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Climate change conference of key nations achieves ‘important progress’ – UN official

20 March 2007 – Government ministers from key industrialized and developing nations attending a climate change conference in Germany at the weekend achieved “important progress” on a series of issues, a senior United Nations environmental official said today.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), told journalists that he was “unexpectedly encouraged by the very constructive outcome” of the talks, held in Potsdam on Saturday.

Mr. de Boer said participants reached consensus on several questions, including support for the scientific explanation about humankind’s role in causing global warming and the need for the response to be in line with the thinking of the scientific community.

They also agreed that any response must occur “in a dual context,” focusing on both reducing greenhouse gases emissions and ensuring that this is done in a way that promotes sustainable development, especially in poorer nations.

The ministers also concurred that: technology will be critical as nations try to respond and adapt to climate change; tackling deforestation deserves special attention given the impact it has on overall greenhouse gas emissions; and developing nations need urgent assistance from industrialized States if they are to adapt adequately to climate change.

The environmental ministers of the G-8 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) took part in Saturday’s conference, as did representatives from five developing nations – Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

Mr. de Boer said he was hopeful that the meeting’s outcome will act as a springboard to some sort of international agreement at both the G-8 heads of State meeting scheduled for Germany in June and the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC slated for Bali, Indonesia, in December.

In a related development, the World Bank today launched the Carbon Fund for Europe, a €50 million trust to help the continent’s countries meet their commitments to the Kyoto Protocol and the European Union’s emissions trading scheme.

The fund, established in conjunction with the European Investment Bank, will buy greenhouse gas emission reductions from climate-friendly investment projects, including those launched by industrialized countries in the developing world.