

E-news update April 3 2006

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POLICY

- 1.1. Blair supports AP6, calls for unified global agreement
28 March 2006, Point Carbon

Tony Blair has declared support for the Asia-Pacific climate pact and says differing global initiatives on climate change could be brought together for a truly global post 2012 regime to tackle climate change.

On a visit to Australia and New Zealand, Blair told a joint news conference with Australian prime minister John Howard in Canberra that the Asia-Pacific pact (AP6) - which critics say is designed to undermine the Kyoto Protocol - had great promise for bringing the US, China and India toward future emissions reduction commitments.

"At the moment, we're in a situation where there's a whole lot of different initiatives that all tend in the same direction," Blair said. "I never thought that the Asia-Pacific Partnership was aimed at our position on climate change. On the contrary ... the very fact that you've now got a forum in which you've got the US, China and India talking together, alongside countries like Australia, is a very important, positive sign."

AP6 was initiated by the US and Australia after their refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The pact allies them with China, India, Japan and South Korea in a partnership to spur clean technology investment. It has been criticised for its lack of any commitment to emissions reduction targets while an official Australian report forecasts greenhouse emissions could more than double by 2050 under AP6 measures.

At the press conference, John Howard maintained the US and Australian position against Kyoto saying that any global agreement needed to include major developing-nation emitters. Quoting his environment minister, Howard said: "If Australia stopped all emissions right now, it would take China

10 months to make up for it. That is a measure of how unreal it is to have an arrangement that doesn't involve the major polluters."

Following the inaugural AP6 meeting in January, which embraced nuclear power as climate-friendly technology, Australia is expected to sign a uranium export deal with China in the next week. It continues talks with India over nuclear arms safeguards in advance of a similar deal.

1.2. Most EU leaders back reviving nuclear power

27 March 2006, The Guardian

The overwhelming majority of leaders at last week's European Union summit, including Tony Blair, strongly backed a revival of nuclear power as the answer to Europe's growing dependence on overseas supplies and to combat climate change.

Only Germany and Austria explicitly rejected the nuclear option in secret summit talks, according to senior German diplomats, who pointed out that Angela Merkel, the chancellor and a trained physicist, favoured it personally but was bound by her Social Democrat coalition partners to reject it.

Andris Piebalgs, EU energy commissioner and author of this month's green paper on a common energy policy, made it plain in an interview that a revival of atomic power was not the "silver bullet" for meeting Europe's triple objectives of security of supply, sustainable development and competitiveness.

"There are no silver bullets and you cannot believe that, if you build new nuclear power stations, that will solve everything," he told the Guardian. "Countries with expertise are well placed to replace existing plants or build new stations but we should not say that nuclear energy will meet all three objectives cheaply and efficiently. It has huge costs and lots of complications, including the issue of waste and final storage."

Mr Piebalgs, a Latvian, said countries pursuing the nuclear option needed to emulate Finland, which is building Europe's first new nuclear plant since the Chernobyl disaster 20 years ago (a French-designed pressurised-water reactor).

"Finland's decision was based on a thorough analysis of the nuclear option and a political debate, including about safe final storage, so each citizen knows that he is not condemning his children to a dangerous future," he said, adding: "The only genuine silver bullet is energy efficiency and conservation."

Last week's summit endorsed the notion of an EU action plan designed to save 20% of energy consumption by 2020 and plans to raise the 6% of energy provided by renewables to 20% by the same date.

But EU leaders rejected Mr Piebalgs' call for a European energy regulator to police the market and provide the framework to invest in common gas and electricity grids that, with new power plants, could cost 1,000bn (700bn) by 2030. By then the EU will import 70% of its energy, mainly gas from Russia, Algeria and Norway, as North Sea reserves run out.

Mr Piebalgs, who also favours the use of clean coal, carbon sequestration and biomass, indicated that a critical answer to Europe's long-term supply needs was to increase the market for liquefied natural gas (LNG), which could be imported from several countries. He suggested that LNG should provide 20%-25% of European energy within the next 25 years.

ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

2.1. U.S. Sets New Fuel Economy Rules for SUVs

29 March 2006, The Associated Press

By Ken Thomas

The government set tighter gas mileage rules Wednesday for pickups and sport utility vehicles, including bulky SUVs like the Hummer H2 and Chevrolet Suburban, responding to rising concern about the supply and cost of energy from abroad.

