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Dr. Jonathan Pershing and Dr. Urban Rid discuss global climate policy

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[Dr. Camilla Bausch](#) [1]

Dr. Jonathan Pershing, US Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change, and Dr. Urban Rid, Director-General at the German Federal Environment Ministry, discussed the future of international climate policy at an event hosted by the American Embassy in Berlin. The dialogue was initiated by Loni Gardner and moderated by Dr. Camilla Bausch, both from Ecologic Institute.

The roundtable event linked Dr. Pershing live from Washington D.C. with Dr. Rid. About 40 key stakeholders from ministries, non-governmental organizations, business and the scientific community attended the event in Berlin, resulting in a vibrant transatlantic dialogue on climate issues.

The exchange of views and questions revealed clear differences between Germany and the U.S. in their respective approaches to the challenge of climate change at the international level. For example, Germany would like to see a binding international agreement on quantified emission reduction obligations and still supports and merits the Kyoto Protocol approach. The U.S., on the other hand, underlining the need to be both ambitious and realistic, stresses the importance of bottom up approaches, which would include countries like China and India. Additionally, the U.S.

questions the merits of the Kyoto Protocol.

With regard to implementation action, the European Union and Germany were able to show a comprehensive track record, including binding targets. Conversely, broad and ambitious legislative action has been difficult to achieve in the U.S. due to the skeptical voices in Congress. With the latest elections, the prospects for passing climate legislation in Congress have become even less likely.

Dr. Rid discussed exactly how Germany aims to meet its pledge of reducing GHG emissions by 40% (compared to 1990 levels). One cornerstone of this plan is the Energy Concept, Germany's roadmap for 2050 to achieve an "environmentally sound, reliable, and affordable energy supply", which integrates climate protection targets. This plan as well as the European policies includes milestone goals, which can be tracked and measured, which Dr. Rid noted was an important component for the success of any such plan. Dr. Pershing reaffirmed the U.S.'s commitment to reducing emissions by 17% by 2020 (compared to 2005 levels), and requested indulgence, noting that the U.S. was only able to begin addressing the issue with the Democrats winning the elections. Dr. Pershing pointed to President Obama's "Clean Energy Standard" concept as one measure the U.S. was pursuing.

However, despite highlighting these contrasts, the event also distilled consensus on key issues. This included the clear message that the current mitigation pledges by countries across the globe are not yet sufficient to reach the ultimate goal of limiting global warming to less than 2°C compared to preindustrial levels. There was a common understanding that this goal will not be reached without all major emitters contributing to the mitigation efforts. Furthermore, there was a clear understanding that there is no alternative to the UN negotiations in terms of finding a global solution to the challenge of climate change. Both Dr. Rid and Dr. Pershing viewed the outcome of the UN's climate change conference in Cancun as positive. They saw the resulting Cancun agreement as having advanced each of the core elements of the Copenhagen Accord. Both sides also agreed upon the importance of implementing and specifying the Cancun results in 2011, during the run up to the next climate summit in Durban, South Africa.

Keywords: Climate, Climate policy, climate protection, transatlantic relations, international relations, energy, USA

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