Resolution on climate change

2005/2663(RSP) - 18/01/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the UN conference on Climate Change held in Montreal in December 2005. It welcomed the overall outcome of the Conference, especially the opening up of the dialogue on a future climate change regime, not only in the context of the Kyoto Protocol but also within that of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. It regretted the fact that the US Administration was still so reluctant to enter into any meaningful international partnership on climate change, but noted that, at least, it did not stand in the way of agreement at Montreal. Parliament welcomed the greater emphasis now being placed on fighting climate change by many key actors in American society, including Members of Congress from both Houses and both parties, state legislators, mayors, NGOs and many in the business community.

Parliament noted with approval the adoption of a series of important implementing measures aimed at ensuring that the potential of the Kyoto Protocol is properly harnessed. It welcomed the recognition at Montreal that there needs to be a new commitment period for Annex I countries to the Kyoto Protocol after 2012, and also that there should be no gap between the first and second commitment periods.

Parliament referred to its resolution of 16 November 2005, and recalled two strategic objectives:

- limiting the average global temperature increase to 2° C above pre-industrialisation levels;

- undertaking strong emission reductions for developed countries of 30% by 2020 and of 60-80% by 2050.

It called for intensive review of the advantages and disadvantages of innovative approaches to complement new mandatory reductions for Annex I industrialised countries, such as the concept of contraction and convergence, and the proposed "sectoral pledge approach", whereby key developing countries would take on voluntary greenhouse-gas-intensity targets for major industrial sectors and would receive market and technology incentives to exceed these targets.

One of the most important ways of combating climate change is by means of technology development. Parliament noted that the EU is to step up its technology cooperation with other countries and called, therefore, for a detailed exploration of the possibilities being opened up by new technologies, such as renewable energy technologies and carbon capture and storage. Environmental technologies can give the EU a competitive edge while greatly contributing to emission reduction, and are therefore at the heart of a sustainable development strategy compatible with the EU's Kyoto commitments and the Lisbon Strategy. Research in this field should be boosted and clear environmental performance targets should be adopted in order to encourage the use of the best available technologies.

Parliament considered that Annex I industrialised countries must continue to play a vital role in tackling climate change at world level. Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol must continue to meet their existing commitments and to take on ambitious targets for a second commitment period after 2012. Moreover, those industrialised countries that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol are called upon to reconsider their position, and to play an active role in future international negotiations, with a view to their participation in the future climate change regime.

Parliament went on to emphasise the key importance of engaging the rapidly industrialising developing countries in a future international climate change regime, while fully respecting their vital concerns about promoting their economic development and fighting poverty. It noted their reluctance to take on binding emission reduction targets at this stage, but hoped that this will ultimately be possible. Adoption of voluntary sectoral targets might be a useful first step. Parliament stressed that poverty and poor environmental performance go hand in hand and called therefore on the EU and its Member States to adopt an ambitious policy of technology partnerships and transfers with developing countries, allowing them to develop their economy and increase their welfare on a more sustainable and climate-friendly basis.

Parliament insisted that Member States, and the EU, live up to their existing commitments, since the EU's leading position in international talks would be undermined if this cannot be achieved. It emphasised the fundamental importance of an integrated EU approach to climate change policy, with sectoral policies on energy conservation and renewable energies, transport, agriculture, industry, research and development etc., complementing rather than contradicting each other. There is particular need for close monitoring of these policies as regards their effects on climate change, and for measures to reduce these effects to the level committed to by the EU in the Kyoto Protocol. Parliament recalled its various specific proposals to this effect in its abovementioned resolution of 16 November 2005.

Energy policy is a crucial element of our global strategy on climate change: diversification of our energy resources and a switch to alternative, more sustainable and environmentally friendly types of energy possess great potential for emission reduction. Furthermore, diversification will make the EU less dependent on external sources and less vulnerable to energy supply crises.

Parliament called for a close examination of:

- the total allocation for 2008-2012 in the European Emissions Trading Scheme in conjunction with policies and measures in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from other sectors, in order to ensure the attainment of Kyoto Protocol commitments;

- the functioning of the European Emissions Trading Scheme, how it might be further improved in its forthcoming review (for example by examining alternatives to grandfathering, such as benchmarking and auctioning), how its scope might be further extended to other sectors, and finally how it might be linked to schemes in other countries;

- use by EU countries of the CDM and Joint Implementation credits to supplement domestic reductions, as well as their environmental effectiveness;

Finally, Parliament underlined the need to further strengthen the European technological lead and to fight climate change through transfer of technologies. It called therefore for the development of simple guidelines within the framework of the CDM and of Joint Implementation projects, especially to enable SMEs to benefit from the economic potential of the emerging carbon markets.