



ITALY

**STATEMENT BY
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**AT THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Hague, November 21, 2000

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Mr Chairman, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The 2000 Report by the World Meteorological Organization has revealed the appalling series of so called "climatic anomalies" that in 1999 devastated large and densely populated regions of the world, causing over 40,000 deaths and estimated damage of at least 40 billion dollars.

And again in this first year of the 21st century the frequency and intensity of weather events has been the cause of further and more serious damage, and even more victims.

The developing countries, with their lack of infrastructures and highly vulnerable territory, are the most affected by extreme events.

But even the more developed countries, over the past decade, have suffered a gradual worsening of extreme events with significant effects on the territory and on the economies of both Governments and private industries.

In Italy, over the past three months, we have been repeatedly hit by unprecedented climatic events, which have caused serious flooding and devastation, and brought the infrastructures and the economies of large, highly developed regions to their knees.

During the same period, also Venice suffered an unusually large number of 'high water' episodes, with an absolutely exceptional and anomalous 'peak' that flooded 90% of the city.

The climate changes we are experiencing were predicted and described in the early 'eighties, when scientists launched the first alarms concerning the possible relations between increased atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide produced by greenhouse gas emissions, and changes in the temperature.

In 1992, on the basis of still uncertain forecasts concerning possible future climate scenarios, the Convention on Climate Change was signed by representatives of the international community. Although convinced of the importance of this Convention, many countries were nevertheless in considerable doubt as to the real climatic risks connected to the increased greenhouse gas emissions.

In December 1995 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change met in Rome, where it approved the Second Report on the world climate which acknowledged the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on the ongoing climate changes.

In December 1997 we approved the Kyoto Protocol, intended to give material shape and a definite time schedule to commitments to reduce gas emissions.

Three years later, well in advance of the time predicted in the early 'nineties, we are experiencing the disastrous effects of climate change.

Nevertheless it is apparent that, despite all commitments and solemn declarations, polluting emissions are still on the increase.

And advance information concerning the figures to be published in the Third Report on the world climate, to be adopted by the Intergovernmental Panel in 2001, indicates a worsening of the 1995 forecasts concerning temperature increases, rising sea level and the intensification of extreme climatic events: according to the Panel the extent of this aggravation is directly related to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and in any case the increased emissions of the past decade will have considerable effects in the next few years.

In the light of these data and forecasts I consider that it is a matter of great concern for us that such a delay has arisen and that there is such a wide gap between the goals we have to achieve and the decisions that our governments have so far taken, and here I am obviously referring to Annex 1 countries.

As the climate changes and we suffer the consequences, and while the scientific predictions concerning the future climate arouse widespread alarm, our reaction, in the face of such an immense problem, seems to be hampered by incomprehensible delays and uncertainties.

If we consider our scientists' forecasts and evaluations, climate change should be given priority attention and be treated as our major challenge: the effects of climate change are capable of upsetting all the social development and economic growth forecasts made for our countries, as well as for the developing countries, not only because repairing the damage requires increasingly vast resources but also because food security and water supplies are being jeopardized, as well as the security of coastal areas in which over 50% of the world's population and activities are concentrated.

And yet it cannot be taken for granted, as should be the case, that this Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention will open the process towards a serious ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. We cannot allow ourselves any further delays, we cannot allow ourselves any further hesitation or indeed to fail. The emergency is a real one and our response must be proportioned to these great transformations.

Italy wants to draw the attention of COP6 to the urgent need to reach an agreement that will allow the Kyoto Protocol to enter into force by the end of 2002.

Since the coming into force of the Protocol is a prerequisite for coordinated actions by all the developed countries to start at national and international level programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without causing any economic distortions.

And the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is the priority objective: there must be no uncertainty on this point because the data and forecasts of the Scientific Panel on Climate Change have now clearly indicated that the reduction objectives set by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 must be updated, and that new commitments will be required in order to reduce emissions and limit the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration by the end of the century that has just begun.

And I want to make it quite clear: without well-defined commitments and concrete actions taken to reduce emissions, the use of sinks and the trading of emission permits cannot be considered as adequate responses to the challenge of climate change.

It is therefore necessary as soon as possible to get the processes of transformation under way as regards both energy and industrial strategies, and production and consumption patterns, in order to guarantee the gradual reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions in the medium-long term (between 2012 and 2040).

The priority accorded to reduction measures requires that industrialized countries adopt a concrete and quantifiable commitment: 'domestic actions' should make up at least half the effort needed to achieve the emissions reduction objectives, while cooperation programmes within the framework of the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation should allow the remaining 50% to be provided for.

We are aware of the objections to these indications: the USA, Japan, Canada and Australia have drawn attention to the fact that climate change is a global phenomenon and so every reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will be effective regardless of whereabouts in the world it is actually implemented.

These countries stress that the reduction of emissions in the internal market entails high marginal costs, while the replacement with new and efficient technologies of production plants and obsolete systems of energy use in the developing countries and in countries in transition could, for the same level of resources deployment, ensure significantly higher reductions than those achievable through the national programmes implemented in the developed countries alone.

With regard to these observations, I wonder how feasible it really is to envisage employing the best and most efficient technologies to developing countries or countries with economies in transition, thereby excluding the internal markets of the more developed countries - I fail to grasp the economic logic behind this kind of "negative protectionism".

It is no coincidence that, in these very days, a cartel formed by the largest world energy and industrial corporations announced it would voluntarily undertake to pursue the development on all markets of the best and most efficient production and consumption technologies and practices.

And the evaluations made by many private and public research institutes all point to the fact that the 50% limit is very close to the 'natural' point of market equilibrium between domestic actions and the use of the mechanisms.

Mr Chairman,

the commitment of the more developed countries to reducing emissions must be accompanied by an equally committed effort of cooperation with the developing countries both to extend the use of better and more efficient technologies and to help the least developed countries that are more vulnerable to the disastrous effects of climate change.

Consequently, the projects to be included in the CDM must be unequivocally oriented towards developing renewable sources, energy efficiency and energy saving in all uses. On the other hand, projects involving the use of nuclear energy or of conventional, non efficient technologies should be excluded.

It is with this in mind, on the occasion of the forthcoming meeting of Heads of State and Government of the G8 countries to be held in Italy in July 2001, that a package of proposals will be presented concerning the sustainable-cost transfer of more efficient renewable sources and energy technologies to the developing countries.

I also wish to emphasize that we consider it just and important to dedicate a part of the economic benefits deriving from CDM projects to the least developed countries, which are more exposed to the risk of damage caused by extreme climatic events.

Lastly, Italy is willing to consider the possibility of guaranteeing financial assistance, additional to the resources made available through the CDM, to implement with public funds local initiatives in developing countries aimed at limiting greenhouse gas emissions and curbing the effects of climate change.

To this end the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility and the 'reorientation' of World Bank funding will be of great importance.

In conclusion, I would like once again to draw attention to the great responsibility of COP6 with regard to the future of our planet and the living conditions of future generations.

It is not at all rhetorical to say we have a historic responsibility that we cannot afford to shirk.