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UN hails G8 as step towards global climate deal

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By Alister Doyle

HEILIGENDAMM, Germany (Reuters) - The United Nations hailed a Group of Eight plan for fighting climate change agreed at a summit on Thursday as a step towards a broader, worldwide pact by 2009.

"It's a very positive outcome," Yvo de Boer, the head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat in Bonn, told Reuters of decisions reached by G8 leaders.

"It augurs very well for the conference of parties in Bali," he said, referring to a U.N. meeting in Indonesia in December that will look for long-term ways to combat climate change beyond 2012.

Leaders at the G8 summit in Germany agreed to seek "substantial" cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly from burning fossil fuels, and to launch talks in Bali to reach a global U.N.-led agreement by 2009.

"We have a clear starting moment and a clear finish," de Boer said in a telephone interview. De Boer cautioned, however, that other countries would also have to agree to a launch of negotiations in Bali.

They include developing nations led by China and India whose emissions are soaring as their economies boom.

De Boer praised President George W. Bush for agreeing to seek cuts in emissions and to convene talks among top emitters, even though Bush blocked European hopes of calling for a 50 percent cut in world emissions below 1990 levels by 2050.

"I think that by doing what he has done the president has put himself and his country back in a leadership position," de Boer said.

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