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CLIMATE POLICY

- 1.1. Vienna UN conference shows consensus on key building blocks for effective international response to climate change

31 August 2007, UNFCCC

A round of climate change talks under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Austria today with agreement on key elements for an effective international response to climate change.

The "Vienna Climate Change Talks 2007" were attended by more than 900 delegates from Parties, representatives from Intergovernmental Organisations, NGOs and members of the press.

They were designed to set the stage for a major United Nations conference in December in Bali.

The meeting in Indonesia will seek to advance future action on climate change post-2012, when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires.

"Countries have been able to reassess the big picture of what is needed by identifying the key building blocks for an effective response to climate change," said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer.

"There is a consensus that the response needs to be global, with the involvement of all countries and that it needs to give equal importance to adaptation and mitigation."

Government delegates also debated how the response can be enabled by an approach that opens the way for financial flows to climate-friendly and climate-proof investments. This was based on a report on the investment and financial flows relevant to the development of an effective and appropriate international response to climate change, presented to the conference by the UN Climate Change Secretariat.

"The report clearly shows that energy efficiency can achieve real emission reductions at low cost," said Yvo de Boer. "It also shows that many cost-effective opportunities for reducing emissions are in developing countries, but also that industrialised countries need aggressive emission reduction

strategies", he said, alluding to the potential of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM permits industrialized countries to invest in sustainable development projects and thereby generate tradable emission credits.

The conference comprised the last workshop of the "Dialogue on long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the Convention" and negotiations under the Kyoto Protocol designed to identify emission reduction ranges of industrialised countries.

A number of Parties, including Indonesia as the host country of the UN Climate Change Conference 2007, in Vienna called for Bali to launch a formalised way to continue this work, which represents one of the options for taking the outcomes further.

At Vienna, the "Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments of Annex I Parties (industrialised countries) under the Kyoto Protocol, the AWG, officially recognised the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) indication that global emissions of greenhouse gases need to peak in the next 10 to 15 years and then be reduced to very low levels, well below half of levels in 2000 by mid-century, if concentrations are to be stabilised at safe levels.

The group also officially recognised that avoiding the most catastrophic forecasts made by the IPCC, including very frequent and severe droughts and water-shortages in large parts of the world, would entail emission reductions in the range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by industrialised countries. The mitigation potential of industrialised countries increases through the use of the CDM.

"This is a first step that has laid the groundwork for the Bali Conference", said Mr. De Boer. "It shows that Parties have the necessary level of ambition to move this work forward," he added.

1.2. Climate talks end without clear pledge on emissions cuts

AFP

Parties to the UN's Kyoto Protocol wound up troubled talks here Friday with broad pledges, but no specific commitments, to deepen cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions blamed for global warming.

In a final document issued after hours of wrangling, they ditched a proposed text whereby industrialized countries would consider cutting their emissions by 25-40 percent by 2020 compared to their 1990 levels, diplomats said.

The goal had been spelt out in a draft statement backed by countries of the European Union but opposed by other delegations, notably Canada, Japan, Switzerland, New Zealand and Russia, they said.

The figures had been spelt out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) -- the world's top climate-change experts -- as an option for policymakers seeking to keep global warming to less than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial levels.

Instead, the Vienna paper said Kyoto parties "recognized" the IPCC range and described it as providing "useful initial parameters for the overall level of ambition of further emissions reductions."

The talks took place under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

A total of 175 of the 191 UNFCCC's members are parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which runs out at the end of 2012.

Negotiations on a successor treaty to Kyoto take place in Bali, Indonesia in December, gathering all UNFCCC members.

1.3. APEC Leaders Week opens with focus on climate change, free trade

2 September 2007, www.chinaview.cn

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum launched its 2007 Leaders Week here on Sunday to discuss a wide range of issues focusing on climate change and free trade.

The Leaders Week started with a two-day APEC Concluding Senior Officials Meeting at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Center. Officials from the 21 APEC members will make final preparations for the APEC Ministerial Meeting, slated for Sept. 5-6, and APEC Economic Leaders Meeting, for Sept. 8-9.

The weeklong meetings will also include a Business Advisory Council meeting, a business summit, and an ABAC dialogue with the economic leaders.

Under the theme of "Strengthening Our Community, Building a Sustainable Future," the leaders, officials and representatives from APEC members will also discuss issues such as energy security, human security, forestry recovery and APEC reform.

At the end of the week, a declaration on climate change could be adopted at the economic leaders meeting to show their determination to tackle the issue.

