

New Climate Fund to Give \$110m

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He announced establishment of the fund at a press briefing after the conclusion of the Asia regional climate change conference launching an EU-backed initiative called the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA).

Mahmud said the new fund would be administered by Bangladesh with a two-tier management structure that would represent all the stakeholders.

He sought to reassure journalists saying that the World Bank's role would be minimal and that the lending agency would only be providing technical assistance for a token fee of 1 percent of the total funds.

Under the GCCA initiative, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Cambodia and the EU endorsed a joint declaration that was signed by the representatives of these countries and the EU commissioner for climate action Connie Hedegaard.

Bangladesh will receive another €8.5 million under the GCCA initiative for which the European Union has allocated €100 from its own budget and bilateral contributions from Sweden and the Czech Republic.

When asked about the nature of funds--whether they were new funds or moneys previously pledged--Hedegaard had responded during a session of the conference on Monday that they were 'brand new'.

It has been a consistent demand of the least developed countries that climate assistance must be new money, meaning it would have to be over and beyond Overseas Development Assistance already pledged.

But Hedegaard evaded a similar question regarding pledges from other countries.

She indicated that there were no guarantees that the pledges from other European countries were over and beyond the pledges that the developed countries were obligated to provide the poor countries.

"What is important is to make sure that the funds are delivered and put to use," she said, rather diplomatically

Hasan Mahmud was confident the new alliance with EU would strengthen Bangladesh's position at international climate negotiations.

Mahmud had pushed hard to bring together a group of Most Vulnerable Countries (MVC) and get official recognition as a separate negotiating group at the last UN climate summit in Copenhagen.

When asked if that initiative would gain more currency with an implicit EU endorsement, Mahmud said he was hopeful that it would be beneficial for the alliance members.

"I think (the alliance) will strengthen our position."

About concerns that an alliance with the EU might require the smaller and poorer members to support the developed country grouping, Hedegaard said there was no such condition.

When asked whether the alliance might constrict Bangladesh's or other alliance members' negotiating space, Hedegaard said, "These funds are completely free of any conditions."

Mahmud was quick to add: "We are not obligated to support EU position fully in any way."

Besides Bangladesh playing the host, eight other countries took part in the conference including Nepal, Myanmar,

Afghanistan, Laos and Yemen.

Mahmud indicated his conviction in historical responsibility and the 'polluters pay' principle, when he said alluding to representatives and ministers of the other participating countries, "The people of these countries are not responsible for the climate change."

He said, on behalf of those countries, that they wanted the earth to be cooled or their peoples would have to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts.

In an apt analogy, although divorced of political prudence, he said, "Our position is like we are standing in the middle of crossfire."

Hedegaard, responding to another question, indirectly admitted that there was little chance of a legally binding agreement in Cancun, Mexico at the end of this year, saying that although it was unlikely countries should try and ensure the momentum gained in Copenhagen remains.

Referring to a new round of negotiations kicking off in Bonn, Germany, Hedegaard said countries should try and agree on substance even if it is a little bit at a time, so that by the end of 2011 there is a substantial agreement dealing with climate change comprehensively.

Source: bdnews24.com