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ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

- 1.1. US looks to private sector to fix greenhouse pollution

23 April 2006, Reuters

Delegates from six of the world's biggest greenhouse gas polluters -- including the United States -- gathered last week for the first time to figure out how private industry can help curb global warming. The Bush administration is promoting this voluntary effort as a practical way to develop clean-energy technology to tackle climate change. But an environmental expert dismissed it as busy-work that would not be as effective as the requirements imposed by the international Kyoto Protocol on global warming.

Initially skeptical, the U.S. administration accepts the reality of global climate change, which has been associated with stronger hurricanes, severe droughts, intense heat waves and the melting of polar ice. Greenhouse gases, notably carbon dioxide emitted by motor vehicles and coal-fired power plants, trap heat like the glass walls of a greenhouse, causing Earth to warm up.

More than 300 delegates from the six countries -- Australia, China, India, Japan and South Korea, in addition to the United States -- met last week in California for the first working sessions of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

These six countries account for about half of the world's emissions of climate-heating greenhouse gases. Only one of the six, Japan, is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2012 under the Kyoto agreement.

Unveiled last July in Laos and formalized with a high-level meeting in Australia in January, the partnership aims to spur development of cleaner, more energy-efficient technologies, said Paula Dobriansky, under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs in a telephone briefing as the meetings proceeded at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Results in six months

The California meeting was the first chance for working groups to discuss "concrete steps," Dobriansky said, adding that the group was aiming for "tangible results over these next six months."

The Bush administration has requested \$52 million for fiscal 2007 for this program spread among the departments of State, Energy and Commerce and the Environmental Protection Agency.

James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, dismissed a question about the seemingly low level of U.S. government financial backing.

"(That) perspective is completely turned around," Connaughton said in the telephone briefing. "Only with private sector investment does the technology get deployed. The government does not go out

into the world and spend the several trillion dollars that are about to be spent on the technologies that are going to be the solutions to this problem."

Government's role, he said, is to guide investment.

David Doniger, a former Clinton administration expert on climate change now with the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council, said that without limits on greenhouse gas emissions, the partnership will be ineffectual.

"The partnership is symptomatic of the Bush administration failure to do anything serious at home or abroad about global warming, because it's all voluntary," Doniger said by telephone.

Over the past 30 years, the Earth has warmed by 1.08 degrees Fahrenheit (0.6 degrees Celsius); over the last 100 years, it has warmed by 1.44 degrees F. (0.8 Celsius), according to NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

1.2. Car industry failing on climate pledge

19 April 2006, European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E)

Carmakers are defaulting on their pledge to tackle climate change, new figures show. Last year, car industry efforts to improve fuel efficiency achieved a third of the rate needed to meet a commitment they made to the EU in 1998.

Improving fuel efficiency is a key factor in tackling climate change because the more fuel a car uses, the more CO₂ is emitted into the atmosphere.

European manufacturers sold cars that produce on average 160 grams of CO₂ per kilometre last year, down only 1 per cent on the previous year, according to sales figures analysed by Transport and Environment (T&E).

The European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) promised the European Commission in 1998 to reach average emissions of 140 grams of CO₂ per kilometre for new cars by 2008.

Carmakers now need an unprecedented improvement rate of 4.3 per cent per year for the next three years to meet their commitment. To date, the best performance was 2.9 per cent, recorded in 2000.

"President Barroso's Commission has sat back and watched while carmakers put all their technology into making cars heavier and more powerful, rather than more fuel efficient" said Jos Dings, Director of T&E.

"President Barroso, himself the owner of a gas-guzzling Volkswagen Touareg, must recognise that a voluntary commitment from an industry that is responsible for 15% of CO₂ emissions in the EU is not enough and is failing miserably. Legislation is urgently needed if real progress is to be achieved" said Dings.

Further improvements in efficiency are not expensive and can be made with widely-available existing technology. A report for the European Commission last year showed that the cost of meeting the EU's own target for new cars of 120 grams of CO₂ per kilometre would be on average € 577 per car.

Meeting the EU target would result in twenty-five per cent lower fuel bills. At today's prices that would mean a € 1000 saving for the average car over three years.

"Rules that make cars more fuel efficient save lots of money and save the climate. It's time President Barroso parked his gas-guzzler and got Europe's carmakers on the road to fuel efficiency" said Dings.

The source of the sales and CO₂ data for 2005 is R.L. Polk Marketing Systems GmbH in Germany. The data have been analysed for T&E by IEEP, the Institute for European Environmental Policy, UK.

In 1998 the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) committed to the European Union to reduce the average CO₂ emissions of new cars sold in the (then) 15 EU Member States to 140 g/km, down from 186 g/km in 1995.

