
US and China may come to talks with emission reduction goals

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The Washington Post reported that, buried in the text of recent joint declaration between US President Mr Obama and Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao was a hopeful clause about climate talks, the Obama administration is likely to offer emission reduction targets at next month's climate summit, as long as the Chinese offer a proposal of their own.

US reluctance to set a short term emissions goal has been a sticking point in the UN sponsored talks for nearly a year. Almost all industrialized nations, and many developing countries, have announced plans to curb their greenhouse gas output by 2020. Neither the United States nor China, which is not obligated to do so under the UN framework, even though it ranks as the world's biggest emitter has done so, thereby hampering the prospects of an agreement.

A senior administration official said that any US target would require congressional action. Senate Majority Leader Mr Harry M Reid said that would not happen until spring. The House passed climate bill includes a 17% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2020 as compared with 2005 levels, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee backed a 20% cut, but key senators vowed to make that less ambitious.

This past weekend, the Obama administration endorsed a Danish proposal to settle for a political accord on global warming in Copenhagen next month, while deferring to 2010 the codification of a legally binding international treaty.

According to the joint declaration, an agreed outcome at Copenhagen should include emission reduction targets of developed countries and nationally appropriate mitigation actions of developing countries.

Mr Obama and Mr Hu also endorsed a package of energy projects, most of which have been in the works for some time. The package highlights areas of growing cooperation between the two nations but does not include new commercial scale projects in carbon capture and storage.

Separately, General Electric announced that it licensed technology from China for possible use in US high speed rail projects that were funded in this year's economic stimulus act.

South Korea, which is Obama's next stop in Asia, announced that it plans to cut its emissions 30% from what they otherwise would have been by 2020, which equates to a 4% reduction compared with 2005 levels. South Korea's greenhouse gas output has nearly doubled over the past 15 years.

(Sourced from www.washingtonpost.com)

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