

# PROGRESSIVE PARTICIPATION OF ALL COUNTRIES

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A stable climate is crucial to all countries of the world. In fact, although the historical responsibility of greenhouse gas emissions lies mainly with the industrialized countries, it is the developing countries which are most vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change, due both to their geographic location and to competing needs for scarce financial resources.

Current discussions on developing country participation in climate change mitigation focus on the dispute between past emissions on the part of the industrialized countries, and future level of emissions on the part of developing countries. Most developing countries have resisted emission targets in light of the fact that they are at a much earlier stage of development; their current per capita emissions are in many cases less than one-tenth the U.S. level, and are bound to increase as development proceeds. Industrial countries, with less than 20 percent of the world's population, currently account for 76 percent of the cumulative carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

The political pressure being exerted on some developing countries to reduce their emission levels now, is not constructive. In fact, it may lead them to follow the Russian example of negotiating targets higher than their expected future emissions, creating misleading emission credits, and circumventing the ultimate objective of the Climate Change Convention: to stabilize the concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions.

Stabilization can only be achieved by a concerted long-term global effort. Historical responsibility of greenhouse gas emissions, which currently determine concentration levels, is squarely on the shoulders of industrialized countries. These countries must indisputably assume a leadership role in curbing their emissions. The Kyoto Protocol is a major diplomatic accomplishment. Industrialized countries must not only ratify, but also comply with its mandate if we are to begin to move toward stabilization.

But the Protocol is only a small step in the right direction. Stabilization demands much greater future commitments from industrialized countries, as well as the gradual incorporation of developing countries. Stabilization dictates progressive participation of all countries.

There are two ironies in this global challenge. The first is that developing countries, despite not having any legal obligation for the time being, are already decreasing their emissions on a voluntary basis. China's coal and oil subsidy cuts between 1990 and 1995 have saved 155 million tons of carbon. Mexico's energy efficient lighting program avoids 32,000 tons of carbon emissions annually. India is the world's fourth leading user of wind power, with 950 MW installed in 1997. These are just a few concrete examples of a wide array of climate-mitigating activities being undertaken in developing countries for sound economic reasons. These activities provide a platform for the adoption of a portfolio of policies and measures that provide development benefits while reducing emissions. These reforms would slow deforestation rates, accelerate energy modernization, and help developing countries leapfrog over the carbon intensive development path followed in the North.

Once industrialized countries have shown compliance of the Kyoto Protocol in the first commitment period, developing countries could build on the policies and measures they would have implemented, in order to assume increasing responsibilities in curbing worldwide emissions.

The second irony of the global climate challenge is that climate protection actually makes economic sense. During the last one hundred years the world's economic growth depended on ever increasing greenhouse gas emissions. The technologies which are available today, and those which are on the horizon, open the possibility for continued economic growth while at the same time curbing emissions. Industrialized countries do not want to give up their living standards. Developing countries do not want to jeopardize their future development. Technological advance speaks to both needs.

In fact, visionary multinational corporations are already incorporating climate mitigation into their business strategy, not based on environmental altruism, but rather on sound economic sense. They have seen that efficient low-emissions energy systems will prevail in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They would rather be on the cutting edge now, than catch up with the competition later.

What is true for corporate strategy in industrialized countries is even truer for developing countries. Many of these countries are reaching a critical juncture in their economic development. Decisions are being made in energy generation that will affect worldwide greenhouse house gas emissions for years to come. Those nations that attract new technologies will be best positioned to succeed in a competitive global economy. Developing countries that avoid action on climate change today may find that they have been bypassed by other nations, which have moved beyond the outdated energy systems of the 1900s.

The key to stabilizing the climate is progressive participation of all countries, based on cooperation rather than confrontation. The key is to view the challenge ahead as an economic opportunity as well as an environmental necessity. Far

from being a threat to further economic growth, well-designed policies to reduce emissions can jump start the process we have all been talking about, but have not implemented: the transition toward sustainable development for all countries.