

Australia, China, US Agree APEC Energy Initiatives

In the week leading to the conclusion of APEC on Sunday, Prime Minister John Howard has announced that Australia will contribute \$15 million to the FutureGen International Partnership, a major United States-led international project that will build a prototype plant integrating coal gasification and carbon capture and storage to produce electricity with near-zero emissions.

FutureGen will cost around US\$1.5 billion to develop and is being run as a commercial project with a separate research program. Several major Australian related coal companies including BHP Billiton, Xstrata and Rio Tinto are industry members of the operation.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings, Howard has also announced Australia's intention to participate in the Generation IV International Forum, an international partnership working on fourth generation nuclear power plant technology, and the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, a US initiative to expand the safe and secure use of zero-emission nuclear energy.

Howard and US President George W. Bush have agreed that Australia and the US should strive for a post-2012 global accord on climate change providing for fair and equitable contributions by all major emitters, with an emphasis on practical actions.

"The work we do here at APEC will make an important contribution to the global discussions in the UN about a new framework on energy security and climate change," says Bush.

"Later this month, the US will convene a series of meetings of the nations that produce the most greenhouse gas emissions, including nations with rapidly growing economies like India and China. We're going to work hard to reach an agreement by next year on a detailed plan for future action." Bush says an effective climate change policy will require the participation of emerging economies India and China.

"Here's my strategy: in order for there to be effective climate change policy, India and China need to be a part of the process," he says.

"In order to get them in the process they have to be included in setting international goals. And the process is beginning here at APEC."

In a joint press conference with Howard, Chinese President Hu Jintao has outlined his desire to reach agreement on the so-called Sydney Declaration.

Hu says that "very soon we are also going to release a joint statement between the two countries on climate change and energy".

Howard and Hu have agreed on the importance of addressing climate change and energy, consistent with each country's respective economic growth aspirations.

Hu says he "made it very clear to [Prime Minister Howard] that the Chinese side is supportive of discussing this matter at the APEC meeting and we also support the issuance of the Sydney Declaration at the APEC meeting focusing on climate change".

"We very much hope that in this Sydney declaration it will give full expression to the position that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change should remain the main channel for the international efforts to tackle climate change and it should also give full expression to the principles set in the convention namely the common, but differentiated responsibilities," says Hu.

Howard and Bush have also agreed on an action plan for Australia and the US to cooperate bilaterally on civil nuclear energy, including research and development, regulatory issues, and skills and technical training.

Australia and the US will continue their cooperative efforts on various initiatives relating to energy and climate change, including renewable energy sources, carbon sequestration, energy efficiency, climate change science, and agriculture and forestry practices.

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