Bush offers alternative environmental plan

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WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Hours before departing Monday for Europe, President Bush promised increased environmental research and commitment from the United States in response to the "unrealistic" goals set by the Kyoto Protocol on global warming.

"I am today committing the United States of America to work within the United Nations framework and elsewhere to develop, with our friends and allies and nations throughout the world, an effective and science-based response to the issue of global warming," Bush announced from the Rose Garden of the White House.

As Bush begins his six-day, five-nation tour of Europe, he faces international criticism for his objection to the Kyoto agreement. Monday, Bush called for a "100 percent effort" from the United States and the rest of the world to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

"The rest of the world emits 80 percent of all greenhouse gases, and many of those emissions come from developing countries," he said.

"The world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gas is China, yet China was entirely exempted from the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol." He pointed out that India also was exempt from the Kyoto pact.

"Kyoto is in many ways unrealistic," Bush said, contending arbitrary and non-scientific environmental goals were set by the protocol for many countries.

Bush said his administration will fully fund high priority areas for scientific research into climate change over the next five years, and help developing nations to match the U.S. commitment.

Former President Clinton signed the Kyoto Protocol, but also said he would not submit it to the Senate for ratification until several changes were made. While many European allies are angry at Bush for his opposition to the accord, Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Nebraska, said Bush had "brought some honesty" to the issue.

"He has set aside the charade of Kyoto and he is saying we can do it in a better way, a more responsible way," said Hagel, who issued a bipartisan resolution in 1997 against the protocol. "We will come up with an alternative. We want to work with our allies on this and our friends around the world, and we will."
President Bush's European trip promises to be a major test of his powers of persuasion as he tries to calm European and Russian skepticism about his administration's national security and environmental policies.

Bush will visit Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Poland and Slovenia in his first visit to Europe as president, and his first group interaction with leaders of the European Union and the NATO alliance.

Bush plans to return to Europe later this summer for the annual meeting of the Group of Eight nations in Genoa, Italy.

Senior White House Correspondent John King contributed to this report

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