



UJAE

Unions for Jobs And the Environment

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United Mine Workers of America

United Transportation Union

Utility Workers Union of America

President

Bill Cunningham

Newsletter

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Weather Report from COP-11 in Montreal By Gene Trisko*

Thousands of delegates and representatives of non-governmental-organizations (NGOs) braved frigid conditions in Montreal December 5th to 9th to discuss potential future steps in global warming policy after the expiration of the first Kyoto reduction targets in 2012. This was the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-11) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The meeting also served as the first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (countries that have ratified the Kyoto treaty).

Hailed by the media as a major step forward in international negotiations, potentially leading to a global “mega-deal” for a new round of stringent greenhouse gas reductions, the “Montreal Action Plan” likely will yield little real progress along these lines. It is more likely to set in motion new discussions eventually leading to abandonment of the failed Kyoto approach to fixed emission reduction targets and timetables.

Two Track Negotiations

The negotiations at COP-11 focused on two future tracks for addressing new climate change agreements: negotiations under Article 3.9 of the Kyoto Protocol for new emission reduction targets after the year 2012, and a longer-term dialogue on future cooperative actions by developed and developing nations. The U.S. Delegation firmly rejected participation in the Article 3.9 negotiations, while accepting a seat at the table for the informal dialogue.

Article 3.9 of the Kyoto Protocol requires that negotiations for a second round of greenhouse gas reductions begin in 2005.

The Montreal agreement for a second round of Kyoto reduction commitments essentially leaves the European Union (EU) and Japan to negotiate among themselves for new reductions after 2012. Prime Minister Tony Blair and other EU leaders already are feeling the pinch of Kyoto compliance, with rising costs of carbon dioxide allowances compounded by skyrocketing imported energy costs for industry and consumers.

Most countries in the EU appear unable to meet their commitments for the first round of Kyoto reductions, mainly due to rising emissions from the transport sector. Overall, the EU pledged to reduce emissions by 8% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. While a few countries may be

The collapse of the economies of the former Soviet Union dropped their greenhouse gas emissions below that needed to meet their 2008-2012 targets. The unneeded permits for these emissions, which can be sold, are called “Hot Air.”

able to achieve their Kyoto targets by means such as purchasing “hot air” surplus CO2 allowances from Russia, the EU overall is struggling to meet its Kyoto commitments (see chart).

Without U.S. participation in a new round of Kyoto talks, and with little likelihood that the EU will come close to meeting its initial reductions, negotiations for even more severe limitations will be contentious. The EU already is highly energy-efficient, largely due to the steep taxes it imposes on energy. Further energy tax increases would not be politically acceptable in most countries. Moreover, the prospect of shouldering even greater burdens to advance the one-sided Kyoto agreement – without any prospect of similar actions by major developing nations – would not play well in European capitals. The EU, like the U.S., is hemorrhaging well-paying industrial jobs to rapidly-developing countries in Asia and Latin America.

The Dialogue: A Kyoto Exit Strategy?

After much negotiation, the U.S. Delegation agreed to participate in a “dialogue” on long-term cooperative actions to address climate change. Participants to these talks will include major industrial and developing nations, including India and China. This dialogue may lay the groundwork for subsequent negotiations on alternatives to the Kyoto Protocol, and to the abandonment of Kyoto’s fixed “targets and timetables” approach.

The dialogue is intended as a forum to “exchange experiences and analyze strategic approaches for long-term cooperative action to address climate change that includes: a) advancing development goals in a sustainable way; b) addressing action on adaptation; c) realizing the full potential of technology; and d) realizing the full potential of market-based opportunities.”

The U.S. and major developing countries agreed to participate in this dialogue subject to the explicit understanding that the process “will not open any negotiations leading to new commitments.” This language mirrors the exemption from new commitments that developing nations secured in the 1995 Berlin Mandate. The Berlin exemption guaranteed that developing countries would not be required to accept any emission reduction commitments in the Kyoto Protocol.

In Montreal, developing nations agreed that the dialogue should identify “approaches which would support, and provide enabling conditions for, actions put forward voluntarily by developing countries that promote local sustainable development and mitigate climate change in a manner appropriate to national circumstances.” These approaches may include “means to promote access by developing countries to cleaner and climate-friendly technologies.”

