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China Vows to Fight 'World War' Scale Climate Destruction

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By Jeremy van Loon and Ben Sills

April 16 (Bloomberg) -- China, the biggest producer of greenhouse gases, vowed to "vigorously" develop a cleaner economy by using energy more efficiently by investing in research and development projects to cut carbon emissions.

Climate change represents a threat to Chinese economic development, and laws should be strengthened to meet climate targets, the Chinese president's special envoy Xie Zhenhua wrote in the China Economic Herald.

"The scale of economic destruction would be equivalent to that of the two world wars and the Great Depression combined" if global temperatures rise by 3 degrees (5.4 Fahrenheit) to 4 degrees Celsius, Xie said. "Human beings and the Earth cannot afford such disasters."

Xie's comments came as U.S. senators prepare draft legislation to limit emissions after the country promised to cut carbon 17 percent by 2020 as part of the Copenhagen Accord. China and the U.S. account for 40 percent of global anthropogenic CO2 pollution.

Chinese delegates stayed neutral at climate change talks in Bonn last weekend as U.S. negotiator Jonathan Pershing fended off efforts by developing countries to sink the climate pact negotiated during two weeks of talks in Copenhagen last year.

Officials from more than 190 countries tussled in Germany over whether the Copenhagen Accord, backed by almost two-thirds of the parties, can serve as a foundation for a worldwide agreement to limit climate change. It was drawn up outside the official UN negotiating process in December after the broader talks involving all the nations stalled.

Industrialized countries must shoulder the blame for 80 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions since 1750, while China's "reasonable increase" in greenhouse gases will allow the country to develop, Xie said. China plans to cut output of CO2 per unit of gross domestic product by 40 percent to 45 percent from 2005 levels by 2020.

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