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Evaluation of Czech EU Presidency

In January 2009, Greenpeace set out its expectations for the Czech Republic's EU Presidency, with a special focus on climate and energy issues. With the Czech Presidency coming to a close, we are now assessing its performance in these priority areas.

Climate & Energy

Expectation 1: Increase domestic EU emission reductions.

The Czech presidency was urged to prepare the ground for a cut in emissions in line with the EU objective of keeping global temperature increase below 2° Celsius, in order to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change. In this context, the EU should commit to reducing its domestic emissions by at least 30% by 2020 (based on 1990 levels).

The outcome: No progress.

Expectation 2: A transition to a secure and clean energy economy.

Over the coming years, the entire EU energy system will have to evolve to allow the large-scale integration of renewable energy into the European power grid system in order to fight climate change and increase fuel independence. During its EU presidency, the Czech Republic should have played a major role in this transition.

The outcome: The Czech Republic has missed this opportunity.

Expectation 3: Financing clean energy production and forest protection in developing countries.

During the Czech Presidency, the EU was expected to agree on how it intends to create reliable and adequate financial support for clean energy production in developing countries, especially in the polluting electricity sector, and for the protection of forests.

The outcome: Despite many ministerial and heads of state and government meetings on this burning topic, the Czech government has failed to lead the EU towards an ambitious global climate agreement later this year.

Overall climate and energy grade: 3/10

Other important environmental issues:

Expectation 4: New EU timber law

The issue: The Czech Presidency has led discussions between EU member states on the proposed law to regulate the timber market. As a major global importer and consumer of wood, the EU should adopt a law banning illegally harvested timber from the EU market. The Czech Presidency was tasked with ensuring that discussions on this law lead to a speedy and effective outcome.

The outcome: The Czech Presidency has failed to make any progress on this crucial file and passed the buck to the Swedish Presidency.

Overall timber law grade: 1/10

Expectation 5: Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

Greenpeace called on the Czech government not to go into history as the presidency that contaminated our fields and our food with GMOs, but to listen to the majority of European citizens and member states who constantly oppose GMOs.

The outcome: Despite the European Commission's efforts to force GMOs onto our plates, no national GMO bans were lifted and no new GM crops were authorised for cultivation under the watch of the Czech Presidency.

Overall GMO grade: 8/10

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