

Is Europe Abandoning Climate Talks Leadership?

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OCTOBER 14, 2005 12:43 PM - Friends of the Earth International (Press Release)

BRUSSELS - European Union Environment Ministers are meeting on Monday (17 October) to agree a European strategy for the next United Nations climate negotiations, which take place in Montreal, Canada next month. The meeting takes place amidst fears that the international leadership previously demonstrated by the EU on climate change may now be watered down. There appears to be low ambitions within the EU on future UN negotiations on climate change, and unwillingness to set themselves robust future targets. Friends of the Earth says that such an attitude would be disastrous: unless tough action is urgently taken, the impacts will be severe for the entire world.

Catherine Pearce, Friends of the Earth International Climate Campaigner said: "Warnings about the terrible impacts of climate change are growing louder every day. If we are to avoid a climatic disaster the European Union must continue to push for tough international action to tackle emissions. Unless the world takes urgent action to cut its emissions, the economic, environmental and human costs will be enormous."

<http://www.commondreams.org/news2005/1014-10.htm>

Meeting of the EU Environment Council - Monday 17 October, Luxembourg

On 17 October, the 25 EU Environment Ministers (plus Romania and Bulgaria) will meet in Luxembourg, where they are due to agree the EU position for the upcoming United Nations climate negotiations (COP11 - COP/MOP1), which will take place in Montreal between 28 November and 8 December 2005.

But Friends of the Earth fears that the EU will abandon its leadership role at the international negotiations, despite growing signs that climate change is proceeding apace and people are

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feeling the impacts of more intense extreme weather events such as storms, floods, droughts or heat waves.

The meeting will be chaired by UK environment minister Elliott Morley (the UK holds the EU Presidency). The UK has made climate change one of its priority areas for international action. However, last month Tony Blair raised concerns by appearing to shift toward a more Bush-friendly view of tackling global warming: against treaties and targets for cutting emissions and toward technological solutions [1]. He told a conference in New York "to be honest, I don't think people are going, at least in the short term, to start negotiating another major treaty like Kyoto"

UK Secretary of State for the Environment Margaret Beckett said in a speech last week [2] to a business audience that "we set ourselves the objective of securing a final deal by 2010". But Friends of the Earth says this is far too late. If we want an agreed a framework which begins in 2012 (when the current phase of the Kyoto treaty ends), a "final deal" must be secured much earlier.

The 11th Conference of the Parties in Montreal, Canada (28 November - 8 December 2005)

From 28 November to 8 December, governments will meet in Montreal, Canada at the United Nations climate negotiations. The meeting is critical for future international action on climate change, because negotiations will begin on carbon dioxide reduction targets when the first commitment period of Kyoto ends in 2012. Ministers from around the world are due to join the negotiations from 7-9 December.

Critical agenda items also 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 by the 36 countries in meeting their targets. EU countries must cut their emissions by an average of eight per cent by 2012 compared to 1990 levels.

What the EU must do

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The EU must agree a pro-active and ambitious agenda for the upcoming negotiations.

Economic fears over setting tougher concerns are misguided. These concerns ignore the huge financial impacts that climate change will have on the world, as well as the economic potential for climate change mitigation such as triggering innovation as well as economic gains in a world that will increasingly need cleaner energy.

To strengthen leadership at the UN climate negotiations, the EU Environment Ministers must adopt the draft conclusions [3] for the 17 October meeting. These are: Explicitly agree that the EU aims for negotiations on a new commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol, directly following the first one, to be held under the Protocol and to be completed by 2008 at the latest. # Maintain and strengthen the reference to both the mid-and long-term greenhouse gas reduction needs, i.e. at least minus 30% by 2020 and minus 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. It should be made clear that a new commitment phase will mean absolute and mandatory emission cuts by industrialised countries. Targets must be based on accumulated, historic per capita emissions as well as on economic capacity to act. # Explicitly refer to the need that in any future climate regime industrialised countries must provide finance and technology transfer, to enable poor countries to choose climate-friendly development. # Include a reference to the need to reform the Clean Development Mechanism, part of the Kyoto Protocol, so that it really delivers sustainable development. # Explicitly acknowledge the obligation to compensate those affected by climate change in developing countries. Appropriate funding for adaptation and disaster relief must become a binding commitment for the industrialised nations under the climate regime.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

[1] 15 September 2005: www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/home.nsf/pt_transcript1

[2] Keynote speech at "Climate Change: the Business Forecast" 5 October 2005

[3] Draft conclusions from 11 October