

Bolivian says climate talks may commit 'ecocide'

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Environmental activists from 350.org, left, demonstrate before the cameras of journalists during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico, Thursday Dec. 9, 2010. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)

(AP) -- Bolivia's President Evo Morales, addressing a U.N. climate conference with modest goals, said Thursday that governments will be committing "ecocide" if they fail to act decisively to halt global warming.

It will be a "failure on the part of the powers of the world, not the peoples, because we need to adopt texts that do not allow further warming of the Earth," Morales told delegates to the two-week conference, which ends on Friday.

The Bolivians lead a group of dissident, left-leaning Latin American governments at the annual U.N. talks, and have complained in particular about closed consultations limited to a select number of delegations.

Morales echoed that complaint in a passionate, 20-minute speech, raising questions anew about whether his Bolivarian coalition of nations will block consensus on items before the assembly.

Citing families deprived of water because of warming and [drought](#), and islanders facing the loss of homes from seas rising from [global warming](#), Morales said that if governments move away from strong, mandatory emissions reductions, "then we will be responsible for 'ecocide,' which is equivalent to genocide because this would be an affront to mankind as a whole."

This year again, the U.N. talks will fail to produce an overarching deal to slash emissions of global warming gases. From the start, the talks focused instead on reaching agreement in secondary areas under the 193-nation U.N. [climate treaty](#).

Delegates haggled and cajoled in search of compromise on a raft of issues, including whether industrial nations should generate \$100 billion a year, or up to six times as much, to help poorer countries cope with global warming.

Setting up such a "green fund" would top the list of accomplishments in Cancun, and late Wednesday, the special climate envoy of host Mexico foresaw success.

"Our expectation is it will be decided at Cancun," said Luis Alfonso de Alba.

Earlier, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, leading a discussion on

climate financing, described the fund as "crucial for building trust between the developed and developing world," trust that U.N. officials hope could eventually pave the way to a comprehensive climate deal.

Last year's climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, was supposed to have produced a global pact under which richer nations, and possibly some poorer ones, would be required to rein in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases emitted by industry, vehicles and agriculture.

That agreement would have succeeded the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which mandated modest emissions reductions by developed nations that expire in 2012. Alone in the industrial world, the U.S. rejected Kyoto, complaining that emerging economies, such as China and India, should also have taken on obligations.

The 2009 summit produced instead a "Copenhagen Accord" under which the U.S., China and more than 80 other nations made voluntary pledges to reduce emissions, or at least to limit their growth.

In a sign of the sensitivity of even voluntary pledges, the U.S. and China are squabbling in Cancun over an effort to "anchor" them in a fresh U.N. document. The Chinese want separate listings to maintain a distinction between developing and developed countries, and the Americans want a single integrated list.

The green fund would help developing nations buy advanced clean-energy technology to reduce their own emissions, and to adapt to climate change, by building seawalls against rising seas, for example, and upgrading farming practices to compensate for shifting rain patterns.

Developing nations view such finance not as aid but as compensation for the looming damage from two centuries of northern industrial emissions. They consider inadequate the goal set in the Copenhagen Accord for the

fund, of \$100 billion a year by 2020, and propose instead that richer countries commit 1.5 percent of their annual gross domestic product - today roughly \$600 billion a year.

Developed nations have resisted such ambitious targets, and also objected to language indicating most of the fund's money should come from direct government contributions.

A U.N. high-level panel last month said the greatest contributions to long-term climate financing should come from private investment and from "carbon pricing," either a direct tax broadly on emissions tonnage from power plants and other industrial sources or a system of auctioning off emissions allowances that could be traded among industrial emitters.

Either route would make it economical for enterprises to minimize emissions, and would produce revenue. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the panel's co-chairman, said his group recommends that at least 90 percent of such revenues flow to domestic budgets and the remainder to the global fund.

The U.S. has been a major holdout against such carbon pricing plans, however, and the impending Republican takeover of the House of Representatives all but guarantees none will be enacted in the U.S. for at least two years.

The U.N. advisers also see possible revenue sources in a tax or trading system for fuel emissions of international airliners and merchant ships, or a fee on air tickets, with a potential for \$10 billion a year.

They also suggested a possible levy on foreign-exchange transactions, and removal of government subsidies of fossil fuels, with the money redirected to a climate fund. They estimated each of those might also produce \$10 billion annually.

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