1.3. Scientists condemn US as emissions of greenhouse gases hit record level

19 April 2006, The Independent UK

By Steve Connor, Science Editor

The United States emitted more greenhouse gases in 2004 than at any time in history, confirming its status as the world's biggest polluter. Latest figures on the US contribution to global warming show that its carbon emissions have risen sharply despite international concerns over climate change.

The figures, which were quietly released on Easter Monday, reveal that net greenhouse gas emissions during 2004 increased by 1.7 per cent on the previous year, equivalent to a rise of 110 million tons of carbon dioxide.

This is the biggest annual increase since 2000 and means that in 2004 - the latest year that full data is available - the US released the equivalent of nearly 6,300 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Scientists in Britain condemned the increase, saying that it showed how the US was failing to take a lead in the international attempt to curb greenhouse gas emissions despite being the worst offender.

Professor David Read, the vice-president of the Royal Society, said that the US and Britain needed to take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas levels in order to honour their commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"The figures published this week show not only that the US emissions are not decreasing, but that they are actually increasing on an annual basis," Professor Read said. "And while the UK appears to be doing slightly better, its carbon dioxide emissions have been rising annually for the past three years," he said. "The US and the UK are the two leading scientific nations in the world and are home to some of the best climate researchers.

"But in terms of fulfilling the commitment made by their signature to the UN convention to stabilise greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere, neither country is demonstrating leadership by reducing their emissions to the levels required," Professor Read said.

The US accounts for about a quarter of the total global emissions of man-made carbon dioxide or the other gases such as methane that can exacerbate the earth's greenhouse effect, which traps sunlight and heat.

Under the UN climate change convention, America is required to publish its net contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, which takes into account pollution sources, such as cars and industry, and "sinks", such as forests.

The figures show that the total US emissions have risen by 15.8 per cent from 1990 to 2004, mainly due to increased consumption of electricity generated by burning fossil fuel, a rise in energy demands caused by increased industrial production and a rise in petrol consumption due to increased travel. Fossil fuel combustion alone accounted for 94 per cent of the carbon dioxide emissions produced by the US during 2004, the figures show.

Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are now a third higher than they were before the Industrial Revolution began in the 18th century, and probably higher than they have been for at least 10 million years.

Scientists have suggested that if the international community is to try to stabilise carbon dioxide levels at twice pre-industrial levels then countries such as the US and Britain need to reduce emissions by about 60 per cent by the middle of this century.

Professor Read said there was mounting evidence to suggest that rising temperatures caused by greenhouse gas emissions were beginning to cause serious climate effects, such as a drop in annual rainfall in east Africa because of rising water temperatures in the Indian Ocean.

"If emissions continue to rise, we can expect even more impacts across the world," Professor Read said. "The developing world will find it difficult to adapt to climate change and the industrialised countries, which are primarily responsible for the rise in greenhouse gas levels, should realise that they would also struggle to adapt to a world in which, for instance, sea levels are several metres higher," he said.

"The science justifies action now by all countries to both adapt to climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

1.4. Solar Water Heating Viable

6 February 2006, <http://www.iran-daily.com/1384/2494/html/energy.htm>

Solar water heaters are particularly important in Brazil, which adopted a means of heating water based on what used to be cheap hydroelectric energy.

Turning sunshine into electricity is still too costly for it to become widespread, but using it to heat water is a viable option that is expanding in many countries, and could make great strides in Brazil.

Two initiatives by environmentalists and interested companies are giving a boost to solar water heaters in Brazil.

In Sao Paulo, only a final decision by Mayor Jose Serra is needed for legislation to go into effect that would make installing solar water heaters obligatory in new buildings and those undergoing major reconstruction.

A draft law proposed five months ago by Vitae Civilis, a non-governmental organization, and inspired by a measure adopted in Barcelona, Spain in 2000, has already been approved by the Sao Paulo municipal secretariat for the environment, ipsnews.net said.

In Barcelona, the plan led to a ten-fold increase in the number of solar water heaters within three years, and has had repercussions throughout Spain, Delcio Rodrigues, an energy expert at Vitae Civilis, told IPS.

There is all the more reason for something similar to happen in Brazil, since Sao Paulo is the country's biggest city, with a population of 11 million, and as the main economic center, it has a great influence over the entire country of 185 million, he observed.

Another project in Belo Horizonte, the capital of the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, is opening up new horizons for thermosolar energy with an innovative business model. A sports and education center at the local Catholic University is to be equipped with solar-heated water for its swimming pool and showers.

