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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Helps Derail Progress on Kyoto

By The Moscow Times

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Greenpeace activists calling attention to climate change beside a giant life preserver on a Cancun beach Friday. **Henry Romero**

CANCUN, Mexico — The world's governments agreed on Saturday to modest steps to combat climate change and to give more money to poor countries, but with pressure from Russia and other countries they put off until next year tough decisions on cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The deal includes a Green Climate Fund that would give $100 billion a year in aid to poor nations by 2020, measures to protect tropical forests and ways to share clean energy technologies.

Ending a marathon session of talks in the Mexican beach resort of Cancun, almost 200 countries also set a target of limiting a rise in average world temperatures to below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times.

But there was no major progress on how to extend the Kyoto Protocol, which obliges almost

40 rich nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Russia said the Kyoto Protocol shouldn't be extended and countries instead should focus on forging a new treaty to fight climate change.

"From our point of view there's not any sense to just continue because only a few limited countries have obligations," Alexander Frolov, deputy head of the Russian delegation, said Friday.

Envoys should focus on creating "building blocks for a new universal agreement" that includes all major polluters such as the United States and China, Frolov said.

The first round of Kyoto expires in 2012, it does not include China and the United States — the world's two biggest emitters — and there is no consensus over whether developing countries should have binding targets to cut emissions or whether rich countries have more to do first.

The failure to resolve the central problem of emissions dismayed environmental groups. It was also unclear how the $100 billion a year for the Green Climate Fund will be raised.

Meanwhile, the Russian government has drafted a bill that will ban from 2014 the opening of factories not using the best available environmental protection technology, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Yury Trutnev said Friday.

"This will be a true ecological revolution," Trutnev said after reporting to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin that the draft will be sent to the government for review before the end of the year.

The government may also increase fines for corporate polluters by two-thirds starting in 2012, he said.

(Reuters, Bloomberg)

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