

**“Living Planet” interview with Richard Kinley  
April 28 2006**

**Deutsche Welle (DW): [...] Richard Kinley, we are ahead of an important round of talks here in Bonn; in fact, there are going to be two separate round of talks. What is actually on the agenda?**

*Richard Kinley (RK): We came out of our last big international meeting with agreement to start talking about future action on climate change and these talks are going to begin at the Bonn meetings. There are two tracks here because of political and legal realities. The first track comes under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and that means all countries in the world will participate in this, including those countries who don't support the Kyoto Protocol. This process under the Convention is rather informal, it's called a "Dialogue on long-term cooperation," and the idea is to see if it's possible for countries to agree on strategies and options are for dealing with the climate problem in the longer term. The second track is under the Kyoto Protocol and it's a formal negotiation about new commitments for developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol. What will be their targets in the period after the first Kyoto Protocol commitment period; that is, after 2012. These two tracks are the most important development in the climate regime in a long time, finally, discussion about the future is under way. Some countries hope that the two tracks will at some point converge, we'll have to wait and see if that happens, but it means now that discussion about the future has moved out of the non-governmental community, out of academia and into the United Nations process.*

**DW: The countries themselves were actually asked to put forward proposals for both the tracks of negotiations ahead of these meetings. What were some of the most promising issues raised in the submissions?**

*RK: We've been very excited by the submissions that we've received because it shows that governments are really thinking seriously about the future and what needs to be considered, thought about, talked about, in getting ready. Under the Dialogue process, that is under the Convention process, we've got quite a range of ideas: I was struck by the fact that there's a clear consensus on the fact that we have a problem, it's urgent, something needs to be done about it. In that context, there's some interesting ideas emerging, one I'd like to point out because it is trying to come to grips with one of the central issues in the whole process, which is what is the best way for developing countries to become more involved in dealing with the climate change problem and we're hearing increasing support for ideas relating to positive incentives for participation by developing countries. In the Kyoto Protocol process, because it's a formal negotiation, it's possible for the countries to be a bit more precise in their submissions and there we have a strong sense of needing to go beyond the Kyoto targets, to have something more ambitious. Some countries, the EU for example, has suggested targets in the range of 15-30 per cent reductions. We've had suggestions for timeframes for the next round of commitments going 2025 or 2030 and a very strong message of support from all countries for the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms and, in particular, for the clean developed mechanism which allows for investments in sustainable development projects in developing countries that reduce emissions there.*

**DW: What role does the USA play in all of this? Of course, the USA is the world's biggest polluter and so far has refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.**

*RK: The United States is going to be actively involved in the Dialogue process under the Convention; in fact they have made a submission on this particular subject which underlines the policy positions that they've been advocating in the last couple of years – the importance of technology, for example – and we expect them to be actively engaged and I think that this is right, appropriate and important. The Dialogue process was in many ways designed to make sure that the United States could participate, because their participation is essential to dealing in the long term with the problem of climate change. They constitute about ¼ of global emissions and therefore have to be part of the solution; also, I think there's a feeling that the United States is the most dynamic global economy, it's important to have them in, to contribute to the technological solutions and the overall design of the regime to bring down global emissions. For example, the United States was the origin of the idea of emissions trading and they are investing considerable effort in research on new technologies, such as carbon capture and storage and a number of others where the long-term future lies.*

**DW: India and China as large developing countries with steeply rising emissions do not have binding emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol, because they are developing countries. Are there any indications that that could change?**

*RK: This issue is really at the centre of the process of what the future regime should look like and at this point, there are quiet divergent views about the best way to engage developing countries in the process. One area which is looking rather promising, though, is the concept of positive incentives for developing country participation. We see many developing countries now, probably for other reasons other than climate change, but nevertheless, they're taking action to deal with urban air quality problems, to ensure clean energy supplies and these are having spin-off benefits with the reduction of climate change-causing emissions. And one of the challenges in this upcoming process is to find ways to accelerate this effort so that emissions in developing countries – which have to rise because of the need for development in these countries – that this...these rates of growth can be attenuated and the minimal emissions can be assured.*

**DW: Do you see any realistic prospect of helping those countries to avoid making the mistakes which the other industrialised countries made in the past, in terms of increasing emissions with development ?**

*RK: There's a great deal of effort to make sure that this happens, both in the developing countries themselves, because they realise that the long-term problems will be significant, but also in, for example, international lending agencies where the World Bank, for example, is investing quite a bit of effort now in looking at alternative energy approaches to ensure that huge energy demands in developing countries over the next fifty years can be achieved with the lowest emissions possible through investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency or lower emitting types of energies, such as gas.*

**DW: Now, many experts say that the world has very little time to stave off the worst effects of climate change and that the international community has to act very quickly; in fact, immediately. What's the time frame for your talks to come to fruition?**

