

# PRESS KIT

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### FOURTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Kyoto Protocol talks in Buenos Aires to promote emissions cuts**

Buenos Aires, 2 November 1998 – Ministers and other senior officials from some 180 governments are meeting here from 2 to 13 November to pave the way for reducing greenhouse gas emissions as required by the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

“The Kyoto conference on the Climate Change Convention was a high-profile event because for the first time industrialized countries adopted emission-reduction targets that are legally binding,” said Michael Zammit Cutajar, the Convention’s Executive Secretary. “In Buenos Aires, governments will try to establish the rules of the game for reaching these targets.”

“These rules are critically important because they will affect the economic costs of cutting emissions over the next decade as well as the debate on future commitments for both developed and developing countries,” he added.

High on the Buenos Aires agenda is the need to flesh out the Protocol’s three “mechanisms”. These mechanisms are intended to help developed countries reduce the costs of reaching their combined 5% emissions-reduction target by the five-year period 2008-2012.

The operational details of these schemes – viewed enthusiastically by some, skeptically by others – must still be worked out. If these details cannot be finalized in Buenos Aires, then governments will try to agree on a schedule for completing them in the near future.

Under the Protocol, an international "emissions trading" regime will allow developed countries that reduce emissions beyond their agreed target to sell the excess emissions credits to others. A key area of debate is whether there should be a concrete ceiling on how many credits a country can buy or sell. Another is the concern that certain countries will be able to meet their targets with minimal effort and could then sell large quantities of emission credits (known as “hot air”) to others, reducing pressure on some industrialized countries to make domestic cuts.

A "Clean Development Mechanism" will enable industrialized countries to finance emissions-avoiding projects in developing countries and receive credit for doing so. This will be

an important new avenue through which governments and private corporations can transfer and promote clean technologies. "Joint implementation" will also provide credit for investments in projects, but only in other developed countries. Reporting rules, comparable methodologies, and project guidelines must still be established.

The Buenos Aires conference will also review progress under the 1992 Climate Change Convention. It will work on devising practical steps for promoting the transfer of climate-friendly technologies to developing countries. Decisions are also needed on the role of the Global Environment Facility in financing Convention-related activities, the guidelines by which developing countries will provide information on their greenhouse gas emissions and national climate change programmes, and the actions needed to minimize the adverse impacts on developing countries of both climate change and policies to limit emissions.

Another outstanding issue from Kyoto is that of "sinks", notably forests, which by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere help to reduce net emissions. After heated debate, certain sinks were included in the Kyoto targets, but there are still methodological problems with how to measure their contribution.

Many developing countries resist formal commitments, even if voluntary, that would put an upper limit on their emissions, noting that their per-capita emissions are still low compared to those of developed countries. Nevertheless, the host government of Argentina has requested that an item on voluntary commitments be placed on the COP-4 agenda; this issue is likely to generate some of the most intense debate of the meeting.

Because Kyoto generated so much public attention and press coverage, it convinced many industries that they will soon face real pressure from national governments to reduce emissions. Many are already committed to being pro-active. Governments now need to maintain momentum and make their Kyoto targets credible by formulating and publicizing national policies and goals.

However, the Kyoto agreement will only become legally binding when at least 55 countries, including developed countries accounting for at least 55% of developed country emissions, have ratified. It is hoped that this will happen by 2001.

**Note to journalists:** Official documents, including the Convention and the Protocol, are available via the Internet at <http://www.unfccc.de>, while press and other background information can be found at <http://www.unep.ch/iuc/>. For interviews or additional information please contact Michael Williams, Information Unit for Conventions, Geneva at (+41-22) 917 8242/44, fax (+41-22) 797 3464, e-mail [mwilliams@unep.ch](mailto:mwilliams@unep.ch). For information on accreditation and press facilities, please contact Axel Wustenhagen, UN Information Centre, Bonn, at (+49-228) 815 2770, fax (+49-228) 815 1999, e-mail [unic@uno.de](mailto:unic@uno.de).

## **Backgrounder – Have countries started limiting emissions yet?**

Bonn, November 1998 – Under the Climate Change Convention, all Parties – developed and developing – are committed to carrying out national programmes addressing greenhouse gas emissions. They are also expected to cooperate in developing and diffusing climate-friendly technologies and practices. With the Convention now over six years old, just how far have governments gone in doing something about their emissions?

### **The industrialized countries**

Under the Convention, industrialized countries accept a non-binding commitment to try to return their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. According to the national reports that these countries have submitted describing this effort, many of them saw their emissions rise through 1995 (the year the latest data was available). The major exceptions are the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, whose emissions have generally declined during the transition to market economies. The accompanying table summarizes the data on carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. Most developed countries have succeeded in reducing emissions of methane, however, and half have reduced emissions of nitrous oxide.

