

Bush Major Emitter Meetings (MEM): wrong way on climate change

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The Major Economies Meeting (also known as the Major Emitters Meeting, MEM) taking place in Honolulu, USA on January 30th and 31st is an attempt by the Bush Administration to deflect international criticism on their do nothing attitude on climate change. It is the second MEM meeting; the first took place in Washington, D.C. in September 2007.

President Bush hopes to hold regular MEM meetings until July, but there is very little support for this process from other countries, who are attending out of courtesy more than conviction. The first meeting in Washington was dismissed as a “total charade”¹ by a senior EU bureaucrat. Greenpeace calls on governments to focus all their negotiating resources on the United Nations global climate negotiations, which are to agree strengthened commitments for the post 2012 era by December 2009.

At the UN negotiations in Bali, Indonesia, in December, the obstructive climate agenda of the Bush Administration was clear for all to see: they watered down the Bali Action Plan, relegated climate science to a footnote in the final declaration and had to be publicly shamed by the international community before even agreeing to a weak consensus².

The Bush Administration was isolated in Bali, where the European Union made it clear that meetings in Honolulu would be useless if negotiations failed in Bali. This threat was part of what forced the US to finally accept a launch of new negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). But real steps forward were taken only under the Kyoto Protocol in Bali. Under Kyoto, governments agreed what the science demands, i.e. that industrialized countries must cut their emissions by at least 25-50% by 2020 (compared to 1990 levels). The US has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol; the US Administration is clearly the wrong host for the first major climate meeting of the year³.

Despite the fact that the Honolulu meeting is entitled: “*Developing a Detailed Contribution in Support of the Bali Roadmap for UN Negotiations*”, it runs a great risk of undermining the negotiations taking place at the United Nations. Bush was forced to formally accept that the MEM is to contribute to the UN negotiations at last year’s G8 summit in Germany. But, Bush is using the MEM to push for the *substitution* of binding international commitments with voluntary pledges and aspirational targets. Bush’s agenda of voluntarism is incompatible with the action needed on climate change that science requires. It is contrary to the Kyoto Protocol, the one global agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Bush proposals stand in the way of the global climate agreement the world needs: an agreement based on real commitments.

The countries attending the meeting are: Japan, France, Germany, Italy, and the United

¹ See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/sep/29/usnews.climatechange7>

² See <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/releases/bali>

³ On the outcomes of Bali compare: <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/the-bali-decisions.pdf>

Kingdom, China, Canada, India, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Australia, Indonesia, and South Africa. Representatives of the United Nations, the EU Presidency and the EU Commission will also be present.

The Honolulu proceedings will largely be closed to the press and completely closed to NGO participation. Requests for NGO observer status were denied.

Addressing Global Warming

The countries meeting in Honolulu account for over 90% greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. More than 80% of emissions in the atmosphere today come from the G8 countries alone. Real action by those gathered in Honolulu could deliver massive cuts in emissions. But, this would require **binding** mandatory targets for industrialised countries, which the US rejects.

U.S. businesses support binding emission caps. 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 reach cuts between 60 and 80 percent by 2050. Greenpeace believes that even more drastic cuts are necessary. But the direction and the approach proposed are correct.

The EU, China and other countries attending the MEM were unequivocal in their support for the Kyoto Protocol at the Bali climate negotiations. They must stand up for Kyoto in Honolulu and make it clear that they will not be diverted from the task of strengthening Kyoto. Despite U.S. obstructions, decisive new negotiations on a strengthened global climate regime for the period after 2012 were been launched at Bali. These negotiations must now receive the full support of the global community. Key issues, such as agreeing to cut global emissions by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels, as the science demands, need to be taken forward and agreed under the United Nations not undermined at a Bush climate sideshow.

Bush's Dead End Diversion

The MEM process is an attempt by the Administration to look busy until Bush leaves office. After seven years of obstruction, the Administration is trying to appear active on climate – but this is nothing more than absurd theatre. The Bush administration realizes that it has lost the trust of the American public and the international community. They also see the MEM as their last chance to lock in a weak agreement before a new administration with a stronger position on global warming comes into office. All of the leading Democratic Presidential candidates and two of the three top Republican candidates support binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions through a cap and trade system. The rest of the world must not allow the Bush Administration to tie in the international community to weak targets or only voluntary action. Bush is a 'lame duck' and will be out of office when the next global climate agreement will be made in Copenhagen in 2009.

The countries most at risk from impacts of climate change are not even invited to be at the table in Honolulu. This is morally unacceptable.

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