Winning the battle against global climate change

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Anders WIJKMAN (EPP-ED, SE) in response to the Commission communication on "Winning the battle against global climate change". The report stressed that the EU strategy on climate change should be based on a seven-pronged approach, involving: building on key Kyoto elements (i.e.binding greenhouse gas emission targets, a global cap-and-trade system, and flexible mechanisms); undertaking strong emissions reductions at home (starting with 20-30% domestic reductions by 2020); adopting a proactive approach to engage other main actors, notably the US; developing a strategic partnership with countries like China, South Africa, Brazil and India to help them develop sustainable energy strategies; vigorously promoting research and innovation for sustainable energy technologies and removing 'perverse' incentives such as fossil fuel subsidies; using legislation to stimulate greater energy efficiency; and encouraging citizens to become directly involved to a much greater extent in mitigation efforts, inter alia through the provision of detailed information about the carbon content of products and services.

Ahead of the forthcoming UN Conferences, MEPs urged the EU leadership to present proposals for a future climate regime "based on the overall objective that the average global temperature increase should not go beyond 2°C of pre-industrialisation levels".

They said that, in the review of the current Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and its possible expansion, "the idea of grandfathering should be closely reconsidered because of its major shortcomings and alternatives such as benchmarking and auctioning – using an up-stream approach - should be explored". National emission quotas would also have to be reconsidered because of increased cross-border trade, notably electricity.

The report said that a future regime should be based on "common but differentiated responsibilities aiming at contraction and convergence, on continued and progressively greater emission reductions and the involvement of more countries in the reduction efforts". Any targets for emission cuts should be based on recent science and aiming to not exceed a global average temperature increase of 2°C with reasonable certainty. Cost-effectiveness should be a characteristic of all measures considered and a long-term goal should therefore be to develop a global carbon market, based on cap and trade.

While welcoming the conclusion of the March 2005 European Council that developed countries should aim for emissions reductions in the order of 15-30% for 2020, MEPs insisted that "emissions reduction targets for the long term are needed as well" and suggested a target of 60-80% for 2050. They pointed out that the potential for energy savings was as high as 40% in the EU, but that to reach this goal binding targets must be set. Furthermore, with a systemic approach it would be possible for renewable energies to cover 25% of EU energy consumption by 2020.

Other recommendations included the introduction of "strong measures" to reduce emissions from transport, including severe reduction targets for the aviation sector and a pilot aviation emissions trading scheme for the period 2008-2012; developing the use of biomass; transforming energy and transportation systems and the thermal design of buildings; and "setting targets for annual reductions in the energy intensity in the order of 2.5-3%".