



PRESS RELEASE

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Climate Change Talks Open in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES, 2 November 1998 – Some 4,000 government officials and other participants attended the opening session today of the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The session was opened by the outgoing President of the COP, Environment Minister Hiroshi Ohki of Japan. Minister Ohki chaired last year's session that resulted in the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol.

Maria Julia Alsogaray, Argentina's Minister for Natural Resources and Sustainable Development was then chosen by acclamation as the new President of the COP. She will preside over the COP and its intersessional talks for about one year after the conference, until a new President is chosen at COP-5.

"The Buenos Aires meeting takes place at a very special moment in the climate change negotiations," she said in her acceptance speech. "The Protocol agreed upon in Kyoto provides the international community with more concrete tools to make progress towards the honoring the spirit of the Convention. Buenos Aires may become -- and we earnestly would like that to happen -- the realm where such an action programme would be established."

Michael Zammit Cutajar, Executive Secretary of the Convention, said in his opening statement that the task of the conference is to maintain the political momentum generated by Kyoto. "Climate change must remain high on national agendas. Ministers must remain committed to seeking agreement and achieving timely results," he told the Conference.

The opening meeting also heard a welcoming address by the Head of Government of the City of Buenos Aires, Fernando de la Rúa.

The COP President will have the support of the chairs of the COP's two subsidiary bodies, Mr. Chow Kok Kee of Malaysia for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice, and Mr. Bakary Kante of Senegal for the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

As of this morning, 1,461 delegates from 163 governments, 2,000 members of 167 observer organizations, and more than 600 journalists have been registered as participants of the conference; more are expected to join during the talks.

This two-week meeting of the COP will start elaborating the rules for meeting the emissions-reduction targets agreed last year in Kyoto. The conference will also explore practical steps for promoting the transfer of climate-friendly technologies to developing countries.