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Activists skeptical, govts welcome accord

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GOVERNMENTS HAILED a deal on Saturday to start negotiations to adopt a new climate pact, but environmental groups said the agreement lacked teeth.

The deal binds the United States and China to greenhouse gas goals for the first time and a two-year agenda would lead to the adoption in Copenhagen in 2009 of a tougher, wider pact to succeed the Kyoto Protocol after 2012.

"This is the defining moment for me and my mandate as secretary-general," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told Reuters after the meeting in a

luxury Indonesian beach resort. "All the 188 countries have recognised that this is the defining agenda for all humanity, for all planet Earth."

This is the defining moment for me and my mandate as secretary-general. I am deeply grateful to many member states for their spirit of flexibility and compromise

BAN KI-MOON,
UN General Secretary

Environmental groups said the agreement lacked teeth after the European Union abandoned wording urging rich countries to step up the fight against climate change.

Weary delegates gave the United States an ovation after the world's top greenhouse gas emitter abruptly dropped last-minute opposition to an agreement after a sleepless night of talks which had passed their Friday deadline.

"We now have one of the broadest negotiating agendas



REUTERS

Activists spray paint on a giant banner near the venue of the UN Climate Change Conference in Nusa Dua on Saturday.

ever on climate change," James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on environmental quality, said in Bali.

The United States had dropped opposition to Indian demands to soften developing

nation commitments to a new pact. President George W. Bush in 2001 refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol saying it wrongly exempted developing nations.

On Saturday, developing nations welcomed the deal.

"Here in Bali we reached a consensus, global consensus for all countries," said Hassan Wirajuda, foreign minister of host nation Indonesia.

"No single country was excluded, in a very inclusive process...we hope it will provide not only a good basis but also the momentum in the coming years."

Canada backed the US view that developing countries had not offered enough.

"190 countries are represented here. 38 of them agreed to take on national binding targets today, we've just got to work on some of the other 150," said John Baird, Canada's environment minister.

Canada and the United States rejected in Bali a specific, EU-backed emissions-cutting range to guide the ambition of rich countries to fight global warming.

The EU said it was satisfied

with the deal, seeing as key the inclusion of Kyoto outsider, the United States.

"It was exactly what we wanted, we are indeed very pleased," said the EU chief negotiator, Humberto Rosa. "We will have now two tremendously demanding years, starting right in January"

The EU-climbdown on targets was the chief disappointment of environmentalists, who had wanted goals matching what scientists say is most needed to limit rising temperatures. "The Bush Administration has unscrupulously taken a money wrench to the level of action on climate change that the science demands," said Gerd Leipold, director of Greenpeace International.

Activists welcomed the U.S. U-turn, which veteran green campaigners described as unique in climate negotiating history.

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