

PLENARY STATEMENT

BY THE STATE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA**

**AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE
CHANGE**

KYOTO, 8-10 DECEMBER 1997

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Latvia, it is a great honour for me to address the third session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Mr. President: Our task at this historical conference on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is to try and agree on the way for international cooperative initiatives aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions which are one of the main reasons for global climate change. Coordination of our activities is of great importance and every country should take responsibility, and actively participate in finding the solution to these problems in order to reach the goals of sustainable development set up at the Rio Earth Summit Conference.

Climate change, resulting from global warming, is one of the most important and yet most complex problems on the global environmental agenda.

Mr. President: Integration into EU is one of the driving policy goals of our Government. It is our firm conviction that Latvia should and will move towards environmentally sound and sustainable development. Latvia has stated this in its policy documents such as, for example the Government's Declaration and the Environmental Protection Policy Plan. These are not merely statements, but are at present being implemented.

Latvia is ready to enforce the identified EU goals regarding interruption of global climate change.

It is a complicated process - both politically and economically - to reach these goals, but in the name of sustainable development we have to find resources and ways to accomplish our plans. The real opportunity for Latvia to achieve these goals is only through the joint efforts of all European countries. Obligatory preconditions for this purpose will be the international cooperation, support, joint initiatives and harmonized legislation as well as public awareness and understanding of the current problems.

During the last six years Latvia has been undergoing the transition process to a market economy as well as integration into Europe. As an associated country to the European Union it has stated its objective to join the European Union in the next years.

Mr. President: During the period 1990-1996 greenhouse gas emissions decreased considerably as a result of the restructuring of the economy including the replacement of obsolete production methods with modern, environmentally sound technology, particularly in the energy sector in order to promote the use of renewable energy resources and energy conservation measures. Project-oriented

environmental activities are started in Latvia. These activities are supported by EU PHARE, donor countries, particularly Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Netherlands, and co-operated by World Bank, GEF and other international financial organizations.

Out of the entire territory of Latvia 44 percent is covered by forests thus defining Latvia as a significant oxygen donor in terms of our community. Concerning forestry, Latvia considers her resources as a national asset and the Government defines sustainable forestry as one of its highest priorities.

Mr. President: Latvia has fulfilled the commitments of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and will endeavor to implement international treaties honestly. The delegation from Latvia is in position to support commitments for further reduction of aggregate anthropogenic carbon dioxide equivalent emissions of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide at least 10 percent for all Annex I countries until 2010. The commitments for reduction of emissions of other greenhouse gases would be adopted in Buenos Aires during COP4.

Envisaged reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should be environmentally, economically and politically reasonable and feasible. Annex I countries should lead the process of actual reductions of greenhouse gas emissions after 2000. Developing countries would demonstrate political will to maintain the spirit of Rio de Janeiro and Berlin and really support the process started in 1992.

Mr. President: Let us join forces to start an effective process for global climate protection on a world-wide level. We expect that the first step will be settlement of central problems and contradictions to adopt the Kyoto protocol.

With respect to future policies and measures for effective climate protection Latvia fully intends to support new initiatives and implementation mechanisms of, not only unilateral, but harmonized international and global measures as well, including joint implementation, emission trading and global tax on aviation fuel.

We wish to assure you that Latvia make very serious efforts to support, co-operate and comply with the declared objectives leading to the rapid reduction of greenhouse gas emissions leading to a sustainable development.

I would like to express my own and my delegation's gratitude to the Government of Japan for the kind hospitality and for the efficient organization of this Conference. I thank also the secretariat for the valuable work in organizing the Conference and preparing indeed the necessary documentation.

Thank you, Mr. President.