*RK: The first of the two tracks has a clear timeframe of two years, so by the end of next year, the end of 2007, there is to be a reasonably good idea about what countries want to do and the Parties to the Convention will take a decision at that point about next steps. The process under the Kyoto Protocol – that is, the negotiations for the second commitment period – do not have a defined timeframe but there is a strong, strong interest amongst countries to complete these negotiations so that there is no gap between the first commitment period ending in 2012 and the second commitment period. It's extremely important for there to be no gap for the functioning of the carbon market, which was established by the Kyoto Protocol.*

**DW: You are scheduled to finalise a five-year plan on adaptation to climate change during the Bonn talks. What does that involve?**

*RK: The five-year programme on adaptation was actually completed in Montreal in our last meeting, and what we're doing now in Bonn is try to turn that into practical next steps. The problem of adaptation to climate change has risen much higher on the political agenda recently, as there has been a greater appreciation that in fact the impacts of climate change are being felt, hence countries have committed to doing more, and the first steps in this five-year plan are really designed to get a better understanding about what has to be done, and then to look at practical steps. If one could perhaps look at a continuum of first impacts of climate change getting a better understanding of what these impacts are, then looking at vulnerabilities – how different regions or different countries are vulnerable to different types of climate change impacts – and thirdly, once one understands what the vulnerabilities are, what the likely impacts are, one can begin to plan for practical actions on adaptation whether in agriculture, in forestry or in coastal zone protection, for example, but its important that these steps be taken on the basis of good technical information and clear scientific understanding and that's the purpose of this five-year programme, to build that understanding*

**DW: Can you give us an example of one region where climate change is already having an effect and where an adaptation process is successfully taking place?**

*RK: Simplest example would be the Artic region, where it has been predicted by science for some time that the impacts of climate change are likely to be most severely felt in the two polar regions, and we are now seeing in the Artic quite significant temperature increases and melting of both the sea ice and the permafrost. So I would say that the communities there are at the early part of this process that I was mentioning earlier of identification of impacts and assessment of vulnerabilities. We've heard, for example, that one of the major means of transportation in Artic regions is the use of ice roads and with the warmer temperatures, the season for the use of these roads is reduced and this has caused*

*quite considerable problems for transport of goods because the roads are not passable for a good part of the year, including in summer.*

*So the implication of this is that alternative means of transportation have to be found, either roads, permanent roads, at great cost need to be built or one needs to use air transport – also extremely costly – or one could use perhaps river transport. But here I think one sees a very good example of where the costs of climate change are very high. The alternatives to the current way of doing business the current way of living are significantly more expensive than the status quo because of climate change impacts .*

*A second example might be in a number of the least developed countries, where a process is under way to develop national adaptation programmes of action and a number of countries have become quite well advanced in these...in the development of these action plans where they have identified their vulnerabilities and begun to develop specific actions, for example, in changing crops or different crop rotation cycles to deal with drier conditions or increased temperature.*

**DW: Adaptation sounds a little like accepting the inevitable. Is there not a danger that as we prepare to adapt, we feel less of a need to take action to reduce climate change in the future?**

*RK: It's very important that one look at climate change through two lenses and to see the future, one needs to look through both of these lenses: mitigation and adaptation. They go together, given the amount of emissions that have already taken place, the world is committed to some degree of climate change, and therefore it needs to adapt to this. At the same time, if additional mitigation efforts are not undertaken, the concern is that the adaptation or the impacts that we face will be so severe that it would be difficult if not impossible and certainly extremely costly to adapt. So one cannot have a simply have an adapt adaptation strategy; mitigation remains at the core*

**DW: In addition to the issues we've already talked about, there are going to be a lot of more technical issues on the agenda at these Bonn talks relating to climate change. What are some of the most interesting issues for you?**

*RK: It's shaping up to be an extremely interesting meeting and period for climate change discussions. I guess this is to be expected, as the level of interest and political priority goes up, but we have two or three new or quite high-profile issues coming up in May.*

*First , there's great interest now from a group of developing countries in dealing with the problem of emissions from tropical forest deforestation. They want to protect their tropical forests and see, given that de-forestation makes a major contribution to climate change, they're hoping that there can be some international cooperation to support them in this effort. These discussions are just beginning, but it's looking to be a very important, very high-profile debate over the next couple of years.*

*Secondly, there's a great deal of interest in a new technology which is emerging called carbon dioxide capture and storage. The idea is that this technology would be*

*expanded considerably so that rather than release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – especially from, for example, a large power plant – it would be captured and stored in an underground reservoir. This is done to a certain extent now already in oil drilling, but the idea is that if it could be expanded, it would be a very important contribution to dealing with the problem in the longer term. There's a number of technical and economic issues that need to be sorted out, but it's an exciting new technology that's gaining a lot of interest.*

*And the third point that might be interesting for many commentators is that countries have had to report this year on progress in implementing their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol (this is developed country Parties under the Kyoto Protocol) and we'll be taking a first look at the progress which has been achieved in implementation so far. I can't say too much about it right now because we're still finishing the analysis, but that's one of the key issues that will be on the agenda at the May meetings in Bonn.*

**DW: Richard Kinley, thank you very much for talking to us.**

*RK: My pleasure, thank you.*