"The adoption of the declaration would demonstrate the determination and positive attitude of the APEC members to address the challenge and raise public awareness in an aim to boost the regional and international cooperation on the issue," said Chinese assistant foreign minister Sui Tiankai at a recent press conference in Beijing.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said that he hoped to use the annual meeting to create a new approach to tackling the issue of climate change.

"We should strive to find agreement on principles for international action that genuinely address the problem," he said.

The prime minister said that he hoped APEC leaders would also go "beyond agreement on principles" to set a "long-term aspirational goal" for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

As to the issue of trade, the economic leaders are expected to discuss ways to break the current deadlock on the WTO'S Doha Round negotiations.

The APEC ministers responsible for trade, at their 13th meeting in Australia's Cairns in July, stated that APEC supports the multilateral trading system and re-affirmed their commitment to a successful conclusion of the Doha round negotiations this year.

It is expected that a statement on the issue will be adopted at the end of the week.

On the sidelines of the APEC meetings, bilateral or multilateral talks will be held among the leaders.

Since its inception in 1989 in response to the growing interdependence among Asia-Pacific economies, APEC has become a formidable regional forum acting as the primary regional vehicle for promoting open trade and practical economic and technical cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The gross domestic product (GDP) of the APEC region has increased three-fold to 37.3 trillion U.S. dollars since 1989, Australian Minister for Trade Warren Truss said in a Saturday report released on the eve of the APEC meetings.

In 1989, APEC economies had a per capita GDP of 5,205 U.S. dollars which was on par with the world average. But in 2006, its per capita GDP reached almost 14,000 U.S. dollars, compared with 10,305 U.S. dollars for the world's average, Truss said.

The APEC economic growth has delivered benefits to almost 3 billion people in the region, Truss said.

APEC currently has 21 members: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, China's Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam. Australia is the chair of this year.

1.4. Merkel makes new proposal on climate change as she revisits site of Kyoto conference

31 August 2007, The Associated Press

German Chancellor Angela Merkel proposed making per capita emissions of greenhouse gases the basis for future climate change negotiations Friday, a suggestion aimed at persuading developing countries to join efforts to reduce global warming.

Merkel made the proposal in a speech at the conference center in Kyoto where, as Germany's environment minister, she took part in work on the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that requires developed countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 5 percent from 1990 levels by 2012.

"The question is, by when will we be able to include the developing countries and what measures will we use to ensure a just world," she said.

Merkel proposed measuring greenhouse gas emissions per capita rather than by total emissions per nation as a measure to mollify populous, rapidly developing countries such as China and India — both among the world's heaviest producers of carbon dioxide and other polluting gases.

Merkel said poorer, more populous nations produce less greenhouse gas emissions per capita than developed nations, so the developing nations should be allowed to produce more gases per person while richer nations should reduce their higher levels, to meet in the middle.

Germany emits 11 tons per person per year, and the United States 20 tons, while in China the figure is 3.5 tons of greenhouse gases per capita, despite fewer environmental controls, because of the country's large population. Worldwide the figure is 4.2 tons per person, according to German government figures.

China signed the Kyoto Protocol but is exempt from emission reductions because it is considered a developing country — a situation often cited by the U.S. for refusing to ratify the treaty, saying it gave emerging industrial powers an unfair advantage.

Merkel warned that developing countries should not be allowed to exceed the higher emissions levels of the rich nations.

Using per capita figures as a basis for talks would give poorer countries the room they need to grow their economies and lift more people out of poverty, she said.

Talks would be tough, she said, "but there is no way to shrink from the issue."

She said it was a moving experience to return to the place where the original agreement was worked out. "Kyoto is not just another place for me," she said.

Merkel, who made climate change a main theme of her country's rotating leadership role in the European Union earlier this year, won agreement from the Group of Eight countries including the United States to "seriously consider" a 50 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. New negotiations toward a successor agreement to Kyoto are slated to begin in December in Bali, Indonesia and be completed by 2009.

1.5. Britain Set to Miss Climate Change Targets – Report

23 August 23 2007, Planet Ark Reutwrs

Britain will miss its goal to cut emissions of climate warming carbon gases by 20 percent by 2010 and will fall short of its aims to boost energy from renewable sources, a leading think-tank said on Thursday.

Cambridge Econometrics, which aims to broaden access to research at Cambridge University, said in a report existing government policies and the European Union's emissions trading scheme were incapable of meeting the global warming challenge.

