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Blair Says G-8 Leaders Need to Move Past Kyoto Debate (Update2)

July 7 (Bloomberg) -- U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair said the Group of Eight industrial countries should move beyond disagreements about caps on greenhouse gas emissions and agree on steps to address global warming without harming economic growth.

In a press conference after a meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush, Blair said the G-8 can't resolve differences on climate change at talks today and tomorrow in Gleneagles, Scotland. Bush rejected a mandatory cap on greenhouse gas four years ago, questioning the science behind the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty on emissions standards that the U.S. has refused to join.

``There's no point in going back over the Kyoto debate," Blair said today. ``That is an argument that has been, and we can't resolve that and we're not going to negotiate some new treaty on climate change at the G-8 summit."

The G-8 needs to start negotiating solutions to pollution problems other than the Kyoto accord, which ends in 2012, Blair said.

``What it is about is seeing whether it will be possible in the future to bring people back into consensus together -- not just America and Europe and Japan, but also America, Europe, Japan and the emerging economies like China, like India," Blair said. ``It's important that we at least begin a process of dialogue that allows us to make progress on this."

Coal and Oil

Russia, the world's biggest oil producer and second-biggest oil supplier behind Saudi Arabia, says the world's nations should reduce the use of coal and use more oil and gas for power production because that results in lower greenhouse emissions, said Alexander Bedritsky, head of Russia's Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring.

``We are selling oil and gas and that means that we give Europe an opportunity to reduce greenhouse emissions," Bedritsky, who is a member of the Russian delegation at the G-8 leaders' meeting, said at a press briefing in Gleneagles today. ``We should also concentrate on developing new technologies, including those that allow use of hydrogen as a fuel."

Bedritskiy said nuclear-fusion reactors may ``make a revolution in 10 to 20 years from now." Russia, as well as Japan, the U.S. and France back development of nuclear power production, he said.

Nuclear Fusion

France was chosen last month as the site for the world's first 4.6 billion-euro (\$5.6 billion) nuclear-fusion reactor. The six members of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, or ITER, reached agreement over the project in Moscow on June 28. The experiment involves the European Union, Japan, the U.S., Russia, China and South Korea. Fusion, the process that powers the stars, could be cheaper and safer than nuclear fission, the action at the core of contemporary nuclear power plants.

The Bush administration wants voluntary reductions, incentives for alternative fuels such as ethanol and nuclear power and conservation. While the Clinton administration agreed to the treaty, it didn't send the accord to the Senate for ratification. Bush argues that Kyoto-like curbs will choke off growth of the U.S. economy.

Bush said Kyoto ``just didn't work for us" because adhering to it would've hurt the U.S. economy and because that treaty didn't include developing economies such as India and China.

``I recognize that greenhouse gases are an issue and that we've got to deal with it," Bush said. ``I also strongly believe that technology and the proper use of technology will enable the world to grow our economies and at the same time be wiser about how we protect the environment."

The U.S. also wants to move toward an agreement with the European Union on trade, Bush said. ``We want to work with the EU to rid our respective countries of agricultural subsidies," and the best forum to do so is the series of global trade talks known as the Doha Round, he said.

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