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Obama climate goals not enough: China, India

Wed Dec 3, 2008 1:21pm EST

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POZNAN, Poland (Reuters) - President-elect Barack Obama's goals for curbing greenhouse gases to 2020 are inadequate to fight global warming, Chinese and Indian delegates told Reuters at U.N. climate talks on Wednesday.

Developing nations welcomed Obama's plan for tougher goals than President George W. Bush but said Obama's target of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions back to 1990 levels by 2020 was not enough to avoid dangerous global warming.

"It's more ambitious than President Bush but it is not enough to achieve the urgent, long-term goal of greenhouse gas reductions," Tsinghua University's He Jiankun, of the Chinese delegation, said on the sidelines of the December 1-12 talks.

U.S. emissions, mainly from burning fossil fuels, are running about 14 percent above 1990 levels and Bush's plans had foreseen emissions rising and only peaking in 2025. Obama also plans to cut emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

"It's not ambitious enough considering the Kyoto Protocol targets, but given the eight-year Bush administration it's progress," said Dinesh Patnaik, a director at the Indian Foreign Ministry.

The United States is isolated among industrialised nations in not ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, which obliges 37 developed nations to cut emissions by 2012 as a first step to avert more heatwaves, floods, droughts and rising sea levels.

Developing nations at the 187-nation meeting said rich nations should set even more ambitious targets, of cuts of 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 to shift from fossil fuels despite the financial crisis.

TOP EMITTERS

China and the United States are top emitters ahead of India and Russia. But U.S. emissions per capita are almost five times those of China and developing nations say the rich have spewed out most heat-trapping carbon since the Industrial Revolution.

The talks in Poznan, Poland, are reviewing progress at the half-way stage of a two-year push for a new U.N. treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol. The new treaty is meant to be agreed by the end of next year in Copenhagen.

Earlier on Wednesday, a group of 43 small island states called for even tougher goals for cuts, saying that rising seas could wipe them off the map.

"We are not prepared to sign a suicide agreement," said Selwin Hart of Barbados, a coordinator of the alliance of small island states, told Reuters at the 187-nation meeting.

They said that rich nations should cut emissions by 40 percent by 2020 below 1990 levels.

Paula Dobriansky, U.S. undersecretary of state for democracy and global affairs who will head the U.S. delegation in Poznan next week, said she would work for a smooth transition to Obama.

"We will not be...closing any doors or foreclosing options for the new administration," she told a phone briefing from Washington. She said the world needed "nothing less than a clean technology revolution." to cut emissions.

European Union leaders last year agreed a target to cut greenhouse gases by a fifth by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

The head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, Yvo de Boer, has praised Obama's goal as "ambitious" given the rise since 1990.

Eileen Claussen, head of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change and Strategies for the Global Environment, said Obama was unlikely to be ready to sign up to specific numbers for 2020 cuts in Copenhagen.

"I think this administration will not be willing to negotiate specific targets until it has numbers out of the Congress," she said. Tackling the financial crisis meant that was unlikely before 2010.

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(Editing by Charles Dick)

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