Fuel combustion is the major source of greenhouse gas emissions. However, many of the policies and measures now being used to promote energy efficiency are being adopted for economic reasons, and not primarily for climate change. The fastest growing source of emissions in most countries is transport. Many governments are seeking to limit or reverse this growth by promoting fuel efficiency through taxes, regulations, and voluntary programmes; reducing noxious emissions through regulations; promoting public transport; and trying to make transport systems more efficient.

The general rise in emissions since the 1990 base year means that, compared to 1998 levels, many countries must reduce emissions by a higher percentage than their Kyoto Protocol target. Compared to the emissions levels that would be expected by 2010 without the Protocol – that is, under a “business as usual” scenario with no climate change policies – the 5% target represents a 29% cut. Clearly, a great deal of work remains to be done to reverse the upward trend in emissions from developed countries.

### **The developing countries**

Although developing countries are not subject to any specific timetables and targets, they are expected to take measures to limit the growth rate of their emissions. Because they have only recently begun submitting information about their national emissions and climate change policies, it is less clear just how much they are doing. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of evidence that many developing countries are taking steps to ensure that their emissions grow at a slower rate than does their GDP. This is particularly true in the field of energy.

For example, from 1992 to 1996, India increased its wind generation capability from 39MW to 820MW. In China, renewable energy – including hydro power and biomass – now accounts for 25% of energy use; in some remote regions the reliance on renewable power approaches 50%. As a result, while China’s GDP has been steadily increasing, the growth in energy demand has not kept pace. As in developed countries, such achievements are generally driven by economic and other concerns, rather than specifically by the need to mitigate climate

change. The full extent of developing country actions to limit emissions will be better understood in several years as more of their national reports are completed and reviewed.

**Table: Total anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, excluding land-use change and forestry, 1990-1995, and projections for 2000**

	Percentage relative to 1990, 1990=100						Projections	
	1990 <sup>a</sup>	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	2000	percentage change from baseline <sup>b</sup>
	(Gg)	%	%	%	%	%	(Gg)	%
Australia	273 123	101	102	103	105	109	311 200	19
Austria	61 880	107	97	96	96	100	57 300	-7
Belgium	116 090	103	102	99	104		125 200	8
Bulgaria	96 878	68	62	64	61	64	74 730	-11
Canada	464 000	98	101	101	104	108	500 600	8
Czech Republic	165 490	93	85	81	77	78	139 000	-17
Denmark	52 277	120	110	114	121	114	54 309	-9
Estonia	37 797	98	73	58	60	55	19 700	-47
Finland <sup>c</sup>	53 800		97	99	110	104	(58 000 - 60 000)	(8 - 12)
France	378 379	106	106	99	99	102	372 934	-2
Germany	1 014 155	96	91	91	89	88	894 000	-12
Greece	84 575	100	102	103	105	107	89 120	16
Hungary	83 676	81	72	73	71	71	64 300	-23
Iceland	2 147	96	102	107	105	106	2 697	26
Ireland	30 719	103	105	104	108	110	34 998	14
Italy <sup>c</sup>	432 150				95	101	421 272	5
Japan	1 124 532	102	103	101	108	108		
Latvia	24 771	78	66	58	48	49	12 274	-51
Lithuania <sup>c</sup>	39 535						27 147	-31
Luxembourg <sup>c</sup>	12 750				94	75	5 684	-45
Monaco <sup>c</sup>	71							
Netherlands	167 550	104	103	105	105	109	173 500	0
New Zealand	25 476	102	110	107	107	107	31 080	22
Norway	35 544	95	97	101	106	107	44 000	22
Poland <sup>c</sup>	476 625		78		78		425 000	-12
Portugal <sup>c</sup>	47 123	104	112	107	108		50 130	35
Romania <sup>c</sup>	198 479	71	62	61				
Russian Fed. <sup>c</sup>	2 372 300	93	85	78	70		1 750 000	-26
Slovak Rep.	60 032	88	81	77	72	81	(44 780 - 46 178)	(-25) - (-23)
Slovenia <sup>c</sup>	13 935							
Spain <sup>c</sup>	226 423	100	104	100	102		258 247	14
Sweden	55 445	100	101	101	106	105	60 100	3
Switzerland	45 070	104	101	98	96	98	43 900	-7
Ukraine <sup>c</sup>	700 107						530 042	-25
United Kingdom	583 747	101	98	95	95	93	550 000	-5
United States	4 960 432	99	100	103	104	105	5 627 310	13

Source: "Second compilation and synthesis of second national communications. Doc. FCCC/CP/1998/11/Add.2" (forthcoming, September/October 1998). Data for Romania is from Doc. FCCC/SBI/1997/INF.4" (22 October 1997)

<sup>a</sup> In accordance with decision 9/CP.2 some Parties with economies in transition use base years other than 1990: Bulgaria (1988), Hungary (average of 1985-87), Poland (1988) and Romania (1989).

