

BRUSSELS (AFP) - European environment ministers has began to plan a new strategy for tackling climate change after "disastrous" UN climate negotiations which the US and China did their best to undermine, the Swedish EU presidency said.



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"I call this a disaster, it doesn't at all match the needs of the world and that is what we have to discuss," said Sweden's Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency until the end of the year.

The outcome of the UN climate talks in Copenhagen, which ended last Friday "was mostly for the big ones, for the US and for China and their followers" agreeing on "the lowest common denominator," he told reporters as he arrived for the talks in Brussels.

The Copenhagen agreement was put together by leaders of the United States, China, India, Brazil, South Africa and major European nations, after it became clear the 194-nation summit was in danger of failure.

It promised 100 billion dollars for poor nations that risk bearing the brunt of the global warming fallout and set a commitment to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

The summit outcome has been widely criticised, however, with recriminations among many of

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the participants.

Belgian Climate Minister Paul Marnette is one of the Europeans seeking a stronger EU line, and sees a kind of climate tax as a possible answer.

"If some countries, including the biggest emitters in the world, continue to block the adoption of binding emission reduction targets, the European Union has to consider... a carbon tax on products imported from these countries," he told the Belgian daily Le Soir Monday.

Otherwise, he added, companies operating in Europe, which has set binding CO2 cuts of 20 percent by 2020, would be at a disadvantage.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has also said that such a carbon tax is worth considering.

However, the idea does not have unanimous EU backing.

"We can't reach our goals through state edicts," German Environment Minister Norbert Roettgen said on Tuesday.

The European Commission is also reticent. "The carbon tax is not a subject for discussion" at the EU ministerial talks, an official said.

No decisions were expected on Tuesday, but the post-Copenhagen debate was underway in Europe.

"The governments are in the process of analysing and leading the debate," one negotiator said, while adding that the next major talks would take place in Seville on January 15-16 after Spain assumes the EU presidency.

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Roettgen was not despairing. "This isn't lost," he said.