

Bush meeting: wrong way on climate change

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The Major Economies Meeting in Washington this week is an attempt by the U.S. to deflect international criticism on climate change. It runs a great risk of undermining the international negotiations taking place at the United Nations by substituting binding international commitments with voluntary pledges.

The countries attending the meeting are: Japan, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, China, Canada, India, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, United Nations, the EU Presidency and the EU Commission.

What is **not** on the table in Washington:

1. Binding international commitments to reduce emissions – as under Kyoto.
2. Any meaningful new proposals by the United States
3. Carbon markets that drive investment changes to deliver an energy revolution
4. A forum for those most affected by climate change and least to blame, such as small island states and least developed countries.

Addressing Global Warming

The countries meeting in Washington account for over 90% of emissions worldwide. Historically, more than 80% of emissions in the atmosphere today come from the G8 countries alone. Real action by the those gathered in Washington could deliver massive cuts in emissions. But this would require **binding** mandatory targets for industrialized countries which the US and Australia reject. Binding targets are necessary to ensure that emissions remain within “safe” levels. The price of carbon needs to be high so that investments in clean technologies, such as wind and solar power, pay. This requires functioning carbon markets under the Kyoto Protocol.

Even businesses are starting to get the message. More than two dozen of the largest U.S. companies such as Ford, General Electric, GM, Dupont, Duke Energy and Chrysler are calling for domestic cap and trade legislation to start cutting American emissions now, and to ramp them down 60-80 percent by 2050. Greenpeace believes even more drastic cuts are necessary. But the direction and the approach proposed are correct.

The EU, China and other countries attending the summit have been very unequivocal in their support for the Kyoto Protocol in recent weeks. They must stand up for Kyoto also in Washington and make it clear that they will not be diverted from the task of strengthening Kyoto.

Bush's Dead End Diversion

- Bush's visions of voluntary (“aspirational”) targets will bring us nowhere near the levels of reductions needed. His continued push for a voluntary approach is an

attempt to derail the international post-2012 negotiations. When he says he supports the UN process, he *at best* means the voluntary UNFCCC, not the stronger, legally binding Kyoto Protocol–

- This process is an attempt by the Bush Administration to look busy until Bush leaves office. After seven years of obstruction, the administration is trying to appear to take action – but this is nothing but absurd theatre. The Bush administration realizes that it has lost the trust of the American public and the international community on this issue. They also see this as their last chance to lock in a weak agreement before a new US administration with a stronger position on global warming comes into office.
- Another issue on the table is the Asia Pacific Partnership illustrates just how unsuccessful a voluntary process can be. In three years, the APP has nothing to show for itself. With no targets and no market drivers, it makes no difference.
- It is time for action not more meetings. It seems that every time politicians get together to discuss climate change they start a new partnership or series of meetings so they have something to announce. The Major Economies Meeting was announced at the G8 talks in Germany and more recently, the heads of state at APEC announced the creation of the Asia-Pacific Network for Energy Technology (APNet). These are just more distractions.

The Big Emitters Meeting vs. the UN Process

- The countries most at risk from impacts of climate change are not even invited to be at the table for this conference. This is morally unacceptable. It also means that the meeting is likely to be in the interest of the polluters, not the victims.
- The Big Emitters process is just another desperate attempt by the outgoing Administration to avoid taking on its fair share of the responsibility to avoid a climate catastrophe. It must not distract from the valuable and constructive work going on within the UN leading up to the upcoming climate talks in Bali. What the world needs is a strong Bali Mandate and a strengthened Kyoto Protocol. As long as Bush does not support Kyoto, he lacks all credibility.

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