<sup>b</sup> The baseline figure used for calculation of percentage change may differ than that of the 1990 figure given in this table due to use of a different baseline other than 1990, use of only a subset of the 1990 figure, subsequent updating of inventory data, calibration of projection models or rounding.

<sup>c</sup> Party did not provide estimates for all years subsequent to 1990.

## Backgrounder – A survey of climate change basics

### Causes, impacts, and response options

**Human activities are releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.** Carbon dioxide is produced when fossil fuels are used to generate energy and when forests are cut down and burned. Methane and nitrous oxide are emitted from agricultural activities, changes in land use, and other sources. Artificial chemicals called halocarbons (CFCs, HFCs, and PFCs) and other long-lived gases such as sulphur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) are released by industrial processes. Ozone in the lower atmosphere is generated indirectly by automobile exhaust fumes.

**Rising levels of greenhouse gases are expected to cause climate change.** By absorbing infrared radiation, these gases control the flow of natural energy through the climate system. The climate must somehow adjust to the “thicker blanket” of greenhouse gases in order to maintain the balance between energy arriving from the sun and energy escaping back into space.

<b>Key greenhouse gases affected by human activities</b>							
	<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>CH<sub>4</sub></b>	<b>N<sub>2</sub>O</b>	<b>CFC-11</b>	<b>HCFC-22</b>	<b>CF<sub>4</sub></b>	<b>SF<sub>6</sub></b>
<b>Pre-industrial level</b>	~280 ppmv	~700 ppbv	~275 ppbv	zero	zero	zero	zero
<b>1994 concentration</b>	358 ppmv	1720 ppbv	312 <sup>§</sup> ppbv	268 <sup>§</sup> pptv	110 pptv	72 <sup>§</sup> pptv	3-4 pptv
<b>Rate of increase *</b>	1.5 ppmv/yr 0.4%/yr	10 ppbv/yr 0.6%/yr	0.8 ppbv/yr 0.25%/yr	0 pptv/yr 0%/yr	5 pptv/yr 5%/yr	1.2 pptv/yr 2%/yr	0.2pptv/yr ~5%/yr
<b>Lifetime (years)</b>	50-200÷	12÷÷	120	50	12	50,000	3,200

Notes: CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide), CH<sub>4</sub> (methane), N<sub>2</sub>O (nitrous oxide), SF<sub>6</sub> (sulphur hexafluoride), and CF<sub>4</sub> (a perfluorocarbon, or PFC) are covered by the Kyoto Protocol. CFC-11 and HCFC-22 (a CFC replacement) are also ozone-depleting substances and thus addressed under the Montreal Protocol rather than under the climate change agreements. 1 ppmv = 1 part per million by volume; 1 ppbv = 1 part per billion by volume; 1 pptv = 1 part per trillion (million million) by volume.

<sup>§</sup> Estimated from 1992-93 data.

\* The growth rates of CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O are averaged over the decade beginning 1984 ; halocarbon growth rates are based on recent years (1990s).

÷ No single lifetime for CO<sub>2</sub> can be defined because of the different rates of uptake by different sink processes.

÷÷ This has been defined as an adjustment time which takes into account the indirect effect of methane on its own lifetime.

This table adapted from “Climate Change 1995”, IPCC Working Group I, p. 15.

**Climate models predict that the global temperature will rise by about 1-3.5°C by the year 2100.** This projected change is larger than any climate change experienced over the last 10,000 years. It is based on current emissions trends and assumes that no efforts are made to limit greenhouse gas emissions. There are many uncertainties about the scale and impacts of climate change, particularly at the regional level. Because of the delaying effect of the oceans, surface temperatures do not respond immediately to greenhouse gas emissions, so climate change will continue for many decades after atmospheric concentrations have stabilized. Meanwhile, the balance of the evidence suggests that the climate may have already started responding to past emissions.

**Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on the global environment.** In general, the faster the climate changes, the greater will be the risk of damage. The mean sea level is expected to rise 15-95 cm by the year 2100, causing flooding of low-lying areas and other damage. Climatic zones (and thus ecosystems and agricultural zones) could shift towards the poles by 150-550 km in the mid-latitude regions. Forests, deserts, rangelands, and other unmanaged ecosystems would face new climatic stresses. As a result, many will decline or fragment, and individual species will be pushed to extinction.

**Human society will face new risks and pressures.** Food security is unlikely to be threatened at the global level, but some regions are likely to experience food shortages and hunger. Water resources will be affected as precipitation and evaporation patterns change around the world. Physical infrastructure will be damaged, particularly by sea-level rise and by extreme weather events. Economic activities, human settlements, and human health will experience many direct and indirect effects. The poor and disadvantaged are the most vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change.

