



President Obama expects ‘a meaningful Copenhagen accord’ on climate change

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Washington, Dec. 4 – In a sign of heightened expectations for the global climate talks which begin Monday in Copenhagen, the White House announced Friday that President Obama will change plans to participate personally “at the end of the Copenhagen conference on December 18th rather than on December 9th” as previously planned. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs explained that “there is progress being made towards a meaningful Copenhagen accord in which all countries pledge to take action against the global threat of climate change.” He added that in the wake of “progress being made in Congress towards comprehensive energy legislation” and Obama’s announcement of U.S. emissions reduction targets (www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091125H1.pdf), “China and India have for the first time set targets to reduce their carbon intensity.”

The White House also announced that following his meetings with Australian Prime Minister Rudd, German Chancellor Merkel, French President Sarkozy, and British Prime Minister Brown, President Obama “concluded that there appears to be an emerging consensus that a core element of the Copenhagen accord should be to mobilize \$10 billion a year by 2012 to support adaptation and mitigation in developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable and least developed countries that could be destabilized by the impacts of climate change.” Gibbs added that the President also supports providing longer-term financing to support adaptation and mitigation in developing countries. Gibbs said this commitment “is not only a humanitarian imperative – it’s an investment in our common security, as no climate change accord can succeed if it does not help all countries reduce their emissions.”

Obama’s support for this “green” financial assistance to developing countries comes the day after Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair John Kerry (D-MA) introduced legislation to do the same (see www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091203H3.pdf).

Gibbs pointed out that “The President strongly believes that all nations have a responsibility to combat the threat of climate change. He has already taken unprecedented action to do so at home, including an historic investment in clean energy solutions that will reduce our dependence on oil and create jobs. Abroad, he has engaged leaders bilaterally and multilaterally on the issue of climate change, and agreed to participate in the climate conference in Copenhagen.”

Today's White House statement added that "There are still outstanding issues that must be negotiated for an agreement to be reached, but this decision reflects the President's commitment to doing all that he can to pursue a positive outcome. The United States will have representation in Copenhagen throughout the negotiating process by State Department negotiators and Cabinet officials who will highlight the great strides we have made this year towards a clean energy economy." Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will be among the Obama Cabinet members participating in the Copenhagen talks.

Reacting to President Obama's financial assistance commitment, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) said she is "surprised the president would commit our nation to billions in new and long-term spending, particularly in a year that has seen our government rack up a record deficit, and before our economy is back on track."

Murkowski, the ranking Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, added that "I'm also disappointed that the administration has chosen to prioritize international assistance over funding that should first go to Alaska, and other places in America that badly need assistance with adaptation. My home state of Alaska literally has villages falling into the ocean. Where's the support for the people in our own country being affected by climate change?"

For the Nov. 25 article covering President Obama's plan to speak at the Copenhagen talks on Dec. 9th and then possibly return at the end of the talks if there was significant progress, go to: www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091125H1.pdf. That earlier article lists the top administration officials attending the talks, including USDA Secretary Vilsack.

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