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PRESS RELEASE

Vienna UN meeting tests temperature of international climate change process

(Vienna, 27 August 2007) - A fresh round of climate change talks under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) got underway in Austria today.

Around one thousand representatives from more than 150 governments, business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions gathered for the "Vienna Climate Change Talks 2007" (27 to 31 August) to set the stage for a major United Nations conference in December in Bali. The conference in Indonesia will seek to advance future action on climate change post-2012, when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires.

The talks were opened by Josef Pröll, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria, along with Maria Madalena Brito Neves, Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cape Verde and Mr. Monyane Moleleki, Minister of Natural Resources of Lesotho.

"Climate change is a huge challenge that can only be tackled at a global level and in an integrated manner, said Josef Pröll. "We do not have much time to create adequate framework conditions. Each year without mitigation measures is a year which drives the human and financial cost of adaptation steeply upwards," he added.

Speaking about the effects of prolonged drought in his home country Lesotho, Minister Monyane Moleleki warned that climate change was already having severe effects on agriculture. "The farmers are suffering because nothing happens when its supposed to - traditional rainy seasons are no longer predictable. The numbers of droughts have doubled since the late 1970s and when the rains come, they come in torrents," he said.

Maria Madalena Brito Neves, Minister of Agriculture and Environment of Cape Verde pointed out that whilst her country had recently made progress in enhancing economic growth by for example the boosting the tourism sector, this progress was in danger of being made null and void. "Climate change can potentially offset all the gains made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Small Island Developing States are particularly affected," she said.

Both developing country Ministers stressed that a future UN climate change regime post-2012 would have to deliver on technology transfer, increased access to the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism and financial resources for adaptation.



The meeting consists of talks under the "Dialogue on long-term cooperative action to address climate change" and negotiations under the Kyoto Protocol designed to identify emission reduction ranges of industrialised countries.

On Tuesday, the UNFCCC secretariat will present a new report on investment and financial flows needed for an enhanced and far-reaching international response to climate change to delegates.

"This could provide the foundation for the financial architecture of a future climate change regime," said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer. "All in all, the Vienna Climate Change Talks present an opportunity to measure the temperature of the climate change process: whether or not the political community is willing to advance a comprehensive agenda on a future climate change regime post-2012 in Bali," he added.

About the UNFCCC

With 191 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has to date 175 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 36 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

Additional information for the media

The UNFCCC secretariat will give press briefings on:

The UNFCCC Investment and Financial Flows project Tuesday, 28 August (13:15)
The outcomes of the conference Friday, 31 August (13:15) and 31 August

Other briefings (e.g. that of the United States of America on Wednesday, 29 August, 13:30) will be announced on the <unfccc.int> website. During the UNFCCC briefings, media will have the opportunity to phone in and ask questions (+43-1) 218-5960.

The majority of meetings and side events at the Austria Center will be open to the media and will be webcast.

To arrange interviews or accreditation, please contact:

Ms. Carrie Assheuer, Public Information and Media Assistant, mobile: (+43-676) 319-9359
or e-mail: press@unfccc.int

For further information, please contact:

Mr. John Hay, Head of Communications and Media, mobile: (+43-676) 319-9382

Mr. Alexander Saier, Information Officer: mobile: (+43-676) 319-9397