

U.S. to present emissions target before Copenhagen



The two-year UN haggles leading up to the Copenhagen conference has been hamstrung by what the world's No. 2 polluter and wealthiest country will propose.

In Europe, green groups said the big question was how far the United States planned to trim its carbon output and over what time frame, and whether this met scientific criteria for tackling global warming.

"Getting clarity from the U.S. on what their commitment is going to be is going to be crucially important," Kim Carstensen of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) told AFP.

Compared to the 1990 benchmark used by almost every other country, the expected U.S.

target only amounts to something like a four-percent reduction.

The EU has vowed to reduce its emissions by 20 percent from 1990 levels before 2020, raising the target to 30 percent in the event of an international agreement on the issue. Japan has offered 25 percent, but attached conditions.

Greenpeace urged Obama to commit to levels above and beyond what was envisaged by the U.S. Senate bill, demanding at least a 25-percent reduction target.

"We believe that there is still room for the U.S. to upgrade their target. We need to see more from them," Joris den Blanken, Green-

peace's EU climate and energy policy director, told AFP.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, visiting Washington, said his emerging economy was ready to do more on climate change if developed nations made financial commitments.

"We will do more if there is global support in terms of financial resources and technology transfer."

India, China and other developing nations have been pressing for Western nations to offer technology and other support to help them reduce the intensity of emissions blamed for global warming.

But the emerging economies have resisted legally binding requirements, saying that wealthy nations, not them, bear the historic responsibility for carbon emissions.

De Boer has ruled out the possibility that a comprehensive treaty can be reached in Copenhagen and anticipates a list of "rich country targets" and more clarity on goals from the likes of India and China.

The United States was the world's biggest carbon emitter until it was overtaken by China in 2006, according to the Global Carbon Project, a consortium of leading climate scientists.

In order to limit warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), a threshold widely adopted as safe, scientists say emissions by industrialized nations must fall by 25-40 percent by 2020 over 1990 levels.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will announce a target for reducing its greenhouse gas emissions before the UN climate conference in Copenhagen, removing a major obstacle to a deal, officials have said.

"Countries will need to put on the table what they are willing to do on emissions," a senior administration official told journalists. "We expect that a decision will be made in the coming days."

The official refused to be drawn on specific numbers but indicated the U.S. target would not differ much from levels mentioned in legislation before Congress.

A U.S. House of Representatives bill, passed in June, calls for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020 and by 83 percent by 2050.

A slightly more ambitious bill before the Senate, but not due to be debated again until early next year, talks of a 20-percent reduction from 2005 levels by 2020.

The senior administration official said Obama could make a last-minute decision to attend the conference if "negotiations have proceeded sufficiently that going to Copenhagen would give a final impetus, a push, to the process."

As the leader of one of the world's two biggest polluters, Obama is under considerable pressure to attend the conference and show flexibility on new emission targets.

Sixty-five leaders, including from Germany, France and Brazil, have already committed to participating at the December 7-18 meeting to find a global treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol.

United Nations climate chief Yvo de Boer told journalists in Brussels that a U.S. emissions target was a crucial factor in the negotiations.

"The key issue here at the moment is the United States. My sense is Obama will be in a position to come to Copenhagen with a target and a financial contribution."



Russian investor to shell out millions for Hitler limousine

By David Crossland



A Russian investor is about to pay millions for a Mercedes limousine believed to have ferried Adolf Hitler. The classic car expert who tracked it down, Michael Fröhlich, has told SPIEGEL ONLINE about its chequered history -- and says a pharaoh-like curse may be attached to the five-ton monster.

Michael Fröhlich, a German dealer in classic cars, has sold John Lennon's Mercedes 600, Marlene Dietrich's Rolls Royce Cabriolet and Charlie Chaplin's Bentley S3 in his time but has just arranged his most unusual deal yet -- a five-ton armored limousine that, he says, was used by Adolf Hitler.

Fröhlich, 59, told SPIEGEL ONLINE that he managed to trace the vehicle to a collector in northern Germany on behalf of a Russian investor willing to shell out millions of euros for the open-top vehicle, one of several that supposedly ferried the Führer through adoring crowds before and during World War II.

