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Diplomats Begin Work on Climate Accord

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BONN, Germany -- Developing countries called for more money and expertise to help them fight the potentially catastrophic effects of global warming, as more than 1,000 diplomats began work Monday on a new accord to control greenhouse gases.

The 166 countries and organizations at a two-week meeting of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn are to negotiate key elements of a treaty to succeed the 10-year-old Kyoto Protocol, which set binding targets on industrial countries to cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases believed to cause global warming.

The Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012, and delegates said a new accord should be in place within two years to move smoothly into a new regime of controls.

Ideas raised at the preliminary meeting in Bonn will be put before a larger meeting in December in Bali, Indonesia, when U.N. officials hope to launch formal negotiations on a post-Kyoto treaty.

That treaty also should draw in the United States, the world's largest polluter, which refused to accept the mandatory limits of the Kyoto system, and emerging giants like India and China, which were exempted from Kyoto obligations, U.N. officials say.

It is the first time government climate delegations are meeting since the U.N.-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued a spate of reports this year, drawing on the studies of some 2,500 scientists, which predict grim consequences of global warming if swift action is not taken.

The reports warned that climate changes will hit poor countries hardest — less rain in arid areas like northern Africa and more severe floods in river deltas like Bangladesh. Millions of poor people will suffer from greater hunger, thirst and disease, and as much as 30 percent of species will be threatened with extinction.

But in its latest report, released Friday, the IPCC said the means and technology exists to prevent the worst, provided governments move quickly to commit the resources.

Following the IPCC reports, which were six years in the making, "there is increasing sense of urgency and of a need to move forward," said Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention and the top U.N. climate official.

De Boer said environment ministers will informally meet twice before the Bali convention to get a better understanding of how that meeting will take shape.

"What you traditionally find in the run-up to an important negotiating moment is that not everybody

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is willing to put their cards on the table," he said.

German delegate Nicole Wilke, speaking for the European Union, told the conference's opening session that global carbon emissions should peak within 10 to 15 years, and afterward should move toward a 50 percent decrease.

She reiterated the EU's commitment to reduce emissions by 30 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, as long as other countries join in that target. At the very least, she said, Europe would slash emissions by 20 percent within 13 years.

Wilke called for expanding Europe's carbon trading market, allowing countries and industries to buy and sell carbon credits to give financial incentives for curbing emissions.

Pakistan, speaking on behalf of 77 developing countries plus China, put the onus on the industrial countries to increase funding and technology help.

Though the world faces a common goal, countries must meet them according to their "respective capabilities," Pakistani delegate Jamil Ahmad said. That meant deep emissions cuts by the developed world and helping less capable countries build their capacity to adapt to new weather conditions.

The industrial world must "move significantly beyond the current institutional and financial arrangements," Ahmad said.

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