**People and ecosystems will need to adapt to future climatic regimes.** Past and current emissions have already committed the earth to some degree of climate change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Adapting to these effects will require a good understanding of socio-economic and natural systems, their sensitivity to climate change, and their inherent ability to adapt. Many strategies are available for adapting to the expected effects of climate change.

**Stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases would require a major effort.** Based on current trends, the total climatic impact of rising greenhouse gas levels will be equal to that caused by a doubling of pre-industrial CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations by 2030, and a trebling or more by 2100. Freezing global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at their current levels would postpone CO<sub>2</sub>-doubling to 2100; emissions would eventually have to fall to about 30% of their current levels for concentrations to stabilize at doubled-CO<sub>2</sub> levels sometime in the future. Given an expanding world economy and growing populations, this would require dramatic improvements in energy efficiency and fundamental changes in other economic sectors.

**Many options for limiting emissions are available in the short- and medium-term.** Policymakers can encourage energy efficiency and other climate-friendly trends in both the supply and consumption of energy. Key consumers of energy include industries, homes, offices, vehicles, and farms. Efficiency can be improved by providing an appropriate economic and regulatory framework for consumers and investors. This framework should promote cost-effective actions, the best current and future technologies, and “no regrets” solutions that make economic and environmental sense irrespective of climate change. Taxes, regulatory standards, tradable emissions permits, information programmes, voluntary programmes, and the phase-out of counterproductive subsidies could all play a role. Changes in practices and lifestyles, from better urban transport planning to personal habits such as turning out the lights, are also important.

**Energy efficiency gains of 10-30% above baseline trends could be realized over the next 20-30 years at no net cost.** Some researchers believe that much greater gains are also feasible during this period and beyond. Improvements over the baseline can be achieved in all major economic sectors with current knowledge and with today's best technologies. In the longer term, it will be possible to move close to a zero-emissions industrial economy – with the innumerable environmental and economic benefits that this implies.

**Reducing uncertainties about climate change, its impacts, and the costs of various response options is vital.** In the meantime, it will be necessary to balance concerns about risks and damages with concerns about economic development. The prudent response to climate change, therefore, is to adopt a portfolio of actions aimed at controlling emissions, adapting to impacts, and encouraging scientific, technological, and socio-economic research.

## **The Climate Change Convention**

**The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Convention is the centrepiece of global efforts to combat global warming.** It was adopted in June 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, and it entered into force on 21 March 1994. The Convention's ultimate objective is the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (man-made) interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner."

**The Convention sets out some guiding principles.** The "precautionary principle" says that the lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as an excuse to postpone action when there is a threat of serious or irreversible damage. The principle of the "common but differentiated responsibilities" of states assigns the lead in combating climate change to developed countries. Other principles deal with the special needs of developing countries and the importance of promoting sustainable development.

**Both developed and developing countries accept a number of general commitments.** All Parties will develop and submit "national communications" containing inventories of greenhouse-gas emissions by source and greenhouse-gas removals by "sinks" (e.g. forests). They will adopt national programmes for mitigating climate change and develop strategies for adapting to its impacts. They will also promote technology transfer and the sustainable management, conservation, and enhancement of greenhouse gas sinks and "reservoirs". In addition, the Parties will take climate change into account in their relevant social, economic, and environmental policies; cooperate in scientific, technical, and educational matters; and promote education, public awareness, and the exchange of information related to climate change.

**Industrialized countries also undertake several specific commitments.** Most members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) plus the states of Central and Eastern Europe – known collectively as Annex I countries – are committed to adopting policies and measures aimed at returning their greenhouse-gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. They must also submit national communications on a regular basis detailing their climate change strategies. Several states may together adopt a joint emissions target. OECD countries should take the strongest measures, while the countries in transition to a market economy are granted a certain degree of flexibility.



**The richest countries shall provide "new and additional financial resources" and facilitate technology transfer.** These so-called Annex II countries (essentially the OECD) will fund the "agreed full cost" incurred by developing countries for submitting their national communications. These funds must be "new and additional" rather than redirected from existing developmental aid funds. Annex II Parties will also help finance certain other Convention-related projects, and they will promote and finance the transfer of, or access to, environmentally sound technologies, particularly for developing country Parties. The Convention recognizes that the extent to which developing country Parties implement their commitments will depend on financial and technical assistance from the developed countries.

**The supreme body of the Convention is the Conference of the Parties (COP).** The COP comprises all the 170-plus states that have ratified the Convention. It held its first session (COP-1) in Berlin in 1995 and will continue to meet on a yearly basis unless the Parties decide otherwise. The COP's role is to promote and review the implementation of the Convention. It will periodically review existing commitments in light of the Convention's objective, new scientific findings, and the effectiveness of national climate change programmes. The COP can adopt new commitments through amendments and protocols; in December 1997, at its third session (COP-3), it adopted the Kyoto Protocol containing stronger emissions-related commitments for developed countries in the post-2000 period.

