

ARGENTINA

Summary of the presentation to the Seminar of Government Experts Bonn, 16-17 May 2005

The results of the recent studies developed by the Ministry of Health and Environment of Argentina have given us stronger and additional evidence that climate change is already taking place at an alarming rate.

Important climate trends started about the 1970 decade in Argentina.

Except over the Andes, annual rainfall augmented in most of the territory, more than 30 % in some areas. The relative benefits of this change were overcome by an increased interannual variability in the north, by extensive and long lasting floods over the flat pampas in the centre of the country, and by more frequent floods on the margins of the great rivers in the east.

In addition, as in many other areas around the world, intense precipitation events are now considerably more frequent. These events cause losses of lives and severe damages to agriculture, households and infrastructure.

Because of higher temperature and lower precipitation, almost all the Andes glaciers are receding, threatening important natural landscapes and the water resource that sustain the economic activities of the now prosperous oasis at the foot of the mountains.

There is already a persistent trend in most of the rivers coming from the Andes that causes losses in power generation and ecological damages. These trends are likely to worsen as indicated by future climate scenarios resulting from increased CO₂ concentration.

The water level of the Río de la Plata estuary has increased almost 20 cm in the last century, half of it in the last 30 years. As a consequence storm surges that flood crowded populated areas in the Metropolitan region of Buenos Aires are becoming more frequent. By the middle of this century, with increased CO₂ concentration scenarios, the storm surges would flood more land affecting hundreds of thousands of people and costing an average of more than a hundred million dollars a year.

Disasters resulting from extreme climate events have caused damages to human life, property, infrastructure and biological diversity. This constitutes a new barrier to sustainable development, because much needed resources allocated to health, education and housing, must be diverted to plan climate change disasters mitigation and preparation and to invest in new infrastructure.

It is clear that more ambitious mitigation efforts are urgently needed because national, regional and global vulnerability to the effects of climate change is increasing.

But during the last three decades, Argentina has already put in force different policies and measures, related to energy, agriculture, forestry and the environment, whose final consequence has been a reduction of green house gases emissions.

Among those measures we can mention the promotion of the use of natural gas instead of oil derivatives to generate energy, the use of natural gas for vehicles (NGV), biofuels regulatory incentives, the design and implementation of an economic dispatch framework in the electric system leading to a low baseline of green house gas emissions, renewable energy subsidies to wind and solar energy, extended use of no tillage systems in agriculture, subsidies for forestry activities and huge investments in the underground transport system.

Despite the effort undergone by the Argentines, sustained even under very difficult macroeconomic and financial circumstances, the country is suffering relevant and negative impacts of climate change.

Therefore, we strongly believe that the moment to engage in a productive dialogue is now and we look forward to it with the clear awareness that an increase in the international efforts to address climate change must be achieved through cooperation and consensus.