"These forecasts provide a reality check to the rhetoric on climate change that is now standard government fare," said Paul Ekins, Senior Consultant to Cambridge Econometrics and co-editor of its report UK Energy and the Environment.

"Our forecasts show that the government is set to miss not only its 20 percent carbon reduction goal by 2010, but also its declared target of obtaining 10 percent of UK electricity supply from renewable sources ... by 2010 and 15 percent by 2015.

Instead it will get just five percent from renewables by 2010, rising to 12.5 percent by 2015, the report said.

It said British emissions of carbon dioxide, the main global warming culprit, would fall by only 12.8 percent from 1990 levels by 2010 -- and even that assumes a far faster rate of decline than has so far been witnessed.

After stabilising between 2010 and 2015, emissions would decline again with falls from power stations being partially offset by increases in those from transport and households.

"We expect carbon emissions to be some 15 percent lower by 2020, suggesting that the 20 percent goal will, on current policies, be hard to achieve even ten years later than originally envisaged," Ekins said.

Tough target:

The government is also committed to produce 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources like wind, sun and waves by 2020, a target the report said it would get close to meeting at 19 percent.

But campaigners say this will be a very tough target to achieve and that there are strong signs from inside government circles that it will try to wriggle off the hook.

Britain will put forward legislation within three months to cut carbon emissions by at least 60 percent by 2050 -- and half that level by 2025.

A Climate Change Bill is expected to go to parliament in November and could become law by May after parliamentary scrutiny and public consultations on the preliminary draft of the legislation ended this month.

But environmental campaigners who have been pushing hard for even tougher targets in the bill said on Thursday the Cambridge report showed how short of the mark government efforts were.

"This report shows the need for a robust legal framework in the Climate Change Bill that will oblige the government to reduce emissions by at least 3 percent year on year," said Friends of the Earth's Mary Taylor.

"We are currently nowhere near that and so are making the job of stabilising our climate more difficult in the long term."

Scientists say average temperatures will rise by between 1.8 and 4.0 degrees Celsius this century due to carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels for power and transport, causing floods and famines and putting millions of lives at risk.

ENERGY

2.1. China launches energy saving drive

2 September 2007, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=192557&Sn=BUSI&IssueID=30166>

China yesterday launched a nationwide energy saving campaign, calling on its people to face the urgent task of reducing its rocketing fuel consumption and worsening pollution.

Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan said China had paid a heavy price for its rapid economic development in the past three decades.

"Our country has taken nearly 30 years to catch up with developed countries in industrialisation and urbanisation... but our economic development has exacted quite a heavy environmental price," he said at the launch of the campaign.

The country's most watched news programme urged people to help protect the environment by switching from plastic bags to re-usable ones and using fewer disposable eating utensils.

Zeng said China had made some progress in energy saving and emissions reduction in the first half of the year, citing a 2.8 per cent decrease in energy consumption per unit of GDP and a 0.88pc cut in sulphur dioxide emissions.

"But our current energy and emissions situation is still severe, and we need to make further efforts," he added.

He called for better policy implementation, more research into green technology and cooperation from companies and citizens in the country's environmental campaign.

In July, China's Premier Wen Jiabao said China needed to "urgently" face the challenges of climate change.

The Chinese government had set a five-year goal of reducing energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product by 20pc by 2010, but has fallen far short of its goals as the economy roared ahead last year at 10.7pc.

China also missed last year's targets to reduce emissions of major air and water pollutants by 2pc. Instead, levels rose by almost 2pc.

CONFERENCES

3.1. European Photovoltaic Solar Energy Conference and Exhibition

3 - 7 September 2007 in Milan, Italy

More info: <http://www.photovoltic-conference.com>.

3.2. International Congress on Plant Oil Fuels

6 - 7 September 2007 in Erfurt, Germany

More info: <http://www.pflanzenoel-kongress.de/index.php?lng=en>.

3.3. Short Training Course on Energy

September 17 - 21 2007 at Venice International University, on the Island of S. Servolo, Venice, Italy.

For further information and application visit:

<http://www.univiu.org/research/ten/newsandevents/shortcoursesept2007/shortcoursesept07>

3.4. General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities

27 - 28 September 2007 in Pärnu, Estonia

More info: <http://www.reiser.ee/conference/ubc.htm>.

3.5. RENEXPO 2007 - International Trade Fair and Conference for Renewable Energies

27 - 30 September 2007 in Augsburg, Germany

More info: <http://www.renexpo.de/?lang=en>.