**The Convention also establishes two subsidiary bodies.** The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) provides the COP with timely information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to the Convention. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) helps with the assessment and review of the Convention's implementation. Two additional temporary bodies were established by COP-1: the Ad hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM), which conducted the negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol and concluded its work in Kyoto in December 1997, and the Ad hoc Group on Article 13 (AG13), which was set up to consider Article 13 of the Convention on how to assist governments overcome difficulties they may experience in meeting their commitments. The AG13 will report on its work to COP-4.

**A financial mechanism provides funds on a grant or concessional basis.** The Convention states that this mechanism shall be guided by, and be accountable to, the Conference of the Parties, which shall decide on its policies, programme priorities, and eligibility criteria. There should be an equitable and balanced representation of all Parties within a transparent system of governance. The operation of the financial mechanism may be entrusted to one or more international entities. The Convention assigns this role to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on an interim basis; this status was extended by COP-1 for four years.

**The COP and its subsidiary bodies are serviced by a secretariat.** The secretariat arranges for sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, drafts official documents, services meetings, compiles and transmits reports submitted to it, facilitates assistance to Parties for the compilation and communication of information, coordinates with secretariats of other relevant international bodies, and reports on its activities to the COP.

## **The Kyoto Protocol**

**The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change strengthens the international response to climate change.** Adopted by consensus at the third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-3) in December 1997, it contains new emissions targets for Annex I (developed) countries for the post-2000 period. By arresting and reversing the upward trend in greenhouse gas emissions that started in these countries 150 years ago, the Protocol promises to move the international community one step closer to achieving the Convention's ultimate objective of preventing "dangerous anthropogenic (man-made) interference with the climate system".

**The developed countries commit themselves to reducing their collective emissions of six key greenhouse gases by at least 5%.** This group target will be achieved through cuts of 8% by Switzerland, most Central and East European states, and the European Union (the EU will meet its target by distributing different rates to its member states); 7% by the US; and 6% by Canada, Hungary, Japan, and Poland. Russia, New Zealand, and Ukraine are to stabilize their emissions, while Norway may increase emissions by up to 1%, Australia by up to 8%, and Iceland 10%. The six gases are to be combined in a "basket", with reductions in individual gases translated into "CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents" that are then added up to produce a single figure.

**Each country's emissions target must be achieved by the period 2008-2012.** It will be calculated as an average over the five years. "Demonstrable progress" must be made by 2005. Cuts in the three most important gases – carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) - will be measured against a base year of 1990 (with exceptions for some countries with economies in transition). Cuts in three long-lived industrial gases – hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>) - can be measured against either a 1990 or 1995 baseline.

**Since emissions levels would increase without a Protocol, actual emissions reductions will be much larger than 5%.** If compared to the year 2000, the total cuts will equal about 10%. This is because many industrialized countries have not succeeded in meeting their earlier non-binding aim of returning emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, so that their emissions have in fact risen since 1990. Compared to the emissions levels that would be expected by 2010 without emissions-control measures, the Protocol target represents a 29% cut.

**Countries will have a certain degree of flexibility in how they make and measure their emissions reductions.** In particular, an international "emissions trading" regime will be established allowing industrialized countries to buy and sell emissions credits amongst themselves. They will also be able to acquire "emission reduction units" by financing certain kinds of projects in other developed countries. In addition, a "clean development mechanism" will enable industrialized countries to finance emissions-reduction projects in developing countries and to receive credit for doing so. The operational guidelines for these various schemes must still be further elaborated.

**They will pursue emissions cuts in a wide range of economic sectors.** The Protocol encourages governments to cooperate with one another and to improve energy efficiency, reform the energy and transportation sectors, promote renewable forms of energy, phase out inappropriate fiscal measures and market imperfections, limit methane emissions from waste management and energy systems, and protect forests and other carbon "sinks". The measurement of changes in net emissions (calculated as emissions minus removals of CO<sub>2</sub>) from forests is methodologically complex and still needs to be clarified.

**The Protocol will advance the implementation of existing commitments by all countries.** Under the Convention, both developed and developing countries agree to take measures to limit

emissions and promote adaptation to future climate change impacts; submit information on their national climate change programmes and inventories; promote technology transfer; cooperate on scientific and technical research; and promote public awareness, education, and training. The Protocol also reiterates the need to provide “new and additional” financial resources to meet the “agreed full costs” incurred by developing countries in carrying out these commitments.

**The new agreement will be periodically reviewed.** The Parties will take “appropriate action” on the basis of the best available scientific, technical, and socio-economic information. The first review will take place at the second COP serving the Protocol. Talks on commitments for the post-2012 period must start by 2005.

**The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention will also serve as the meeting of the Parties (MOP) for the Protocol.** This structure is expected to reduce costs and facilitate the management of the intergovernmental process. Parties to the Convention that are not Parties to the Protocol will be able to participate in Protocol-related meetings as observers.

