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PRESS RELEASE

Marrakech climate talks to finalize Kyoto rulebook

Marrakech, 9 October 2001 – The world's governments are meeting here from 29 October to 9 November to finalize the procedures and institutions needed to make the Kyoto Protocol fully operational.

They will do this by negotiating a package of formal Conference decisions on the basis of political principles agreed by ministers and senior officials last July in Bonn. These decisions will also address how to increase the flow of financial and technological support to developing countries under the Climate Change Convention.

"The work of translating the Bonn Agreements into a detailed operational rulebook must be completed here in Marrakech," said Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the Convention.

"Certainty about the Kyoto Protocol's rules will further motivate businesses and other economic actors to create the low-carbon economy of the future. It will also clear the way for governments to ratify the Protocol and bring it into force. Marrakech should be the turning point that enables the Protocol to move into high gear," he said.

With the new funding and rules in place, the Parties to the Convention could start discussing the political issues that are likely to dominate the next few years, including the widespread desire to re-engage the US in emissions limitation, the second period for emissions cuts under the Protocol (on which negotiations should start by 2005) and the prospects for expanding the group of countries with emissions targets.

This broader perspective should come to the fore at next September's World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, to which the Marrakech conference will make an input. The conference will also consider the implications for future action on climate change of the latest scientific and technical findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

In addition to agreeing broad principles, July's Bonn conference completed 10 draft decisions, mostly on issues concerning the Convention, and forwarded them to the Marrakech meeting for adoption. Three draft decisions on the Protocol (addressing sinks, mechanisms, and compliance) were discussed but not completed. Two draft decisions (on policies and measures, and reporting and review) were not discussed and will be taken up in Marrakech. These 15 decisions are to be adopted together as a package.

The Marrakech conference, which is the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP 7), is also expected to start setting up the Kyoto institutions. A first step would be to elect the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism to ensure the CDM's prompt start. (The CDM will promote sustainable development by encouraging investments in projects in developing countries that reduce or avoid emissions; developed countries then receive credit against their Kyoto targets for emissions avoided by these projects.)

The principles set out by the Bonn Agreement as a basis for the Marrakech decisions include:

* Developed countries will provide greater access to funds and technology so that developing countries can limit emissions and adapt to climate change. They will also minimize the economic impact that their efforts to reduce emissions will have on developing countries. Specifically, a Special climate change fund for adaptation, technology transfer, and emissions limitation will be established under the Convention, as will a least developed countries fund for implementing the Convention and adapting to climate change. In addition, a Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund will be established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes. In July, many developed countries made a joint political statement pledging to contribute €450 million (\$410 million) per year by 2005 to help developing countries manage their emissions and adapt to climate change. A system for contributing to and overseeing the various funds needs to become quickly operational.

* Developed countries can receive credit towards their Kyoto emissions targets for carbon dioxide absorbed from the atmosphere by “sinks”. Eligible activities include revegetation and the management of forests, croplands and grazing lands. Individual country quotas have been set; the result is that sinks will account for only a fraction of the emissions reductions that can be counted towards the Kyoto targets.

* Energy efficiency, renewable energy, and forest sink projects can qualify for the Clean Development Mechanism. Developed countries are to refrain from using nuclear facilities in the CDM.

* Use of the Protocol’s three flexible mechanisms should be supplemental to domestic action, which will constitute a significant element of the effort made by each Party. This applies to the CDM and to the international emissions trading regime, which enables developed countries to buy and sell emissions credits amongst themselves, and the Joint Implementation regime, under which OECD countries can invest in projects in countries with economies in transition.

* The compliance mechanism will be overseen by a Compliance Committee with a facilitative branch and an enforcement branch. For every ton of gas that a country emits over its target, it will be required to reduce an additional 1.3 tons during the Protocol’s second commitment period. Additional compliance procedures and mechanisms will be developed after the Protocol enters into force.

The Kyoto Protocol will enter into force and become legally binding after it has been ratified by at least 55 Parties to the Convention, including industrialized countries representing at least 55% of the total 1990 carbon dioxide emissions from this group. So far, 40 countries have ratified, including one industrialized country (Romania).

The talks will take place at the Palais des Congrès de Marrakech under the chairmanship of President-designate Mohamed Elyazghi, Morocco’s Minister of Territory Planning, Urban Management, Housing and Environment. The high-level segment for ministers and senior officials is scheduled for 7 to 9 November.

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Note to journalists: Accreditation is now open – see www.unfccc.int. For more information about accreditation, please contact Michel Smitall at +49 228-815-1005, fax +49-228-815-1999, or msmitall@unfccc.int.

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