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The Copenhagen Accord: a deal far from perfect

MARIAN WILKINSON COPENHAGEN

PRIME Minister Kevin Rudd will announce on February 1 if Australia will try to achieve an ambitious 2020 target to cut its greenhouse gas emissions as part of the new global agreement on climate change.

A cut in emissions of this size would have a major effect on Australia's use of coal-fired electricity and force a faster move to clean energy.

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Non-binding climate deal reached

US President Barack Obama reaches a non-binding agreement with major developing powers on a climate deal at a UN Summit in Copenhagen.

Yesterday – as the Copenhagen climate summit lurched into its 13th day, and four hours after its scheduled close – representatives of 192 nations struck a historic accord.

US President Barack Obama flew in to join negotiations at the 11th hour, using crash-through diplomacy to deliver the agreement, which provides for a target to limit warming to no more than two degrees and $30billion over the next three years to help poor countries adapt to climate change.

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It was vague on a promise to raise $100 billion for these countries in the years up to 2020.

Mr Obama admitted the accord would not stop temperatures rising to dangerous levels. Several small island nations, including Tuvalu, and environment groups slammed it as being too weak to stop dangerous climate change.

While the final compromise deal was significantly weaker than the ambitious "grand bargain" Mr Rudd called for when he arrived, he said it was better than the "catastrophic collapse" which was looming.

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"This was really, really hard," Mr Rudd said after emerging from the marathon negotiations at 1am with his exhausted Climate Change Minister Penny Wong. "The Copenhagen agreement will not meet everyone's expectations ... Much more work remains to be done."

Mr Rudd said he would decide whether Australia would go for the deep cuts of 25 per cent to its emissions when other countries lodged their pledges to the Copenhagen Accord in February.

"Australia will do no more and no less than the rest of the world, and that is our position," he said.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is urging all countries, including Australia, to promise to deliver their most ambitious

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targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to stop the global temperature from rising two degrees.

Mr Obama conceded he had been forced to make "the best of the situation" after Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao refused to budge on critical issues.

The stand-off between President Obama and the Chinese leader, both representing the world's biggest greenhouse gas polluters, was resolved only after intense round-table discussions between the two and the leaders of India, Brazil and South Africa.

Mr Obama called the accord "ameaningful and unprecedented breakthrough", saying it was the first time in history that all the big greenhouse gas polluters in both rich and poor nations had come together to take action against climate change.

"Taken together these actions will help us begin to meet our responsibilities to leave our children and our grandchildren a cleaner and safer planet," he said. "This progress did not come easily, and we know that this progress alone is not enough."

Environment groups slammed the failure of rich countries to announce their final 2020 target, saying the pledges on the table will lead to a temperature rise of three degrees, enough to trigger dangerous climate change, according to scientists.

Greenpeace International executive director Kumi Naidoo said: "World leaders had a once-in-a-generation chance to change the world for good, to avert catastrophic climate change. In the end they produced a poor deal full of loopholes big enough to fly Air Force One through."

Lumumba Stanislaus Dia Ping, from Sudan, which is chairing the Group of 77 and China bloc of 130 poor nations, condemned the deal: "Today's events really represent the worst developments in climate change negotiations in history."

In Sydney, Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said the accord was as hollow as Mr Rudd's attempts to affect climate change.

Mr Abbott, who argues Australia should delay a domestic carbon emissions trading scheme until a substantive agreement has been struck at a global level, said: "I think it's wrong for people like Mr Rudd to imagine that they can be much more than the mouse that roared."

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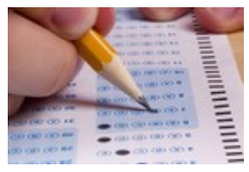

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