Wrangling dims hopes for creating ‘green fund’

Climate conference unlikely to achieve its modest goals.

BY CHARLES J. HANLEY
Associated Press

CANCÚN, Mexico — Delegates from almost 200 nations worked Thursday to resolve disputes and take steps toward easing the impacts of climate change, at a conference whose limited goals drew an accusation of “ecocide” from Bolivia’s president.

Once again this year, as they near an end, the annual negotiations under the U.N. climate treaty will not produce an overarching, legally binding deal to slash emissions of global warming gases.

From the start, the talks focused instead on secondary areas, including setting up a “green fund” to help poorer countries cope with global warming.

But in that and in a half-dozen other areas, as they approached Friday’s final gavel, world environment ministers and other delegates still haggled over the wording of texts.

Environmentalists accused the U.S. of holding the green fund hostage until it is satisfied on other items.

Bolivia’s President Evo Morales, addressing the full conference, cited families already being deprived of water because of warming and drought, and islanders facing the loss of homes from seas rising from global warming.

If governments move away from strong, mandatory emissions reductions, “then we will be responsible for ecocide,” which is equivalent to genocide because this would be an affront to mankind as a whole,” he said.

The green fund would help developing nations buy advanced clean-energy technology to reduce their own emissions, and to adapt to climate change.

Developing nations consider inadequate the goal set in the Copenhagen Accord for the fund, of $100 billion a year by 2020, and propose instead that richer countries commit 1.5 percent of their annual gross domestic product — today roughly $600 billion a year.

Developed nations have resisted such targets.

Tough questioning at oil spill hearing results in pushback

Houston Chronicle

HOUSTON — Lawyers for BP and Transocean found themselves briefly on the same side Thursday as they objected to persistent questioning from a U.S. Coast Guard investigator.

The three days of hearings that concluded Thursday have been the latest in the interplay between the two companies, including the differences between federal guidelines for maintenance of blowout preventers and the company’s procedures.

When Nguyen asked Castex why Transocean, which owned the Deepwater Horizon, chose to use its own system instead of industry guidelines, Castex answered that the company did not follow industry guidelines, but was focused on the differences.

Nguyen said he didn’t take the hostile tone personally.

“I know they all have rules to play for their clients and are doing a good job to make sure they’re well served,” he said. “My job is not trying to go after anyone in particular but make sure we know as much as we can about how to make things safer. 

“I would like to leave this hearing with a clear understanding of what’s important — that’s what we’re trying to get.”