

Statement of Alden Meyer, Union of Concerned Scientists  
to the COP 10 Closing Plenary, December 17, 2004, Buenos Aires

Thank you for this opportunity to address you on behalf on the Climate Action Network.

The message from the world's climate scientists is clear: global warming is real, its impacts are increasingly evident, and substantial emissions reductions are needed to avoid dangerous interference with the climate system. CAN believes that urgent action must be taken to preserve our ability to limit overall warming to under 2 degrees Celsius.

We are now celebrating the imminent entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. While just a first step, this achievement is already affecting markets and the way business thinks about greenhouse gas emissions. This is a major success. To maintain this momentum, binding caps on emissions must continue and deepen after 2012.

My own country, the United States, has not been playing a constructive role in this process. There are many encouraging actions by American states, cities and businesses that are reducing emissions and laying the groundwork for eventual national action. But the Bush administration opposes even constructive discussions \* much less negotiations \* on the post-2012 framework for international action. Clearly, the rest of the world must move ahead without the United States \* and Australia \* at least for now.

We need a multi-track process for the next round of negotiations. The first track should elaborate further emissions reduction commitments by industrialized countries after 2012. A second "decarbonization" track should focus on achieving much more rapid deployment of clean technologies to achieve developing countries' sustainable development objectives, while restraining their emissions of greenhouse gases. A third "adaptation" track should aim to substantially increase the capacity of developing countries to cope with the impacts of climate change. A negotiating mandate that includes all these tracks is the essential task for the next meeting of the parties in late 2005.

North-South collaboration is key in this process. When it comes to global warming, we are all passengers in a boat on a storm-tossed sea. We can no longer afford to point fingers at each other and say "your end of the boat is sinking." We all are in this together.

Fortunately, we have the energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies needed to make substantial emissions reductions in the years ahead. What's needed is the political will to deploy these technologies in a much more aggressive way. By sending a clear market signal, the mandatory cap-and-trade approach of the Kyoto Protocol is a key element in making this happen. Other policies, such as standards and incentives, are also important in this regard.

Due to their past emissions, industrialized countries bear the moral and legal responsibility for the impacts of climate change. These countries continue to spend tens of billions of dollars each year subsidizing fossil fuel production, yet only hundreds of millions per year are now pledged to help developing countries deal with the impacts caused by the use of these fuels. As a recent UNEP Finance Initiatives study states, "the increasing frequency of severe climatic events, coupled with social trends, has the potential to stress insurers, reinsurers and banks to the point of impaired viability or even insolvency." Over the next decade, the study estimates, economic losses due to natural disasters could reach \$150 billion a year. Clearly, substantially more impact assistance is needed, and soon.

Let me end on a personal note. My wife and nine-year-old daughter Johanna are with me here today. I wonder what to tell Johanna about these negotiations, and their impact on her future. Will we move quickly enough to head off the worst impacts of climate change? Or will we allow short-term economic interests and divisions among countries to block the way forward? The children of the world are truly in your hands. I hope you will choose wisely.