

7 January 2009

Greenpeace Czech EU Presidency briefing

Below, Greenpeace sets out its expectations and priorities for the Czech Republic's EU Presidency for the first six months of 2009, with a specific focus on climate and energy issues.

Climate change is occurring faster than expected. The reality is that in some cases the situation is harsher than what science has been predicting. The past year has been devastating in terms of natural disasters. Global insurance company Munich Re announced last week that in 2008 over 220,000 people died from the effects of extreme weather events like cyclones, tornadoes and floods. Meanwhile, the global economic damage caused by these events was in the order of \$200 billion, about 50% more than in 2007.

This environmental crisis, combined with geopolitical tensions such as the recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine, shows the need to radically change the way we produce and consume energy. The EU must reform its energy economy towards an environmentally friendly, less fossil-fuel dependent and more efficient energy system.

Both climate change and energy security problems require a bold policy response. The EU and other developed countries need to reform the energy system and be net-zero greenhouse gas emitters by 2050. By 2020, emissions in developed countries must be reduced by an amount at the higher end of the 25-40% range set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

To achieve this, the Czech Republic has to make climate protection, together with energy security, the highest priorities of its EU presidency. An international meeting in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 is expected to result in a new UN climate agreement – a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. The Czech government will negotiate with US President-elect Barack Obama and other world leaders in preparation for this next global climate deal. The Czech Presidency has the moral and political responsibility to strengthen EU climate and energy policies and to persuade other major world economies to support an ambitious international agreement in Copenhagen.

The Czech Presidency will also start implementing and improving the recently adopted EU set of laws known as the 'climate and energy package'. The ambition of the agreements struck under the French Presidency in 2008 will have to be increased in the interest of securing a successful climate agreement in Copenhagen. More specifically, the Czech Presidency should increase the ambition of the 2020 targets for domestic emission cuts in the EU and support mechanisms to adequately finance clean development and forest protection in developing countries.

Preventing dangerous climate change and reducing our dependency on expensive fossil fuels will lead to more jobs and to a more stable and efficient economy.

Below, Greenpeace has formulated **three priority actions** on climate and energy for the Czech Presidency. We also flag two additional and very significant environmental topics that will be handled by the Czech Republic during the first half of 2009.

Climate & Energy

1. Increase domestic EU emission reductions

The Czech presidency should prepare proposals to further reduce emission and fossil fuel use within EU to both increase energy security and to decrease the EU's climate footprint. The EU must take the lead by committing to reduce their domestic emissions by at least 30% by 2020 (based on 1990 levels). Other developed countries should follow

suit. Significant action will also be needed from the most responsible and capable countries within the developing world so that the growth of emissions for this group as a whole is reduced. The EU and the developed world as a whole have the responsibility to help the developing world play its part in the fight against climate change (see below).

2. A transition to a secure and clean energy economy

The consequences of the recent dispute between Russia and the Ukraine over gas supplies again show the importance of reforming the EU for it to become more energy efficient and less fossil fuel-dependent.

The EU has adopted its new Renewable Energy Directive as part of the climate and energy package, which will be essential to reach 20% renewable energy in Europe by 2020. The law sets binding renewable energy targets for each member state and defines the policy framework to promote the development of renewables in three sectors: electricity, heating and cooling, and transport.

Over the coming years, the entire EU energy system must evolve to allow the large-scale integration of renewable energy into the European power grid system. During its EU presidency, the Czech Republic can play a major role in this transition.

The Greenpeace European Energy [R]evolution report (www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/press-centre/reports/EU-energy-revolution-report) explains how existing clean energy technologies can be applied more efficiently across the EU, while allowing for an increase in energy consumption and phasing out nuclear power and coal. The scenario developed by the Institute of Technical Thermodynamics of the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) is a practical blueprint on how to reduce CO₂ emissions in the EU by almost 80% by 2050.

3. Financing clean production and forest protection in developing countries

During the Czech Presidency, and in particular on the 2 March environment ministers meetings and the 8-9 March EU summit, the EU will strike crucial agreements on the positions it will adopt at the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen. In particular, the EU is 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.

Other important environmental issues:

4. New EU timber law

The Czech Presidency will also be leading discussions between EU member states on the recently 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 can ensure that discussions on this law lead to a speedy and effective outcome.

5. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

Several key GMOs issues are expected to be discussed under the Czech Presidency. The Commission is likely to put forward proposals to authorise GMOs for cultivation, to establish a threshold for GM contamination in seeds and to lift the EU's zero tolerance policy. Greenpeace calls 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 reject GMOs.

See press release of 7 January 2009 related to this briefing on www.greenpeace.eu
--

CONTACTS:

Joris den Blanken – Greenpeace EU climate & energy policy director:
+32 (0)476 96 13 75 (mobile), joris.den.blanken@greenpeace.org

Mark Breddy – Greenpeace EU communications manager:
+32 (0)2 2741 903, +32 (0)496 15 62 29 (mob.), mark.breddy@greenpeace.org