

Expiry of emissions pact in 2012 bedevils talks

June 6 2011, By ARTHUR MAX , Associated Press



In this June 1, 2011 photo released Saturday, June 4, 2011 by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), workers inspect equipments inside the cesium absorption tower, part of the radioactive water processing facilities at Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in Okuma, Fukushima prefecture, northeastern Japan. The Japanese utility battling to bring its radiation-spewing nuclear reactor under control said Sunday, July 5, 2011 that 1,500 more tons of radioactive water are being moved into temporary storage in the processing facilities, the latest attempt to prevent a massive spill of contaminated water into the environment. (AP Photo/Tokyo Electric Power Co.) EDITORIAL USE ONLY

(AP) -- Climate negotiators are exploring "constructive and creative" solutions so that wealthy countries keep trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions even when binding commitments expire next year, the U.N. climate chief said Monday.

The expiry in 2012 of the 1997 [Kyoto Protocol](#), which bound nearly 40 countries to specific [emission reductions](#) targets, looms as delegates from 184 nations seek agreement now on combating global warming.

Hopes for an overarching climate accord, which fell flat at 2009 Copenhagen [climate summit](#), remain dim as negotiators in Bonn spend the next two weeks preparing for another major [climate conference](#) in Durban, South Africa, starting Nov. 28.

A key obstacle is the fate of the Kyoto protocol.

Countries generally have fallen into camps of rich and poor on the issue. Developing countries insist the Kyoto obligations be extended and new targets adopted. [Industrial countries](#) say they want [emerging economies](#) to accept similar binding commitments.

Three countries that fell under the Kyoto mandate - Japan, Canada and Russia - have said they will not renew their commitments after they expire in 2012. The United States was never part of Kyoto.

But Christiana Figueres, head of the U.N. climate change secretariat, said negotiators are trying to move outside of the rich-poor boxes.

"Countries are being much more constructive and creative," she told reporters at the start of a two-week negotiating session. "We don't know yet where it's going to lead, but there is a very healthy atmosphere of really listening to each other."

Most countries want to find a formula that also embraces the United States, but the U.S. delegation affirmed it would accept treaty commitments only if developing countries like China and India do as well.

"The U.S. is committed to a legally binding outcome that would engage all major economies," said Jonathan Pershing, the chief delegate. "We are not committed to any outcome which would only obligate developed countries ... nor are we committed to an empty agreement merely for the sake of an agreement."

In a sign of the complexity of the talks, the formal start of the conference was delayed by more than half a day while delegates haggled over the agenda, with several countries insisting on the inclusion of their special interests.

Saudi Arabia, for example, wanted a discussion on how it could be compensated for the loss of oil revenue.

The U.S. delegation wanted more work done on verifying that countries meet their commitments. That issue, pitting the U.S. against China, nearly caused the collapse of the last year's conference in Cancun, Mexico, before a skeleton deal was done.

"By Durban, we should have guidelines developed for reporting and verification," Pershing said. He linked progress on "transparency" with finalizing a Green Climate Fund, a \$100 billion annual payment to developing countries to help them adapt to climate change and move toward low-carbon economies.

The deal struck in Cancun, he said, was "a balanced package which included financing and transparency."

Reports of record high [greenhouse gas emissions](#) and unprecedented carbon levels in the atmosphere added a sense of urgency to the talks.

The International Energy Agency said energy-related carbon emissions last year reached record levels - more than 30 gigatons, or 5 percent

more than the previous peak in 2008. Experts had predicted the financial crisis that caused a sharp dip in emissions in 2009 would continue in 2010.

The Paris-based agency said the figures were "a serious setback" to hopes of limiting the rise in the Earth's average temperature to 2 degrees Celsius (3.8 F) above preindustrial levels.

Another report by the U.S. government monitoring station in Mauna Loa, Hawaii, recorded carbon levels in May of 395 parts per million, compared with 290 at the beginning of the industrial revolution 150 years ago. Scientists believe atmospheric concentration of carbon is trapping the Earth's heat and causing it to gradually warm.

Also contributing to the apprehension was uncertainty over Japan's future energy policy, and whether it will adhere to its pledge to reduce emissions by 25 percent after a March 11 tsunami triggered an ongoing nuclear disaster at its Fukushima Daii-ichi plant.

Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan last week reaffirmed its pledge to reduce emissions. But a Japanese delegate at the Bonn talks said the target was likely to be dropped.

Japan's 120 million people produce 4 percent of the world's emissions, and the country is considered a key player at the [climate](#) talks.

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Expiry of emissions pact in 2012 bedevils talks (2011, June 6) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-06-expiry-emissions-pact-bedevils.html>

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.