

Climate Change: Kyoto Moves Forward Despite Slow Pace

By [Friends of the Earth International](#)
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NAIROBI (KENYA), November 17, 2006 — Modest agreements were reached at the United Nations climate change talks that ended here today. 165 countries discussed ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012 under the existing Kyoto Protocol, which is the only international legally binding treaty to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. [1]

“Whilst we welcome the work that has been made here, we have not seen these talks respond to the reality of the urgency in the real world. The impacts of climate change are becoming more severe. The warnings from the scientific community are becoming increasingly alarming. The public at large are taking to the streets calling for action. Ministers must step up their efforts to move this Kyoto process forward,” said Friends of the Earth International climate change campaigner Catherine Pearce.

Friends of the Earth International notes with concern that the postponement of many of the Nairobi decisions ultimately means that strong leadership will be required at the next climate talks in 2007 in order to launch actual negotiations for the post 2012 commitments. In addition, International efforts on how to achieve the 50% greenhouse gas emission cuts needed by 2050 are still to be determined.

“We call upon world leaders to demonstrate the urgently required leadership to build a stronger, improved and expanded Kyoto, with more stringent emission cuts for the industrialised countries and flexibility to allow contributions from some of the developing countries,” added Catherine Pearce

In Nairobi a work programme has been set out and prepares the ground for action after 2012, when the first phase of Kyoto ends. In order to ensure no interruption between the first and second commitment phases, these negotiations must be completed by the end of 2008. The Kyoto Protocol sets caps on emissions of greenhouse gases by 39 industrial nations, but further Kyoto action is urgently needed to avoid a gap between current and future commitment periods after 2012, when current targets are due to end.

The Kyoto process is moving forward despite the obstruction of a few countries. Major polluter Australia -which has failed to ratify Kyoto- shockingly tried to mislead the public with claims that Kyoto is a failure and will not deliver results for the environment or the economy. Following a change of Government, Canada is also trying to walk away from their existing Kyoto commitments.

As the first climate talks in Sub Saharan Africa, this conference has been especially helpful

in raising awareness of climate change in this continent, which is already suffering climatic extremes. Parts of Kenya, for instance, are suffering a drought that started in 2003. In Northern Kenya, pastoralists have lost 10 million livestock. Two thirds of the population in Turkana region have lost their livelihoods.

In Nairobi, the richest countries failed to address the most urgent needs of the poorest countries.

“We need to see far quicker and more drastic actions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people, including those living in Africa. The least developed countries and in particular small island developing states – the nations most at risk from climate change – did not get from the conference strong commitments to help them confront climate change. The highest level of political commitments from world leaders is necessary to meet the scale of the challenge to solve this global crisis,” said Friends of the Earth International climate change campaigner Catherine Pearce.

Most of the heat-trapping gases are released by the richest nations of the planet, and cause rising temperatures and more extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. [2]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLIMATE TALKS

Good progress was made on the Adaptation Fund, the only financial mechanism that will provide steady funds for poor countries suffering from climate change impacts. The allocations of this fund will be largely determined by developing countries.

The talks addressed the ‘Clean Development Mechanism’ (a system designed to make it easier and cheaper for industrialised countries to meet their greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by investing in reductions in developing countries), but strong concerns remain about what the mechanism will include and what it can deliver.

Ways to reduce greenhouse gas-causing deforestation in developing countries (which accounts for approximately 20% of global emissions) were also discussed, but progress was very slow, despite the fact that urgent action is needed to reduce deforestation. During the 11 days of the conference an estimated 330,000 ha of forest have been lost.

Notes

[1] The UN climate change website is www.unfccc.int

[2] A UK government-commissioned report released in October warns that if no action is taken on emissions, there is more than a 75% chance of global temperatures rising between 2 and 3 degrees celsius over the next 50 years, resulting in melting glaciers, causing floods, a decline in crop yields and an increase in extreme weather.

Online at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm

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