

Climate talks resume in Bangkok with deal in doubt

26 September 2009, By MICHAEL CASEY , AP Environmental Writer



FILE - In this Saturday, May 2, 2009 file photo, a villager holding umbrella to protect himself from sun, walks over parched land on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, India. Two years ago, the world's governments came together on the island of Bali and agreed they had to rein in the heat-trapping gases that were being blamed for deadly heat waves, melting glaciers and rising seas. But with delegates set to meet in Bangkok Monday, Sept. 23, 2009, negotiations are bogged down and there is a very real possibility that no deal will be reached in December when delegates meet in Copenhagen. (AP Photo/Biswaranjan Rout, File)

(AP) -- Two years ago, governments from around the world came together on the island of Bali and agreed to urgently rein in the heat-trapping gases blamed for deadly heat waves, melting glaciers and rising seas.

But with just over two months left to reach a deal at a conference in Copenhagen on fighting climate change, negotiations have bogged down over the big issues of emissions targets and financing for poor nations. The climate negotiations resume Monday in Bangkok, but a growing chorus of voices is warning a pact may be out of reach this year.

"The odds of concluding a final comprehensive treaty in Copenhagen are vanishingly small. Many world leaders have started to acknowledge that,"

said David M. Rubenstein, senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

At Copenhagen, the international community will try to forge a pact to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer told The Associated Press on Friday that negotiations were far behind where they should be. But he said he remained confident a deal would be reached in Copenhagen and that pushing negotiations into 2010 wasn't an option.

Many activists said they were disappointed that a G-20 meeting ended Friday in Pittsburgh without an agreement on financial assistance to help poor countries shift to cleaner economies.

"With 72 days to Copenhagen, rich countries have once again refused to put up the funds needed to deliver the deal in Copenhagen," David Waskow, a climate adviser for Oxfam America, said in Pittsburgh.

"For the hard-hit countries already on the front lines of climate change, the rich countries' failure to act is particularly devastating," he added.

At the Bangkok meeting, the second to last before Copenhagen, 1,500 delegates from 180 countries will try to reduce the 200-page draft agreement to something more manageable. Along the way, they hope to close the gap between rich and poor positions and come close to agreement on such issues as reducing deforestation and sharing of technology.

The two-week meeting follows a U.N. climate summit last week in New York, where 100 world leaders expressed their support for a deal.

President Barack Obama and Chinese President

Hu Jintao, leaders of the world's two biggest greenhouse gas emitting countries, each vowed tough measures to combat climate change.

Hu said China would generate 15 percent of its energy from renewable sources within a decade, and for the first time pledged to reduce "by a notable margin" its carbon pollution growth rate as measured against economic growth. He did not give specific targets.

Japan's new prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, whose nation generates more than 4 percent of the world's greenhouse gases, pledged his government would seek a 25 percent cut in emissions from 1990 levels by 2020.

"One of the big questions for Bangkok is whether the positive, qualitative spirit we saw from heads of state and ministers (in New York) will trickle down to the negotiating level and make countries more willing to clear away some of underbrush of the text," said Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"If we come into Copenhagen with 200 pages of text with hundred of brackets (marking undecided text) and all kinds of options on the table, that will be hard for ministers and heads of state to grapple with and reach a political deal," he said.

Most countries want a new climate pact that includes measures limiting temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels, a level necessary to avoid the worst impacts of [climate change](#). But so far, there is no consensus on how to reach that goal.

Industrialized nations have offered emission cuts of 15 percent to 23 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 - far short of the 25 percent to 40 percent cuts scientists and activists say are needed to keep temperature increases below 2 degrees Celsius.

Developing countries have said they want to do their part but have refused to agree on binding targets and want to see more ambitious cuts by the West. They won't sign any deal until the West guarantees tens of billions of dollars in financial

assistance.

"Without a financing package, there is no deal in Copenhagen at all," Meyer said.

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