The bluish-black Mercedes 770A Kompressor delivered in 1935 has changed hands a number of times in recent years. It is being sold together with five other vehicles of the same rare model, four of which were owned by top Nazis including Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. The other one belonged to a former president of Turkey, Ismet Inonu.

The unnamed Russian buyer is purchasing them all for a double-digit million euro sum, Fröhlich said. "I was of two minds about tracking down the car of this shit Hitler. Most of my relatives died in the war and I was saved by the Americans in the Berlin airlift, they supplied penicillin which I needed because I was suffering from tuberculosis," he said. "The vehicle disgusts me, I have to say." The Hitler limousine alone is estimated to be worth between €4 million and €10 million euros (\$6-15 million), according to one media report.

"The previous owners all died, it's a bit like the curse of the pharaohs," Fröhlich said. After the war the limousine was bought by the owner of the Imperial Palace hotel in Las Vegas and took pride of place in his personal collection. After his death, it went to a Bavarian collector, who died last year at age 49, said Fröhlich.

The six cars now being sold all ended up in the collection of a car fan in northern Germany. He is still alive.

"I got a call two months ago from a Russian investor who had found out that the car was no longer in the Imperial Palace collection," said Fröhlich. "So I spent weeks digging around and found it on Saturday. The buyer flew in straight away. I brought him and the collector together." The deal has yet to be finalized.

(Contd. on P.15)

Obama's nice guy act gets him nowhere on the world stage

When he entered office, U.S. President Barack Obama promised to inject U.S. foreign policy with a new tone of respect and diplomacy. His recent trip to Asia, however, showed that it's not working. A shift to Bush-style bluntness may be coming.

There were only a few hours left before Air Force One was scheduled to depart for the flight home. U.S. President Barack Obama trip through Asia had already seen him travel 24,000 kilometers, sit through a dozen state banquets, climb the Great Wall of China and shake hands with Korean children. It was high time to take stock of the trip.

Barack Obama looked tired on Thursday, as he stood in the Blue House in Seoul, the official residence of the South Korean president. He also seemed irritable and even slightly forlorn. The CNN cameras had already been set up. But then Obama decided not to play along, and not to answer the question he had already been asked several times on his trip: what did he plan to take home with him? Instead, he simply said "thank you, guys," and disappeared. David Axelrod, senior advisor to the president, fielded the journalists' questions in the hallway of the Blue House instead, telling them that the public's expectations had been "too high."

The mood in Obama's foreign policy team is tense following an extended Asia trip that produced no palpable results. The "first Pacific president," as Obama called himself, came as a friend and returned as a stranger. The Asians smiled but made no concessions.

Lost some stature

Upon taking office, Obama said that he wanted to listen to the world, promising respect instead of arrogance. But Obama's currency isn't as strong as he had believed. Everyone wants respect, but hardly anyone is willing to pay for it. Interests, not emotions, dominate the world of realpolitik. The Asia trip revealed the limits of Washington's new foreign policy: Although Obama did not lose face in China and Japan, he did appear to have lost some of his initial stature.

In Tokyo, the new center-left government even pulled out of its participation in a mission which saw the Japanese navy refueling U.S. warships in the Indian Ocean as part of the Afghanistan campaign. In Beijing, Obama failed to achieve any important concessions whatsoever. There will be no binding commitments from China to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A revaluation of the Chinese currency, which is kept artificially weak, has been postponed. Sanctions against Iran? Not a chance. Nuclear



disarmament? Not an issue for the Chinese.

The White House did not even stand up for itself when it came to the question of human rights in China. The president, who had said only a few days earlier that freedom of expression is a universal right, was coerced into attending a joint press conference with Chinese President Hu Jintao, at which questions were forbidden. Former U.S. President George W. Bush had always managed to avoid such press conferences.

Relatively unsuccessful

A look back in time reveals the differences. When former President Bill Clinton went to China in June 1998, Beijing wanted to impress the Americans. A press conference in the Great Hall of the People, broadcast on television as a 70-minute live discussion, became a sensation the world over. Clinton mentioned the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, when the government used tanks against protestors. But then President Jiang Zemin defended the tough approach taken by the Chinese Communists. At the end of the exchange, the Chinese president praised the debate and said: "I believe this is democracy!"

