



## **Climate Change Conference in Bali Officially Kicks Off New Round of Negotiations 17 December 2007**

Discussions over the aims and timing of a new global climate change treaty have wrapped up in Bali after two weeks of often turbulent bargaining. The next step will be two years of negotiations over the new treaty itself, which will become a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. As Chad Bouchard reports from Jakarta, thousands of delegates took part in the United Nations-sponsored conference, to discuss the man-made emissions that most scientists believe are changing the earth's climate.

After an unscheduled 13th day of debate, Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar, concluded the talks in Bali Saturday with a bang of his gavel.

"I declare the conference of the parties at its 13th session to be adjourned," he announced. The talks were held up in their final hours over subjects that will certainly be debated long and hard before a new climate change treaty is enacted: the question of specific targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and whether rich countries will pay developing nations to help them rein in their emissions.

The so-called "road map" that came out of the Bali conference was deliberately vague on both questions, leaving hard work ahead for the negotiators.

Still, the Bali road map has successfully put into motion two years of negotiations on a new international agreement to fight global warming.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had urged the 10,000 delegates gathered in Bali from 190 countries to act fast.

"This is the moral challenge of our generation," he noted. "Not only are the eyes of the world upon us. More important, succeeding generations depend on us. We cannot rob our children of their future."

Ban said an agreement limiting emissions should be comprehensive, and should enlist the participation of both poor and wealthy nations.

"Our atmosphere can't tell the difference between emissions from an Asian factory, the exhaust from a North American SUV, or deforestation in South America or Africa," he said.

The major topic of contention was whether emission reduction targets should be included in the Bali road map, or whether they should be agreed on between now and the end of 2009.

Scientists say that in order to avert the worst effects of global warming, average world temperatures must not be allowed to rise more than two degrees over what they were in pre-industrial times.

In order to reach that goal, countries and environmentalists led by the European Union wanted the road map to specify sharp reductions in emissions: by the year 2020, they wanted emissions to be 25 to 40 percent lower than they were in 1990.

A group led by the United States, and including Canada, Japan and Saudi Arabia, strenuously opposed including concrete reduction targets.

In the final days of the conference, the EU-U.S. debate grew heated. Delegates said the U.S. was obstructing the talks. Portuguese Environment Minister Humberto Rosa had a "clear and sharp message" to deliver to Washington.

"We very much welcome the engagement of the U.S., even the leadership that President Bush has said he wants the U.S. to have on climate change," he said. "But the problem is we cannot here in Bali just state it, just the words of engagement and leadership and ambition or urgency. We must understand, what does that mean?"

U.S. delegation member James Connaughton, the chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, replied that those insisting on specific numbers in the road map were the ones doing the real obstructing.

"That in itself is a blocking effort," he said. "We need to free up this conversation so we can have the deliberation to buy as much consensus and as much collective, constructive engagement as we can. That will provide a lasting and agreed outcome when we reach the end of this process in 2009."

There was talk of issuing the road map without U.S. support, but it was argued that a climate change effort without the participation of the U.S., one of the top emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, would be meaningless. A compromise was reached in which emissions targets were made into a footnote at the end of the document.

The road map does call for global man-made emissions to peak in the next 15 years, and for emission levels recorded in 2000 to be cut in half by 2050. It also promotes a plan enabling wealthy countries to pay poor countries to keep remaining forests intact.

Deforestation accounts for at least 20 percent of the world's carbon emissions, according to the U.N. A number of plans for halting the destruction of forest have been put forward, including one called REDD: Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries.

At the conference, World Bank President Robert Zoellick announced a \$300 million pilot program to put the REDD program into action.

"The Kyoto treaty did not recognize emissions benefits of developing countries to work to reduce deforestation," he said. "So this pilot can show the benefit of including such activities in the new agreement to be negotiated."

Convention delegates agreed on how to manage the Adaptation Fund, which is financed from carbon trading markets sponsored by the U.N. The fund will help developing nations adapt to the effects of global warming, such as flooding and drought.

Negotiators also agreed to transfer more clean energy technologies from developed countries to other nations.

Further conferences to discuss the new climate pact are scheduled for Warsaw next year, and Copenhagen in 2009.

Source: [www.voanews.com](http://www.voanews.com)