Gordon Brown hails Copenhagen success despite widespread condemnation

Angela Merkel expected to announce a conference in Germany to deal with monitoring emissions targets – a major stumbling block in talks

Allegra Stratton in Copenhagen

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The UN climate negotiations in Copenhagen broke up last night with Gordon Brown hailing the night a success on five out of six measures but most observers united in damning the meeting a grave disappointment.

Last night, the talks wrapped up with countries agreeing that rather than using Copenhagen to announce how they would curb their carbon emissions, instead over the the "next few weeks" they would publish their targets and another meeting would be convened to discuss the legality of the measures agreed.

Europe's pledge to move from 20% to 30% – trumpeted as likely all week – failed to materialise suggesting that the European leaders believed the outline agreement on offer not sufficient to merit the higher commitment.

"It is not sufficient to combat the threat of climate change, but it's an important first step ...

No country is entirely satisfied with each element," said a US official.

The deal said little on the major sticking points of the last few days – whether or not the US or China and other heavy polluters were serious about curbing their emissions.

In a press conference held at 11pm immediately after talks had broken up, Brown himself said the agreement was just a "vital first step" and accepted that there was a lot more work to do to before it could become a legally binding agreement. In questions afterwards he declined to call it an "historic" conference.

He said that one of the outcomes of the day's negotiations was that Angela Merkel would be announcing shortly a conference in Germany to deal with the issue of monitoring emissions targets. This body would be tasked with developing the most effective means of monitoring whether a nation is cutting its emissions without intruding on its sovereignty - a major stumbling block in this week's negotiations.

Brown said: "This is the first step we are taking towards a green and low carbon future for the world, steps we are taking together. But like all first steps, the steps are difficult."

"I know what we rally need is a legally binding treaty as quickly as possible."

However Brown brushed off a suggestion that Europe hadn't gone from 20% to 30% in its carbon emission target because of the paucity of other agreements on the table.

Instead he said it was the first time so many countries had come together to agree a 2C target by 2050.

NGOs gathered in Copenhagen were severely disappointed. Senior climate change advocacy officer at Christian Aid, Nelson Muffuh said: "Already 300,000 people die each year because of the impact of climate change, most of them in the developing world. The lack of ambition shown by rich countries in Copenhagen means that number will grow."

Kate Horner from Friends of the Earth said: "This is the United Nations and the nations here are not united on this secret back-room declaration. The US has lied to the world when they called it a deal and they lied to over a hundred countries when they said would listen to their needs. This toothless declaration, being spun by the US as an historic success, reflects contempt for the multi-lateral process and we expect more from our Nobel prize winning President."

Tim Jones, climate policy officer at the World Development Movement said: "This summit has been in complete disarray from start to finish, culminating in a shameful and monumental failure that has condemned millions of people around the world to untold suffering."

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