Lack of global deal is no excuse for climate inaction, warns Gummer

15 Jan 2013, Jessica Shankleman, BusinessGreen

Governments can no longer duck their responsibility for tackling global warming by claiming they would be alone in doing so, after new figures confirmed most of the world's largest economies are taking significant steps to avoid catastrophic climate change.

That was the stark message from the UK's top climate policy adviser, Lord Deben, to MPs and other policymakers at a global climate summit in London yesterday.

Despite painfully slow progress towards an international climate treaty, 32 of the 33 countries audited in the latest Globe Climate Legislation Study are implementing significant climate or clean energy policies, and 31 are enacting energy efficiency policies.

Deben, who is president of Globe International and chairman of the UK's Committee on Climate Change (CCC), said the report "peculiarly" revealed that governments are already doing more at a national level than they are prepared to commit to as part of an international deal.

"Normally they agree to international deals but then do very little towards it, or tell others to do it, but in this case most countries are doing more than they will agree to internationally," he said.

Speaking to BusinessGreen on the sidelines of the event, he argued most countries understand the need to tackle climate change in order to protect their economies and citizens.

However, negotiations on the international stage are prone to being thwarted by disagreements between rich and poor nations over who should take responsibility for climate change.
He also told delegates that the new report was the best argument against the "simplistic view of popular press in every country... who argue that their country should drop climate policy plans 'because no one else has any'".

"It isn't the easy answer to ignore climate change," he added. "To ignore climate change is the stupid answer. It means that your economy is less able to handle the problems of the future.

"Climate change is not an alternative you can put aside in times of difficulty. It is the answer to the problems of recession and the economy. It is not an alternative you take up when things are going well."

Deben also told *BusinessGreen* the report should act as a warning to those companies that have not yet taken steps to become more resilient to future climate risk, as it shows that climate policies are becoming increasingly inevitable.

"The world is going in one direction," he said. "Canada is the anomaly and the whole of the rest of the world is moving in one direction, even the United States with all the attack of the Tea Party, it's still moving in that direction.

"So if you're building a business, you really have to build it on the basis that climate change is going to be a significant factor and therefore in legislation and regulation. If you're building a sensible business you will make sure that you take that fully into account so you won't get yourself into the expensive business of trying to comply in someone else's timescale."

His comments were echoed by Christiana Figures, head of the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, who delivered a passionate and tearful speech, that described national policy on climate as the "absolute, critical, essential lynchpin" between action and international agreements.

She urged those countries that have passed flagship climate legislation to "implement, implement, implement," and those that have yet to pass legislation to adopt it.

She also asked countries to keep in mind governments at a sub-national level, such as local authorities or states, and the private sector when developing new policies.

"Private sector is the seat of innovation and private sector has the capital," she said.

She also asked Globe International to double the scope of its next annual report to cover 60 of the world's largest economies - a challenge that was welcomed by Gummer.

He told *BusinessGreen* that he was confident Globe could monitor 60 countries next year, and added that it was likely to revise its methodology in order to take account of action at a local or state level as well as national.

"In Canada, where the central government has been very bad indeed, some of the states are doing well, and so to be fair to those countries we need to reflect that. Also, some of those countries will be smaller and have less impact than some of those states," he said.

Meanwhile, Angus McCrone, chief editor of Bloomberg New Energy Finance, underscored the key policies that governments could use to drive new investment in renewable energy.

He presented new figures that showed clean energy investment dipped 11 per cent in 2012, but that the amount of new capacity installed had remained broadly the same as the year before, suggesting a fall in the price of new projects.
McCrone warned governments against creating the three "policy headaches" of uncertainty, retroactive decisions and unhelpful financial regulations.

But he encouraged countries to introduce mechanisms to attract new investment, such as feed-in tariffs, green certificates and renewable energy targets.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Fossil fuel is here to stay

There is no plan to change the use of fossil fuels. Read the news, please. Energy companies around the world are fracking, drilling and turning prime farmland and forests into wastelands of giant wind turbines. China opens a new coal plant every week, land grabs to drill in the Arctic, Canada is preparing tar sands oil extraction. It will take an act of God to stop those monsters who will kill us all for money and to get rich.

Posted by sandcanyongal, 15 Jan 2013