

## UN chief calls for compromise at climate talks

By Fiona Harvey in Cancún  
8 December 2010, p. 8

Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary-general, urged government ministers meeting in Mexico for climate change talks to agree to a compromise, in the hope of getting the slow negotiations moving.

At the opening of the high-level segment of the talks, Mr Ban told the conference in Cancún: "The world, particularly the poor and vulnerable, cannot afford the luxury of waiting for the perfect agreement."

He said it was more important to do a deal quickly than to hold out for a stronger agreement. "We need results now, results that curb global greenhouse emissions," Mr Ban said. "Business as usual cannot be tolerated."

No final agreement is expected at Cancún but participants are hoping to settle some areas of conflict, preparing the way for a deal within two years.

UK domestic politics threatened to disturb the talks as Chris Huhne, secretary of state for energy and climate change, who is co-chairing a working group at the talks, said he was poised to return to London for a parliamentary vote. Some members of the coalition government are planning to rebel in a vote over raising tuition fees for university students.

Mr Huhne described the activities of his working group, which is trying to resolve the future of the Kyoto protocol, as "potentially one [issue] on which the whole success of Cancún could ride".

The provisions of the 1997 Kyoto treaty expire in 2012. Developing countries are anxious for an extension, called a "second commitment period", by which rich nations would set new greenhouse gas emissions targets. Jairam Ramesh, India's environment minister, said a failure to continue the protocol would be regarded as "very serious" by the developing world.

But Japan, Canada and Russia have refused to agree to a second commitment period on the grounds that the protocol does not cover big emerging economies such as China, and the US is not party to the protocol. The European Union will agree to a second commitment period, though the details have not been worked out.

Mr Huhne and Isabella Teixeira, the Brazilian environment minister, have the task of finding a compromise. With only three negotiating days left, the US is resisting calls to opt for a partial agreement on a small number of issues, such as forestry or technology co-operation, preferring to wait until a compromise is possible on all the outstanding issues - including financing and methods of verifying emissions.

One of the key bones of contention for the US is the way in which emissions are monitored. Beijing has been reluctant to agree to stringent monitoring, which Chinese officials fear would be intrusive or infringe the country's sovereignty. A proposal by India that would allow for monitoring with safeguards has been gaining some traction.

Remarks to Reuters news agency, which were taken by many to mean that China would accept legally binding targets, sparked a day of confusion on Tuesday. The comments were later contradicted by Xie Zhenhua, a Chinese vice-minister. Todd Stern, the US special envoy for climate change, said any such offer would contain "nothing new".

Negotiators said the talks were proceeding calmly, with a notable lack of the threatened walkouts and open conflict that marred last year's climate summit in Copenhagen. Mr Stern said: "There is a deal there to be done."

Lord Stern of Brentford, former World Bank chief economist and author of the Stern report on the economics of climate change, was upbeat.

"We can get a good outcome here that allows us to move forward on the substance between now and next year," he said. "The important thing is to build mutual confidence."