

E-news update 27 July 2009

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CLIMATE CAMPS

CLIMATE

1.1. US must move faster on climate change: Sweden

24 July 2009, EurActiv

Sweden, which currently holds the European Union presidency, urged the United States on Thursday (23 July) to move faster to tackle climate change ahead of a major environmental summit in Copenhagen later this year.

Swedish Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren told journalists at a meeting of EU energy and environment ministers that he welcomed US President Barack Obama's efforts to fight global warming, but called on the United States to do even more. "We welcome that the ambitions have changed dramatically compared to the previous administration, but still we expect more and we need more," he told reporters at a mountainside meeting held in central Sweden.

Sweden took over the six-month presidency of the European Union earlier this month and is helping to pave the way for tough talks on a major climate deal in Copenhagen this December which would replace the Kyoto Protocol after it expires in 2012.

The French government last month criticised the United States and Canada for being too slow, saying they needed to do more to tackle greenhouse gases.

It warned that Canada and the United States were not on course to cut emissions by the level needed, making it difficult for rich nations to meet the 25-40% collective reduction in greenhouse gases recommended by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Carlgren said it was encouraging that a bill which seeks to reduce US emissions 17% by 2020 and 83% by 2050 from 2005 levels had already been approved by the House of Representatives and was on its way to the Senate.

But European member states have already agreed to slash carbon emissions by at least 20% by 2020 from levels in 1990.

"We see within that bill the possibilities of raising the ambitions, and we are really urging our American friends to raise their bids and make sure that they can commit to more," he said.

"The EU has so far put 20% on the table but we want that to go higher and we want to bring others with us," he said.

The United States, the world's second-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after China, signed but never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, a climate treaty to be renewed in global talks culminating at the Copenhagen conference.

Carlgren said global negotiations ahead of Copenhagen were still moving too slow.

"We want to speed up and the EU is now urgently calling on other parties to join us and to make sure that we can speed up and negotiations," he said.

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/us-move-faster-climate-change-sweden/article-184364>

1.2. EU climate vow 'separate' from Copenhagen deal

20 July 2009, EurActiv

"Our engagement for climate protection should be independent from Copenhagen," the newly-elected chair of the European Parliament's environment committee, German Social Democratic MEP Jo Leinen, told EurActiv in an interview, stressing that "if Copenhagen is a success, all the better; if not, we have to stick to our job".

"The climate package was not conditional on results in Copenhagen. It was a self-evident challenge to meet and would not stop climate protection even if Copenhagen does not bring results," he added.

The new environment committee chair started his career as an anti-nuclear activist in Germany, and until the Parliament went on recess for the European elections, he chaired the constitutional affairs committee, which for the past five years has been dealing with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.

Asked on whether his experiences of constitutional matters would help him in his new job, he noted that in both cases, the big question was the future of Europe.

"In the AFCO committee it was more about the institutional set-up, and in the environment committee, it is the sustainability of our economies, of our social systems and of course of our environmental behaviour," he said, noting that these were two sides of the same coin.

According to Leinen, Europe should strive to maintain its leadership by helping to reach an ambitious deal in Copenhagen, but should shy away from making commitments if others do not follow. Energy and climate change policies are now ready for the implementation phase, stressed the German MEP, adding: "We have to fulfill our own promises and obligations."

"The economic and financial crisis should not be a pretext to lower our ambitions. We have to stick to the energy and climate package that was decided in December, for our position in the negotiations but also for us," he said.

Despite admitting that most recovery plans have not made huge shifts towards a low-carbon economy, Leinen nevertheless believes we are heading in the right direction.

"Sure, the balance sheet is not good because most money is not in sustainable development. There is still a big job to do," he stressed, insisting that the EU assembly's shift to the right will not hamper climate legislation.

"It is true that we have an ideological shift to the right, but politically I think that climate protection is fashionable as well for bourgeois society and for bigger parts of the industry. We have also shifted the acknowledgement and the interest of more businesses, which see the new climate package as a chance for profits, new investments and new markets," he stressed.

"I am optimistic that we are at a turning point where they come along with us. I don't think they are going to be in antagonism as before," Leinen said.

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/eu-climate-vow-separate-copenhagen-deal/article-184268>

1.3. U.N. seeks \$10 billion aid as good start to climate pact

23 July 2009, Reuters

Aid of \$10 billion from rich nations would be a "good beginning" to launch a U.N. climate treaty due to be agreed in Copenhagen in December, the United Nations' top climate official said on Thursday.

