

# Media Briefing

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## MONTREAL CLIMATE TALKS HOLD KEY TO SAVING THE PLANET

### Negotiations Begin With Informal Ministerial on Climate Change, Ottawa 22-24 September

Governments will meet in Montreal, Canada at the end of November for the United Nations Climate Negotiations which hold the key to future action on tackling emissions of greenhouse gases – and stabilising our fragile climate.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties will be the first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol – those countries which have signed up to the international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the period 2008-2012 - and is expected to attract high level government leaders and ministers from around the world.

The negotiations take place against a backdrop of mounting evidence that climate change is already happening around the globe, and that rising temperatures may already be leading to feedback processes which result in even greater greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating the situation. Some recognised 'tipping-points' may have already been crossed.

The Ottawa Meeting, which takes place from 22-24 September 2005, represents an important opportunity on the road to Montreal. Recent informal ministerial meetings, such as the one in Greenland, have demonstrated that progress on agreeing consensus and building confidence can be achieved through such meetings. The Ministerial is being hosted by Canadian Environment Minister Stéphane Dion. Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for the Environment will be representing the UK.

For the meeting to be effective, Friends of the Earth believes countries must adopt stronger agreements to curb climate change pollution and not give the Bush Administration any further opportunity to drag the rest of the world down to its level. The situation is now urgent. Those countries which recognise the danger must negotiate the emission reductions necessary to avoid disaster. Experts expect that the US will at some point negotiate, but not while George Bush is in office. In the meantime Friends of the Earth believes that the bar must be raised, not lowered.

### Background

The Kyoto Protocol, established in 1997, came into force in February this year. Some 140 countries

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have now signed up to the treaty. The Protocol was borne from, and is firmly embedded in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, drafted and adopted in 1992. This has been signed by 189 countries worldwide. The Convention sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

These negotiations are particularly important because they represent the first opportunity for governments to gather under the Kyoto Protocol. These are the countries which have signed up to legally binding measures. This currently constitutes 36 countries which have mandatory targets for the period 2008-12, when the first commitment period ends.

Negotiations under the Protocol automatically exclude those governments who have not yet signed up to the Protocol. These governments, which include the United States and Australia, can participate as observers.

### **Issues on the Agenda**

The international climate negotiations will take place from 28 November – 9 December 2005. Joint meetings of the Conference of the Parties and Meeting of the Parties will be convened during a joint high level segment from 7-9 December, attended by ministers from around the world.

Critical agenda items include compliance with and legal enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol, the capacity and role of the established funds for adaptation in developing countries, and a review of the adequacy of existing targets, including demonstrating progress in meeting them.

This meeting also offers the first legal window, under the Kyoto Protocol, by which negotiations on the shape of the international climate regime after 2012 can proceed. According to Article 3.9 of the Protocol, negotiations on commitments for the period after 2012 must start no later than 2005.

### **What can be achieved**

Friends of the Earth is calling for governments gathering in Montreal to get agreement on the negotiating process under the Kyoto Protocol, with a clear timeline starting in 2005 and running through to 2008. There is as yet no apparent clear multilateral agreement on where these negotiations should be housed: under the Protocol or the Convention.

Although the Protocol requires certain improvements and amendments to include more countries and strengthen certain provisions, it is not necessary to begin these negotiations from scratch under the Convention. The Protocol itself is based on robust, legally binding cuts in emissions – the only solution to addressing climate change. It is important that future commitments are based on similarly legally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As conclusions from the G8 Summit made very clear, the Bush Administration is not going to change its position and engage constructively in any climate debate. Friends of the Earth International urges the other countries in the negotiations not to allow the multilateral process to be paralysed by the US rejection of serious joint action to reduce global emissions. The Bush Administration does not reflect the interests of many state leaders and citizens. In February, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels challenged mayors across the country to join Seattle in taking local action to reduce global warming pollution by taking on Kyoto style targets, through the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement<sup>1</sup>. One hundred

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1 Further information on the US Mayors Climate protection Agreement is available on:

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and sixty six cities across 35 states have now signed up.

The international community must press on and find ways of engaging larger developing countries which, in fact, have already started to develop national mitigation measures.

Friends of the Earth International Climate Campaigner Catherine Pearce said:

“The Montreal talks are crucial for achieving international action on tackling climate change. The participating countries must push forward for urgent action and develop a process which will allow developing countries such as China and India to come on board.

“While it is of course disappointing that the world’s richest country and biggest polluter is not on board with these talks, the US administration must not be allowed to hamper international action. It can only be hoped that George Bush will soon recognise how important this process is. We do not have the time or the need to begin this process all over again.”

#### **Future Framework:**

The international Climate Action Network has set forth a clear proposal for the post-2012 regime including more ambitious absolute and binding reduction targets for industrialised ‘Annex I’ country, commitments from some non-Annex I countries to advance their development goals in a sustainable manner and increased adaptation measures in the most vulnerable countries and communities. Agreement to launch negotiations is not expected to include any details on types and level of commitment. However, these negotiations should look to achieving the required global reductions, in the order of 30% by 2020 and should include key elements such as adequacy of commitments, technology transfer, land use and forestry, adaptation and legal status.

#### **Other international processes:**

The international negotiations in Montreal stand alongside other international partnerships which have recently been announced:

G8 Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy, Sustainable Development, announced at the G8 Summit on 8 July. Participating countries include – G8 countries, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, South Africa and Spain. The aim of this process is to:

- a) address the strategic challenge of transforming our energy systems to create a more secure and sustainable future
- b) monitor implementation of the commitments made in the Gleneagles Plan of Action and explore how to build on this progress
- c) share best practice between participating governments

The first meeting will be held in London on 1 November where the terms of reference for the dialogue are expected to be agreed. The Dialogue countries will meet regularly in the next 2 years, reporting back to the G8 Summit in 2008 in Japan.

Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate, announced on 28 July. Participating countries include: Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and USA. The partnership, led by the US and Australian governments, will look to develop technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rather than having specific targets. The first meeting will be held in Adelaide, Australia in November. Friends of the Earth has previously queried the significance of the partnership which does not include clear targets or funding commitments and stands outside the Kyoto Protocol.

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<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/mayor/climate/quotes.htm>

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