UN climate talks stall despite G7 push on carbon

June 8 2015, by Mariette Le Roux

Scientists warn that on current trends, Earth is on track fo worsening drought, flood, rising seas and disease

Calls by the Group of Seven (G7) Monday to slash world carbon emissions did little to boost UN climate talks in Bonn, where frustration mounted over the snail-like progress.

Groups of countries pleaded for greater efforts to streamline a draft text

for a climate pact due to be adopted at a conference in Paris in just over six months.

"We are very concerned about the pace of negotiations," said Amjad Abdulla of the Maldives, speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) which are deeply exposed to climate change.

"We have not made the big jump forward that we need," he told a stock-taking session.

"There is clearly an urgent need to make more substantive progress and to proceed at a faster pace than we did last week," said South Africa's Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko on behalf of the so-called G77 and China group of developing nations.

Due to end on Friday, the 11-day Bonn talks are tasked with shaping a draft text for the November 30-December 11 UN conference in Paris, which must yield a global agreement.

The final document is supposed to enshrine the will of 195 countries to roll back climate change, spell out commitments to tackle greenhouse gases and provide aid to vulnerable economies from 2020.

But after a week of wrangling, just about five percent had been shaved off a sprawling near-90-page draft, mostly by removing glaring duplications, said delegates.

And there has been little serious talk about some of the many thorny issues that remain.

Negotiators agreed "the pace and the mode of negotiations need to pick up, that they need to engage with each other on the political issues, not just the mechanical shifting around of text," said veteran analyst Alden

Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS).

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Elsewhere in Germany, leaders of the G7 industrialised democracies urged global emissions cuts at "the upper end" of a 40-70 percent range by mid-century over 2010 levels.

This is the range proposed by the UN's top climate science panel for a good chance of meeting the goal of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Scientists warn that on current trends, Earth is on track for double that,

setting the stage for worsening drought, flood, rising seas and disease.

'Difficult' for Paris

In other news, a study on China said Monday emissions by the world's largest carbon polluter were likely to peak five years earlier than its own stated target of 2030.

The researchers, from the London School of Economics (LSE), said their figures boosted the world's chances of reaching the 2C objective.

They cautioned, though, that the pathway also depended on China swiftly cutting its emissions beyond the peak.

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But in Bonn, negotiators waded through pages and pages of text projected on big screens, trying to trim superfluous words and paragraphs.

In a bid to speed things up, delegates asked the joint co-chairmen of the talks Monday to take charge of developing a streamlined text proposal, in consultation with specially designated "facilitators".

"We strongly believe that unless we have more condensed text in the near term, it will be very difficult to achieve success for Paris," Abdulla stressed.

Nations remain deeply divided on several underlying issues, key among them such basics as apportioning responsibility between rich and poor for emissions cuts.

And rich countries are under pressure to show how they intend meeting a pledge made in 2009 to bolster climate finance to $100 billion per year by 2020.

But getting to the substance is tricky without first clarifying the choices.

"To be able to take this to ministers, you need to narrow down the options to a manageable set so you can start to get some political guidance," said Meyer.

A workable draft text would make it easier for guidance to emerge from a UN General Assembly "high-level event" on climate change on June 29, and ministerial consultations scheduled for July 21 and 22 in Paris, he added.

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