

## **Obama acts to cut emissions, sends strong signals to the world**

President Barack Obama's moves to reduce greenhouse emissions and raise fuel standards will slash U.S. oil demand over the long term, while also sending a strong signal that the United States is serious about tackling global warming, reports Reuters.

Obama issued directives on Monday requiring the Environmental Protection Agency to consider allowing states to cut greenhouse gas emissions spewed by vehicles and ordered the Transportation Department to boost fuel economy standards for cars and trucks for the 2011 model year.

"It will be the policy of my administration to reverse our dependence on foreign oil while building a new energy economy that will create millions of jobs," Obama said at the White House.

Gasoline use accounts for almost half of U.S. daily oil consumption, and higher vehicle fuel economy standards could reduce future U.S. reliance on foreign oil suppliers.

"America will not be held hostage to dwindling resources, hostile regimes and a warming planet," Obama said.

"The federal government must work with, not against, states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Obama said at the White House, taking a stab at his predecessor's policies.

"The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts, we will be guided by them. We cannot afford to pass the buck onto the states."

The State Department also announced Todd Stern, a senior White House official under former President Bill Clinton, will be the administration's principal adviser on international climate policy and strategy and its chief climate negotiator.

### **Pressure to pass cap-and-trade**

Obama's move sends a signal to the world that the United States, the second largest greenhouse gas polluter after China, is serious about slowing emissions of the gases blamed for warming the planet.

Rich and poor countries are trying to move past gridlock to formulate a successor agreement to the Kyoto Treaty on global warming by the end of the year in Copenhagen.

Allowing states to cut greenhouse gas emissions could put pressure on

Congress to more quickly pass legislation that implements a nationwide cap-and-trade system for emission permits to fight climate change.

### **Environmentalists satisfied**

Just days into office, President Obama is showing America and the world that he will lead our country in a bold new direction to protect the environment and fight global warming, said Frances Beinecke, President of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"By raising fuel efficiency standards, our cars will burn less gas, Americans will save at the pump, and our country will be less dependent on oil," said Beinecke.

The Bush administration's decision to forgo setting federal vehicle gasoline mileage requirements gives the Obama administration the opportunity to impose much higher fuel economy standards.

"The Obama administration appears ready to nudge the car companies to re-tool and join the 21st century," said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch.

### **'Signal to Detroit'**

Stronger fuel requirements could force U.S. automakers to manufacture more cars and trucks that run on alternative fuels, such as electricity, natural gas and hydrogen.

"It will be a signal to Detroit that a huge market awaits them, if they do the right thing and produce the cleanest, most efficient vehicles possible," said California Sen. Barbara Boxer.

U.S. automakers may have a hard time continuing to sue to block states from regulating greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time getting government loans to restructure.

"It is deplorable that these companies are taking taxpayer funds and then turning around to sue in an effort to keep making higher-polluting cars," O'Donnell said.

**Source: Reuters**