

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
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AT THE OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
OF THE THIRD SESSION  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC  
Kyoto, 8 December 1997

I welcome all heads of delegation and others whose arrival has turned this Conference into a truly political occasion. It is a remarkable Conference in many ways: because of the large number of participants and its impact on world news - and because it is the source of the largest internet broadcast to date, transmitted live in seven languages. All of this focuses world attention on Kyoto, where political conviction and leadership can bring the negotiations on a protocol to a successful and significant conclusion.

Kyoto in history is not only a political capital but also a centre of Zen Buddhism. Zen teaches that enlightenment comes from breaking through mental boundaries imposed by established ways of looking at the world. I am indebted to a delegate here for this insight, which gives us a good theme for the days ahead.

One mental barrier to break is that of preoccupation with short-term economic costs of action to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. Developed countries negotiate on sharing this perceived burden; developing countries seek to ward it off. The costs of inaction, the long-term economic costs of the impacts of global warming, are not brought to the fore in this debate. Nor are the economic opportunities that a global climate change strategy can deliver:

opportunities for profitable technological innovation and "no regrets" investments, opportunities for sustainable economic growth, that avoids the mistakes of the past two centuries.

It is not too late for all negotiators, and the interests they represent, to raise their sights from the defence of the present to the protection of the future, to look beyond current economic turmoil towards a future well-being that is prosperous, equitable and respectful of Nature.

A second barrier to overcome is that of fear that political leadership in dealing with climate change may be an electoral handicap. Politicians must be sensitive to their voters' concerns, but should not underestimate their voters' intelligence. Leadership does not mean following trends but shaping them, using the talents of persuasion and education in which politicians excel. The implementation of the Kyoto protocol must generate domestic action in the industrial power-houses of the world economy, triggering technological responses and changes in patterns of consumption.

Turning to the specific issues under negotiation, I would like to make two points. The first is to underline the importance of ensuring the credibility of the targets to be adopted for the reduction of emissions from industrialized countries. Chairman Estrada Oyuela has been leading the negotiations on the Committee of the Whole towards agreement on common methodological bases, on a common system of accounting, notably as regards sinks. This is encouraging, in that the emerging regime of emission commitments needs a solid foundation. A diplomatic formula, that papers over differences in methods of calculation, would be window



dressings that would not fool any informed observer or market operator. Credibility should also be the guiding principle for the verification and review of actions under the protocol, and for compliance mechanisms.

Second and last, I venture a word about the issue that has been known as "evolution", the future development of commitments by all Parties. It is important to put this issue in perspective. The Convention is a process; it is evolving before our eyes. The Berlin Mandate was a sign of evolution; so was the decision last week to add four countries to the list of Annex I Parties. The review of annexes will be on the agenda again at the next Conference, as will the review of adequacy of commitments of Annex I Parties - another provision that can move the process forward. The protocol itself is likely to reinforce this evolutionary trend, encouraging the creation of opportunities for developing countries to continue to lower the energy intensity of their economic growth and opening avenues for voluntary action by these countries.

Evolution should not be confused with creation, with the big bang that started it all. Evolution took more than seven days to achieve. We will not be able to achieve all our plans in Kyoto. Let us focus on the central aim of this Conference, to agree upon clear, binding and verifiable commitments that will lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by industrialized countries below 1990 levels early in the next century. This will be a platform for the future development of the Convention, which will unfold, step by step, from Kyoto to Buenos Aires and beyond.