



**STATEMENT BY MR. JAN PEETERS, STATE SECRETARY FOR
SECURITY SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND ENVIRONMENT OF
BELGIUM,**

**TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
KYOTO, 9 DECEMBER 1997**

Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to join in the remarks made by my colleague, Mr. Lahure, who spoke yesterday on behalf of the European Union and its member states. My country strongly endorses the positions taken by the European Union at this conference.

This week, we have to adopt legally binding commitments by the industrialised countries, who bear the historic responsibility for the current high concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The convention itself requires them to take the lead by reducing their emissions. This is a matter of justice and equity, to which my country fully subscribes. The capacity of the earth's atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gases is limited and, ultimately, we must find a way of achieving a more equitable sharing of this capacity between countries of North and South. We, political leaders of the industrialised world, will lose credibility in this matter, if we fail to reach a meaningful agreement at the end of this conference.

People everywhere want a better quality of life, which cannot be achieved merely by economic growth. But we understand that we cannot expect countries in which basic human needs are not yet adequately met to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions as long as the wealthiest and least energy-efficient countries take no effective action themselves.

We must therefore adopt targets for emission reductions which are not only realistic, but also transparent. Both in the calculation of the target itself, and in the way in which they are to be achieved. The worst possible outcome of this conference would be a protocol which appears ambitious but in reality creates many different loopholes which will allow a continued increase of the emissions of Annex I countries.

Belgium, as a country which exports 70 % of its production to the rest of the world, is a strong proponent of co-ordinated policies and measures. These policies would reinforce the actions we undertake nationally, and would also diminish the opposition against them. We support a market-oriented approach, but also recognise that markets can and must be oriented by economic instruments and fiscal measures which provide real incentives for increased energy efficiency and environmental responsibility. Governments must play their role, to ensure that markets give the right signals to producers and consumers.

Mr. Chairman, in reality we -- in the North -- are all countries in transition. We must all achieve a transition from unsustainable modes of production and consumption to a sustainable way of life. At the end of this century, we must shift to a new model of social and economic development. One of the key elements of this model should be a new energy policy, which greatly increases the energy efficiency of our economies. Through such action, we will show that it is possible to increase the level of development of all people in the world, and that quality of life will not be diminished, but increased by a voluntarist approach to the problem of climate change.

Mr. Chairman, our population -- our voters -- have a legitimate desire for economic well-being and economic security. But they also want environmental security and a better quality of life for their children and their children's children. We will have to deliver both at this conference. It will only be a first step for the protection of our atmosphere. But the first step, like the first step of a child, is the most important one.

For policy-makers there cannot be a more rewarding task than to work for the well-being of the generations to come.