The new fuel economy rules, covering 2008 through 2011, would save 10.7 billion gallons of fuel over the lifetime of the vehicles sold during that period and take a more aggressive stance than a Bush administration proposal issued last summer, officials said.

"The new standards represent the most ambitious fuel economy goals for light trucks ever developed in the program's 27-year history," said Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta, announcing the plan from a Baltimore football stadium that overlooked traffic near an Interstate 95 interchange.

The new regulations followed President Bush's declaration in January that the U.S. is "addicted to oil," and his call for a 75 percent reduction in Mideast oil imports by 2025. Manufacturers will begin implementing the rules as average gas prices exceed \$2.50 a gallon and many consumers are seeking more fuel-efficient vehicles such as hybrids and flexible-fuel pickups and SUVs.

U.S. automakers, notably General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co., have struggled in recent months, outlining plans to reduce their work force as they deal with shrinking market share, higher costs for labor and raw materials and intense competition from Asian competitors.

Mineta said the plan was "pragmatic" and devised with jobs and costs in mind, along with the benefits of conserving fuel. Automakers will need to closely scrutinize their product lineup to meet the standards, which are the most sweeping to the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) system in three decades.

"This is challenging and it won't be easy to meet these standards but manufacturers are committed to being a part of the solution," said Charles Territo, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

Transportation officials estimated the plan would add about \$200 to the cost of each vehicle, but consumers likely would recoup that cost in fuel savings in four years, they said.

The rule would include SUVs weighing 8,500 to 10,000 pounds for the first time starting in 2011, but it would not include large pickup trucks in the weight class. Vehicles likely to be affected include the Hummer H2, Chevrolet Suburban, GMC Yukon XL, and the Ford Expedition EL, scheduled to be released this summer. DOT officials said they would require manufacturers to install fuel saving technology on all passenger trucks.

Environmental groups found the plan disappointing after lobbying for months for higher gas mileage requirements and the inclusion of the largest pickup trucks and SUVs. Eric Haxthausen, an economist with Environmental Defense, compared it to "slowing down the Titanic as it steams ahead toward the iceberg."

"After the Bush administration acknowledged our oil addiction, one might have expected a slam dunk, but this is an air ball," said David Friedman, research director for the Clean Vehicles Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. His group estimated it would only save two weeks of gasoline a year over the next two decades.

The new rules do not apply to passenger cars, which must meet a 27.5 mile per gallon average.

Under the CAFE system, automakers now must meet an average of 21.6 mpg for their 2006 model year light trucks. That average will rise to 22.2 mpg for 2007 vehicles.

Under the new rules, the fleetwide average would reach 24 mpg by 2011, when the largest SUVs will be included in the calculation. The program will be phased in through 2010, with automakers having the option of complying under the old system or using new system.

If automakers use the old system, the targets would be 22.5 mpg in 2008, 23.1 mpg in 2009 and 23.5 mpg in 2010. All manufacturers would need to use the new system in 2011.

The new rule would call for specific fuel economy standards for all light trucks based on the vehicle's wheelbase and track width.

Mineta said the new rules would help close loopholes automakers used in the past to meet the standards and level the playing field for automakers.

Automakers have noted that the final plan will likely mean seven straight years of higher fuel economy requirements for light trucks. The industry has fought previous attempts to raise the standards but has expressed support for the proposal's direction.

Ford spokesman Ed Lewis said it would be "technically challenging" but would "move automakers toward a more level playing field because it recognizes the differences between full-line manufacturers and those who only produce small trucks."

GM spokeswoman Sherrie Childers-Arb said her company looked forward to "carefully reviewing" the new rules.

Reaction in Congress was mixed.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said it "missed an opportunity to break our nation's addiction to oil, reduce our greenhouse gases, and decrease the price of gas at the pump."

Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., a longtime advocate of the auto industry, said, "At first glance it appears to be a challenging standard for the industry that I hope it will be able to achieve."

On the Net: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>.

2.2. Blair cooling on green targets for Kyoto successor

29 March 2006, Times Online

TONY BLAIR was accused last night of caving in to American pressure by proposing a watered-down replacement for the Kyoto Protocol that relies on new technology rather than binding greenhouse gas cuts as the solution to climate change.