Yvo de Boer, head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, also told the BBC World Service in an interview that rich countries needed to pledge deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and the poor had to slow the rise in their emissions.

But cash was needed to kick-start a deal.

"If we can get in Copenhagen something like 10 billion euros or dollars on the table that will allow developing countries to begin preparing national plans to limit their emissions and adapt to climate change, then that would be a good beginning," he said.

"But even more importantly, Copenhagen has to agree an architecture, a burden-sharing formula, that will allow us to share out the costs of climate action among countries as the needs increase over time," he added.

Costs of fighting climate change in the longer term could be up to \$200 billion a year, according to U.N. projections. Developing nations say the rich have to show willingness to give cash to launch a new U.N pact to succeed the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012.

Many developing nations are likely to be hardest hit by climate change such as more droughts, disease, floods, heat waves and rising sea levels.

PITTSBURGH

Environmental group Greenpeace said that far higher figures of about \$140 billion annually should be on the table when leaders of the Group of 20 discuss climate finance at a meeting in the U.S. city of Pittsburgh in September.

"De Boer is absolutely right to highlight that this finance question must be resolved to break the deadlock in the international climate talks but \$10 billion could only be regarded as a down payment," Greenpeace campaigner Joss Garman said.

De Boer said that rich nations were finding it harder to come up with cash because of the recession. "It's become more difficult to raise financial resources," he said.

He also said developed countries should be guided in planning emissions cuts by what he has often called a "good beacon" of reductions of 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

In a 2007 report, a U.N. panel of scientists said cuts of 25-40 percent were needed to avert the worst of global warming. So far, promises by developed nations amount to cuts of only about 10 to 14 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

And de Boer said that developing nations had to sign up to slow the rise of their emissions, mainly from burning fossil fuels in factories, power plants and vehicles, as part of a Copenhagen deal.

"If on that piece of paper, China, India, Brazil and other major developing countries have offered national actions that will significantly take their emissions below business as usual ... that for me will be a success," he said.

Link: <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/22/20090723/tsc-environment-us-climate-aid-011ccfa.html>

1.4. LEAD: No success on new climate change pact without China: U.N. chief+

24 July 2009, Preitbart.com

BEIJING, July 24 (AP) - (Kyodo)—(EDS: MORE DETAILS, 6TH GRAF ONWARD)

U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said Friday there could be no success in reaching a new global climate agreement at December's climate conference without a contribution from China.

In Beijing on a four-day visit, Ban called on China to lead the fight against climate change, saying that the country has become a global power and so holds global responsibilities.

"Without China there can be no success this year on a new global climate framework," Ban said at a signing ceremony to launch a project on energy-efficient lights.

"With China, there is an enormous potential for the world to seal a deal in Copenhagen," he said, referring to the climate change conference to be held in the Danish capital in December.

Environmental ministers and leaders will be meeting in Copenhagen on Dec. 7-18 to try to hammer out a new deal on climate change to replace the Kyoto Protocol, concluded in the ancient Japanese capital in December 1997.

The United Nations will call a summit of world leaders in September to discuss the Copenhagen climate-change conference.

Ban said he will stress the importance to be played by major developing countries, especially China.

"China can be a model not only for developing nations, but for the whole world," the U.N. chief said.

Ban noted China is already a world leader in wind and solar technology, and its renewable energy sector, worth \$17 billion, employs a million people.

China is also the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases and 85 percent of its carbon emissions come from coal, China's primary source of energy.

The Chinese government has set aside 5 percent of its latest \$586 billion economic stimulus package to sustainable environment projects.

Link: http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D99KKJQ80&show_article=1

1.5. China holds key to climate change deal: UN's Ban

24 July 2009, AFP

United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon said here on Friday that China's support was crucial if a new international climate change deal was to be successfully brokered.

"Without China there can be no success this year on a new global climate framework deal," Ban said during a speech to launch a programme promoting environmentally friendly lights.

"But with China there is an enormous potential for the world to seal a deal in Copenhagen."

Ban will oversee a UN summit in the Danish capital in December aimed at hammering out a new climate change pact to cut the greenhouse gas emissions that are blamed for global warming.

China and other developing nations are opposed to any compulsory cuts in their emissions, saying the historic responsibility for solving the problem rests with the developed countries that have polluted for so long.