Clinton Sees the Light

Former President Bill Clinton visited COP-11 on the final day to urge progress on a future set of climate talks. His comments reflected a clear understanding of the need to move beyond fixed targets and timetables, and to embrace all countries in efforts to address climate change. In his press conference, Clinton advised the EU not to press Kyoto-style targets on the U.S., but to focus on energy-saving projects and similar actions that all parties could achieve. What is important, he said, is that “everyone get out of bed in the morning” ready to do something about climate change.

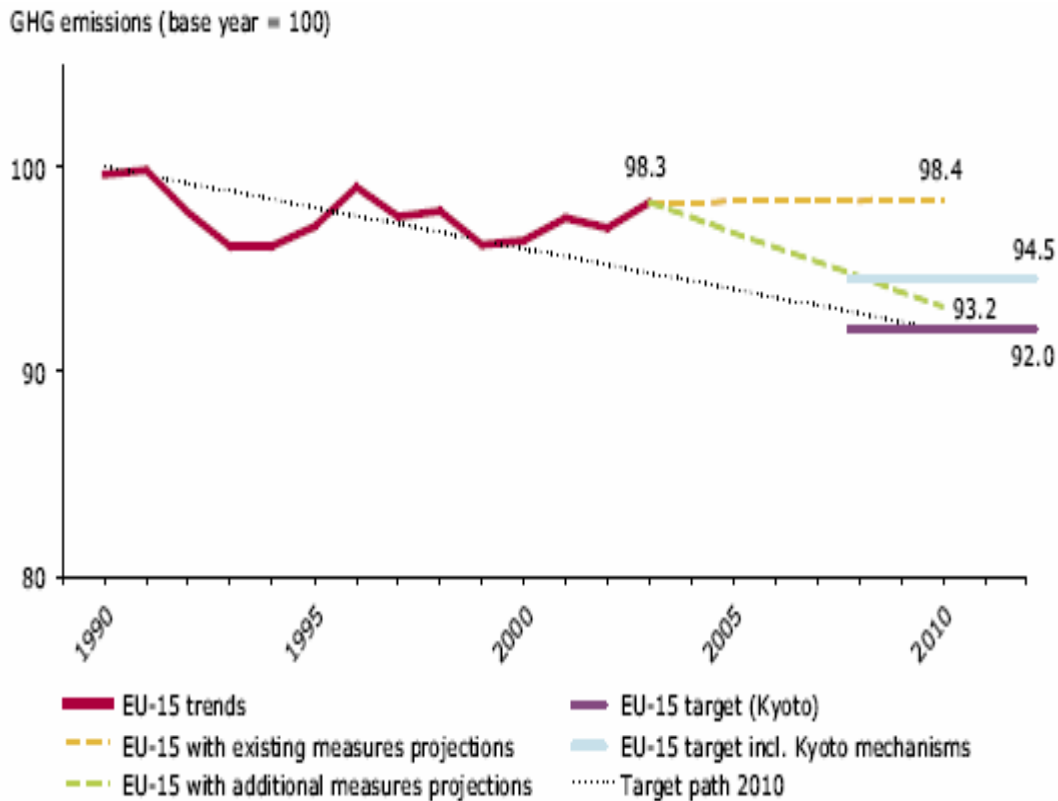
The real message Clinton carried to Montreal was his recognition that Kyoto, as a framework for emission reductions limited to major industrial nations, is collapsing under its own weight. A new path forward is needed, involving all countries, with realistic objectives tailored to the “common but differentiated responsibilities” of parties to the UN Framework Convention. Montreal will be regarded as a success if it moves the parties to the Convention in this direction.

A New Path

A new path to climate change, involving all nations, could lead to increased export of advanced U.S. clean coal and other energy technologies to help developing nations reduce their future carbon emissions. It could entail greater emphasis on low-cost carbon sequestration, through improved agricultural practices or through geologic disposition of carbon dioxide emissions at new energy facilities. It could offer the promise of climate change policies that create jobs, not destroy them. It could provide the U.S. with a new climate change strategy that avoids steep energy price increases and shutdowns of plants; a strategy that is ratified by the Senate and embraced by the American public, not rejected.

Exploratory discussions seeking this new path forward will begin on May 15 in Bonn, Germany.

Projections show European Union Making Little or No Progress in Meeting its Commitments



Note: Data source: EEA Data service (Ref: www.eea.eu.int/coreset).

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