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U.S. Like an 'Addict in Denial,' Say Authors of 'Saving Kyoto'  
2009-09-02 15:40:56.847 GMT

By Mathew Carr

Sept. 2 (Bloomberg) -- The U.S., the world's second-biggest emitter after China, is like an "addict in denial" about the need to cut its greenhouse gases, according to a new book.

"The U.S. still finds it easier to point a finger at China and its growing energy needs or India with its many mouths to feed than to confront its own resource addiction," said Graciela Chichilnisky and Kristen Sheeran, authors of "Saving Kyoto," published this month by New Holland Publishers (U.K.) Ltd. Chichilnisky is a lead author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won a 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

"Like every addict who passes through stages of denial on the way to recovery, we must eventually realize that the fundamental problem and solution lies within," they wrote in the book.

The United Nations is seeking this year to replace or extend the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, whose initial phase runs for the five years through 2012. That treaty included caps on industrial nations requiring cuts of about 5 percent in greenhouse gases from 1990 levels. The U.S. never ratified Kyoto and remains "antagonistic," the authors say.

The protocol has been criticized for not imposing caps on fast-developing nations including China and India. There will be a surplus of as many as 10 billion metric tons of so-called assigned credits from the UN in the five years through 2012, largely from Russia, according to a July report from Mark Lazarowicz, U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown's special representative on carbon trading.

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Still, the U.S. should embrace the treaty and lawmakers should apply the Kyoto process to help protect forests as well as biodiversity and ecosystems more generally, Chichilnisky and Sheeran said. This year's climate talks culminate in a UN meeting in Copenhagen in December. Chichilnisky and Sheeran, an economics professor at St. Mary's College of Maryland, said the Kyoto Protocol funds the changes needed to reduce emissions blamed for climate change and transfers wealth to the world's poor.

"Preserving the most unique and magical features of the Kyoto Protocol is the greatest challenge confronting us," the authors said. The treaty needs updating to broaden the scope and cut emissions faster.

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