

U.N. study: Comprehensive Global Warming Strategy

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U.N. panel releases comprehensive global warming strategy

By Alan Zarembo, Times Staff Writer

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A United Nations panel today released its most comprehensive strategy to avoid the catastrophic effects of global warming, but experts said that political and economic realities likely doom it to failure.

Despite backing by more than 100 countries, including the United States and China, the report's call for trillions of dollars to pay for immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions make it largely symbolic, experts said.

There is little sign that the United States and China — which account for nearly half the world's emissions — would agree to mandatory reductions, they said.

"The notion that all countries are going to sign on tomorrow is ridiculous," said John Reilly, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The report, by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was released in Bangkok after a week of long, often tedious debates.

It concluded that charging polluters for their emissions — up to \$100 a ton by the year 2030 — would spur trillions of dollars in investment needed to improve energy efficiency and develop alternatives to fossil fuels.

It offered several scenarios for stabilizing concentrations of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases.

Only one, however, would avoid global warming's worst effects — dangerous sea level rise, frequent drought and idespread extinctions.

It requires emissions to peak in 15 years and fall to 50% of current levels by mid-century, limiting temperature ncreases to 3 degrees Fahrenheit.

The concentration of greenhouse gases would be stabilized below 490 parts per million carbon dioxide equivalents — a measure that factors in the warming effects of all greenhouse gases. The current concentration is about

430 parts per million.

The annual cost of such mitigation would reach 3% of global gross domestic product by the year 2030.

For many European countries, that estimate was a call for action.

“The report shows — and this is encouraging — that ambitious climate protection is economically manageable,” German government spokesman Ulrich Wilhelm said.

But for the United States and China, it was evidence of their long-held view that mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would derail economic growth.

China fought, unsuccessfully, to delete the most stringent emissions scenario from the report, participants in the conference said. India, the world’s fifth-biggest polluter, joined in the effort.

The Bush administration also raised concerns about the lowest emissions targets.

“It would cause a global recession,” James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said at a news conference.

“Our goal is reducing emissions and growing the economy,” he said.

The biggest polluters have the most to lose.

Experts said it is already too late for the low-emissions scenario, since the United States and China have little incentive to cooperate with the rest of the world.

Agreements over who does what and who pays would already have to be in place, said Jae Edmonds, an economist at the Joint Global Change Research Institute, located at the University of Maryland.

“So many things have to happen so fast, and they are so big,” he said.

Still, some experts hoped the U.N. report would increase pressure on the United States to agree to mandatory emissions cuts.

“The industrialized world needs to step up first,” said ecologist Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy for the Union of Concerned scientists, who helped write the report.

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[IPCC Working Group Report on Climate Change pdf \(complete report\)](#)

The Working Group III contribution to the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) focuses on new literature on the scientific, technological, environmental, economic and social aspects of mitigation of climate change, published since the IPCC Third Assessment Report (TAR) and the Special Reports on CO₂ Capture and Storage (SRCCS) and on Safeguarding the Ozone Layer and the Global Climate System (SROC).

The following summary is organised into five sections after this introduction:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emission trends
- Mitigation in the short and medium term, across different economic sectors (until 2030)
- Mitigation in the long-term (beyond 2030)
- Policies, measures and instruments to mitigate climate change
- Sustainable development and climate change mitigation.

References to the corresponding chapter sections are indicated at each paragraph in square brackets. An explanation of terms, acronyms and chemical symbols used in this SPM can be found in the glossary to the main report.

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