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China unveils Copenhagen targets



The Copenhagen talks aim to seek a successor to the Kyoto Protocol

China has unveiled its first ever firm target for limiting greenhouse gas emissions, two weeks before a global summit on climate change in Copenhagen.

Beijing said it will aim to reduce its "carbon intensity" by 40-45% by the year 2020, compared with 2005 levels.

Carbon intensity, a measurement unique to China, is the amount of carbon dioxide emitted for each unit of GDP.

But experts say it will not necessarily mean an overall emissions cut as China's economy is growing so rapidly.

The BBC's Quentin Sommerville in Beijing says this is a commitment to make Chinese factories and power plants use fuel more efficiently and get better results, producing fewer greenhouse gases.

But that does not mean that the absolute levels of carbon dioxide and other pollutants will start falling, he adds.

China also announced on Thursday that Prime Minister Wen Jiabao would be attending the climate talks in Copenhagen, which aim to find a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on cutting greenhouse gases.

On Wednesday, US President Barack Obama said he would also attend the talks, which take place between 7-18 December.

The US said President Obama would offer to cut US emissions by 17% from 2005 levels by 2020 - less than hoped for by the EU, Japan and UN scientists.

China's announcement marks the first time it has issued numerical targets for plans to curb the growth of greenhouse gas emissions.

A statement from Beijing's State Council, or cabinet, said: "This is a voluntary action taken by the Chinese government based on its own national conditions and is a major contribution to the global effort in tackling climate change," Xinhua news agency reported.