**The Protocol was opened for signature for one year starting 16 March 1998.** It will enter into force 90 days after it has been ratified by at least 55 Parties to the Convention, including developed countries representing at least 55% of the total 1990 carbon dioxide emissions from this group. In the meantime, governments will continue to carry out their commitments under the Climate Change Convention. They will also work on many practical issues relating to the Protocol and its future implementation at their regular COP and subsidiary body meetings.

# Glossary of climate change acronyms and jargon

Negotiators at the climate change meetings rely on an extensive vocabulary of acronyms and technical jargon. Here are some of the most important.

## I) The Players

**Ad hoc Group on Article 13 (AG13)** – A subsidiary body (committee) created by COP-1 to explore how to help governments overcome difficulties they may experience in meeting their commitments.

**Ad hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM)** – A subsidiary body created by COP-1 to conduct the talks that led to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol; the AGBM concluded its final meeting on 30 November 1997.

**Annex I Parties** – The industrialized countries listed in this annex to the Convention are trying to return their greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 as per Article 4.2(a) and (b). They have also accepted emission targets for the period 2008-12 as per Article 3 and Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol. They include the 24 original OECD members, the European Union, and 14 countries with economies in transition (Croatia, Liechtenstein, Monaco and Slovenia joined at COP-3, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia replaced Czechoslovakia).

**Annex II Parties** – The rich countries listed in this annex to the Convention have a special obligation to help developing countries with financial and technological resources. They include the 24 original OECD members plus the European Union.

**AOSIS** – The Alliance of Small Island States is an ad hoc coalition of low-lying and island countries. These countries are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise and share common positions on climate change. The 42 members and observers are American Samoa, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cape Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominica, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Grenada, Guam, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Netherlands Antilles, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, US Virgin Islands, and Vanuatu.

**Bureau** – Responsible for directing the work of the COP. Its 10 members are delegates elected by each of the five regional groups and they include the COP President, six Vice Presidents, the Chairs of SBI and SBSTA, and a rapporteur. In addition, each subsidiary body also has its own Bureau.

**Chair (or chairman etc.)** – The participating governments elect a Chair for the subsidiary bodies from amongst the delegates. Different Chairs may be elected for other informal groups. The Chair is responsible for facilitating progress towards an agreement and serves during the inter-sessional period until the start of the next COP.

**Committee of the Whole** – Often created by a COP to facilitate the process of negotiating text. When the Committee finishes its work it turns the text over to the COP which finalizes and then formally adopts it during a plenary session.

**Conference of the Parties (COP)** – The COP is the supreme body of the Convention. It currently meets once a year to review the Convention's progress. The word "conference" is not used here in the sense of "meeting" but rather of "association", which explains the seemingly redundant expression "fourth session of the Conference of the Parties".

**COP/MOP** – The Kyoto Protocol's supreme body will be the COP, which will serve as the Protocol's meeting of the Parties. The sessions of the COP and the COP/MOP will be held during the same period. This will improve cost-effectiveness and coordination with the Convention.

**countries with economies in transition (EIT)** – Those Central and East European countries and former republics of the Soviet Union that are in transition to a market economy.

**European Union (EU)** – As a regional economic integration organization, the European Union can be and is a Party to the Convention; however, it does not have a separate vote from its members. The EU can also be a Party to the Protocol. Because it signed the Convention when it was known as the EEC, it retains this name for all formal Convention-related purposes. Its members are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

**friends of the chair** – Delegates who are called upon by the Chair (who takes into account the need for a political balance among various interests) to assist in carrying out specific tasks.

**Group of 77 and China** – The G-77 was founded in 1967 under the auspices of the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It seeks to harmonize the negotiating positions of its 132 developing-country members.

**Global Environment Facility (GEF)** – The multi-billion-dollar GEF was established by the World Bank, the UN Development Programme, and the UN Environment Programme in 1990. It operates the Convention’s “financial mechanism” on an interim basis and funds developing country projects that have global climate change benefits.

**Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)** – The INC met during five sessions between February 1991 and May 1992 to draft the Convention; it met six more times to prepare for COP-1 before completing its work in February 1995.

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** – The IPCC was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environment Programme. It conducts rigorous surveys of the world-wide technical and scientific literature and publishes assessment reports that are widely recognized as the most credible existing sources of information on climate change. The IPCC also works on methodologies and responds to specific requests from the Convention’s subsidiary bodies.

**JUSSCANNZ** – The non-EU industrialized countries meet as a group to discuss various issues; they are Japan, the US, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway, and New Zealand. Iceland, Mexico, and the Republic of Korea may also attend meetings.

**national delegation** – One or more officials who are empowered to represent and negotiate on behalf of their government.

