

Energy Secretary Says International Monitoring Tops Paris 'Wish List'

Among the top priorities for the Obama administration at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change now underway in Paris is more international monitoring, and a means to continue renewing "climate goals."

During a Monday press conference, U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz told reporters in Paris that the U.S. wants a final U.N. deal to include mechanisms to verify how well nations are meeting their carbon emission reduction goals. He also said the U.S. wants the final agreement to offer a means to update and renew commitments in later years.

"We are looking for verifiable approaches for accounting for progress," he said. "We've been very clear that we would like to see a regular review period."

Moniz, Secretary of State John Kerry and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy are in Paris as the U.N. climate talks continue. Over the weekend, a draft final proposal was released.

In that draft, the nations involved in the negotiations agreed to three major goals:

- To hold the increase in the global average temperature below 1.5° C or well below 2° C above pre-industrial levels by ensuring deep reductions in global greenhouse gas net emissions;
- To increase their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to effectively respond to the impacts of the implementation of response measures and to loss and damage; and

- To pursue a transformation toward sustainable development that fosters climate resilient and low greenhouse gas emission societies and economies, and that does not threaten food production and distribution.

Moniz admitted the U.S. negotiating team must keep in mind that congressional support for any agreement will be necessary. Republicans are generally hostile to the negotiations.

But, President Obama has also used executive authority to circumvent congressional Republicans in the past.

“The president put forward a strong action plan in June of 2013, which we are executing,” Moniz said. “The president made clear, and I think it’s important, that ultimately we do have legislation that provides an economy-wide approach, but in the meantime, we will emphasize executive authorities for meeting our ambitious targets.”