

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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**TO THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

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Statement by Ms. Satu Hassi, Minister of the Environment and Minister for Development Co-operation of Finland at the Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

November 21, 2000

Thank you, Mr. President

Finland would like to express its thanks to the Government of the Netherlands and to the City of The Hague for organising this important Conference, and for the hospitality extended to us. Our thanks also go to the Secretariat, which has again provided us with high-quality documents in good time.

Approximately one hundred years ago, the Swedish chemist and Nobel Prize winner Svante Arrhenius posed the hypothesis that combustion of fossil fuels might cause climate change. Nevertheless, scientists did not take this hypothesis seriously until the 1970s and 1980s. Serious political talks aimed at slowing climate change began in the 1980s. These talks led to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio in 1992 and to the 1997 Kyoto Climate Protocol.

We are now holding a conference to make the Kyoto commitments a reality. In other words, to agree on rules that will further specify the Kyoto Protocol so that ratification can begin, and the Protocol can come into force.

Our success in this endeavour is vital. If we fail, ratification will be delayed and the technical readiness required for it may be postponed even to the year 2008. In some countries, this might result in a lack of time for implementing the emission reductions promised at Kyoto. In the worst case, we would have to restart the entire Kyoto process.

Climate change, however, will not wait. Each day brings new information confirming the fact that the climate is changing, and that at least a part of the change is due to human activity. The sea level is rising slowly; this is already evident on the shores of small island states. Coral reefs are bleaching due to warming of sea water and glaciers are melting away around the world. The permafrost in Alaska has begun to melt and roads and structures built on it have

collapsed. Plants accustomed to a cool climate are migrating towards the poles and up mountain slopes. Extreme weather, such as storms, droughts and floods, is becoming more common. According to the third IPCC Assessment Report on climate change can proceed faster than we have previously estimated.

If climate change is allowed to go too far it may spiral out of control. As the areas covered by ice and snow decrease in size, the surface of the earth will absorb more solar radiation. Because of warming, tundra and forest soils may cease to absorb carbon and become a source of it instead. The melting of permafrost may release vast amounts of methane into the atmosphere.

Even if all the greenhouse emissions caused by humankind were to be stopped now, the climate would still continue to warm to some extent. Hence it is of the utmost urgency that we act now if we wish to prevent irreparable damage.

But the urgency is not only on the behalf of nature, but humankind. We must also understand that much of what the countries at this Conference seek is linked to the entering into force of the Kyoto Protocol. For example, neither the CDM investments desired by developing countries, nor the transfers of funds allocated for adaptation activities will begin before the Protocol enters into force.

We simply cannot fail. The Kyoto Protocol must enter into force. And soon. But the Protocol, regardless of how difficult and demanding a step it represents, is only the beginning. A second and third commitment period will still be needed with even more ambitious emission reductions. The success of this conference will also provide the basis for the next commitment period.

Our main challenge at COP 6 is to ensure that the basic structures for implementing the Protocol will put the process on the right track from the beginning.

We have to ensure that the instruments – such as the Kyoto mechanisms and sink activities – are transparent and reliable. These instruments have to bring genuine benefits to the environment and rule out opportunities for fraud and manipulation. The Kyoto Protocol must not become a tool for printing “forged money” for environmental credits. The emission reductions must be real. The Kyoto mechanisms should promote sustainable development locally and nationally through renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

We need instruments that are also cost-effective and fair for all countries. We must be able to use our scarce resources as efficiently as possible. This will be even more important in the future when we, hopefully, have even more ambitious targets.

And above all, we need instruments that will convey the right signal to economic actors. In order to mitigate climate change, huge technological changes will be necessary. The Kyoto Protocol includes novel instruments, instruments that have never been tested on a global scale. These instruments may not be flawless at the outset, but it is crucial that our solutions have a sound foundation. In this way we can develop the instruments in accordance with the accumulating experience.

Mr. President

The COP 6 agenda does not consist of "Annex I Party issues" and "developing country issues", but of a list of issues that concern us all.

Industrialised countries made important commitments at Kyoto in terms of greenhouse gas emission reductions. While taking this leadership role, we also recognised our primary responsibility for the alarming climatic development that has taken place. Climate change is a global problem. It is very likely that developing countries will be among those who suffer the most. Therefore, they will also benefit when the Kyoto Protocol is really implemented.

There is an obvious need for additional resources to support the efforts of developing countries. Finland is ready to increase funding for instance through GEF taking into account decisions of this conference.

Therefore, Finland stresses that the package to be negotiated in The Hague should, for instance, include a system for the Clean Development Mechanism that would provide real win-win possibilities for both Parties. The solutions to be adopted for capacity building and technology transfer should be demand-driven, country-specific and integrated into all relevant activities. Special emphasis should also be laid on supporting national focal points for climate change that will increase awareness of the problems involved and give added political impetus to them in national political decision-making. In all our efforts, the concerns of the least developed countries, including small island states, should be given special priority.

The opportunities for beneficial synergic effects should be examined whenever relevant. For instance, Finland has recognised that many projects supported through multilateral and bilateral development co-operation can simultaneously improve the efficiency of industrial processes, local air quality and thereby health, too, while mitigating climate change.

Mr. President

A comprehensive negotiation package should also address the concerns of the countries with economies in transition. Many of these countries have committed themselves to ambitious emission reductions although they are also struggling to strengthen the basic structures of their economy.

Bearing this in mind, it is essential that a sound basis be established for the mechanisms, especially for Joint Implementation, and that the mechanisms can be started promptly and efficiently. The capacity- building efforts should also reach the EIT countries in a way that is relevant for their requirements.

Finally, Mr. President

Many of the Annex I Parties have already prepared or are preparing their national programmes to implement the Kyoto Protocol, although none of them have so far ratified it. Finland's programme is to be submitted to Parliament early next year.

This is a very positive sign and it illustrates the serious intentions of these governments. Additionally, the far-sighted enterprises in the private sector do not see climate policies as a threat but as a positive challenge, even as an opportunity for business.

Indeed, in my view, our task here in The Hague is to create the framework for mobilising societies' resources – both intellectual and material, and public, private and those of NGOs – to act creatively and constructively for the mitigation of climate change.

Thank you, Mr President.