But amid hopes from many players involved for some form of compromise, Ban said China's decisions leading up to Copenhagen would be crucial in setting the foundations for any deal there.

"Strong signals from China on mitigation actions announced before Copenhagen will help push the negotiating process forward. They can also direct responsibility to other key countries to do more," he said.

The US Congress is considering legislation that would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. But China has said such cuts are not enough.

When the US special envoy for climate change, Todd Envoy, visited Beijing last month, China reiterated that developing countries should be held to a different standard on emissions.

China and the United States are the two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases.

Link: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g-KXywTzSLsNcliwoJ-JW0ReLGpg>

POLICY

2.1. EU soft on polluters, greens say

22 July 2009, BBC news

The EU's carbon trading system is too generous to industry, allowing windfall profits through the sale of emissions permits, a green campaign group says.

The UK-based Sandbag group says analysis of EU official data for 2008 shows industry could earn up to 5.4bn euros (£4.6bn) from selling permits.

Industry is accumulating surpluses of permits as the recession forces plants to reduce or halt production, it says.

But an EU official said it was too early to assess the system's impact.

"Let's not panic about it yet," said Barbara Helfferich, European Commission spokesperson for the environment.

She said the carbon price - about 14 euros per tonne of CO₂ - had remained "relatively stable over the past few months".

"The best measure is the market - if there were an over-allocation of permits you would see the price radically drop," she told BBC News.

Accumulating permits

The second phase of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) runs from 2008 to 2012 and covers about 50% of the EU's CO₂ emissions, generated by power plants and energy-intensive industries such as cement, steel and glass manufacturers.

The EU decided to give most of the CO₂ permits to these industries for free in the first and second ETS phases.

It is widely acknowledged that industry made big profits from the sale of CO₂ permits in the first phase, from 2005 to 2007.

The Sandbag report says industry is likely to have 700 million surplus permits in the 2008-2012 phase, which it will either be able to sell for windfall profits or bank for future use, "depressing the price of carbon in the next phase of trading".

The group argues that the availability of these permits is a disincentive for industry to reduce CO₂ emissions, undermining the EU's target of achieving a 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

The group urges the EU to rescue the ETS by raising the target to 30% by 2020, or 40% if a deal is reached at the global climate summit in Copenhagen in December. A tougher target would mean making fewer CO₂ permits available.

Planning for future

The BBC's environment correspondent Roger Harrabin says the research shows that Europe's power firms are still short of CO₂ permits, so are buying up the surplus from cement and steel.

In effect, Europe's power consumers are indirectly subsidising through their power bills those firms worst hit by the downturn, he says.

Citing data from the EU's 2008 register of verified emissions and CO₂ permits (CITL), Sandbag says just 10 European installations account for nearly 60% of the whole industrial surplus of CO₂ permits.

Of these, three installations are run by the steel firm ArcelorMittal, accounting for 15% of the surplus, it says.

A spokesman for ArcelorMittal, Jean Lasar, said that in the first phase "we did make some profits - but we didn't design the system".

Emissions 'bank account'

In the economic downturn ArcelorMittal has stopped production at various sites in Europe, meaning CO₂ emissions have fallen.

But Mr Lasar said the firm was passing on some permits to its partner energy utilities, who make use of gas emitted during steel production.

"We haven't sold any permits in this trading period... we are keeping them, we might need them at a later stage," he told BBC News.

"We can't be expected to shape our carbon strategy on what is happening now in the market. The long-term strategy is to significantly reduce emissions," he said.

The CITL register, which keeps a tally of verified CO₂ emissions and CO₂ permits, is "like a bank account - sometimes there is lots of money in there, sometimes not," Mrs Helfferich said.

"There are many permits in the CITL because they're traded back and forth, and now nobody is using them up. But the reckoning comes on 1 April next year, when the accounts are balanced out," she said.

She admitted that the first ETS phase had suffered from an over-allocation of permits, because "it was a kind of testing period - we had no idea what the overall emissions really were".

Link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8163571.stm>

EMISSIONS

3.1. Ministers pushing for more growth, fewer emissions

22 July 2009, EurActiv

An extraordinary joint session of EU energy and environment ministers will this week start talks on how to achieve the Swedish Presidency's vision of a sustainable and eco-efficient economy.

The ministers' informal meetings will take place back-to-back in Sweden on 23-25 July, including a joint session on Friday (24 July) to forge consensus on the best path towards a future with more growth and fewer emissions. The informal talks will be held on the basis of a Stockholm Environment Institute report, which argued that the EU needs to put more effort into promoting innovation and energy efficiency (EurActiv 02/07/09).

