



United Nations Environment Programme

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PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

Russia's Ratification of the Kyoto Climate Treaty "Historic" Says Kofi Annan

Formal Handing Over of Accession Papers Made at Security Council Meeting

Event Marks Countdown for Global Warming Agreement Entering into Legal Force

Nairobi, 18 November, 2004 - In a move underlining the vital links between the environment and global peace, Russian Permanent Representative to the UN Andrey Denisov today formally handed over the accession papers on ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Annan said in a statement: "I congratulate President Putin and the Russian Federation for their leadership in making it possible for the Protocol to enter into force – as it will, 90 days from tomorrow, on 16 February 2005. This is a historic step forward in the world's efforts to combat a truly global threat. Most important, it ends a long period of uncertainty."

He added: "Those countries that have ratified the Protocol, and which have been trying to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases even before its entry into force, now have a legally binding obligation to do so. Businesses that have been exploring the realm of green technology now have a strong signal about the market viability of their products and services. And the financial community and insurance industry, which have been trying to 'put a price' on the risks associated with climate change, now have a stronger basis for their decision-making on incentives and corporate performance."

The Secretary-General also said: "All countries must now do their utmost to combat climate change and to keep it from undermining our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I therefore take this opportunity to urge those developed countries that have not ratified the Protocol to ratify it and limit their emissions. The Parties to the Climate Change Convention will have their next major meeting in Buenos Aires from 6 to 17 December. I hope they will use that occasion to seize the promising possibilities that have been opened up by this major development."

Today's short ceremony, attended by Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, occurred as the UN Security Council was meeting in Kenya to discuss the situation in Darfur, Sudan.

It also underlined the importance of UNEP and its African headquarters to world affairs. Scientists expect that Africa, which is only responsible for just over 3 per cent of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, is likely to be hit hardest by the impacts of climate change.

In a statement, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia had not taken the decision to ratify lightly, acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol will have consequences for “Russia’s social and economic development.”

Nevertheless, he stated that a thorough analysis of all the ramifications have concluded that the treaty was vital for “the promotion of international cooperation.”

Klaus Toepfer said today: “Kyoto is a welcome first step, but only a first step. We now need to think beyond Kyoto. We need to make fighting climate change part of a broad church in which all facets of society are brought on board. We need to ‘think climate’ when we plan cities and roads, rail links and other infrastructure. We need to ‘think climate’ when we plan our energy needs for the 21st century.”

“We have huge challenges in the areas of mobility and transport. We need the active engagement of the rapidly developing economies of China and India so that their development, involving a third of the world’s population, is propelled on a cleaner and less carbon intensive path,” he said.

While Africa and the developing world are the most vulnerable to the anticipated impacts of climate change, some areas like the Arctic are already feeling its effects.

Mr Toepfer added: “The new Arctic Impact Assessment Report, compiled by some of the finest scientific experts available in that region, and released only a few days ago, clearly demonstrates the disasters in store for people and the planet if we do not build on the solid foundation of Kyoto. But I am confident that we can avert the nightmare scenarios of a seven-metre rise in sea levels and other catastrophic effects by mobilizing industry and business, governments, local authorities and ordinary people everywhere,” he said.

Wangari Maathai, Kenya’s assistant environment minister who will receive the Nobel prize in two weeks time for her work linking peace and the environment, said for her part: “Today’s ceremony is a momentous occasion and I am gratified that the Russian Government chose to deposit the instrument at the UN Office in Nairobi. The world has yearned for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, rightly recognizing it as a critical component of the effort to preserve the global habitat and the resources it provides in sustaining life. No less important, as the Nobel Committee so resoundingly affirmed last month, the environment is the key to peace as well. So I congratulate the UN for once again bringing the world together for sustainable development and peace.”

Notes to Editors

Details of the Kyoto Protocol and the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change being held in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 6 to 17 December can be found at www.unfccc.org

The new Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report can be accessed at <http://amap.no/acia>

UNEP's work on climate change can be found at <http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/>

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