition groups have in the past held up energy infrastructure projects, sometimes indefinitely. But Devon County Council in southwest England has already welcomed the Atlantic Array plan.

"The proposal represents the best opportunity for the local economy in northern Devon in a decade," the council's strategic planning director, Humphrey Temperley, said in a statement.

Danish state-controlled DONG Energy, one of the developers of the Thames Estuary project, is expected to team up with Farm Energy again for the Atlantic Array farm.

2.3. Biofuel Crops Threaten Indigenous People

15 May 2007, AP

Indigenous people are being pushed off their lands to make way for an expansion of biofuel crops around the world, threatening to destroy their cultures by forcing them into big cities, the head of a U.N. panel said Monday.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, chair of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, said some of the native people most at risk live in Indonesia and Malaysia, which together produce 80 percent of the world's palm oil -- one of the crops used to make biofuels.

She said there are few statistics showing how many people are at risk of losing their lands, but in one Indonesian province -- West Kalimantan -- the U.N. has identified 5 million indigenous people who will likely be displaced because of biofuel crop expansion.

"The speed with which this is happening we don't really realize in our part of the world," Ida Nicolaisen, an expert in indigenous cultures and member of the U.N. forum, said at a news conference. "Because the technology we have today and the economic resources that are at stake are so big, it happens overnight."

The Indonesian and Malaysian missions to the U.N. did not immediately return calls seeking comment on the remarks.

Tauli-Corpuz said the forum will discuss the threat posed by biofuel crop expansion during its annual, two-week meeting in New York, which opened Monday with the blowing of a traditional bocina horn from the Andes and a ceremonial dance by a group from India.

Biofuels, which are made from corn, palm oil, sugar cane and other agricultural products, have been seen by many as a cleaner and cheaper way to meet the world's soaring energy needs than with greenhouse-gas emitting fossil fuels.

In its first major report on biofuels last week, however, the U.N. warned that the benefits of the alternative energy source may be offset by serious environmental problems and increased food prices for poor people in the developing world.

Many biofuel crops, the report said, require the best land to grow, diverting food crops and causing prices for staples like maize and sugar to rise. They also demand large amounts of water and environment-damaging chemical fertilizers, the report said.

The clearing of forests to make room for these new crops is putting at particular risk the 60 million indigenous people who depend on forests almost entirely for their survival, according to the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

They are being forced to migrate to already overcrowded cities, where many of them end up living in slums with poor housing and limited access to services, Nicolaisen said.

Tauli-Corpuz said the forum is pushing the General Assembly to pass a long-delayed declaration on indigenous rights, which she said will protect native peoples from being pushed off their lands as the demand for biofuel crops grows.

The declaration states that indigenous peoples have the right to their own identity, culture and language, and to self-determination. It also says governments should respect their rights to traditional lands and resources, and that native peoples have the right to decide on any development project in their community.

The U.N. Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, approved the declaration last June and recommended that the 192-member General Assembly adopt it. But the draft failed to make it out of the assembly's human rights committee in November due to opposition from African countries who argued it contradicted their national constitutions.

A handful of developed nations with large native populations -- New Zealand, Australia and Canada -- also opposed the draft.

The U.S. abstained on the vote, but had signed a joint statement with Australia and New Zealand last year calling the draft "fundamentally flawed."

The three countries said self-determination could threaten the "territorial integrity" of U.N. member states, and the provisions on lands and resources appeared to recognize indigenous rights to lands now lawfully owned by other citizens.

The African countries have been negotiating on a series of amendments to the draft, but Tauli-Corpuz urged the General Assembly to pass the original declaration during its current session, which ends in September.

2.4. EU Parliament votes to reform nuclear treaty

10 May 2007, Platts

Hoping to revive proposals for greater EU regulation of nuclear safety matters, including power plant operation, the European Parliament today (May 10, 2007) will vote on a resolution aimed at reforming the 50-year-old European Atomic Energy Community Treaty (Euratom).

Under Euratom, the elected parliament has no official say over nuclear matters, although in practice it is sometimes consulted by the European Commission and the Council.

In its "own initiative" resolution, the parliament is calling, again, for it to be given "co-decision" powers over nuclear matters and for reviving legislative proposals to harmonize nuclear safety standards across the EU, which have been languishing in the EU Council since the commission's 2002 so-called nuclear package. The nuclear package includes proposals for greater regulation of nuclear waste and the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, in addition to minimum safety standards for nuclear power plants.

During a debate in the parliament last night (May 9), Energy Commissioner Andris Pielbags welcomed the Maldeikis report, named for the Lithuanian MEP Eugenijus Maldeikis, who crafted the resolution. Referring to the proposed directives in the Commission's 2002 nuclear package, Pielbags said, "I believe it's time to move them forward."

But like the parliament's call for co-decision authority, the nuclear package is in the hands of the council, which may be moving more slowly than either the commission or the parliament might like. The council is certainly moving more slowly than the parliament's Green Party members would like.

"I'm horrified by the statement that this is a balanced debate," German MEP Rebecca Harms said last night, speaking for the Greens in parliament. The Maldeikis report doesn't go far enough, she said. The parliament has already called for reform of Euratom, she said, and the Maldeikis report is far too timid. Harms said Euratom needs a complete overhaul.

Today's vote in Parliament, expected to approve the resolution, follows a recent Council "conclusions" document calling for the creation of an EU high level group of nuclear experts from member states -- a talking shop to its critics -- to take up some of the proposals for new regulation in collaboration with the commission and to forge greater EU cooperation on nuclear matters. However, the council conclusion notably falls short of calling for co-decision for the parliament.

CONFERENCES

3.1. Russia and the Kyoto Protocol 2007

St. Petersburg, 24 – 25 May

Online registration will be available soon. Meanwhile please write to ys@pointcarbon.com to get registered.

Following the overwhelming success of last year's conference which gathered over 300 participants and 20 exhibitors from from 24 countries, we are pleased to invite you to meet the Russian authorities, project owners and developers, emission reduction buyers, potential project hosts, technology providers, carbon investors and analysts.

To learn more about the conference, sponsorship and exhibition opportunities, please visit <http://www.pointcarbon.com/Events/article20697-369.html>.

3.2. 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.