Acting on climate change and reducing Europe's dependency on imported fossil fuels by creating new energy systems will be two key issues to address, Swedish Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren said, outlining the idea behind the concept.

"A third challenge is to foster competitiveness and innovation through these great transformations, in both the climate system and in energy," he added.

The meeting will see high-profile guests like Lord Nicholas Stern and South African Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs Buyelwa Patience Sonjica join the ministers.

Carlgren said the conclusions prepared for the meeting called for an integrated policy response across several policy areas. He said economic policy, including taxation, education, and research and development, among others, would all have to be harnessed to contribute to the changes.

Sweden wants to see the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs reflect the new priorities. It will make a strong environmental pillar a central part of the new strategy, to be put on the table again at a meeting of the Competitiveness Council in October. Before the joint meeting, energy ministers will hold talks tomorrow (23 July) to address energy efficiency. The meeting will discuss the possible content of the EU's Energy Efficiency Action Plan, which the Commission hopes to table in November. The Swedish EU Presidency also hopes to make progress on key legislative dossiers like energy labelling, the recast of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and tyre labelling. It plans to reach an agreement on the legislation by the end of the year, but progress so far has been slow (EurActiv 25/06/09).

Environment ministers, on the other hand, will hold separate working sessions on climate change on Friday, while Saturday is devoted to the EU's position for international climate talks.

The environment policymakers will advance discussions on financing criteria for comparability of effort in a bid to confirm the EU's role as the engine for achieving an ambitious new treaty in Copenhagen in December.

Carlgren argued that a "tough game" was to be expected in the remaining months, requiring all EU parties to put pressure on developed countries to make further commitments to cut emissions and on major emerging economies to deliver sufficient reductions.

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy-efficiency/ministers-pushing-growth-fewer-emissions/article-184297>

3.2. Industry stands to win over €5 billion from ETS

23 July 2009, EurActiv

Industries participating in the EU's emissions trading scheme will likely end up with surplus allowances worth almost 400 million tonnes of CO₂ in the period 2008-2012, undermining the objectives of the scheme, a climate campaign group said this week.

A new report by Sandbag released on 20 July argued that the EU ETS (see EurActiv LinksDossier) is failing to follow the 'polluter pays' principle, and is in fact subsidising polluters by giving them a large number of free emission allowances instead.

The report estimated that the industries included in the scheme - except those in the power sector - are likely to earn as much as €5.4 billion by selling surplus credits accumulated during the second trading period, 2008-2012. The new entrants' reserve, set aside for those installations entering the ETS scheme, could hold another 300 million surplus permits by 2012, the report added.

The windfall profits result from firms selling their extra allowances to power companies, which by and large have to pay for all their emissions.

Moreover, the scheme includes a "generous safety valve" to counteract potential excess demand by allowing companies to buy offset credits from abroad, the report stated. The second trading period could see some 900 UN-administered CER credits enter the market, adding to what is perceived as increased "hot air" in the system, the report argues.

Sandbag stressed that as permits and offset credits are bankable up to 2020, nearly 40% of the effort required to achieve 2020 caps could be covered by extra allowances from the second phase ending in 2012.

To get the artificial market deliver on reducing emissions, its original purpose, the EU should take steps to tighten targets by 2020 and to cancel the New Entrants Reserve, the NGO underlined. Moreover, member states could offer tax breaks to companies that surrender their extra credits instead of putting them on the market, it proposed.

Ten sites dominate 'shame list'

Sandbag also launched a map yesterday (22 July), indicating which EU industrial installations are short of permits and which have surpluses. The data shows that just ten plants make up 60% of the whole EU surplus, three of them belonging to steel group ArcelorMittal.

Presenting the results in Brussels, Sandbag Director Bryoni Worthington argued that companies in countries with strong 'polluting' industries like Germany, Spain and Sweden have shown great skill in lobbying member states for free allowances, while new member states have distributed their free permits more equally between players.

Worthington said the European Commission had most likely failed to notice the skewed distribution of free permits when it approved the National Allocation Plans due to lack of resources. "I believe that the Commission was caught up by clever member state submissions," she told journalists in Brussels.

