

From: White House News Update
To: Hannegan, Bryan J.;
CC:
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Attachments:

US unveils alternative plan to Kyoto treaty

By Financial Times reporters

The US unveiled an agreement with several Asian countries to develop technology for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but denied the plan was an attempt to sideline the United Nations-brokered Kyoto protocol.

Robert Zoellick, US deputy secretary of state, who formally announced the pact at the sidelines of the Association of South-East Asian Nations meeting in Vientiane, Laos said the agreement was not in direct competition to the Kyoto protocol.

“We are not detracting from Kyoto in any way at all. We are complementing it. Our goal is to complement other treaties with practical solutions to problems,” he said.

However, the US has been seeking a way to move “beyond Kyoto” and says the pact - called the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate - contrasts with “broad international commitments that lack a programme of action.”

The partnership will include China, India, South Korea, Japan, Australia and the US. It will promote research and development for environmentally clean technology but does not set any new targets for greenhouse gas emissions, or involve specific commitments on the transfer of technology from the US to developing countries.

Jim Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said the aim was to focus on “practical efforts to create new investment opportunities and remove barriers to help each country meet nationally designed strategies and address the long term challenge of climate change”.

Together the six countries generate 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The US and Australia are the only developed countries to have rejected the Kyoto treaty, which requires developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas output by 2012.

China, India and other developing nations account for a rapidly rising share of the world's emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide but are not required to cut them under the Kyoto treaty, which the US has branded unfair.

The deal could intensify pressure on the European Union, Canada and Japan - the strongest proponents of Kyoto to gain stronger backing among poorer nations.

Catherine Pearce, climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth, the environmental lobby group, said: "A deal on technology, supported by voluntary measures, to reduce emissions, will not address climate change. This is yet another attempt by the US and Australian administrations to undermine the efforts of the 140 countries who have signed the Kyoto protocol."

Reporting by Amy Kazmin in Vientiane, Fiona Harvey in London, Caroline Daniel in Washington and Tim Johnston in Sydney

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