

ELEVENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: 28 NOVEMBER – 9 DECEMBER 2005

The first Meeting of the Parties serving as the Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 1) is taking place in Montreal, Canada, from 28 November to 9 December 2005. The event is being held in conjunction with the eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These meetings are expected to draw as many as 10,000 participants.

At COP/MOP 1, Parties are expected to discuss and adopt decisions on the outstanding operational details of the Protocol, including procedures relating to compliance and guidelines for the “flexible mechanisms” intended to help Parties reach their emissions targets. Discussions on the mechanisms will cover issues such as the supervisory committee of the Joint Implementation mechanism, and recommendations by the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism. Other issues on the COP/MOP agenda include the Adaptation Fund and future commitments for the period after 2012 (when the Protocol’s first commitment period ends). Various methodological, administrative, financial and institutional matters will also be addressed.

COP 11’s agenda includes items on capacity building and technology transfer, the adverse effects of climate change on developing and least developed countries, and several financial and budget related issues, including the report of the Global Environment Facility (which serves as the treaty’s financial mechanism). The UNFCCC’s subsidiary bodies will also meet, from 29 November to 6 December. The joint COP and COP/MOP high-level segment will take place from 7-9 December.

In addition to these meetings, over 140 “side events” will be held on a range of climate change topics. There will also be several major “parallel events” organized with assistance from the host government, as well as numerous other climate and energy-related exhibits, displays, launches and initiatives.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNFCCC AND THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

Climate change is considered to be one of the most serious threats to sustainable development, with adverse impacts expected on the environment, human health, food security,

economic activity, natural resources and physical infrastructure. Global climate varies naturally, but scientists agree that rising concentrations of anthropogenically-produced greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere are leading to changes in the climate. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the effects of climate change have already been observed, and scientific findings indicate that precautionary and prompt action is necessary.

The international political response to climate change began with the adoption of the UNFCCC in 1992. The UNFCCC sets out a framework for action aimed at stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic interference” with the climate system. Controlled gases include methane, nitrous oxide and, in particular, carbon dioxide. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994, and now has 189 Parties. The Parties to the UNFCCC typically convene annually in a Conference of the Parties (COP), and twice a year in meetings of the subsidiary bodies – the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: In December 1997, delegates at COP 3 in Kyoto, Japan, agreed to a Protocol to the UNFCCC that commits developed countries and countries making the transition to a market economy to achieve emissions reduction targets. These countries, known under the UNFCCC as Annex I Parties, agreed to reduce their overall emissions of six greenhouse gases by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels between 2008-2012 (the first commitment period), with specific targets varying from country to country. The Protocol also establishes three flexible mechanisms to assist Annex I Parties in meeting their national targets cost-effectively: an emissions trading system; joint implementation (JI) of emissions-reduction projects between Annex I Parties; and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which allows for emissions reduction projects to be implemented in non-Annex I Parties. Following COP 3, Parties began negotiating many of the rules and operational details governing how countries will reduce emissions and measure their emissions reductions. To date, 157 Parties have ratified the Kyoto Protocol, including 37 Annex I Parties representing 61.6% of 1990 Annex I greenhouse gas emissions. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005.

BUENOS AIRES PLAN OF ACTION: The process for finalizing the rules and operational details of the Protocol was agreed at COP 4 in 1998 in a document known as the Buenos

Aires Plan of Action. The Plan set COP 6 as the deadline for finalizing these rules and operational details and strengthening implementation of the UNFCCC. In November 2000, Parties met at COP 6 in The Hague, the Netherlands, to complete these negotiations. They were not successful and delegates suspended COP 6 until July 2001 when it reconvened in Bonn, Germany. After further talks, delegates eventually agreed to adopt a political decision, the Bonn Agreements. While this decision provided high-level political direction on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, delegates were still unable to finalize text on some issues, and agreed to forward all the draft decisions to COP 7 for final resolution.

MARRAKESH ACCORDS: In late October and early November 2001 at COP 7, delegates resumed their discussions and reached agreement on the Marrakesh Accords. These Accords consist of a package of draft decisions on many of the details of the flexible mechanisms, land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) and compliance with the Kyoto Protocol that should be adopted by the COP/MOP. The Accords also address support for developing countries, including capacity building, technology transfer, responding to the adverse effects of climate change, and the establishment of three funds – the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Fund, Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), and Adaptation Fund.

