

World given deadline on climate change

By Charles Clover, Environment Editor, and Sebastien Berger in Bangkok

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World leaders will have to agree the shape of a "son of Kyoto" treaty before the end of the year if the most catastrophic effects of climate change are to be averted, UN officials said yesterday.

They were speaking after scientists and officials from 120 countries agreed in Bangkok that the world has the technology and can afford to tackle the effects of climate change - provided it begins immediately.

Envoys sent out by the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-Moon, have begun seeking advance agreement from heads of state on the principles of a post-2012 climate change treaty, negotiations which begin at a meeting in Indonesia in December.

The secretary-general's latest initiative comes after a new consensus on what could be done was agreed by scientists and officials, including those from the US, China and the European Union.

The prompt adoption of biofuels, renewable energy sources, greater energy efficiency and nuclear power can slow down what would otherwise be a worldwide disaster, said the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's working group.

advertisement Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the 2,000-strong network of UN scientists and energy experts, said of the final summary of its report: "It's stunning in its brilliance and relevance. It's a remarkable step forward."

He said the report would have a "profound" effect on ministers attending the negotiations in Indonesia later this year - which will include the US even though it is not a member of the Kyoto treaty.

David Miliband, the Environment Secretary, said after the report was published: "Without a new global deal on climate change, emissions of greenhouse gases will continue to increase. That's why we're pushing hard for negotiations to start on a new global climate deal this year and are working through the G8 group of nations and the UN climate change conference."

Ogunlade Davidson, co-chairman of the group that wrote the report, said: "If we continue what we are doing now, we are in deep trouble."

Coming out of the meeting early yesterday, delegates said science appeared to have trumped politics - especially opposition from China, which wanted to condone a greater build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere before action would be taken.

Beijing and its supporters had argued that moves to make deep cuts in carbon dioxide emissions risked stifling its spectacular economic growth, delegates said.



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China failed to remove mention of a stringent emission target. The Chinese delegation could not be reached for comment.

Yvo de Boer, the UN's most senior climate change official, said: "One of the key sectors in terms of mitigation is the energy supply sector. More than two thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions come from this sector.

"The way in which the future energy needs are met will determine whether the efforts to address climate change will remain manageable."

The head of the US delegation, Harlan Watson said: "The US leads the world in deploying a range of technologies that scientific and economic experts have now agreed can provide a global solution to reduce emissions and sustain economic growth."

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