

# UN climate talks in focus at Davos forum

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South Africa's President Jacob Zuma, left, and Mexico's President Felipe Calderon participate in a session on Climate Change at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Thursday, Jan. 27, 2011. Focus shifts on Thursday to the future of the euro and the issue of climate change. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

(AP) -- Businesses, especially U.S. ones, must get more involved in the global effort to slow climate change and help pressure politicians to enact policies that promote green growth, international leaders said Thursday.

"They are part of the problem and they must be part of the solution," South African President Jacob Zuma said at the World Economic Forum.

In a panel discussion at Davos, where some 2,500 business leaders and politicians are gathered, he vowed to press for a greater corporate role in the U.N. [climate talks](#) that his country will host in the coastal city of Durban later this year.

"I think that's one of the areas we are going to work very hard leading to Durban to convince business to be party so that it's not just governments alone," Zuma said, sharing the stage with Mexico President Felipe Calderon, European Union Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard and U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres.

There is serious concern about how to keep the [global economy](#) moving forward while, at the same time, ensuring that people in the developing world are not denied a chance to better their lives without contributing to factors that have caused global warming.

Hedegaard said that governments can provide the right conditions for green growth, but "the solutions have to come from business."

"That is why setting the political targets are so crucial because then we can set a price on carbon," she said. "If it costs a lot to pollute a lot, then business has an incentive to pollute less."

She noted that President [Barack Obama](#) didn't mention climate change or global warming in his State of the Union address "because of the political situation." But she implored U.S. businesses to be bolder in embracing more energy-efficient economies.

"It's bad business to not be among the front-runners," she said. "I hope that even more American business people would understand that they need to put the pressure on their politicians."

Calderon said very little can be achieved without U.S. involvement, and

he called for a change in American public opinion on global warming.

"My perception is most of the people in the United States are afraid about the economic situation," he said. "They perceive this issue of climate change like an obstacle for their own progress. And we need to change that perception."

China, which has overtaken the U.S. as the biggest greenhouse gas emitter, has now realized it makes economic sense for it to become more energy efficient, Figueres said.

"China is committed to winning the green race," she said. "And honestly they are not doing it just because they want to save the planet. They are doing it because it's good for the economy."

The discussion comes after global talks on a new climate pact escaped failure last month in the Mexican resort town of Cancun, where nations agreed on a modest set of decisions that put climate change negotiations back on track after the bitterly divisive summit in 2009 in Copenhagen.

The Copenhagen talks exposed the rift between rich and poor nations on the fundamental question of how to share the responsibility of tackling [climate change](#) - chiefly curbing the emissions of heat-trapping gases from the burning of fossil fuels.

Copenhagen produced only a nonbinding accord with voluntary climate targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions that wasn't even formally adopted by the conference.

At Cancun, nations brought those voluntary pledges into the U.N. negotiating process and established a green fund to manage the \$100 billion a year by 2020 that developed countries have pledged to help poor nations cope with global warming.

But the ultimate goal of crafting a new global climate pact was put off till the next climate conference in Durban or beyond. The main issue that remains to be resolved is the legal status of such a treaty: Should the commitments inscribed in it be compulsory?

China and India oppose legally binding emissions targets, saying that would hobble the economic growth they need to lift millions of citizens out of poverty. For its part, the U.S. says it would only consider binding commitments if China and India do the same.

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