



US to Push Global Environment Network at Tokyo Meet

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TOKYO - Forty-seven countries will take a step this weekend toward creating a global network to share information about the environment, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency chief Mike Leavitt said.

The EPA administrator said the proposed network, the Earth Observation System, would allow the sharing of weather, climate and other data and would save billions of dollars a year through more efficient collection of such information.

"We have to work together more closely and we have to have more data about the pulse of the planet," Leavitt told a news conference ahead of an "Earth Observation Summit" on Sunday.

The 47 countries and the European Commission will sign a document outlining the project at the end of the meeting in Tokyo.

Leavitt also said that President Bush was committed to improving the environment, despite his decision to pull out of the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gases in 2001.>

"We will produce one of the most productive periods of air quality improvement in our nation's history," he said. "We will implement the most stringent standards of ozone in our country's history."

The global data network will be also be discussed by the leaders of the Group of Eight advanced industrialized nations at their summit in the United States in June, Leavitt said.

The Tokyo meeting follows one in Washington last year, where the monitoring system was initially discussed with the aim of implementing it within 10 years.