

**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 FORTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF  
PARTIES**

**TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION  
ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**BUENOS AIRES, 12<sup>th</sup> OF NOVEMBER 1998**

*Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I have the honour to address this prominent Conference and to convey the greetings and good wishes of the Republic of Latvia to our hosts, the Government and the people of Argentina, as well as to the citizens of Buenos Aires for their hospitality and excellent organisation of this Conference. Let me offer congratulations to you, *Madame President*, and to your colleagues in the Bureau for election. I extend my gratitude also to the Secretariat for the efficient work in preparing the documentation for this Conference.

*Madam President:* For the last seven years, Latvia has been undergoing a processed approach towards the development of a market economy. This process is associated with integration into international and European structures. The priority of our Government in relation to foreign policy, is integration into the European Union. The development of the national economy in Latvia is successful, and is characterised by low inflation rate, complete privatisation, stable currency, non-deficit budget, stable growth of Gross Domestic Product, increasing levels of investments and active efforts in the harmonisation of legislation to EU requirements. Also, Latvia is now a member of the World Trade Organisation.

A program-oriented, policy implementation process, in all branches of the national economy is underway in Latvia. This process is carried out by means of technical assistance and co-financing from supporting countries, international organisations and funds. Latvia chose such a program-oriented approach to implement environmental policy in the most effective way.

From 1992 Latvia, as an Annex I Party, has actively participated in the international process for Climate Change and has implemented the provisions of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The main climate change related policies and measures, realised and envisaged during the last years are those associated with increases in energy efficiency, energy saving, promotion of the use of renewable energy resources and conservation measures, and improvement of waste management systems. Currently, projects are being implemented in Latvia involving heat energy conservation in buildings. These include the use of local energy resources, particularly the use of wood fuel, reconstruction of small hydro power plants and improvement of separate waste collection and disposal system by the recovery of biogas.

Latvia signed the Kyoto Protocol in November, 1998. Latvia is fully committed to fulfilling her obligations under the Convention and implementing those of the

Kyoto Protocol. Elaboration of the first Climate Change Mitigation Policy Plan and the second National Communication document were completed at the beginning of 1998. These climate protection documents contain an assessment of the current situation in the country and give consideration to the possibilities for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. They also address issues relating to increases in carbon dioxide sequestration in accordance with the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol objectives.

*Madam President:* Latvia strongly supports the concept of the Buenos Aires Work Plan of the Kyoto Protocol, as presented by Austria on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, and understands the necessity for it to be elaborated and adopted before the year 2000. The proposed Work Plan would be valuable to Latvia for constructive planning of climate change domestic policies and measures. Also for institutional strengthening involving the implementation of flexible mechanisms, capacity building and international co-ordination of all actions towards greenhouse gas mitigation to fulfil the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. Participation in the negotiating process of the Work Plan will afford a welcome opportunity to incorporate all the specific needs and obligations of developing, small economies and the transition country Parties, including Latvia.

The level of active involvement, of developing countries, to combat climate change, will likely be a problem in the future. At present, however, Annex I Parties should meet their obligations to the Convention while at the same time intensify negotiations on the development and elaboration of specific modalities, rules and guidelines for Joint Implementation, Clean Development Mechanisms, Emission Trading as well as for co-operative policies and measures and compliance management. The Latvian delegation agrees that the use of the flexible mechanisms will be more effective if a common understanding and consensus on outstanding issues is reached. Despite supporting the application of flexible mechanisms our opinion is that the main progress in greenhouse gas emission reduction should be achieved domestically. We consider the Joint Implementation, Clean Development Mechanism and Emission Trading as supplemental to domestic actions.

Latvia is ready to share the experience gained during the experimental phase of project-oriented environmental activities, in particular activities implemented jointly, for practical elaboration of efficient auditing, verification and accountability to implement the flexible mechanisms.

*Madam President:* Latvia is interested in a successful outcome of this Conference and we support all the incentives of the Parties towards a solution of central problems. The initiatives of the European Community and its Member States form a sound basis for avoiding contradictions during the negotiating process and for facilitating a common approach. The delegation from Latvia believes that during this important meeting, substantial progress on unsolved critical issues will be reached by the common efforts of all Parties.

Thank you, *Madam President.*