

*Republic of Colombia*  
*Statement by the Minister of the Environment of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Juan Mayr Maldonado*  
*Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change*  
*Buenos Aires, November 12, 1998*

*Madam President, Your Excellencies, honorable delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is an honor for me and my delegation to be in the beautiful city of Buenos Aires and to participate at the Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

At the conclusion of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, we made significant progress on the Framework Convention on Climate Change, because quantified emission limitation and reduction objectives were set for the Annex I countries that are responsible for the greatest historical contributions to global warming and for the damage that huge stock of emissions is now causing.

Colombia, whose historical emissions are insignificant and whose current emissions are responsible for only 0.3% of the global emissions of carbon dioxide, is highly vulnerable to Climate Change. In less than 30 years, our principal ice caps will disappear from our mountain ranges. Our principal high altitude Páramos, which are our main sources of fresh water and which are habitat to numerous endemic species, will be seriously degraded, leading to serious social, economic and environmental disruptions.

Climactic phenomena such as El Niño and La Niña have become more acute and frequent, causing greater damage to our society and economy, and our response capacity is being overwhelmed. Our indigenous, afro-american and peasant communities feel the brunt of climate change because their livelihood depends on coexistence with fragile regional ecosystems. Our tropical, coastal and Andean ecosystems, home to 10% of global biodiversity, are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

In order to face the threats of global warming, we must work effectively on two fronts: quantifiable reductions of greenhouse gas emissions must be made, and we must sequester the maximum amount of gasses possible through adequate management and conservation of all types of forests. Rapidly growing tropical forests have been proven to capture the greatest amount of GHGs. These measures must be undertaken on a world scale as soon as possible. We cannot delay implementation of GHG mitigation measures any longer.

With respect to emissions reductions, Colombia as a developing country will not take on international voluntary commitments within the current framework because the nations that have generated the problem over the last hundred years have not undertaken commitments, which adequately reflect the damage that their historical emissions are now causing. Our relatively small economy has not contributed to the problem historically, and our society deserves the right to grow and develop economically without unfairly structured constraints.

The right of developing countries to develop in a sustainable way, free of unjust emissions commitments, was recognized by the Framework Convention On Climate Change through the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and also by the Berlin Mandate, according to which, developing countries are not to take on these voluntary commitments.

Additionally, our trade balance will be affected by the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, considering that it depends significantly on the export of fossil fuels. According to article 4.8 of the

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UNFCCC, the parties will adopt measures to compensate environmentally vulnerable countries like Colombia and take on measures to mitigate negative effects that these policies will have on exports and development.

We must defend the role of forests in the clean development mechanism. Not only will forests contribute significantly to the reduction of the global CO<sub>2</sub> stock, good forest management will generate a host of benefits that greatly contribute to the development and well being of our countries. Forests are key to the conservation of precious tropical biological diversity as well as to the improvement in fresh water supplies and erosion control. Madam President, we must not ignore the important opportunities represented by forests in the CDM.

The reduction of Greenhouse gas emissions, as well as sustainable development, are high priorities for Colombia, and we firmly believe that the CLEAN DEVELOPMENT MECHANISM will be a valuable tool for obtaining these objectives. Given its great potential, this mechanism must be operationalized as soon as possible. This can be done by establishing an interim phase for its use that would stimulate investment in desirable projects now, even before entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, based on the guarantee of full credit for early emissions reductions when the protocol finally comes into force. We must reward those investors that are willing to undertake projects that meet accepted criteria.

Guaranteeing credit for early investment will lower the risk of undertaking these projects, and will permit both investors and host countries to gain valuable experience in the design, implementation and operation of the clean development mechanism. This will promote our common environmental and social goals now, instead of waiting for years, which could represent a very high opportunity cost for all stakeholders involved.

Madam President, in addition to minimizing the transactions and operations costs of the CDM, other guiding principles must be equity, equality, transparency and agility. The emission reduction credits generated by the CDM must be homogeneous and fully fungible on international capital markets. We must maintain a window of opportunity open for traditional international cooperation to fund those projects that in the free market may not receive funding under normal circumstances.

Madam Chair, although we consider that this conference of the parties has made some progress by initiating a discussion on the work program, the progress has been severely limited with respect to the expectations that the entire world had for this meeting. Our own expectations included the initiation of substantive discussions on the design and operation of the clean development mechanism, as well as the discussion of guidelines for the design of projects to be developed under the CDM. For this reason, we consider it necessary for the COP to adopt decisions expedite the implementation of the CDM. In our opinion, the best alternative for this is the establishment of an interim phase of operation for this valuable mechanism.

Speaking for myself, our delegation and our dedicated staff of environmental professionals at home in Colombia, we are willing to go to work inter-sessionally with interested parties within the framework of the convention to make real progress on the adequate design of the CDM, in this way promoting the early achievement of UNFCCC objectives.

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We cannot close without expressing our profound sentiments of condolence for our Central American brothers and sisters, who have been devastated by the severe climatic phenomena of recent days. We share in their tragedy and pledge full support for their people.

In closing, allow me to reiterate, on behalf of the people and government of Colombia, our invitation to attend the Conference of Plenipotentiaries to adopt the Biosafety Protocol, which will take place in Cartagena de Indias at the beginning of next year.

Thank you, Madam President.