

Latvia 090



Ministry of the Environment and Regional Development
of the Republic of Latvia

FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
FIRST SESSION

STATEMENT
by
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for the
ENVIRONMENT
of the
REPUBLIC of LATVIA

Berlin
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Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates.

On behalf of the Republic of Latvia, I have the honour to address the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. I wish to express my delegation's gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and to the host city, Berlin, for a gracious reception and for the efficient organization of this Conference.

Madam President,

Latvia, whose Saeima (Parliament) ratified the Convention on 23 February 1995, is an "Annex 1" country that is undergoing the process of transition to a market economy. Before restoring its independence in 1991, Latvia experienced a half-century of occupation by a totalitarian regime producing a crisis in all sectors of its economy, in particular in energy and industry.

Today, Latvia must solve the problems connected with this painful legacy: an ineffective and inefficient state industrial sector that is unfriendly to the environment; agriculture, energy and transportation sectors in the midst of restructuring; and an undeveloped environment and municipal sector.

At the same time I should highlight the advantages of our present situation. First, the restructuring of production provides an opportunity to replace an obsolete production base with modern, environmentally-friendly technology. Second, Latvia has a high level of biodiversity and a comparatively low level of pollution in rural areas. Third, we can analyze global experience and thus carry out the most effective national environmental strategy. These factors give Latvia the opportunity to renew its economy while applying a strategy of sustainable development and I am confident that we will take advantage of this opportunity.

Madam President,

In accordance with its commitments under the Convention, Latvia has prepared its national communication and I take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Netherlands for its assistance in this regard. What distinguishes Latvia is that, during the period 1990-1994, greenhouse gas emissions decreased considerably in connection with the restructuring of the economy and the resulting reduction of production in many sectors. In the future we plan to achieve further reductions of emissions by applying effective policies aimed at protecting the environment. Thereby, we foresee that, with economic development, greenhouse gas emissions in the year 2000 will not exceed 1990 levels.

The Latvian Environmental Protection Policy Plan envisages operative activities for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan includes policy goals for a twenty to thirty year period as well as supporting principles and identification of resources for implementation.

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environmental pollution and a tax on natural resources. The aim of the latter is to limit the inefficient usage of natural resources and environmental pollution, while supporting a strategy of sustainable development. This tax will be collected on extraction of natural resources, on introduction of pollutants to the environment, on degradation of natural resources and on commerce in goods and products harmful to the environment. Our goal is to tip the fuel balance in favor of renewable sources of energy.

Important restructuring is underway in energy utilities in order to promote conservation measures and effective use of energy resources.

Almost half of the territory of Latvia is covered with forests, which are a sink for carbon dioxide and a guarantee for a qualitative environment. The State is carrying out an efficient and rational forestry policy.

Madam President,

The delegation of Latvia joins the spirit of and aspirations of this Conference to increase State commitments after the year 2000. However, the base year agreed to in the Convention (1990) coincides with a crisis period in Latvia and the restructuring of its economy. Thus, Latvia is unable at this time to specify reductions of greenhouse gas emissions after the year 2000, .

With respect to future measures toward implementation of the Convention, Latvia supports effective and mutually beneficial schemes for joint implementation of commitments. In addition, Latvia remains interested in the transfer of, or access to, environmentally sound technologies and know-how, within the scope of Article 4 (5) of the Convention.

Madam President,

The restructuring of the economy of Latvia and consistent implementation of environmental policy will lead to a decrease of aggregate green house gas emissions in the year 2000, in comparison with the situation in 1990. We are convinced that we have embarked on the course of sustainable development.

Latvia will continue to engage in national and international efforts with the goal of preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the Earth's climate system.

Thank you, Madam President.