Greenpeace activists perform above an underwater art museum to draw attention to the rising risks for millions of people living in coastal areas if immediate action isn't taken to curb global warming.

Climate talks focus on nailing down pledges

Delegates seek to hold nations to emissions goals.

BY ARTHUR MAX
Associated Press

CANCÚN, Mexico — U.N. climate talks moved into their decisive week Monday with the agenda dominated by future cuts in carbon emissions and keeping countries honest about their actions to control global warming.

Government ministers arrived in force to begin applying political muscle to negotiations that in the past week have narrowed some disputes, but which are likely to leave the toughest decisions for the final hours of the 193-nation conference on Friday.

Delegates were feeling pressure to produce at least a modest agreement from the two-week U.N. meeting to restore credibility to the talks after the last summit in Copenhagen failed to agree on any binding action to rein in emissions of global-warming gases.

"We cannot leave Cancún empty-handed," warned Connie Hedegaard, the European Union's top climate official.

The conference seeks decisions on establishing a "green fund" to help poorer nations rein in greenhouse gases and to adapt their economies and infrastructure to a changing climate; an agreement making it easier for developing nations to obtain patented green technology from advanced nations; and pinning down more elements of a system for compensating developing countries for protecting their forests.

New negotiating documents put on the table over the weekend were generally well received, despite criticisms of flaws and omissions.

But Hedegaard said negotiators need to nail down ways to ensure that countries meet their emissions pledges.

Falling short of a legal treaty at last year's summit, President Barack Obama brokered a political document with the leaders of China, India, Brazil and South Africa, called the Copenhagen Accord, which outlined important compromises.

One breakthrough came when China agreed to allow other countries to review climate actions that received international financing. At Cancún, the Chinese went a step further and said all their operations, including fully domestic actions, would be open to international scrutiny.

But details about how this would be done remained to be settled.

Adoption of the Copenhagen Accord was blocked by a handful of dissident nations. In subsequent months, however, 140 countries declared their endorsement of the deal, and 56 of them made specific pledges for reducing carbon emissions, or at least limiting their growth, by 2020.

Mexico's deputy foreign minister, Juan Manuel Gomez Robledo, said more countries had said in private consultations that they intended to add their pledges to the list.