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PM makes it clear: Won't be pushed on Hagen pact

UNFCCC Snubbed Over Attempts To Make Accord Formal

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New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's speech on Friday came as a snub to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat which has sent yet another letter to India asking it to agree to the Copenhagen Accord and let its name be put in the 'chapeau' (opening and over-arching paragraph of the accord) of the political pact agreed to at the Danish capital in December.

Speaking at an event where UNFCCC executive secretary Evo De Boer, many foreign dignitaries and international climate negotiators were in audience, the PM called the accord merely a catalogue of voluntary commitments. His statement came days after the UNFCCC secretariat, in a relentless push to gain greater legitimacy for the contentious accord, asked India and others to 'agree' to the pact — a phrase considered to have greater consequences than the suggestion in the secretariat's first letter received in January asking India to 'associate' itself with the document.

Interestingly, UNFCCC ex-



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ecutive secretary Evo De Boer, who was in Delhi over the past few days, did not reveal the existence of the second letter even when questioned during a media interaction about the future of the accord and how he expected it to move ahead. When contacted in Delhi by TOI, De Boer did not want to comment.

But Manmohan Singh made clear in his speech that India only saw the Copenhagen Accord as serving to further the formal UN talks and did not lend any greater credence to it. In the dying moments of the Copenhagen

meet, the Indian and Chinese negotiators had made it clear that they did not want their names inscribed in the chapeau. The emerging economies had done a quick assessment to realise that signing on to the accord would tie up their hands and leave the door ajar for imposing earlier and stronger commitments from the developing world. They had feared that the industrialized countries would use the accord to break the back of already collapsing formal UN negotiations.

The role of the UNFCCC secretariat in battling for an

accord that was negotiated outside the formal UN process has already been questioned. Many had raised queries about why the UN body had sent its first letter asking countries to inform if they wish to 'associate' themselves with the accord and give their targets by January 31.

In a deft response to the first letter, the BASIC four countries had refused to either provide targets under the accord or proclaim such a backing for the pact but merely sent in their voluntary commitments under provisions of the formal UN provisions. The US and other developed countries, in their formal response to the letter, preferred to throw their weight behind the accord and ascribe their emission reduction targets under it as well.

Despite this, the UNFCCC secretariat has written within days of the BASIC countries' submissions asking them to agree to the accord and allow their names to be inscribed by February 11.

Sources in the government said that they were miffed at the attitude of the UNFCCC secretariat to keep pushing the envelope.