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Countries pledge global support for clean energy

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By [Jasmin Melvin](#) and Alina Selyukh

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States and dozens of other countries have pledged hundreds of millions of dollars toward clean energy initiatives to help battle climate change, U.S. Energy Secretary Stephen Chu said on Tuesday.

Meeting in Washington, D.C., for a two-day conference, delegations from 24 countries representing 80 percent of global energy consumption promised 11 initiatives that would mean building fewer power plants and using more clean energy.

"We know the clean energy challenge won't wait, and we won't wait either," Chu said.

With the U.S. Senate virtually gridlocked on passing an energy and climate change package this year, the Obama administration is under pressure to provide leadership in global climate talks that are making little progress.

The countries pledged to improve energy efficiency in appliances and buildings, accelerate deployment of smart grid technology and electric vehicles, and help developing countries embrace low-carbon technologies.

These initiatives "will save enough energy in the next 20 years to equal the output of 500 medium-sized power plants," Chu said.

Eight companies, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Target Corp, Marriott International Inc and Nissan Motor Co Ltd, along with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, backed a plan to create efficiency standards for buildings and industrial facilities.

Britain's Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Chris Huhne, said a group led by his government and Australia will help advance carbon capture and storage (CCS), a technology its backers hope will reduce fossil fuel emissions.

"CCS is going to play absolutely a vital role in tackling global climate change," Huhne said.

The group will reveal recommendations for accelerating the use of CCS technologies before 2020 at the next ministerial meeting in 2011.

India, Italy and the United States agreed to work together to supply developing countries with solar projects not connected to energy grids and other alternative power.

The U.S. Energy Department said this initiative would help light the homes of 10 million people within five years.

The program was officially activated on Tuesday with Italy's \$10 million contribution to the International Finance Corporation, the first transfer of funds for the project.

"The main goal of this program is to create stable market conditions in developing countries in order to make off-grid, high quality energy technologies commercially viable, and therefore affordable to the local population," said Stefania Prestigiacomo, Italy's Minister for Environment, Land and Sea.

The meeting in Washington brought together delegations from the European Commission, Mexico, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Sweden, Russia, South Africa and other nations.

"What this is about is taking concrete action, concrete steps," Chu said. "This is not about philosophical positioning. This is about really saying, 'We're going to do this.'"

Chu said that the international talks and agreements made during the meeting would help broker understanding at the global climate talks.

The next ministerial meeting will be in 2011 in the United Arab Emirates, followed by a 2012 meeting in Britain.

(Reporting by Jasmin Melvin and Alina Selyukh; Editing by [Lisa Shumaker](#))

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