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Attachments:

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HEADLINE: **Australia says no date set for US-led cleaner
energy forum**

BYLINE: ROD McGUIRK; Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: CANBERRA, Australia

BODY:

Australia said Friday it hasn't set a date for hosting an inaugural U.S.-backed summit aimed at reducing greenhouse gases, dealing a setback to an effort that critics have called a ploy to undermine the Kyoto global warming pact.

The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Energy Development - which also includes China, Japan, India, South Korea and Australia - was launched in July to develop technologies to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases believed to be warming Earth's atmosphere. It was touted as a more effective solution to global warming than the Kyoto Protocol.

Critics, however, suspected it was a ploy to undo the Kyoto pact and an excuse for Washington and Canberra to reject the protocol, which took effect in February

and aims to cut carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions by industrialized nations by 5.2 percent below their 1990 levels by 2012.

Australia is among critics who say Kyoto does not do enough to curb global warming because it doesn't impose targets on developing economies including China and India.

The inaugural ministerial meeting of the cleaner energy partnership was scheduled to be held in the city of Adelaide in November, but Environment Minister Ian Campbell said Friday that no date had been set.

"The particular date will be announced as soon as we've got that date," Campbell told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

The British Broadcasting Corp. quoted an unidentified senior official involved in the process as saying Thursday that the meeting had been postponed until January at the earliest.

Christine Milne, a senator of the environmentalist Greens party, said the summit had been postponed because the group hadn't made progress toward developing and sharing cleaner energy technologies.

The group's vision statement talks of developing, deploying and transferring technologies such as nuclear power and clean coal technology in which greenhouse gases are extracted and eliminated while burning coal.

Yet critics note that the U.S.-led partnership is nonbinding and sets no emissions reduction targets.

The opposition Labor Party, which wants Australia to sign Kyoto, said the government wanted a November summit to pre-empt an annual U.N. meeting on climate change that begins in Montreal on Nov. 28 and will plan how the Kyoto targets will be monitored when they become enforceable from 2008.

Postponing the meeting "would be humiliating for the government because it attempted to spin the pact and the Adelaide meeting as a major international breakthrough for addressing climate change," Labor's environment spokesman Anthony Albanese said in a statement.

He suspected China, India, Japan and South Korea, which have signed Kyoto, did not want to present the pact as an alternative.