



G8 Ministers Discuss Climate Change, Successor to Kyoto Treaty

By Alex Morales

March 17 (Bloomberg) -- Environment ministers from the Group of Eight nations and five key developing countries began talks on climate change and the shape of a successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions-limiting provisions end in 2012.

The talks should lay the groundwork for December's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference in Bali, Indonesia, said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer. Yesterday, ministers agreed to produce a study by 2008 on the economic impact of the world's loss of biodiversity.

"I would be very happy if this meeting were to lead to a shared sense of what the direction of the post-2012 agreement should be and the timetable to begin talking about that," de Boer said yesterday in an interview in Potsdam, near Berlin.

Environmental groups including Greenpeace are seeking bigger cuts in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to help avert the worst ravages of climate change. Scientists have said global warming is causing sea-levels to rise, storms to intensify, and droughts and floods to become more frequent.

Under Kyoto, 35 nations and the European Union committed to reduce emissions by a combined 5 percent over the five years ending in 2012, from 1990 levels. The world's largest emitter, the U.S., cited economic reasons for not signing up, while large developing nations such as India and China don't have targets.

"A future agreement where you need much further-reaching cuts than now would be pretty much meaningless without the U.S. on board," de Boer said.

The U.S. has focused on bilateral agreements and so-called intensity targets, or reducing the amount of emissions per unit of economic output, a policy that has their total emissions on course to be 30 percent higher in 2012 than in 1990.

U.S. Key to Success

U.K. Environment Secretary David Miliband said yesterday in an interview with reporters in Potsdam that it's a question of "when, not if" the U.S. signs up to a global deal to cut emissions, and that "it's not going to succeed without them."

EU leaders this month agreed to cut emissions 20 percent by 2020, and 30 percent if other rich nations such as the U.S. sign up. Miliband four days ago proposed legislation in the U.K. that would commit Britain to emissions reductions of 26 percent to 32 percent by 2020 and 60 percent by 2050.

The EU pledge provides "the kind of leadership from industrialized countries that developing countries are looking for," de Boer said, adding that a Kyoto successor will need "a mechanism of differentiated commitments for different types of country."

China, India

Asked about China and India, the UNFCCC chief said: "it would be very encouraging if we could find ways that provide them with incentives to limit the growth of their emissions. I don't think you could realistically expect them to reduce their emissions because they have other priorities like economic growth and poverty eradication."

The G-8 is an international forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan,

Russia, the U.K. and the U.S. The five major developing nations are Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

The study into the economic cost of the loss of plant and animal species arising from human activities, which was agreed yesterday by the G8+5, will be similar to the U.K.'s Stern review on climate change, published last year by former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern, ministers said.

Today's talks on climate and energy began at 9:30 a.m. local time and a press conference is scheduled for 12:25 p.m.

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Last Updated: March 17, 2007 05:48 EDT



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