The Prime Minister will call today for a new international goal of stabilising temperatures and carbon emissions at present levels when the Kyoto agreement expires in 2012, to be achieved primarily by investment in cleaner energy technologies.

Though the plan will be presented as a way of resolving deadlock over the best way to tackle global warming, it was attacked by environmental groups as a toothless sop to the Bush Administration that would fail unless backed by rigorous targets.

"In attempting to try to bring Bush on board he's moving so far that we might end up without a coherent framework," Mike Childs, of Friends of the Earth, said. "The trouble with saying we need new technology without having targets is that the business community won't invest. It will keep its money in coal, oil and gas."

Mr Blair's proposal, which comes as the Government admitted that it would miss its pledge to reduce carbon dioxide output by 20 per cent of 1990 levels by 2010, will be laid out in a speech to a climate change conference in Wellington, the New Zealand capital.

It is intended to break the international stalemate over the Kyoto Protocol, which sets targets for emissions reductions by rich countries but is repudiated by the US.

A source close to the Prime Minister said it was now clear that Kyoto was a "dead-end street", as it has developed into a religion that countries stand implacably for or against.

Sir David King, Mr Blair's influential Chief Scientific Adviser, has argued that the world should seek to stabilise atmospheric carbon dioxide at 550 parts per million (ppm) by 2050, which he says is an achievable target that would limit the worst impacts of global warming. This goal, however, has been criticised as insufficient by green groups, who point to research suggesting that a maximum level of 400-450 ppm would be needed to confine climate change to 2C (3.6F) of warming.

Mr Blair has accepted that the US will not sign up to a "son of Kyoto" agreement that involves concrete reductions in carbon dioxide emissions, and fears that a failure to agree a new climate pact would be a disaster for the planet.

Peter Ainsworth, the Shadow Environment Secretary, described the new initiative as appalling. He said: "He's taking his cue from George W. Bush. One has a sense of towels being thrown in all over the place."

Michael Roberts, of the CBI, said: "Tony Blair is right to say that technology is important to tackling climate change -- but firm international commitments to cut carbon emissions will also help to drive technological change."

American objections to Kyoto stem from concern about the security of its energy supplies, and the damage that binding carbon emissions cuts might cause to its economy. It has said it will not sign up when two of the world's largest polluters -- China and India -- are not part of the process.

Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, said: "It's very regrettable that the Prime Minister is cooling on targets. Technology is not a substitute for having a clear framework."

CLIMATE IMPACTS

3.1. Climate change big threat to East Asia -World Bank

30 March 2006, Reuters

Climate change is likely to significantly affect economies in the Asia-Pacific region, threatening the increasingly industrialised coastal belt and hurting the region's poor, the World Bank said on Thursday.

Rising sea levels, more intense storms and greater extremes of droughts and floods will probably cause greater loss of life and threaten the livelihoods of millions, the Bank said in a report.

Countries in the region are partly to blame, the Bank said, because of their dependence on fossil fuels, and they needed to do more to promote energy efficiency to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

They also needed to become better adapted to the coming weather extremes to limit the damage and protect livelihoods.

"The region's GDP is likely to be significantly impacted by climate change, albeit in an uneven fashion," said the report, part of the Bank's twice-yearly review of East Asian Economies.

The region, home to about two billion people stretching from tiny Pacific island nations to populous Indonesia and powerhouse China, was also highly vulnerable to climate change.

"Due to its geography, it is one of the regions most at risk from natural disasters," the report adds.

Coastal areas were particularly vulnerable because of the huge investment in infrastructure, such as roads, cities and industrial complexes, and because many of the countries in the region were island nations.

"While the region is still largely rural, most of its GDP and its mega cities, especially in China, are located on the coast -- prime candidates to be impacted by sea level rise and weather-related disasters," it said.

Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia, along with China, could suffer sharp cuts in their gross domestic product as a result of a rise in the sea level, it added, citing a recent study.

Sharing the blame

"While most EAP (East Asia and Pacific) nations contribute minimally to greenhouse gas emissions, the region's industrialised countries are at least in part to blame for the long-run cumulative contribution to climate change.

"Moreover, the rapidly industrialising economies of the region are increasingly responsible for a significant share of current global emissions," the report said.