**non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** – Many relevant NGOs attend the climate talks as observers in order to interact with delegates and the press and provide information. NGOs must be non-profit and can include environmental groups, research institutions, business groups, and associations of urban and local governments.

**non-Party** – A state that has not ratified the Convention may attend talks as an observer.

**observer** – The COP and its subsidiary bodies normally permit observers to attend their sessions. Observers may include the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency, non-Party states, and other relevant governmental or non-governmental organizations.

**OECD** – The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development consists of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Korea, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, and the US.

**Party** – A state (or regional economic integration organization such as the EU) that agrees to be bound by a treaty and for which the treaty has entered into force.

**President** – Elected by the Parties to preside over the COP, the President is often a senior official or minister from the state or region hosting the meeting.

**regional groups** – The five regional groups meet privately to discuss issues and nominate bureau members and other officials. They are Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), and the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG).

**secretariat** – Staffed by international civil servants and responsible for servicing the COP and ensuring its smooth operation, the secretariat makes arrangements for meetings, compiles and prepares reports, and coordinates with other relevant international bodies. The Climate Change secretariat is institutionally linked to the United Nations.

**subsidiary body** – A committee that assists the Conference of the Parties. Two permanent ones are defined by the Convention: the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice. COP-1 also established two other temporary bodies: the Ad hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate, which concluded its work on 30 November 1997, and the Ad hoc Group on Article 13. Additional subsidiary bodies may be established as needed.

**Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)** – Makes recommendations on policy and implementation issues to the COP and, if requested, other bodies.

**Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)** – Serves as the link between the information and assessments provided by expert sources (such as the IPCC) on the one hand, and the policy-oriented needs of the COP on the other.

## II) The action (meetings, documents, process)

**agenda** – A programme of work that the delegates adopt and are guided by; the annotated agenda contains a more detailed explanation of each agenda item.

**amendment** – The COP can change the existing Convention text through consensus or, if consensus cannot be reached, by a three-quarters majority vote by all Parties present and voting.

**Berlin Mandate** – Adopted at COP-1, the Berlin Mandate launched the talks that led to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol.

**consensus** – An agreement can be adopted by consensus rather than by a vote when there are no stated objections from delegations.

**contact group** – The COP or the Committee of the Whole may establish an open-ended meeting wherein Parties can negotiate before forwarding agreed text to the plenary for formal adoption. Observers can generally attend.

**COP sessions** – The first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-1) was held in Berlin from 28 March to 7 April 1995, the second (COP-2) in Geneva from 8 - 19 July 1996, the third (COP-3) in Kyoto from 1 -11 December 1997, and the fourth (COP-4) is being held in Buenos Aires from 2 - 13 November 1998.

**Conference Room Papers (CRPs)** – A category of in-session documents containing new proposals or outcomes of in-session work for use only during the session.

**declaration** – A non-binding political statement made by ministers attending a major meeting (e.g. the Geneva Ministerial Declaration at COP-2).

**decision** – Unlike a resolution, a decision is a formal agreement and leads to binding actions. It becomes part of the agreed body of decisions that direct the work of the COP.

**documents** – Official meeting documents are available to everyone and feature the logos of the United Nations and the Climate Change Convention and a reference number, such as FCCC/CP/1998/1. Pre-session documents are available before the meeting, often in all six UN languages. In-session documents are distributed on-site (see CRPs, L docs, Misc. docs, and nonpapers). Informal documents are often distributed outside the meeting room by observers.

**drafting groups** – To facilitate negotiations, the President or the Chair may establish smaller drafting groups to meet separately and in private to prepare text. Observers generally may not attend.

**entry into force** – Intergovernmental agreements, including protocols and amendments, are not legally binding until they have been ratified by a certain number of countries; the Climate Change Convention required 50 and enters into force for each new Party 90 days after it ratifies.

**informal contact group** – On the instructions of the President or Chair, delegates may meet in private to discuss specific matters in order to consolidate different views, reach a compromise, and produce an agreed proposal, often in the form of a written text.

**L. docs** – In-session documents that contain draft reports and texts for adoption by the COP or the subsidiary bodies, usually in all 6 UN languages.

**meetings vs. sessions** – Each session of the COP is divided into a number of meetings. Each meeting is generally scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., so that the morning of 2 November will be the first meeting of the fourth session of the COP.

**misc. docs** – Miscellaneous documents are issued on plain paper with no UN masthead; they generally contain views or comments submitted as received from a delegation without formal editing.

**nonpapers** – In-session documents issued informally to facilitate negotiations; they do not have an official document symbol although they may have an identifying number or the name of the authors.

**plenary** – A meeting of the entire COP where all formal decisions are taken.

**protocol** – A protocol is linked to an existing convention, but it is a separate and additional agreement that must be signed and ratified by the Parties to the convention. Protocols typically strengthen a convention by adding new, more detailed commitments.

