

Resolution on the outcome of the Buenos Aires Conference on climate change

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the outcome of the Buenos Aires Conference on climate change, welcoming the international agreement on decisions taken at the Tenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, including the Buenos Aires Programme of Work on Adaptation and Response Measures. It also welcomed the decision to start a dialogue on future responses to climate change under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol in May 2005. It regretted, however, that the Tenth Conference of Parties was a missed opportunity as regards the preparation of further objectives for the period beyond 2012, and in particular, that despite the efforts of the EU delegation, the Conference only agreed on one informal meeting for the preparation of future new goals in 2005.

Parliament pointed out that climate change is one of the major challenges of the 21st century, and has significant negative global environmental, economic and social consequences. It will impinge negatively on sustainable development and the livelihoods of millions of people all over the world. In 2004 again, hurricanes, typhoons and other weather-related natural disasters hit populations hard throughout the world and notably in the poorest countries. Besides the human suffering and the numerous casualties, the economic losses are estimated at a record level of 90 billion dollars for 2004.

Full implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol is of fundamental importance in tackling the key problem of climate change and for the future of the world's environment. Parliament recalled that a recent Commission progress report (COM(2004)0818) confirms that the EU as a whole is on track to meet its target under the Kyoto Protocol.

It felt strongly that the EU should retain its leading role in international efforts to fight climate change. It expects the EU, therefore, to present a proposal for a future regime to the Seminar of Governmental Experts which is consistent with the EU objective of maintaining the average global temperature increase below 2°C above pre-industrialisation levels, with global greenhouse emissions peaking within the next two decades, and which respects the principles of equity, responsibility and ability or capacity to act.

Parliament noted the necessity of significantly enhanced reduction efforts by all developed countries in the medium term to be able to meet the long-term emission reduction challenge. The EU must adopt reduction targets at the 2005 Spring European Council which are in line with the above objectives Parliament believed that, for industrialised countries, medium-term reductions of the order of 30% by 2020 and long-term reductions of 60-80% by 2050 are necessary to achieve that goal.

It went on to call on the Commission and the Member States to step up efforts to engage in a dialogue with responsible countries around the world to sketch out a sustainable solution to prevent dangerous climate change. Parliament condemned the attempts of some countries to obstruct the starting of negotiations on climate policy commitments beyond 2012, and regretted the repeated statements by the Italian Minister for the Environment that it would be pointless to set binding objectives for reducing emissions after 2012 without the participation of the United States, China and India. These statements could weaken the EU's position.

Parliament again called on the countries that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so as soon as possible. The US Government must reconsider its decision not to participate.

On the subject of emissions, Parliament was concerned that progress in emission reductions in other sectors may be jeopardised by rising transport emissions. The EU could learn from California how to limit transport emissions, and the Commission should urgently put forward proposals for binding CO₂ limits for new vehicles. Parliament also repeated its demand that emissions from international flights and shipping should be incorporated in the emission reduction targets for the second commitment period from 2012.

Parliament believed that a future regime should be based on common but differentiated responsibilities, on continued and greater emission reductions post-2012, and the involvement of more countries in the reduction effort, notably the US and more advanced developing countries. The Commission and the Member States must stress the necessity of climate protection when holding dialogues with international partners, especially the US, China and India.

Finally, Parliament insisted on the need for increased financial assistance for adjustment measures in developing countries. Whilst economic development is a right for all developing countries, measures should be taken to encourage more environmentally friendly models of development.