But the local electricity generating company, CEMIG, will install and pay for the system, and then charge for the hot water it provides, though obviously at a much cheaper rate than water heated by electricity.

It is important to set up alternatives of this kind, because the greatest obstacle to more widespread use of solar heaters is the relatively high cost of the equipment, which requires an investment of about 600 dollars for a family of four, for example, while an electric water heater costs just over 10 dollars.

However, over two or three years the savings on electricity will exceed the amount invested, and the equipment can last 20 years or more, according to Antonio Placidelli, marketing manager of Soletrol, Brazil's leading producer of solar water heaters.

Opening up ways of financing the purchase is therefore a decisive factor in encouraging widespread use of the system, especially in Brazil, where interest rates on bank loans are extremely high--often over 100 percent annually in real terms, that is, disregarding inflation.

Solar water heaters are particularly important in Brazil, which adopted a means of heating water for bathing based on what used to be cheap hydroelectric energy generated by Brazil's numerous rivers.

Electric heaters provide hot water in more than two-thirds of Brazilian homes.

Vitae Civilis estimates that these, together with a lesser number of hot water tanks, account for six to eight percent of total electricity consumption in the country.

Furthermore, this consumption is concentrated between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 PM local time. At this peak time, the share of total consumption is 18 percent.

Because of this, even electricity distribution companies wish to expand the use of solar water heaters. They lose out on energy sales, but they save much more by reducing peak demand, which causes immense waste.

As a result, CEMIG has adopted a policy of encouraging solar water heaters, and is promoting their installation in 100 buildings in Belo Horizonte and in a housing project for low-income families. Today this city of 2.4 million people is the capital of thermosolar energy in Brazil, with 1,000 buildings using solar-heated water.

Brazil has developed its own water heater technology and industry in the last 30 years, reducing the cost of the equipment and even exporting the heaters, according to the Brazilian Association of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Heating (ABRAVA), which has an entire department dedicated to solar water heaters (DASOL).

More information: www.vitaecivilis.org.br.

1.5. World Bank's climate plan fails to show the right path

19 April 2006, Friends of the Earth International

A new report from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on "clean energy" due out on April 22 acknowledges the severe impacts of climate change on developing countries but still steers future energy policy in the wrong direction, according to Friends of the Earth International.

The report, called Clean Energy and Development: Towards An Investment Framework, was approved by the World Bank's board and is expected to be validated at the Bank's Spring Meetings on April 22 and 23.

Local communities and the environment would bear the consequences of the increase in unsustainable energy investments around the world that the new plan would bring.

»This proposal from the Bank does not suggest a strong ambition to re-direct financing away from existing fossil fuel patterns, or to deliver sustainable energy to the two billion people currently without,« said Catherine Pearce of Friends of the Earth International.

»The technologies which seem to be receiving interest from the Bank include those with damaging social and environmental impacts, such as nuclear, large dams and so-called 'clean coal«. It is widely understood that these technologies will not help to bring people out of poverty, which is the World Bank's mission,« added Catherine Pearce.

»We will only be able to take the World Bank's proposals to combat climate change seriously if it decides to stop subsidising dirty fossil fuel projects,« said Janneke Bruil of Friends of the Earth International. »Currently, the World Bank is too committed to the oil, gas and coal mining industry«.

Even though it states that rich nations "will remain the largest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases," the new World Bank report does not encourage these nations to play a leading role in fighting climate change by aggressively reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

»G8 countries currently release 45 per cent of today's global emissions, and are the main decision makers in the World Bank. As such they are in a position to make a significant contribution to the fight against climate change« said Elizabeth Bast of Friends of the Earth US.

»Climate change is a serious and immediate problem for us in Nepal because of rapid glacial melting, especially on the Himalaya. The World Bank and the industrialized countries should take real and immediate action because ultimately climate change has been created by the developed world,« said Prakash Sharma from ProPublic/Friends of the Earth Nepal.

Background: The Group of Eight (G8) richest nations at their Gleneagles Summit last July asked the World Bank to propose a plan for a sustainable energy future. The World Bank's new report acknowledges that just the cost of adapting to climate change is likely to be between 10 and 40 billion dollars per year. But instead of responding to those needs, the World Bank plans to continue funding substantial amounts of dirty fossil fuel projects. In 2005, only 10% of the Bank's energy financing went to renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Two billion people currently have no access to energy services.

Introducing clean, affordable, decentralised renewable energy services can help alleviate poverty, reduce regional and local air and water pollution, generate jobs and income, empower local communities and promote gender equity.

Friends of the Earth believes that energy projects should be subject to input and approval by local communities and civil society and that the World Bank should present clear CO2 reduction commitments with targets and timetables.

