Countries are pushing ahead with laws to tackle climate change, despite ‘snail-paced’ progress on a global deal to cut emissions, it was revealed.

Almost all of the 33 developed and developing countries surveyed in a new study had introduced or progressed with significant climate-related legislation within their own borders in the last year.

In 2012, 18 of the countries made significant progress, according to the report by the Grantham Research Institute at LSE and Globe International, which brings together legislators from different countries.

Only Canada had gone backwards on climate change, by repealing the Act which implemented its targets under the Kyoto Protocol treaty to cut global emissions. Despite a tough economic year for many countries, such as those in the eurozone, some progress was made by developed nations.

While the UK had not made substantial progress in 2012, it has a raft of climate-related legislation in place, including the flagship 2008 Climate Change Act, and measures on energy efficiency, supporting renewables and sustainable homes.

The report found the EU as a whole made progress through its new directive on energy efficiency, while the US pushed forward with regulating carbon dioxide through its Clean Air Act.

Action by developing countries was more significant, with Mexico leading the way with a new climate law to cut emissions by 30 per cent compared to “business as usual” by 2020, and major progress by countries ranging from Kenya to Pakistan.

China, the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, has begun to draft its national climate change law, while local legislation – the first of its kind in the country – was passed in Shenzhen to manage greenhouse gas emissions.

The report, now in its third year, was expanded to cover 33 countries, including 17 of the 20 top polluters, which account for 85 per cent of the world’s emissions.

Lord Deben, president of Globe International and chairman of the UK’s official Committee on Climate Change, said: “This is a game-changing development, driven by emerging economies, but taking place across each and every continent.”

But it was warned that the measures taken by the countries in the study were not enough to prevent global temperatures rising more than 2°C, beyond which ‘dangerous’ climate change is predicted to occur. Globe vice president and Tory MP Graham Stuart said: “Progress has been much more substantial and much more widespread than people realise, but still lags the action required to meet the goal of reducing climate change to less than 2°C.”

But showing that legislation is being implemented in a number of countries will build confidence among nations that they are not acting alone and will improve the chances of an ambitious international deal being secured, he suggested.

And the more countries that have legislation and regulation in place, the more logical it comes for businesses to invest in the technologies, such as energy efficient appliances and renewables, needed to combat climate change.

“Legislation and regulatory frameworks can never in themselves deliver what’s required.

“What we are hoping for is that it triggers the technological change and behavioural change in business and wider society that means we can lower emissions without crippling industry or threatening living standards with an unacceptable cost.”
He added that the idea of green jobs was an attractive one, with significant numbers of people already employed in the sector in the UK and other countries.

And he said: “The snail-paced progress of international negotiations reinforces the case Globe has been making for a number of years: it’s at the national level you can accelerate progress and by doing that build the confidence and the conditions to allow eventual international agreement.”

He added: “While international negotiations continue at a painfully slow pace, national progress as mapped by Globe gives hope for the future.”

Globe International is holding a summit this week, bringing together legislators from around the world, to kick-start efforts to push forward climate legislation between now and 2015, when it is hoped a new global climate treaty will be agreed.

0 Comments