

Canada Country Statement
The Honourable Christine Stewart
Minister of the Environment for Canada
Kyoto, Japan, December 8, 1997

Mr. Chairman, honourable ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, let me say how honoured I am to be here on behalf of all Canadians to express our views on climate change.

Here in Kyoto, Ministers are addressing one of the greatest environmental and economic challenges of the century. As Ministers, and as global citizens, it is our duty to prevent irreparable harm to the environment. This means concluding a Protocol that is environmentally responsible, economically realistic and internationally equitable.

Canadians understand the threat of climate change all too well. As a northern country, with a resource-dependent economy, Canada is especially vulnerable to unchecked climate change. Scientific studies suggest that climate change could result in serious consequences for our environment, our economy, our society and our way of life.

That is why we are proposing reductions for Annex I countries that go beyond stabilization, and set targets of a three percent reduction in the commitment period of 2008 to 2012 and a further five per cent reduction in the period of 2013 to 2017.

Canada seeks an agreement that takes national circumstances into account and respects equivalency of effort. This is important to us because Canada is a country with a resource-intensive economy, a fast-growing population, a very low population density, extreme climatic conditions and great distances. We will need flexibility to adjust, step by step, to the changes that will be required to reduce emissions.

We recognize that priority needs to be placed on domestic reductions. At the same time, we are seeking a Protocol package that includes flexibility measures so that we can reduce our emissions as cost effectively as possible.

We are seeking:

- comprehensive coverage that includes six gases, along with all anthropogenic sources and sinks;
- trading of greenhouse gas permits as a cost-effective way of reducing emissions;

- joint implementation projects with shared credit that acknowledges the contribution of both developed and developing nations in reducing emissions and stimulating technology transfer; and
- other options, including recognition for exports of energy with low carbon content, that allow importing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote alternative, cleaner sources of energy.

Climate change is a global problem that requires a global solution. Canada recognizes that most of the accumulated emissions in the atmosphere came from developed countries. It is entirely appropriate therefore that we should go first.

At the same time, the data show that emissions from developing countries are growing. Within the time frame foreseen for this Protocol, these emissions will likely exceed those of developed countries. An outcome in Kyoto that does not provide for their participation in the search for a solution to climate change cannot be effective. Canada therefore supports a sequencing of obligations, with developing countries joining in the effort when developed countries have demonstrated real progress in reducing their emissions.

Canada is committed to working with developing nations to obtain the technologies they need to achieve economic growth while contributing to the global effort to reduce emissions. This is line with Canada's commitment to sustainable development at home and abroad.

All over the world, addressing climate change will require major changes in the way we produce energy, transport people and goods, and shelter our people. My colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources Canada, who is here with me at this conference, is leading Canada's efforts to encourage energy efficiency and innovation, the use of alternative energy sources and the development of new energy technologies.

We are pleased to be joined here in Kyoto by representatives from the provinces and territories, with whom we will work in partnership, on a step-by-step basis, to develop and implement our climate change strategy. On the international front, we will work with them and all of you to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally.

We are at a decisive point here in Kyoto. I believe we can achieve a global solution to climate change. When I return to Canada, I want my children and grandchildren to be proud of what we have achieved together in Kyoto. We have a responsibility to all the children of the world. We do not want to fail them. Rather, let them remember we acted with courage.