China, for example, is the world's second largest emitter of carbon dioxide after the United States. Carbon dioxide, produced from burning coal, oil and gas as well as burning forests, is one of the main greenhouse gases.

The region's poor will be badly affected because climate change will affect agriculture, forestry and fisheries, industries that underpin the livelihoods of millions of impoverished people in the region.

Planning for a future filled with greater uncertainty was crucial, the report said.

"A host of actions to adapt and mitigate climate change can be taken which are cost-effective and make economic and environmental sense," it said.

These included greater energy efficiency, increased use of renewable energy such as hydropower, water conservation and planting crops that can withstand drought, salinity and higher temperatures. (WEATHER-ASIA-WORLDBANK; reporting by David Fogarty, editing by Alan Raybould; World Desk Singapore +65 6870 3925).

CONFERENCES

4.1. The Kyoto Protocol and Beyond: a Legal Perspective

This is the first announcement of the conference "The Kyoto Protocol and Beyond: a Legal Perspective" which will take place at the University of Siena, Italy on 9 - 10 June 2006.

The Conference is one of the few international events focusing on the legal and institutional aspects of the Kyoto Protocol implementation and it brings together the most qualified experts worldwide on the subject.

Participation is free of charge. The conference programme and registration form, as well as all relevant information on the event, are available at: <http://www.unisi.it/eventi/kyoto/>.

4.2. Summer 06 Colloquium on Climate & Health

The National Center for Atmospheric research will host its second Summer Colloquium on Climate & Health in July, 2006. This is a week-long workshop targeting recent graduates, young researchers, and/or professionals interested in expanding their research area to focus on issues of climate and health. For further info, and online application <http://www.isse.ucar.edu/climatehealth/> or contact Veronica Wynne, (303)497-8117.

The workshop offers lecture, discussion, and hands-on lab experience with various tools for studying climate-health phenomena. We are hoping to recruit participants from diverse areas of public health.

Those accepted to the colloquium receive airfare/room/board for the workshop.

The application period for the Summer '06 Climate & Health Colloquium begins on February 6 – with an extended deadline of April 7, 2006. ALSO, the date by which we will make acceptance notifications has been moved to April 28, 2006.

4.3. Make Markets Work for Climate

International Conference: 16-17 October 2006 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

On 16-17 October 2006, the Netherlands State Secretary for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment will host the International Conference Make Markets Work for Climate. This two day conference will be held in the historic Tuschinski Theater in the heart of Amsterdam.

Cost-effective measures and financial perspectives:

It is calculated that large investment flows of billions of euros will be generated by the commitment from to international community to further reductions of greenhouse gas emission. The question is how we can create market conditions that stimulate the design of cost-effective policies, that encourage the adoption of new technologies, and at the same time create interesting financial perspectives for developing countries. Financial and market based mechanisms might be a solution to significantly reduce costs. How can we make this work?

What has to change to make markets work:

During the conference, the critical question to be addressed is how we can make markets work more effectively for climate change? Issues that will be discussed are for example:

How can we create new grant and loan mechanisms at the international level to achieve economies of scale?;

Are there greater possibilities to blend public and private finance resources through carbon finance?;

What potential is there to make emissions trading schemes technically compatible to increase trading between parties with and without quantified targets?

Market players as co-organisers:

The World Bank, ABN AMRO and Shell have already agreed each to organise one of the four plenary sessions that will be held. At this moment we are in discussion with a fourth partner from a developing country to complete the program. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development will support the conference as a whole.

High level stakeholders share their views:

We invite participants from both the developed countries and the developing countries. Specially the participation of high ranking officials and CEO's from the energy, environment and financial sector, of governments private and financial organisations. But also policymakers, high level experts and other relevant stakeholders are welcome to attend.

More information: More information on this event will soon be published on the conference website vrom.nl/makemarketwork.

PUBLICATIONS

5.1. National Allocation Plans 2005-7: Do they Deliver? Key Lessons for Phase II of the EU ETS

A summary for policy makers National Allocation Plans 2005-7: Do they Deliver? Key Lessons for Phase II of the EU ETS is now available to download on CAN E website: http://www.climnet.org/EUenergy/ET/NAPsReport_Summary0306.pdf.

