

NATIONS: Mexico's House approves renewable energy goals, cuts fossil fuel subsidies *(Friday, April 13, 2012)*

Lisa Friedman, E&E reporter

Mexico's House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly yesterday to approve a set of sweeping federal climate change mandates.

Environmental activists hailed the 280-10 vote, with one abstention, as a major step forward. Now the legislation aiming to slash the country's greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent compared to business-as-usual levels in this decade and 50 percent by midcentury heads back to the Senate for final approval.

"We are very happy," said Andres Avila, Mexico representative for the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Clean Air Policy.

"It was a surprise," he said. "We were expecting that the vote would be more complicated, that there would be some forces opposing it. But all the parties finally got to an agreement. Now they showed us they can work together."

"Mexico's action on climate will make a real global difference," added Samantha Smith, who heads the World Wildlife Fund's global climate and energy initiative.

In a statement, Smith noted that Mexico is projected to be the world's fifth-largest economy by 2050. "If it continues with this path, it is set to be one of the greenest," she said.

Mexico is the world's 15th-largest greenhouse gas emitter. Under the terms of the U.N. climate change regime, it is considered a developing country and not yet under legal obligations to cut greenhouse gas emissions. But Mexico has been among the most progressive countries in dealing with climate change, setting out voluntary emission targets a year before China and India did.

The legislation, however, does not mandate those reductions or impose a price on carbon. Rather, it establishes a national registry and rules for emissions reporting. It also sets a 35 percent renewable energy target by 2024 and sets out targets for reducing subsidies for fossil fuel production, among other things.

Avila noted that changes the House made in the bill will mean at least one Senate committee will have to reconsider the legislation before it goes to plenary, perhaps on April 24. But, he said, with only two weeks left in Mexico's congressional session, final passage is not assured.

Said Avila, "It's not over yet."

ABOUT CLIMATEWIRE

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