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PRESS RELEASE

Climate change talks suspended

Negotiations to resume during 2001

The Hague, 25 November 2000 – After two weeks of intensive negotiations, ministers and diplomats have suspended talks on making the Kyoto Protocol operational and strengthening financial and technical cooperation between developed and developing countries on climate-friendly policies and technologies.

“It is extremely disappointing that political leaders were unable to work it out here and finalize guidelines for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially when the public had such high expectations,” said Jan Pronk, the conference chairman and Environment Minister of The Netherlands.

“But I believe that the political will to succeed is still alive, and I am confident that we can regroup in the very near future and complete a deal that leads to effective actions to control emissions and protect the most vulnerable countries from the impacts of global warming,” he said.

The conference made progress towards outlining a package of financial support and technology transfer to help developing countries contribute to global action on climate change. But the key political issues – including an international emissions trading system, a “clean development mechanism”, the rules for counting emissions reductions from carbon “sinks” such as forests, and a compliance regime – could not be resolved in the time available.

“This conference highlights both the importance and the difficulty of making the transition to low-carbon economies,” said Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme. “It is better to suspend the talks and resume later to ensure that we find the right path forward rather than take a hasty step that moves us in the wrong direction.”

A compromise text tabled by Mr. Pronk will be forwarded as an input to a resumed sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. These talks could be held in late May in Bonn, the home of the climate change secretariat.

“Establishing a robust global regime for addressing climate change is an ambitious undertaking – comparable to the creation of the international trade regime under the WTO,” said Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the Convention. “Global warming is one of the great challenges of the 21st century, and I trust that public reaction to our meeting

here will inspire governments with the necessary sense of urgency to succeed at the next opportunity.”

Today’s suspension of a major environmental negotiation has a hopeful precedent. In February 1999, governments meeting in Cartagena, Colombia were forced to suspend a final round of talks on the Biosafety Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity (which, like the Climate Change Convention, was signed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit). In January of this year, the resumed session succeed in adopting an agreement on genetically modified organisms that was widely applauded by all negotiating groups and by environmentalists and industry representatives.

The Hague conference has been attended by over 7,000 participants from 182 governments, 323 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and 443 media outlets.

Note to journalists: For more information, please contact Michael Williams in Geneva at (41-22) 917 8242/244/111, fax (41-22) 797 3464, e-mail mwilliams@unep.ch. Official documents are available at www.unfccc.int.