

Global emission cuts yield 'nothing without US participation'

As Indonesia has pledged to cut emissions, it is committed to convincing developed countries to follow suit during the next UN climate change conference later this month. Rachmat Witoelar, head of the National Council on Climate Change (DNPI) and chief negotiator for Indonesia, said that his team would appeal to developed countries to fulfill their commitment and encourage developing countries to cut emissions as much as possible.

"Indonesia started the initiative by declaring a 26 percent emission cut by 2020. As a result, there have been many countries following in our footsteps, such as Japan, Brazil and India," Rachmat said.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference adopted the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which set binding targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These amount to an average of 5 percent decreases against 1990 levels over the five-year period between 2008-2012.

Industrialized countries, which are also among the world's largest emitters, have been reluctant to adopt the protocol, stalling negotiations until the most recent conference in Cancun, Mexico, last year.

The Conference of Parties (COP) is scheduled to meet in Durban, South Africa, at the end of this month, carrying the burden of stalled negotiations on emission deals for 14 years.

Amid the growing resistance of developed countries to adhere to the Kyoto treaty, observers have doubted that the Durban talks would move the debate any closer to a deal.

Rachmat said that his team would try to persuade developed countries to report emission cuts, ranging from 25 percent to 40 percent, especially the US.

"If the world cuts carbon emissions but the US does not, there is no helping climate change," he said.

Rachmat said that if the developed countries reduced emission, they would likely to experience a decrease in economic growth. He added, however, that economic declines would not place the countries in a similar position as Bangladesh, or other poor countries.

"There is no such thing as a free lunch. You have to sacrifice a bit for the world. There are actually around 10 states in the US that have experienced economic growth through emission cuts. Declining economic growth caused by emission cuts is a myth," he said.

If negotiations crumble, Rachmat said Indonesia was still committed to emission cuts.

He said Indonesia would still carry out its strategy on a national action plan on reducing greenhouse emissions (RAN-GRK), as stipulated by a presidential regulation.

"If everyone does not want to commit to cutting emissions, Indonesia will stick to UNFCCC programs that benefit the people, such as fast track funding, adaptation programs and REDD+," he said.

Rachmat said there would still be a chance to salvage Kyoto Protocol next year in COP18 conference in Seoul, South Korea. He said that the countries could also meet in meetings leading to COP18 to decide on the protocol. He said that Indonesia would also try to consolidate party groupings, such as Cartagena Group, an informal space open to all countries committed to reaching an ambitious outcome through the UNFCCC negotiations in which Indonesia is a member, and Umbrella Group, a loose coalition of non-EU developed countries that was formed following the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol to work on the globally binding agreement.

"We have proposed holding a meeting with Cartagena Group countries here in Indonesia during the third quarter of next year. We will talk about strategies that are outside the least developed countries [LDC] and extremely strong countries such as the US. We hope that the meeting will result in an action plan," he said. He said that there was a new paradigm proposed by Mexico for the decision-making articles as practiced in the Cancun conference last year. During the Cancun conference, there were several countries, including Sudan and Bolivia, which refused to agree on the conference accord. Mexico ignored their objections and pursued passage of the accord.

"I personally agreed [with Mexico]. If 180 countries have agreed, but only one or two countries refused, the world can not wait for those countries to agree," he said.