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Obama won't revise U.S. climate goals before election

By Darren Samuelsohn

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President Barack Obama won't update his international commitments on climate change until 2013 — if he's back for a second term.

U.S. deputy climate envoy Jonathan Pershing [spelled out](#) the timetable for Obama's next big update Monday in Bonn, Germany, at the start of a two-week U.N. conference on the issue.

Pershing's remarks came when asked by a reporter whether the United States planned to rethink its pledge to curb emissions 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 in light of a discouraging report last month by the International Energy Agency. The IEA [said](#) greenhouse gases are building up in the atmosphere at higher-than-expected rates and that not enough is being done globally to stop it.

"I think we're not going to make a judgment about how we'd do something differently without more information about how we are doing on the commitments we have just now undertaken," Pershing replied. "We just did this about six months ago. The notion that six months later we're throwing the whole thing over and starting again doesn't seem like the right approach.

"The right approach seems to be slightly more measured," Pershing added. "Not too measured. We've given ourselves only a couple of years. 2013 is not that far down the road to then examine how we've done and how we move forward."

Along with other major greenhouse gas emitters, U.S. officials agreed in December at U.N. talks in Cancun, Mexico, on a 2013-15 schedule for updating its commitments, Pershing said.

The United States is not budging from its existing promises even though Obama was unable to get a cap-and-trade bill through Congress, Pershing said, citing a "whole range of policies and programs" to meet its goals.

Also Monday, the top U.N. climate official acknowledged that an agreement won't be reached on how to extend the Kyoto Protocol before its current commitment period closes at the end of 2012.

"We would assume that there is no time to do that between Durban and the end of 2012," Christiana Figueres told reporters, referring to the South African city that will host the next big round of U.N. climate negotiations Nov. 28 to Dec. 9.

The United States is the only industrialized nation that has never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, so it is not directly involved in those negotiations. But the lack of action in Washington has prompted some to point a finger at Obama for the sluggish nature of the overall effort.

Pershing, however, said the United States isn't to blame considering it stands by the work it promised to do. Instead, he said he was more concerned about developing countries that are projected to produce a much larger share of future emissions.

Many have made pledges to grow in a more sustainable way but have resisted talks on figuring out ways to monitor and police their promises.

"That remains to be part of a negotiation, but the fact it's such a difficult battle, that there's so much of an uphill discussion about it, suggests to me the problem is not the U.S. but others who are not yet ready to move forward on commitments that they've made," he said.

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