Friends of the Earth campaigners from Asia, Africa, Central America and Europe, are in Washington DC April 19-26 to demand that the World Bank and the US Congress respond to the real needs and challenges that climate change poses to the world.

1.6. Pacific action urged on clean energy plan

18 April 2006, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,18845477-30417,00.html>

Amanda Hodge

The Howard Government's Asia Pacific climate partnership must begin rolling out clean energy projects across the six-nation membership within 12 months or risk losing crucial industry support.

The warning comes as all eight taskforces established under the AP6 - the name of the greenhouse technology alliance - prepare to meet for the first time in California today to flesh out action plans.

Australian industry representatives attending the meeting told The Australian they would be pushing to set genuine progress benchmarks that lead to pilot technology projects and greater access to new markets.

Asia Pacific climate partners Japan, the US, Australia, South Korea, China and India met for the first time in Sydney in January to set directions for the alliance, but this week's meeting will be the first time the taskforces meet.

Each taskforce has been given six months to draw up plans identifying suitable markets across member nations for deploying low-emission technology and demonstration projects.

The eight groups - which operate under the banners of renewable and distributed energy, cleaner fossil energy, power generation and transmission, steel, coalmining, aluminium, cement and buildings and appliances - consist of four government and industry representatives from each country.

Solar Systems managing director Dave Holland, an Australian delegate on the renewable energy taskforce, said his priority this week would be to identify opportunities and barriers to establishing large-scale renewable energy projects in all six markets.

"For business to take technologies into markets you need real and specific opportunities, and that's different from a government just saying, 'We welcome people in', because all these markets are looking for low-cost technology."

He, however, warned that industry groups, whether in the renewable energy or low-emissions sectors, would not tolerate such demands on their time unless measurable progress was achieved.

"What's important for industry is if we don't get real traction for real projects in 12 months it's going to be hard for industry to stay focused," he said. "So we have to target some things that are real."

CONFERENCES

2.1. Sustainable Energy path for Europe: e5 workshops in Cologne 10 – 12 May

On the occasion of Carbon Expo from 10 to 12 May in Cologne, e5 launches its e-turn 21 conference series "The Challenges, Perspectives and Obstacles of the European Energy Sector with regard to a Sustainable Energy path: creating a compromise among European Energy actors".

Programme details: <http://www.e5.org/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=100>.

With the project e-turn21 the European Business Council for Sustainable Energy (e5) has started a transnational dialogue about the energy structure 2050. A conference series is planned for May and June 2006 under the title «The Challenges, Perspectives and Obstacles of the European Energy Sector with regard to a Sustainable Energy path: creating a compromise among European Energy actors». Four different "Road-Show Conferences" - to be organised in Paris, Madrid, Cologne and Brno (Czech Republic) - aim at offering the possibility to provide a discussion forum for the economic, technological, financial, academic and NGOs actors.

Information

details:

<http://www.e5.org/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&btile=CE&mid=&ceid=98>.

2.2. Russia and the Carbon Market" Conference

Point Carbon and Moscow-based National Carbon Sequestration Foundation (NCSF) invite you to take part in the "Russia and the Carbon Market" Conference that will take place on 28-29 June 2006 in Moscow, at Radisson SAS Slavyanskaya Hotel.

We expect to gather over 300 interested participants from governments, companies and organizations, which does make it the largest carbon market conference in Russia. Professional speakers will enable conference participants to have a professional insight into the perspectives for Russia to participate in the international carbon market and develop one internally. The conference will also include presentations and discussions of up-to-date topics on Russia's share of the global carbon market, with specific focus on AAU trading and investing in JI projects in Russia.

To learn more on the conference, sponsorship and exhibition opportunities, as well as register online, please visit <http://www.pointcarbon.com/Events/article13423-369.html> or <http://www.ncsf.ru/conf/>.

PUBLICATIONS

3.1. Available materials on innovative financing to accelerate solar water heating

Green Markets International, the Vitae Civilis Institute, and Caribbean Solar Technologies, are pleased to announce the availability of materials prepared under a REEEP-sponsored initiative to advance innovative financial mechanisms for solar water heating.

"A Guide to Fee-for-Service Solar Water Heating Programs for Caribbean Electric Utilities" provides a detailed roadmap for utility operated fee-for-service programs, focusing on the Caribbean region.

"Business Prospects for Solar Water Heating Fee-for-Service Operations in Brazil" (also available in Portuguese) documents the solar water heating fee-for-service business model, covering programs that can be implemented by ESCOs and others in Brazil. Under these business models, customers pay a reduced fee for hot water service, the implementing company generates attractive financial returns, and environmental benefits accrue at the local and global level.

