Obama says disappointment at Copenhagen justified

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WASHINGTON, Dec 24 (bdnews24.com/Reuters) -US President Barack Obama said on Wednesday that disappointment over the outcome of the Copenhagen climate change summit was justified, hardening a widespread verdict that the conference had been a failure.

"I think that people are justified in being disappointed about the outcome in Copenhagen," he said in an interview with PBS Newshour.

"What I said was essentially that rather than see a complete collapse in Copenhagen, in which nothing at all got done and would have been a huge backward step, at least we kind of held ground and there wasn't too much backsliding from where we were."

Sweden has labeled the accord Obama helped broker a disaster for the environment, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the summit was "at best flawed and at worst chaotic," and climate change advocates have been even more scathing in their criticism.

The talks secured bare-minimum agreements that fell well short of original goals to reduce carbon emissions and stem global warming, after lengthy negotiations failed to paper over differences between rich nations and developing economies. Some singled out China for special blame.

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British Environment Minister Ed Miliband wrote in the Guardian newspaper on Monday China had "hijacked" efforts to agree to significant reductions in global emissions. Beijing denied the claim and said London was scheming to divide developing countries on the climate change issue.

Obama did not point any fingers, but did say the Chinese delegation was "skipping negotiations" before his personal intervention.

"At a point where there was about to be complete breakdown, and the prime minister of India was heading to the airport and the Chinese representatives were essentially skipping negotiations, and everybody's screaming, what did happen was, cooler heads prevailed," Obama said.

Obama forged an accord with China, India, Brazil and South Africa in the conference's final hours after personally securing a bilateral meeting with the four nations' leaders.

"We were able to at least agree on non-legally binding targets for all countries -- not just the United States, not just Europe, but also for China and India, which, projecting forward, are going to be the world's largest emitters," he said.

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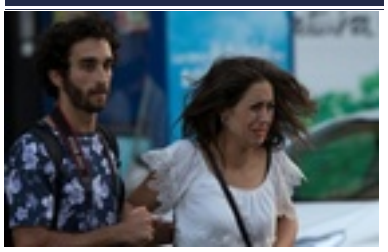

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