

UN meeting: help nations adapt to global warming

30 August 2009, By ELIANE ENGELER , Associated Press Writer



Environmental activists display effigies of, from left to right, U.S. President Barack Obama, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi during a demonstration calling for the world leaders to take immediate action against climate change in Jakarta, Indonesia, Saturday, Aug. 29, 2009. The demonstration marked the hundred days countdown to the U.N. climate change summit that will be held in Copenhagen in December. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara)

(AP) -- As nations negotiate tough decisions on cutting greenhouse gases, the United Nations is holding a separate conference on coping with more floods, droughts and other effects of climate change already assured.

The World Climate Conference - which avoids the political pitfall of discussing cuts to [carbon emissions](#) - aims to make sure poor countries have the same access to climate data as rich ones, and that the information is shared among scientists and governments worldwide.

A large U.S. delegation is attending, eager to impress with the new Obama administration's commitment to combatting climate change.

"Climate change is real," said delegation leader Jane Lubchenco, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "It is

happening now, in our backyards and around the globe."

Delegates to the five-day conference starting Monday in Geneva hope to set up a Global Framework for Climate Services to ensure that early warnings for tsunamis and hurricanes reach everybody and that farmers in remote African regions know about upcoming droughts and floods.

Lubchenco said decision-makers would require reliable information about the current and projected impacts of climate change.

Many countries, however, lack information about even their own climates.

"Hydrological networks in Africa are totally insufficient," said meeting host Michel Jarraud, head of the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization. "Many water basins are managed without any information about precipitation and run-off amount of water in the underground water table."

Governments across the globe are facing a December deadline for separate U.N. talks aimed at forging a new accord to replace the 1997 [Kyoto Protocol](#) on reducing greenhouse gases blamed for [global warming](#) and [climate change](#). Organizers of the Dec. 7-18 U.N. meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, hope to reach an agreement on limiting the warming of the Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above levels 150 years ago.

"Even if Copenhagen is very successful in making decisions on the mitigation of greenhouse gases, there will still be a certain amount of warming" to which the world will have to adapt, Jarraud said.

Rising sea levels may prompt some countries to build more dikes, relocate inhabitants from low-lying islands and ensure health services can cope

with diseases such as malaria that may spread, he said.

This week's World Climate Conference brings together about 15 heads of state, including those from Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Togo, as well as 80 ministers from various governments. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is to speak Wednesday.

The conference, costing some 4.5 million Swiss francs (\$4.2 million), was sponsored by several countries, including Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The United States contributed \$500,000, while Switzerland put in 1.8 million francs (\$1.7 million).

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