



Slow Progress in Poznan While Climate Threats Mount

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The annual UN climate change conference ended shortly before 3:00 am today in Poznan with a commitment from governments to shift into full negotiating mode next year in order to shape an effective international response to climate change, to be agreed in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

Negotiators agreed that the board of the Kyoto Protocol's Adaptation Fund would have the legal capacity to grant developing countries direct access to about \$60 million to help them adapt to the effects of global warming.

Until now, the Adaptation Fund board could not operate because it was not allowed to approve and sign such contracts.

The Adaptation Fund is fed by voluntary contributions and a two percent share of proceeds from the protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.

The CDM allows the industrial nations governed by the protocol to receive credit towards their emissions limits by investing in green projects in developing countries.

But governments were unable to reach consensus on scaling up funding for adaptation by agreeing to put a levy on the other two Kyoto Protocol mechanisms, Joint Implementation and Emissions Trading.

Progress was made in the area of technology with the endorsement of the Global Environment Facility's "Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer."

The aim of this program is to scale up the level of investment by leveraging private investments that developing countries need for climate mitigation and adaptation technologies.

"We will now move to the next level of negotiations, which involves crafting a concrete negotiating text for the agreed outcome," said the president of the conference, Polish Environment Minister Maciej Nowicki.

Parties agreed that a first draft of the negotiating text would be available at a gathering of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn in June 2009.

"In addition to having agreed the work program for next year, we have cleared the decks of many technical issues," Nowicki said. "Poznan is the place where the partnership between the developing and developed world to fight climate change has shifted beyond rhetoric and turned into real action," he said.

Polish President Lech Kaczynski emphasized the need to alleviate poverty and address climate change, and highlighted the EU's leading role in combating climate change as one of the best expressions of solidarity.

Governments meeting under the Kyoto Protocol agreed that commitments of industrialized countries after 2012 should take the form of quantified emission limitation and reduction targets, similar to the type of targets they have undertaken during first five-year commitment period 2008 - 2012.

"Governments have sent a strong political signal that despite the financial and economic crisis, significant funds can be mobilized for both mitigation and adaptation in developing countries with the help of a clever financial architecture and the institutions to deliver the financial support," said Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UNFCCC.

"We now have a much clearer sense of where we need to go in designing an outcome which will spell out the commitments of developed countries, the financial support required and the institutions that will deliver that support as part of the Copenhagen outcome," he said.

"Mauritania is already in the grip of a triple stranglehold: a growing desert, encroaching ocean and worsening floods," he said. "The Maldives are saving up for exodus because of rising seas."

"President-elect [Barack] Obama wants to return to 1990 levels by 2020. The EU is assuring us that it will stick to minus 20 percent by 2020. And there is more. By 2020, Norway intends to be at minus 30 percent, the United Kingdom has committed to minus 26 percent and Sweden is discussing a target of minus 35 percent," he said.

Regardless of a financial crisis or an economic down-turn, climate change will not slow down, said de Boer. "And when the world has recovered from the economic recession, it will not have recovered from climate change."

De Boer suggests that governments should aim for, "A self-financing climate compact, using resources created through climate regulations, for example through levies on emissions trading or auctioning of emissions permits can further push that green growth."

A joint ministerial declaration was launched in Poznan today to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation.

The statement commits a number of developed and key tropical developing countries to take early action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, a process known as REDD, in the developing world.

"Tropical deforestation is a major source of the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing global warming, so action on this is essential under the global climate agreement which the international community must conclude at the end of next year," said European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas who endorsed the declaration. "The European Commission has proposed the creation of an international financial mechanism to reward developing countries for their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation," Dimas said.

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, who shared last year's Nobel Peace Prize for raising awareness of climate change, urged the conference to stay focused on reducing the global carbon emissions that have already begun to change the conditions of life on Earth.

Gore warned the ministers to strengthen their carbon emission reduction targets to take account of growing evidence that global warming will strike harder and sooner than scientists had previously thought.

He called for a new global goal of limiting carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million (ppm) - current levels are already over 380ppm, up from 280ppm before the Industrial Revolution.

"I call on the people of the world to speak up more forcefully," Gore said. "We need to focus clearly and unblinkingly on this crisis rather than spending so much time on OJ Simpson, Paris Hilton and Anna Nicole Smith."

This challenge "affects the survival of human civilization," Gore said.

"We cannot negotiate with the facts, we cannot negotiate with the truth about our situation, we cannot negotiate with the consequences of unrestrained dumping of 70 million tons of global warming pollution into the thin shell of atmosphere surrounding our planet every 24 hours," he said.

While he was not in Poznan, the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States brought hope that the U.S. position of denial and delay over the past eight years of the Bush administration would soon give way to greater cooperation from the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter.

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said, "My representatives in Poland tell me that there is a new commitment to address the challenge of global warming after the U.S. election. This is very positive for the future of the planet and an opportunity to spur economic recovery with the investment in clean energy and green jobs."

Addressing the ministers gathered for the start of the high-level session on Thursday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for renewed global solidarity to tackle the twin challenges of climate change and the financial crisis.

The world cannot afford to let economic woes hinder progress on "the defining challenge of our era," said Ban. "The world is watching us. The next generation is counting on us. We must not fail."

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