Deadline for Nam to sign climate accord

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GOVERNMENT has until this Sunday to sign the agreement reached last month at the Copenhagen climate summit in Denmark, Prime Minister Nahas Angula said yesterday.

'After our delegation returned from the summit we made a submission to Cabinet and now Cabinet has to decide,' the Prime Minister told a business breakfast organised by the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) yesterday, where he gave a report back on the Copenhagen summit.

Angula did not reveal what his recommendation was to Cabinet - whether to sign or not.

The first Cabinet meeting of the new year was held on Tuesday.

'You will find it on the Internet, just Google it,' Angula responded to questions whether Government would publicly announce its decision.

Angula criticised that the decisions of the Copenhagen Accord were non-binding and were thrashed out by the leaders of a handful of industrial countries.

'The big polluting countries mapped out the deal; developing countries as such were left out of the decision-making,' the Prime Minister said.

'If Namibia signs this Accord by Sunday then our country has to subscribe to it, but it is not a binding agreement and that puts us in a dilemma and a difficult position. We must also make sure that the Copenhagen Accord does not [compromise] the Kyoto Protocol, an international climate agreement signed several years back.'

He described the offer by industrial countries to pledge US$30 billion over the next three years to help developing countries cope with the effects of climate change 'as a bait for developing countries' to sign the accord.

'If a [developing] country wants some of the billions offered it must indicate what measures it will take to combat climate change.

'We have to organise ourselves and map out a mitigation strategy to react to climate change and this would include an early warning system against floods, ensuring food security and disaster management and develop clean (renewable) energy.

'Government decided that the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) will set up a climate change committee with key stakeholders and that will include the private sector to drive these plans.

'We will also have to work out an adaptation plan how our country will handle climate change and its effects,' he said.

That would include 'green' energy sources like solar and wind power, and also nuclear power, but there is disagreement over whether nuclear energy is a clean source of energy or not, Angula said.

The Prime Minister also told the gathering that 'not all was lost' with regard to the disappointing results of the Copenhagen summit.

The content of the accord is supposed to be made legally binding at the next climate summit later this year, according to Angula.