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UN closer to climate deal as US holds out

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THE United Nations climate change meeting stumbled towards a compromise last night on a road map to guide the world to a new global climate agreement.

The United States fought a trenchant battle to the eleventh hour to stop the declaration referring to the UN's scientific advice on the need for developed countries to make deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

The final compromise was being hammered out with Australia's Climate Change Minister, Penny Wong, playing a key role in the effort to drive a deal between the US and Japan on one side and the European Union, China and developing countries on the other.

The battling delegations reached a consensus that the Bali road map should launch formal negotiations on a global climate change agreement that would be signed by 2009.

In other key breakthroughs, nations agreed that efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions by stopping deforestation should be included in the new agreement along with measures to transfer clean energy technology to developing countries, policies to help finance this and strategies to help poorer countries adapt to the climate change that was already under way.

But the US continued to wage a full-frontal effort to remove the crucial reference to the scientific advice in the draft.

This states that global greenhouse gas emissions need to peak in the next 10 to 15 years and that developed countries will need to cut their emissions by between 25 and 40% by 2020 if the world wants to stop global temperatures rising above 2 degrees and avoid the most severe impacts of climate change.

These impacts, delegates were told, included the possible loss of 30% of the world's animal and plant species and as many as 50 million climate refugees in the next decades.

Sixteen of the world's 19 largest cities from Jakarta to Shanghai would also be under threat from sea level rise caused by warming of the oceans, the UN's climate chief, Yvo de Boer told delegates.

The European Union continued to demand that the final Bali declaration must refer to the scientific advice, saying it would serve as a lighthouse to guide

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