Obama visited a new China, an economic power that is now making its own demands. America should clean up its government finances, and the weak dollar is unacceptable, the head of the Chinese banking authority said, just as Obama's plane was about to land.

Obama's new foreign policy has also been relatively unsuccessful elsewhere, with even friends like Israel leaving him high and dry. For the government of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, peace is only conceivable under its terms. Netanyahu has rejected Obama's call for a complete moratorium on the construction of settlements. As a result, Obama has nothing to offer the Palestinians and the Syrians. "We thought we had some leverage," says Martin Indyk, a former ambassador to Israel under the Clinton administration and now an advisor to Obama. "But that proved to be an illusion."

Even the president seems to have lost his faith in a genial foreign policy. The approach that was being used in Afghanistan this spring, with its strong emphasis on civilian reconstruction, is already being changed. "We're searching for an exit strategy," said a staff member with the National Security Council on the sidelines of the Asia trip.

(Source: Spiegel online)

Herman van Rompuy to visit Latvia as Belgian PM

Herman van Rompuy, recently elected the first European Union president, will visit Latvia December 2 as incumbent Belgian prime minister, the Chas newspaper reported on its website.

Van Rompuy, 62, was elected permanent president of the European Council by the 27-nation bloc's leaders at a meet-

ing on Thursday evening.

Latvia has been hard hit by an economic crisis, with many enterprises going bankrupt. The government has asked international financial organizations for assistance, and they are ready to grant the republic a 7.5 billion euro (\$11.2 bln) loan.

During his visit, van Rompuy will meet

with Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis.

To take the office of EU president, elected for 2.5 years but not more than for two terms, van Rompuy has to resign as Belgian premier, which he has not done yet. He is to take the new office on January 1.

(Source: Ria Novosti)



Spain police arrest 36 youths for suspected ETA links

At least 36 people have been arrested overnight in Spain as part of a police operation against a banned youth group linked to radical Basque separatism.

Officers raided a number of properties in the Basque region and the neighboring province of Navarra.

They were reportedly acting on documents seized earlier this year after the arrest of an alleged senior member of the militant group ETA.

ETA has waged a 41-year campaign for an independent Basque homeland.

The group, which ended its most recent ceasefire in June 2007, is blamed for more than 820 deaths in that period. This year, the group has killed three Spanish police officers using car bombs.

Those arrested overnight said to be members of Segi, a radical Basque youth group declared illegal in 2007, after a judge concluded it had links to ETA.

Under the supervision of an investigating judge, the police raided a number of private homes and youth centers.

The police operation is ongoing, with reports saying a number of other suspects could have fled across the border into France.

The suspects are considered hardliners within the separatist movement, police sources told local media.

Anti-terrorist officers had been monitoring youth activity following the arrest in Paris earlier this year of an alleged senior commander of ETA, says the BBC's Steve Kingstone in Madrid.

Documents seized at the time indicated the group was seeking to enlist a new generation of followers.

(Source: BBC)

Armenian forces kill Azerbaijani civilian: reports

BAKU (AFP) — Armenian forces killed an Azerbaijani civilian near the breakaway region of Nagorny Karabakh, Azerbaijani media reported on Monday.

ANS television and the Azeri Press Agency said a 41-year-old man was killed on Sunday when separatist forces opened fire on Azerbaijani positions in the Goranboy region on the de facto border with Karabakh.

The Nagorny Karabakh administration denied its forces had killed a civilian and accused Azerbaijani soldiers of repeatedly firing on its positions over the weekend.

Officials with Azerbaijan's defense ministry could not be reached for comment.

Nagorny Karabakh's armed forces said in a statement that Azerbaijani soldiers had fired on its positions over the weekend and on Monday, but called reports of the civilian being killed "propaganda" from Baku.

"This disinformation from Baku in no way conforms to reality," the statement said.

Backed by Yerevan, ethnic Armenian forces seized control of Nagorny Karabakh and seven surrounding districts from Azerbaijan in the early 1990s, in a war that claimed an estimated 30,000 lives.

Armenian and Azerbaijani forces are spread across a ceasefire line in and around Nagorny Karabakh, often facing each other at close range, and shootings are common.