5.2. Free online access to ISI journal GAIA

Since 2005, our journal "GAIA - Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society" has been covered by the Institute for Scientific Information's databases (Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and Current Contents/Social and Behavioral Science).

To celebrate this recognition, we are offering free online access to our online archive until May 31st, 2006.

Simply log in at <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/oekom/gaia> using "GAIA_2006" as user name and "undisciplined" as password.

GAIA is a transdisciplinary journal for scientists and other interested parties concerned with the causes and analysis of environmental and sustainability problems and their solutions.

GAIA - Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society publishes original scientific articles on environmental and sustainability research. Keeps you informed about important events in environmental and sustainability research. Reports on the activities of institutions affiliated with GAIA: German Society for Human Ecology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Humanoekologie, DGH), Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres, Austria-Consortium GAIA, Swiss Academic Society for Environmental Research and Ecology (Schweizerische Akademische Gesellschaft für Umweltforschung und Oekologie, SAGUF). Presents and reviews new publications.

More information: <http://www.oekom.de/gaia-english-version.html>.

5.3. Transport and environment: facing a dilemma

EEA Report No 3/2006, published at: http://reports.eea.eu.int/eea_report_2006_3.

Abstract: This report represents a summary of 10 selected issues from the EEA's TERM (transport and environment reporting mechanism) set of transport and environment integration indicators. The objective is to indicate some of the main challenges to reducing the environmental impacts of transport, and to make suggestions for improving the environmental performance of the transport system as a whole. The report examines 10 key issues which need to be addressed in the coming years. These issues are derived from seven policy questions that form the backbone of TERM. As with previous TERM reports, this report evaluates the indicator trends in terms of progress towards existing objectives and targets. This is carried out using EU policy documents and various transport and environmental directives.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

6.1. Invitation for comments – JI project in Bulgaria

the Certification Body "Climate and Energy " of TÜV SÜD Industrie Service GmbH realizes a determination of the Bulgarian Small Hydro Power Plant (SHPP) portfolio.

Purpose and short description:

The project consists of a portfolio of three run of river SHPPs with a total installed capacity of 6.34 MW. The project will not only result in a reduction in the generation of GHGs sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and dust are emitted during generation of electricity from fossil fuels. The implementation of the SHPP portfolio will generate renewable electricity and displace conventional thermal electricity production. Therefore, there is also a reduction of the mentioned gases associated.

We invite all parties, stakeholders and observers in accordance with the JI rules and modalities to comment on the project on our webpage:

http://www.netinform.net/KE/Wegweiser/Guide2.aspx?ID=1606&Ebene1_ID=26&Ebene2_ID=445&m ode=0.

This project will be open for comments within the next 30 days - from March 28 to April 26, 2006.

6.2. Invitation for comments – JI project Coal Mine Methane Utilisation

TÜV NORD JI/CDM Certification Program has been commissioned to carry out the Validation of the Project "Methane Capture and Power Generation from Coal Mine Methane in the Concession HER-FRIED".

Project description:

The project "Methane Capture and Power Generation from Coal Mine Methane in the Concession HER-FRIED" aims to reduce GHG emissions by the recovery of coal mine methane (CMM) from the closed coal mine 'Friedrich der Große' to use it as fuel for three gas engines to produce electrical power.

Degassing of Coal Mine Gas (CMM) is an unavoidable occurrence of hard coal mining. In addition to active coal mines there are a lot of abandoned mines, which also emit CMM after mining. Even after shut down mining activities the CMM escapes over many years through open shafts, cracks and existing degassing wells in the overburden directly or diffusely into the atmosphere. CMM mainly consists of the harmful greenhouse gas methane (GWP 21), so that using of CMM becomes more important particularly with regard to the world-wide consensus of reducing green-house-gas emissions.

In the German Ruhr district there are industrial hard coal mining activities for more than hundred years. In the whole area there are more than 100 known shafts. The coal-mine-methane captured in this project would otherwise escape directly through cracks and fissures diffuse through the overburden rocks into the atmosphere. The project couples the production of power with the conversion of the 21 time stronger green-house-gas methane into carbon dioxide.

According to the modalities for the validation of JI projects, we invite all interested parties, stakeholders and observers to comment on the project. The PDD can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.global-warming.de/e/1486/>.

The project is open for comments from 2006-03-30 on for 30 days.

