

Overview: Major Economies Meetings

The Leader's Representatives met in Hawaii to discuss a process for, and key aspects of, a detailed contribution to address energy security and climate change for a post-2012 climate agreement. The meeting intention was to reinforce and accelerate discussions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and contribute to a global agreement under the Convention by 2009.

Possible Contributions of the Major Economies Leaders to the UN Negotiations

Representatives reiterated the need for the MEP to advance the UN negotiations while considering a busy global meeting calendar and ensuring a focus on issues not currently addressed in other forums. Many representatives expressed the importance of defining or clarifying the meaning of various climate terminologies, providing a political impetus for advancing UN climate negotiations, and agreeing on a MEP objective and timetable. Of note: France indicated the MEM should address "Western over-consumptive lifestyles" as contributors to climate change, which it considered a moral issue. Brazil, Italy, and South Africa characterized the MEM as a political dialogue, which Brazil noted both defined and limited what the MEM could do. Canada commended the MEM for gathering the countries with the capacity and responsibility to wrestle with the toughest economic issues raised by climate change.

Leaders Representatives or senior MEM officials met on March 14, 2008, on the margins of the Chiba, Japan Gleneagles Dialogue Ministerial Meeting, for a consultation on draft text for a leaders statement. This session is not to be considered "MEM3." As a result of the Honolulu discussions, Japan will also convene a Clean Energy Technology Workshop on March 17, 2008.

Robert Dixon, White House Council on Environmental Quality, leads the coordination of the committee responsible for drafting the leaders statement. Other countries represented include: Brazil, China, France, Japan, South Africa and the United States.

France will host MEM3 sometime in April. In addition to the MEM, the French also plan to host one or more side events specifically on sectoral issues, potentially involving private sector participants.

Key agenda items from MEM2

1) Long-Term Global Goal

European representatives and Japan reiterated views that such a goal is important, though Japan emphasized its visionary nature while Germany and others see it as a basis for operationalizing near and medium term commitments. Canada and Australia support a long-term goal but were less vocal in the meeting. All developing country participants, and Russia, urged various forms of caution on the basis that it is unclear what the path to a very ambitious 2050 goal would entail given the current state of advanced low-carbon technology options. India and China, fearing that such a goal would be used as a basis for allocating burden, emphasized their low per capita emissions and (erroneously, in the case of China) their low historic contributions to current climate change. Chairman

Connaughton highlighted the importance of new technologies in achieving any ambitious long-term goal, including in particular nuclear power and carbon capture and storage, as well as current renewable technologies which, though growing, remain niche contributors to energy supply.

2) Cooperative Technology

Representatives agreed on the value of technology in addressing climate change and cooperation to advance innovations. There was general consensus that consideration of technology transfer issues should go beyond intellectual property rights and include capacity building, incentives to promote private investment, collaborative RD&D with institutions in developing and developed countries, and innovative technology funding mechanisms to promote deployment of the best available technology.

3) Sectoral Approaches

Participants also explored aspects of sectoral approaches, and agreed to continue this discussion at the meeting hosted by France in April. Of note: China was positive about a sector approach, and during its intervention itemized all of the sectors in which it could make progress in exchange for support. Germany and the UK distinguished between sectors that are internationally competitive and where unilateral action could lead to leakage (e.g., cement, iron, and steel) and those which were not competitive (power generation, transportation). The EC proposed “no-lose” sectoral targets for developing countries, linked to the international carbon market (“sectoral CDM”).

4) Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Commitments or Actions

Representatives discussed potential contributions of nationally appropriate mitigation commitments or actions to a post-2012 framework. The interventions ranged from indications of support for economy-wide targets and/or sector targets, definition of binding in context of international agreements and national plans, and connecting national plans to global goals. Italy suggested sequencing, with first moving toward international agreement on mitigation, then on national goals. The EC indicated its preference for sanctions that would increase as countries start to take on more ambitious emissions cuts to reach the 2050 goal. Japan also favored sanctions, but not overly strict ones, which were viewed as discouraging participation. Russia came out the strongest against sanctions.

5) Addressing Adaptation and Forestry

Many highlighted the need for any substantive discussion on adaptation and forestry to include the countries most affected – noting few are part of this process. Adaptation was suggested as a topic for the April meeting. Of note: Brazil made a lengthy intervention on deforestation and proposed a workshop on this topic to include Major Economies and countries from the Congo Basin.

6) Financing and Measurement Issues

Participants described the need to increase scientific information sharing and frequency of reporting, and for enhanced developing country capacity to improve emissions measurement and inventory methods.