

BRUSSELS (AFP) - The energy ministers of nine European Union nations on Monday signed a deal to develop a massive offshore wind power grid in the North Sea and Irish Sea, as UN climate talks got underway in Copenhagen.

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The text was signed on the margins of an EU energy ministers' meeting by Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden.

"This very ambitious project is not just of interest to the countries bordering the North seas. It is important for the future energy mix providing the needs of the European Union," said Paul Magnette, climate minister of Belgium which initiated the scheme.

The plan, which will now be examined by experts, foresees "the major part of offshore wind energy development in Europe will be focussed on the North Seas region."

"We're already the world leader in offshore wind here in the UK and today's announcements bring new funding and expert direction to grow this vital new industry.

"They also mean we can work with other countries in the EU to increase our renewable energy supplies," said Britain's energy minister Lord Hunt.

The countries involved aim to devise a work plan in early 2010 to coordinate offshore infrastructure development.

Sweden supports massive wind energy initiative

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

Tuesday, 08 December 2009 10:05 - Last Updated Tuesday, 08 December 2009 12:44

The initiative is part of EU plans to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 percent by 2020.

There are already some 30 offshore wind farms in Europe, off the coasts of Denmark, Germany, Britain and the Netherlands.

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