



Yvo de Boer Photograph: Marco Garcia/ AP/PA

## Yvo de Boer: 'No climate change treaty until COP17 next year'

**A legally binding climate change treaty will not emerge from the Copenhagen Accord until COP17 in South Africa in November 2011, says outgoing UN climate chief Yvo de Boer.**

He urged signatories of last December's watered-down COP15 Copenhagen Accord to work on an "operational architecture" for worldwide greenhouse gas emission cuts at the upcoming COP16 in Cancún, Mexico.

De Boer, the executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, announced his resignation after the collapse of negotiations in Copenhagen.

He is expected to be replaced by Costa Rican bureaucrat Christiana Figueres.

Although the COP15 talks "did not deliver the outcome in legal terms that many had been hoping for", de Boer says it was "a very clear signal that the world intends to move ahead and address climate change in a serious way.

"In political terms, I think it was a very significant advance," he tells Recharge.

He stresses that 117 of the 120 heads of state and government who came to Copenhagen have since “associated themselves” with the accord, and that \$30bn in short-term and \$100bn in long-term finance was pledged as part of the deal.

Every industrialised country — whose collective greenhouse gas emissions account for 80% of the global total — has since announced 2020 carbon dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>] reductions targets, with 35 developing nations, including all the big ones, having now put in place ‘action plans’ on climate change,” he adds.

“The question is now how, in Cancún and then in South Africa, to take those national initiatives and turn them into a harmonised, international approach.”

De Boer says the Cancún meeting needs to focus on an adaptation-mitigation framework based on renewable-energy finance, technology and capacity building that convinces developing countries “a regime is emerging that will be of advantage to them in the long term”.

“These are exactly the mechanisms lacking from the unco-ordinated approach that we saw emerge from Copenhagen,” says de Boer.

“Once we have this [organisational structure] in place, then we can look to take a decision on turning that into a new legal instrument under the climate change convention.”

Copenhagen was “quite close to achieving this”, but talks collapsed because the greenhouse gas reduction targets made too heavy a demand on developing countries.

While de Boer is optimistic about the ground that can be made up at Cancún, he cautions that momentum must be maintained to carry the negotiations towards a legally binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction treaty.

“One thing that concerns me is that — on a formal level — the next time that ministers meet will be on the second from last day at Cancún,” he notes.

“I encourage ministers [who were] at Bonn [the meeting of climate change committee delegates in Germany in April] to remain engaged in this process.”

De Boer, who was speaking during an oil industry conference in Bahrain, stresses that the petroleum producers must not be sidelined in climate talks.

“Many [oil-producing nations], I think, often have the feeling that this is a fight against oil rather than a fight against greenhouse gas emissions,” he says.

“Fossil fuels will continue to play a critical role in the global energy mix for decades to come.

“The question is, how you marry that reality with a desire to address the consequences of climate change.”

### **Darius Snieckus**

Published: Thursday, May 20 2010

Article available at [http://www.rechargenews.com/business\\_area/politics/article215304.ece](http://www.rechargenews.com/business_area/politics/article215304.ece)