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PRESS RELEASE

Kyoto Protocol to enter into force 16 February 2005

Bonn, 18 November 2004 – The 90-day countdown to the Kyoto Protocol's entry into force was triggered today by the receipt of the Russian Federation's instrument of ratification by the United Nations Secretary-General. The Protocol will become legally binding on its 128 Parties on 16 February 2005.

"A period of uncertainty has closed. Climate change is ready to take its place again at the top of the global agenda," said Joke Waller-Hunter, Executive Secretary of the Climate Change Secretariat, which services the UN Climate Change Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.

"Next month's ministerial conference in Buenos Aires will provide the next major opportunity for governments, businesses and civil society to promote the innovative new policies and technologies that will create the climate-friendly economy of the future," she said.

The Protocol's entry into force means that from 16 February 2005:

1) Thirty industrialized countries will be legally bound to meet quantitative targets for reducing or limiting their greenhouse gas emissions.

2) The international carbon trading market will become a legal and practical reality. The Protocol's "emissions trading" regime enables industrialized countries to buy and sell emissions credits amongst themselves; this market-based approach will improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of emissions cuts.

3) The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) will move from an early implementation phase to full operations. The CDM will encourage investments in developing-country projects that limit emissions while promoting sustainable development.

4) The Protocol's Adaptation Fund, established in 2001, will start preparing itself for assisting developing countries to cope with the negative effects of climate change.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, industrialized countries are to reduce their combined emissions of six major greenhouse gases during the five-year period 2008-2012 to below 1990 levels. The European Union, for example, is to cut its combined emissions by eight percent, while Japan should reduce emissions by six percent. For many countries, achieving the Kyoto targets will be a major challenge that will require new policies and new approaches.



Only four industrialized countries have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol: they are Australia, Liechtenstein, Monaco and the United States. Australia and the United States have stated that they do not plan to do so; together they account for over one third of the greenhouse gases emitted by the industrialized world.

Developing countries, including Brazil, China, India and Indonesia, are also Parties to the Protocol but do not have emission reduction targets. Many developing countries have already demonstrated success in addressing climate change.

“Reducing the risks of global warming will require the active engagement of the entire international community. I urge the US and other major emitters without Kyoto targets to do their part by acceleraterating their national efforts to address climate change,” said Ms. Waller-Hunter.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most up-to-date scientific research suggests that humanity's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases will raise global average temperatures by 1.4 – 5.8°C by the end of the century. They will also affect weather patterns, water resources, the cycling of the seasons, ecosystems and extreme climate events.

Scientists have already detected many early signals of global warming, including the shrinking of mountain glaciers and Arctic and Antarctic sea-ice, reduced ice cover on lakes and rivers, longer summer growing seasons, changes in the arrival and departure dates of migratory birds, the spread of many insects and plants towards the poles, and much more.

The 10th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention will be held at the “La Rural” exhibition centre in Buenos Aires from 6 to 17 December 2004.

Note to journalists: For further information about accreditation and technical facilities for the Buenos Aires conference, please contact Ms. Carrie Assheuer, Public Information and Media Assistant. See also <<http://unfccc.int>>.