

Climate change

Poland's place, post-Kyoto

WBJ talks with Professor Robert Stavins, director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program, about the current state of the debate on the climate change and possible post-Kyoto policy architecture

Mladen Petrov: What is the purpose of the project you are currently working on?

Robert Stavins: The Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements is an interdisciplinary effort with the goal to identify the design elements for post-2012 international climate policy architecture, as the sun sets on the Kyoto Protocol – the challenge is to figure out the best way to go forward. I am currently spending a week in Europe – one day in Warsaw, one day in Rome and two days in Brussels, with the European Commission and the European Parliament – talking about post-Kyoto architecture.

What is your vision of this post-Kyoto architecture?

At this point we are laying out a range of possibilities which can be classed into three categories. The first one is targets and timetables – those are agreements that are similar to the Kyoto Protocol, which has targets for every participating country. The second category is harmonized domestic policies, and the third is loosely coordinated projects. At Harvard and at cooperating institutions we are doing research to identify the best approach. The project is international, as this is one of the most difficult problems the world has ever faced. That is why we are involving academics, the business community, governments and NGOs. The project comprises the US, Canada, Japan,

Europe, China, India, Brazil and key developing countries.

How is the American position on global warming evolving after the Kyoto Protocol, which the US did not ratify?

The US signed the protocol, but it didn't ratify it and it will not ratify it. It is important to stress that this was a bipartisan decision, as Europeans seem to think it was the decision mainly of the Republican party. In 1997, there was a 95-0 vote in the US Senate, before the Kyoto Protocol was negotiated, that in case the negotiated agreement did not have binding targets for key developing countries, such as China and India, the Senate would not ratify the agreement. What has happened in the US is that now there is movement towards the US adopting a domestic climate policy, probably a carbon-trading program, which is similar to the EU's approach. There are five important bills in the US Senate and two important bills in the House of Representatives. However, I think it is very unlikely that there will be an Act of Congress signed by the president and the current administration. That will probably happen in 2009 with the new Congress and President, no matter which party he or she is from.

Would you call this progress?

Definitely, we have been seeing tremendous progress over the last 18 months. Changes were



Professor Stavins sees a place at the table for Poland in drawing up Post-Kyoto policy

taking place even before Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize. However, his movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, did galvanize opinion and many people who weren't focused on these problems changed their attitudes. In terms of the Nobel Prize, I think it had a smaller effect on the US public than the film did.

What does the US government propose as a solution to the problem?

The big question is whether it has to be all of the countries that have to sit down and come up with a solution. Under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is the UN, or 191 countries, that should reach an agreement. On the other hand, about 20 of these countries account for almost 90 percent of emissions. The vast majority of those 191 countries are trivial in terms of their contribution to the problem. Therefore they really don't need to be at the table. The

alternative would be choosing a smaller set of countries, meaning the G8 plus the major developing countries. This is the approach suggested by the former prime ministers of Canada and the United Kingdom, and more recently by US president Bush.

What is Poland's place in this scheme?

Poland is of great importance, and curbing greenhouse gas, particularly carbon dioxide emissions, will be a very great challenge, because of the rapidly growing economy and the very high reliance on coal. During previous visits to Poland, I've seen considerable interest in these issues, and with the change of government, I suspect that the level of interest will be even greater. I certainly don't know what the position of the new administration will be. However, I do believe that, as a fast-growing economy, Poland should participate actively in the debate.

How is the business community responding to the problem?

The business community is absolutely central. Business wants to reduce or even eliminate uncertainty, as the worst thing for investment is when there is tremendous uncertainty about, for example, what future electricity or other energy prices will be. Therefore business wants to know what policies are going to be in force not just today and tomorrow, but for years to come. Because of that, in the US there is now a major collaborative effort between businesses, including some diverse Fortune 500 companies. What they are asking for is a nationwide carbon-trading program. This group – USCAP – has been very influential, and what is striking to me is that rather than fighting regulations, businesses are recognizing the problems and participating. I see this also in the business communities in Europe, and to some extent in Canada. ●

Security at PM's Chancellery

Security measures at the Prime Minister's Chancellery will be ramped up. All seven entrances to the Chancellery building will be renovated and fitted with new turnstiles, access-control devices and a new IT system. The tender for installing the new system was won by tech firm T4B. The investment will cost zł.520,000. Renovation should be finished by mid-January 2008.

(WBJ)

ZUS head dismissed

President of the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) Paweł Wypych has been dismissed from his post without a word of justification, and less than one hour after PM Donald Tusk made the decision. Tusk explained that the rush was justified in order to block changes that were being introduced by Wypych and would have had serious financial ramifications for ZUS.

Tusk to visit Vatican

Prime Minister Donald Tusk will pay a visit to the Vatican to meet Pope Benedict XVI on December 7th. "Such a quick decision from the Vatican could only be achieved by Władysław Bartoszewski," claimed Foreign Ministry representatives. "I have my contacts," admitted Bartoszewski, an adviser to the PM on foreign affairs. (Poland A.M.)

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