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Bush firm on warming treaty

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GOTEBORG, Sweden -- President Bush yesterday stood firm on his rejection of a restrictive global warming treaty, telling European leaders "the goals weren't realistic" and asking the 15 presidents and prime

As protesters and riot policed clashed near the venue of a summit between the United States and the European Union, Mr. Bush pledged to work toward reducing emissions of gases that some scientists say cause global warming -- but not under the restraints of the pact known as the Kyoto Protocol or treaty.

"We didn't feel like the Kyoto treaty was well-balanced. It didn't include developing nations. The goals were not realistic. However, that doesn't mean we cannot continue to work together, and will work together, on reducing greenhouse gases," Mr. Bush said to about 200 international reporters at the Massan Convention Center.

In the diplomatic atmosphere, Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson said Europe would simply have to accept the U.S. position on Kyoto, which commits industrialized countries to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2012.

"So to say, we agree to disagree about substance, according to the Kyoto Protocol," said Mr. Persson, who is serving as president of the EU. "The European Union will stick to the Kyoto Protocol and go for a ratification process. The U.S. has chosen another policy."

But to a small group of reporters afterward, Mr. Persson criticized Mr. Bush's decision.

"It will have a tremendous impact, sorry to say, because it would have sent an extremely strong signal if the U.S. had stuck with the Kyoto Protocol."

But Sweden -- as well as the other 14 nations in the union -- has never ratified the 1997 treaty. When Mr. Bush was asked whether European leaders, who have raked the U.S. president for abandoning a treaty passed by only one of its 187 signatory countries, he turned the tables on his host, EU Commission Chairman Romano Prodi.

"I think that's a good question for President Prodi. ... I would be interested in your answer," he said to laughter.

Mr. Prodi, fumbling a bit, defended the 4-year old pact, saying "there is no one single country who has declared not to ratify it."

"The ratification process will start soon, and it started already in some countries, it's going on, and there is no one message until now of refusal or delay of ratification," the Italian leader said.

European leaders have been fiercely critical of Mr. Bush's decision to abandon the treaty. A day before Mr. Bush arrived in Brussels to attend his first NATO meeting, EU environment ministers rejected his latest initiatives to study climate change, calling them short on action.

While Mr. Bush said the United States would go its own way on global warming, he said "the United States is committed to addressing climate change."

"We had a constructive discussion on this topic over lunch, and we agreed to create new channels of cooperation on this important topic. As the prime minister said, we don't agree on the Kyoto treaty, but we do agree that climate change is a serious issue and we must work together. We agree that climate change requires a global response, and agree to intensify cooperation on science and on technology."

Even before Mr. Bush's rejection, the treaty had a rough history in the United States. President Clinton had

said he supported the pact but never sent it to the Senate. On its own, the Senate unanimously rejected the accord in a symbolic vote.

During closed-door meetings with EU leaders, Mr. Bush discussed liberalization of trade and the AIDS epidemic in Africa. The leaders also discussed solutions to the crises in the Middle East and Macedonia.

As Mr. Bush attended the summit, mounted riot police sealed off a nearby high school serving as headquarters for several anti-globalization groups. Officers moved in after protesters blocked a patrol car on school grounds Wednesday night, raising suspicions that some of them were plotting violence, one officer said.

Some demonstrators hurled bottles and stones at police who were preventing them from converging on the European Union summit venue.

Last night, more than 10,000 demonstrators protested against Mr. Bush and globalization at rallies throughout Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city. About 200 were arrested, police said.

Mr. Bush travels to Warsaw today, where he will deliver what aides have been touting for days as a "major" speech. The president yesterday gave a preview of what he will say in the former Soviet-bloc country.

"I believe that we have an opportunity to form an alliance of peace, that Europe ought to include nations beyond the current scope of EU and NATO. I strongly believe in NATO expansion, and I believe that the EU ought to expand as well," he said.

Tomorrow, Mr. Bush wraps up his five-day, five-country trip with a stop in Slovenia, where he will meet for the first time with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, which opposes nations near its borders joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

"It's at a very important time for me to visit with Mr. Putin, to assure him a couple of things," Mr. Bush said yesterday. "One, Russia is not the enemy of the United States; two, the Cold War is over and the mentality that used to grip our two nations during the Cold War must end; three, we look forward to working with Europe."

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