**ratification** – After signing the Convention or the Protocol, a country must ratify it, often with the approval of its parliament or other legislature. The instrument of ratification must be deposited with the depositary (in this case the UN Secretary-General) to start the 90-day countdown to becoming a Party.

**recommendation** – Weaker than a decision or a resolution and not binding on Parties.

**reservation** – A Party may accept a decision of the COP while noting its reservations and concerns for the record. However, no reservations may be made to the Convention itself or to the Protocol.

**resolution** – Unlike decisions, resolutions do not generally become part of the formal body of decisions that guide the work of the COP. They are directives that guide, opinions rather than permanent legal acts.

**rules of procedure** – The rules that govern the proceedings of the COP, including the procedures for decision-making and participation. The COP has not yet adopted the rules and all expect one (on voting) are currently being “applied”.

**Second Assessment Report (SAR)** – Also known as Climate Change 1995, the IPCC’s SAR was written and reviewed by some 2,000 scientists and experts world-wide. It concluded that “the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate” and confirmed the availability of “no-regrets” options and other cost-effective strategies for combating climate change.

**signature** – The head of state or government, the foreign minister, or another designated official indicates his or her country’s agreement with the adopted text of the Convention or the Protocol and its intention to become a Party by signing.

**square brackets** – Used during negotiations to indicate that a section of text is being discussed but has not yet been agreed.

**Third Assessment Report (TAR)** – The IPCC’s Third Assessment Report is expected to be finalized in late 2000 and published in early 2001.

### III) The issues

**activities implemented jointly (AIJ)** – Under a pilot phase that ends by 2000, AIJ activities can be carried out through partnerships between an investor from a developed country and a counterpart in a host country. The purpose is to involve private-sector money in the transfer of technology and know-how. See also Joint Implementation.

**Article 4.1** – This Convention article contains general commitments for all Parties – developing and developed.

**Article 4.2** – This Convention article contains specific commitments for developed country (Annex I) Parties only, notably to take measures aimed at returning greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

**clean development mechanism (CDM)** – The Kyoto Protocol establishes the CDM to enable industrialized countries to finance emissions-avoiding projects in developing countries and receive credit for doing so.

**emissions trading** – The Kyoto Protocol establishes a mechanism whereby Parties with emissions commitments may trade their emission allowances with other Parties. The aim is to improve the overall flexibility and economic efficiency of making emissions cuts.

**financial mechanism** – As defined by the Convention, its role is to transfer funds and technologies to developing countries on a grant or concessional basis, under the guidance of the COP. The Global Environment Facility is “operating” the mechanism on an interim basis.

**greenhouse gases (GHGs)** – The major GHGs responsible for causing climate change are carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O). The Kyoto Protocol also addresses hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>).

**“hot air”** – Refers to the concern that some governments will be able to meet their commitment targets with minimal effort and could then flood the market for emissions credits, reducing the incentive for other countries to cut their own domestic emissions.

**in-depth review (IDR)** – The first submissions of national communications by developed countries were subjected to a series of in-depth reviews generally involving country visits by international teams of experts.

**joint implementation (JI)** – The Kyoto Protocol establishes a mechanism whereby a developed country can receive “emissions reduction units” when it helps to finance projects that reduce net emissions in another developed country (including countries with economies in transition). Some aspects of this approach are being tested as Activities Implemented Jointly (see AIJ).

**mechanisms** – The Kyoto Protocol establishes three mechanisms to increase the flexibility and reduce the costs of making emissions cuts; these are the Clean Development Mechanism, emissions trading, and joint implementation.

**national communications** – A central requirement of the Convention (and the Protocol) is that each Party must inform the others about its national climate change activities. Many developed countries have submitted their second reports and developing countries have started to submit their first.

**policies and measures** – Countries must decide what policies and measures to adopt in order to achieve their emissions targets. Some possible policies and measures which Parties could implement are listed in the Kyoto Protocol and could offer opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation.

**Quantified Emissions Limitation and Reduction Commitments** – Legally-binding targets and timetables under the Kyoto Protocol for the limitation or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for developed countries.

**review of commitments** – The Parties must regularly review the adequacy of the Convention’s Article 4.2 (a) and (b) outlining developed country commitments to limit emissions. The first review took place at COP-1 and led to the Berlin Mandate and the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. The second review is to take place in Buenos Aires.

**sinks** – Under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries can include changes in net emissions (calculated as emissions minus removals of CO<sub>2</sub>) from certain activities in the land-use change and forestry sector. Calculating the effects of sinks (growing vegetation tends to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) is methodologically complex and still needs to be clarified.

**voluntary commitments** – During the Kyoto negotiations, a draft article that would have permitted developing countries to voluntarily adhere to legally binding emissions targets was dropped in the final hours. This issue remains important for some negotiators and may be discussed in Buenos Aires.

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