Delegates sought to build on the Marrakesh Accords at COP 8 and COP 9, agreeing on rules and procedures for the CDM Executive Board, and on modalities and procedures for afforestation and reforestation project activities under the CDM. Parties also discussed how to integrate findings of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report into the work of the UNFCCC, and agreed on two new agenda items focused on adaptation and mitigation.

COP 10: At COP 10 in Buenos Aires in December 2004, delegates agreed to the Buenos Aires Programme of Work on Adaptation and Response Measures. Parties also took decisions on technology transfer, LULUCF, the UNFCCC's financial mechanism, and education, training and public awareness. However, some issues remained unresolved, including items on the LDC Fund, the SCCF, and Protocol Article 2.3 (adverse effects of policies and measures). Meanwhile, lengthy negotiations were held on the complex and sensitive issue of how Parties might engage on commitments to combat climate change in the post-2012 period. The Kyoto Protocol requires Parties to begin considering the post-2012 period by 2005. Delegates agreed to hold a Seminar of Governmental Experts prior to SB 22 in May 2005, although the terms of reference for the Seminar did not refer specifically to the post-2012 period or new commitments.

SEMINAR OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS AND SB 22: This seminar took place in May 2005, in Bonn. Delegates started to address some of the broader issues facing the climate change process, including a future framework and commitments beyond 2012. Immediately following the seminar, the twenty-second sessions of the subsidiary bodies (SB 22) convened. These focused on preparations for COP 11 and COP/MOP 1, and addressed a variety of issues ranging from budget matters to adaptation and mitigation. Delegates provisionally agreed on a programme budget for 2006-2007 at a level that was US\$1.75 million less than had been proposed. However, work on the SCCF was not concluded.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

G8 MEETING AND MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE: On 8 July 2005, leaders attending the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, agreed to a communiqué recognizing humanity's

serious impact on climate change and making a commitment to promote innovation, energy efficiency, conservation and cleaner technologies. Participants also agreed to proceed with a "Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development." The first ministerial dialogue was held in London, UK, on 1 November 2005. It was attended by energy and environment ministers from 20 countries, who focused on energy technologies and steps to achieve a low-carbon economy. According to some reports, the focus on technological solutions and private sector involvement reflected recent efforts by the EU, US and other large economies to find common ground in spite of differences over the binding targets set out under the Kyoto Protocol. The London dialogue followed an informal ministerial meeting in Greenland in mid-August designed to discuss policy differences among several key countries.

ASIA-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP ON CLEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE: On 28 July, a new six-country partnership was announced to combat climate change through technology-based solutions. This agreement was announced by Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and the United States. The first meeting of the partnership is expected in early 2006.

2005 WORLD SUMMIT: The 2005 World Summit, held at UN headquarters in New York from 14-16 September, gave some consideration to climate change. The Summit's outcome document highlights countries' commitments and obligations under the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, stressing the need to act with "resolve and urgency" to address the many challenges faced in tackling climate change, promoting clean energy, meeting energy needs and achieving sustainable development. The outcome document supports the need to work expeditiously to establish a worldwide early warning system for natural hazards and articulates an agreement to speed up the transfer of affordable and cleaner energy efficiency and conservation technologies to developing countries "on favourable terms." The impact of energy services on poverty is also clearly stated.

GEF REPLENISHMENT: The final scheduled meeting for the fourth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund took place on 21 and 22 November, in Tokyo, Japan. However, the contributing participants were unable to reach agreement on funding pledges, and it is expected that a further meeting will convene in mid-December.

UNFCCC MEETINGS: Various UNFCCC events have been held since SB 22, including a workshop on the development of a five-year programme of work on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation (17-19 October 2005, Bonn) and a seminar on the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies for adaptation (14-16 June 2005, Tobago). The UNFCCC has also held: a regional workshop for Asia on education, training and public awareness under UNFCCC Article 6 (11-15 September, Yokohama, Japan); a "Hands-on Training Workshop on Mitigation Assessments" (26-30 September, Seoul, Republic of Korea); a meeting of the Least Developed Country Expert Group (18-20 August, Kiribati); and a workshop on innovative options for financing the results of technology needs assessments (20-21 October, Bonn).

Several meetings have taken place in Montreal immediately prior to COP 11 and COP/MOP 1. These include the 22nd meeting of the CDM Executive Board (23-25 November), the fifth meeting of the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from non-Annex I Parties (24-25 November), an Expert Meeting on Response Measures (23-24 November), and a meeting of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (23-25 November).