



# Climate change debate needs revolution

*Written by John Aglionby in Jakarta | Published: 5 September 2007 04:27*

A revolution of society on a scale never witnessed in peacetime is needed if climate change is to be tackled successfully, the head of a major business grouping has warned.

Bjorn Stigson, the head of the Geneva-based World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), predicted governments would be unable to reach agreement on a framework for reducing carbon emissions at either a US-sponsored meeting in Washington later this month or at a United Nations climate summit in Indonesia in December.

Climate change is also expected to be high on the agenda at this week's annual summit of Pacific leaders in Sydney.

"It will probably get worse before it gets better before governments feel they've got the political mandate to act," he told the Financial Times during a visit to Jakarta. "We're going to have to go into some sort of crisis before it's going to be resolved. I don't think people have realised the challenge. This is more serious than what people think."

The "challenge", Mr Stigson said, is for developed nations to cut carbon emission levels by 60 to 80 per cent from current levels by 2050 if global emissions are to be kept below 550 parts per million. Global emissions at that level would keep average permanent global temperature increase below 3 degrees by 2050, a level beyond which most scientists say climate change would be significantly worse.

The WBCSD reached this conclusion after studying the Stern review on climate change, the International Energy Association's world energy outlook, and a recent International Plant Protection Convention review.

"I think it's beginning to dawn on people that we are talking about such a major change in society people are saying this is tougher than what we thought," he said. "How do you change society in a radical way in a democracy so the people you want to vote for you are also going to suffer the consequences of the policies that you put in place."

"I don't think we've seen that kind of a challenge in societal change happening peacefully. It's [only] happened in revolutions."

The 200 members of the WBCSD, which have a combined market cap of \$6,000bn, are dismayed by politicians' lack of political will to address the issues, Mr Stigson said.

"We're very concerned by what we see and the lack of response from governments in grasping the responsibility they have in dealing with this issue," he said. "Our problem right now is that we...don't know what the policies are going to be beyond 2012. How do you take these issues into consideration when you build a new plant that's going to live for 30, 40 years."

The WBCSD want rich countries to agree on global targets for themselves while committing to developing nations \$80-\$100bn a year and technology to help them grow more sustainably.

"If that deal is not there, you'll be in a situation where India, China and Brazil will say, we're not going to get into any agreement," he said. "If I were betting my money now, I would bet that by 2012 the world will not have a global framework. We will have a patchwork of regional and national regulations that we have to make as compatible as possible."