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/industry-stands-win-5-ets/article-184310>

3.3. Meet Belcha – Europe's biggest carbon polluter (and it's about to get even bigger)

22 July 2009, Guardian

The biggest single producer of carbon emissions in the European Union has been named – and it is about to get even bigger. The appropriately titled Elektrownia Belchatow – a massive coal-fired power station – belched out 30,862,792 tonnes of CO₂ last year and by 2010 the whole generating facility will have grown by 20%.

The Polish energy giant was named as climate change enemy number one in a report by the London-based Sandbag Climate Campaign and its greenhouse gas output dwarfed the 22m tonnes of annual carbon produced by the Drax power station in North Yorkshire and a host of equally dirty German plants.

Sandbag said the expansion of Belchatow and the planned construction of 50 coal-fired plants across the European mainland demonstrated that policies such as the EU's European Trading Scheme (ETS) were not working.

Bryony Worthington, founder of Sandbag, said the price of pollution allowances in the ETS was too low to deter companies from choosing coal over clean energy, noting that six of the 10 most polluting plants are in Germany despite generous government subsidies for solar and other clean technologies.

"They have to buy emission allowances yet they are still planning a massive expansion. If the scheme was having the desired effect they would be pursuing cleaner options now, not at some distant point in the future," she added.

While British ministers have taken a stand against constructing new coal stations at Kingsnorth in Kent and elsewhere without "clean" technology to capture the emissions, the deluge of projects in Europe is undermining EU credibility ahead of the forthcoming UN negotiations in Copenhagen on tackling global warming, according to Mark Johnson, a Brussels-based campaigner at the WWF.

"Dozens of new unabated projects across Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland and elsewhere are either under construction or could soon be approved. Going ahead with these could wreck Europe's climate strategy," he said.

Elektrownia Belchatow is raising coal-fired capacity from 4,400 megawatts to 5,258 from next year. The facility, which burns the most polluting lignite "brown" coal from its own mine next door, is earmarked for a full carbon capture and storage prototype, but only by 2015 at the earliest.

A spokesman for French engineering company Alstom said they were working on a range of initiatives to improve the wider efficiency of the plant and reduce its carbon output. It is one of an estimated 11 new coal schemes planned in Poland, while 28 more are on the drawing board in Germany, according to the WWF.

While Poland has long been dependent on its home-mined lignite, Germany is expanding its coal-fired stations to produce electricity in anticipation of a rundown in its nuclear facilities.

This strategy, being pioneered by RWE and E.ON, could yet be changed as the two main political parties vying for power in the September elections have opposing views on how energy security should be achieved.

E.ON said that coal is being pursued because it answers some of the problems posed in the energy sector.

"It is a cheap form of power but it also gives security of supply and flexibility. The final element is obviously to find a way of not damaging the environment and we hope CCS will be the answer to that," explained a UK spokesman for the German company.

Protests by environmentalists over E.ON's plans to build a coal-fired power station at Kingsnorth have encouraged Ed Miliband, the secretary of state for energy and climate change, to rule that there should be no plants in the UK without some degree of CCS, with the remainder of any plant having CCS fitted within five years of it being judged "technically and economically proven".

The WWF believes the 50 coal schemes in total around Europe represent about 50 gigawatts of power. That compares with the 70GW of total power produced in Britain from all existing sources, including gas, nuclear and a small but growing contribution from wind.

New coal stations are being planned in big numbers in the US and China but the EU has been arguing that all countries should proceed only if they use CCS to turn them into "clean" coal projects.

The EU is committed to cutting carbon emissions by at least 20% by the year 2020 and 80% by 2050 and wants all nations to agree tough new targets at Copenhagen.

The concept of CCS is considered vital to the fight against global warming.

But question marks remain about whether the feasibility of doing it at large scale and at a cost that makes it work, leaving Belchatow and others belching on.

Link: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/jul/22/europes-biggest-carbon-polluter-coal>

CLIMATE CAMPS

14-15 September 2008

First International Climate Gathering - mobilisation meeting for COP15
Copenhagen, Denmark

3-9 Aug 2009

French Climate Camp <http://www.campclimat.org/>

Notre Dame les Landes, Nantes, France

<http://climatecamp.org.uk/themes/ccamptheme/files/appel.pdf>

3-9 Aug 2009

Dutch/Belgian Climate Camp <<http://www.klimaatactiekamp.org/>>

On the Belgian/Dutch border. See

http://www.climatecamp.org.uk/themes/ccamptheme/files/en_flyer.pdf

3-9 Aug

