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Copenhagen climate deal 'satisfies' Saudi Arabia

By Richard Black
Environment correspondent, BBC News website

Saudi Arabia says it is "satisfied" with the conclusion of last month's UN climate summit in Copenhagen.

Saudi Arabia has argued for compensation from "lost" oil revenue

However, the country's lead negotiator Mohammad Al-Sabban told BBC News that the UN climate process may be heading for stalemate, like world trade talks.

Meanwhile, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has become the latest world leader to admit that last month's summit made little progress.

The status of the agreement made in Copenhagen remains unclear.

The summit concluded without adoption of the "Copenhagen Accord" instigated by Brazil, China, India and South Africa (the BASIC group) and the US.

Most countries endorsed it, but not all; and governments could only agree to recognise the accord's existence.

A number of governments and leaders, including US President Barack Obama, have since admitted that this conclusion fell short of many peoples' expectations.

But Mr Al-Sabban said Saudi Arabia was content.

> **"There is no escaping the truth that the nations of the world have to move to a low-greenhouse-gas-emissions and energy-efficient-development path"**
> Manmohan Singh

Why did Copenhagen fail?

"I would like to express our satisfaction with the outcome," he wrote in an e-mail to BBC News.

"We were among the 25 or so countries who positively negotiated the accord along with the world leaders, and we had succeeded in including the interest of OPEC countries in the Copenhagen Accord."

However, a number of politicians from industrialised nations have since blamed the developing world for blocking progress; and this, he said, would exacerbate mistrust between rich and poor.

"If so, we may be heading to the same future of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round, which is facing a total stalemate."

Talks on the Doha Round began in 2001, but remain stalled over disputes between developed and developing world, largely over agricultural subsidies.

Environment groups have regularly accused Saudi Arabia of trying to block progress within the UN climate process to safeguard its fossil fuel industry.

The world's biggest oil producer has consistently argued that it should be compensated for any loss of revenue caused by international restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions.

Basic issues

Because of the unique circumstances of its conception, the status of the Copenhagen Accord remains unclear.

Governments have until the end of January to submit "actions" that they are prepared to take under the accord.

It is expected that those deciding to do so will merely re-state

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existing commitments on curbing greenhouse gas emissions and on funding climate protection in the poorest parts of the world.

As one of the Copenhagen Accord's architects, India has not escaped criticism about the agreement's lack of ambition.

Speaking at the Indian Science Congress, Mr Singh said India "must not lag behind" in the adoption of low-carbon technologies.

Mr Brown said Copenhagen may yet yield a way forward

"We were able to make only limited progress at the Copenhagen summit, and no-one was satisfied with the outcome," he said.

"And yet there is no escaping the truth that the nations of the world have to move to a low-greenhouse-gas-emissions and energy-efficient-development path."

Reports indicate that the BASIC group is to meet later this month to plot a course forward.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, meanwhile, told the BBC that progress based on the Copenhagen Accord was possible.

"I think it's not impossible that the groundwork that was done at Copenhagen could lead to what you might call a global agreement that everybody is happy to stand by," he said.

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