

# Little progress seen at UN climate change talks

Experts say climate talks have been stymied by national self-interest

By AN MINH

A consensus on greenhouse gas reduction remains an elusive hurdle in the race to curb global warming and help countries cope with the potentially devastating environment impacts of climate change, experts said.

Delegates from more than 170 countries are meeting in China in an effort to end the gridlock that has plagued United Nations climate negotiations since the failure of world leaders to achieve a binding agreement at last year's summit in Copenhagen.

Koos Neefjes, Climate Change Advisor to the United Nations Development Program, said that this is the last talk before a major UN climate change summit which will begin, this November, in Cancun, Mexico.

"The China Climate Change Conference is one important step in 2010 to help the world get closer to a comprehensive agreement in implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change," he told *Thanh Nien Weekly* via e-mail.

Neefjes said some progress has been made on climate change adaptation, technology development and on international financing of climate change responses at the ongoing conference in China.

"But there is no clear agreement yet on greenhouse gas reduction by developed countries or on the role that developing countries should play in mitigating their growing emissions. Whether sufficient progress can be made here in Tianjin is still doubtful," he said.

Neefjes further indicated that a failure to make headway at the China conference would translate to a virtual stalemate at the upcoming meeting in Mexico.

"The differences lie in how much emissions reduction must be agreed on the basis of scientific analysis, and how much the Parties feel they can legally agree without damaging their own economic and social development," he said.

The eventual goal of the UN process is to secure a treaty before 2012 that limits global warming and helps countries cope with the potentially devastating environmental impacts of climate change.

Progress at the China talks has been stymied by the diplomatic gridlock created during negotiations at the Copenhagen summit, last year.

Chief US negotiator Jonathan Pershing said time was running out on the set of agreements.

"There is less agreement than one



PHOTO BY AFP

A flooded portion of Ho Chi Minh Highway in the central province of Quang Binh. At least 48 people have been killed in floods that struck central Vietnam last week.

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**DR. BJORN LOMBORG,**  
DIRECTOR OF THE DANISH THINK TANK COPENHAGEN CONSENSUS CENTER

might have hoped at this stage," *AFP* quoted Pershing as saying on Wednesday. "It's going to require a lot of work to get to some significant outcome by the end of this week, which would lead us into a significant outcome in Cancun."

Given the mounting obstacles to a significant climate change agreement, Dr. Bjorn Lomborg, director of the Danish think tank Copenhagen Consensus Center and author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist," says he's hoping for a return to the proverbial drawing board.

"Unfortunately, just like last December's climate summit in Copenhagen and all the other climate summits going back to Rio in 1992, I expect very little good to come out of the UN Climate Change Conference in China," he told *Thanh Nien Weekly* via email. "My hope is that the lack of constructive action

will get us thinking about smarter ways to move forward on climate change."

Lomborg attributes the enormous costs of cutting carbon emissions before alternative energy technologies are ready to the lack of progress at the Copenhagen summit.

"This is why neither developing nor developed countries are willing to sign a binding agreement on climate. The only solution is for us to adopt a different strategy for solving global warming," he wrote.

"I think China is saying what Vietnam and most other developing nations are saying — cutting carbon emissions would stifle our economic growth and condemn our people to continued poverty. This is why all the nations of the world should be focusing on developing green energy technologies — it's a way to solve global warming without stopping growth."

## Floods kill 48 in central Vietnam

By THANH NIEN STAFF

At least 48 people have died, 18 are missing and 19 have been injured in floods brought by torrential rains starting last week in the central provinces, the Central Flood Control Committee reported Thursday (October 7).

Quang Binh Province was hardest hit with 33 people dying and 14 missing. Ha Tinh Province ranked second with seven deaths, while Quang Tri and Nghe An posted three and five respectively, it said.

"The rains have stopped falling and the water level has visibly lowered. But the possibility of finding the missing is reduced after several days of searching," *AFP* quoted Hoang Van Quyet, an official with Quang Binh Province's natural disaster committee, as saying.

Many houses, schools, bridges and other constructions were either submerged or damaged by floods across the north of the central coast, the committee said.

More than 17,500 houses were submerged and 638 bridges and drainage systems were swept away or destroyed in Ha Tinh Province.

Tran Minh Ky, vice chairman of Ha Tinh's People's Committee, told the *Tuoi Tre* newspaper that Huong Khe District had been hit hard by flooding partly because the Ho Ho Hydropower Dam had failed to release water when heavy rains came.

In fact, as the sluice gates could be operated because of a power cut, water had overflowed the dam and put it at risk of being breached, Ky said.

Water levels in rivers from Ha Tinh to Quang Binh provinces, meanwhile, have gone down after reaching the highest danger levels over the past few days, as rains have stopped or decreased.

Food and emergency medical supplies are being sent to affected communities, state media reported.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on Wednesday ordered authorities in affected areas to spend budget funds to buy instant noodles and bottled water for local people in flooded area.

Tropical storms and flooding regularly hit Vietnam at this time of year.