

US presses green growth in Asia

May 18 2011



US Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke speaks at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Big Sky, Montana. Warning that the era of cheap fuel was over, the United States on Wednesday called for Pacific Rim economies to knock down trade barriers to spur growth in clean energy.

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President Barack Obama's administration, which faces domestic opposition on climate change, is putting a high priority on the environment as the United States this year chairs the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Meeting senior APEC trade officials at the snow-covered ski resort of Big Sky, Montana, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said that millions of green jobs are waiting to be created from the factory floor to the

construction sector.

"In the next few decades, world economies will need to rebuild and reinvent virtually every industrial activity -- from power generation and transportation to manufacturing and construction -- all to succeed in an energy environment that looks drastically different from the one that we're used to," Locke said.

"For well over 100 years, much of the world enjoyed two luxuries that helped propel the greatest burst of sustained economic growth in human history.

"[Fossil fuels](#) were cheap and abundant. And number two: we either didn't know about or didn't care about impact to our planet from [greenhouse gas emissions](#) caused by burning those fuels," he said.

"Those days are over."

But Locke said that clean energy needed entrepreneurs -- and that the [Asia-Pacific region](#) had too many barriers to trade.

He pointed to US concerns about lack of protection for intellectual property, along with transportation costs, customs clearance delays and lack of access to financing.

APEC includes rising powers in clean energy including China, which has surpassed the United States as the top investor in [green technology](#) even as its [carbon emissions](#) keep soaring forward.

Obama's rivals in the Republican Party gained ground in congressional elections last year and are deeply suspicious about action on climate change, with many saying that it would prove too costly at a time of high oil prices and unemployment.

Locke said that clean jobs were real and criticized those who are "deriding green jobs as little more than a marketing tool contrived by environmentalists."

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Citation: US presses green growth in Asia (2011, May 18) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-05-green-growth-asia.html>

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