Legislators hold key to tackling climate change - Globe study

15.01.2013

Categories: Sustainability, Regulation, Government, Law
Tags: Climate Change, China

The Global Legislators’ Organisation (Globe International) has this week launched its 3rd Climate Legislation Study, produced in partnership with the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics.

The project audits climate legislation across the world’s major developed and emerging economies.

“The tide is beginning to turn decisively on tackling climate change, the defining material challenge of this century,” said the Rt Hon John Gummer, Lord Deben, president of Globe International, chairman of the UK Statutory Independent Committee on Climate Change, and former UK Secretary of State for the Environment.

He noted that in the past year, 32 out of 33 surveyed countries in the report have introduced or are progressing significant climate-related legislation. “In 2012 alone, 18 of the 33 countries made significant progress. This is a game-changing development, driven by emerging economies, but taking place across each and every continent. Most importantly it challenges how governments look at the international negotiations up to 2015 requiring much greater focus by governments to support national legislation.”

According to the report, while the approach often differs (whether directly inspired by climate change, energy efficiency, energy security or competitiveness), national legislation is achieving “remarkably similar results”, namely improved energy security, greater resource-efficiency and cleaner, lower carbon economic growth.

Much of the substantive progress on legislative activity on climate change in 2012 took place in emerging economies, including China, which will provide the motor of global economic growth in coming decades, says the report.

According to Globe, “while current national legislation does not yet, cumulatively, add up to what needs to be done to avoid dangerous climate change, it is putting in place the necessary mechanisms to measure, report and verify emissions, a pre-requisite for a credible global climate treaty”.

The organisation says that this progress will deliver real benefits to national economies and, ultimately, give world leaders the political space to go further and faster in the UN negotiations, helping provide a foundation for a comprehensive, global deal by 2015.

“It is no exaggeration to say that the clean revolution we need is being carried forward by legislation,” said Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. “Domestic legislation is critical because it is the linchpin between action on the ground and the international agreement. At the national level, it is clear that when countries enact clean energy policies, investment follows. At the international level, it is equally clear that domestic legislation opens the political space for international agreements and facilitates overall ambition.”

“We must be realistic. It will not be possible to reach an agreement in 2015 in the UN brokered climate negotiations unless the national regulatory frameworks are in place,” said Globe secretary general, Adam

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Matthews. “It is by implementing national legislation that the political conditions for an international agreement will be created.”

Grainne Rothery

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