



Resolution 987 (1992)¹

Climate change

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly is aware of the new challenges facing our planet. It has urged for action in [Resolution 919 \(1989\)](#) on the destruction of tropical forests -Causes and remedies, [Resolution 926 \(1989\)](#) on the danger of climatic changes and the protection of the ozone layer, [Recommendation 1130 \(1990\)](#) on the formulation of a European charter and a European convention on environmental protection and sustainable development, and [Recommendation 1140 \(1991\)](#) on global environmental change and the role of science and democracy.
2. There is now consensus among the large majority of environmental experts that climate change is the most serious one of these challenges. For limiting the advancement of climate change the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was accepted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development organised by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Brazil in June 1992.
3. If emissions of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons, nitrous oxide) resulting from human activities continue at the present level, the global mean temperature will increase by 2oC in forty years and by 4oC before the end of the next century, causing the extinction of many species, advanced desertification and a rise in sea level. It will lead to serious problems in agricultural production and in coastal cities and states.
4. With such perspectives ahead it is not possible to postpone action and wait for full scientific proof of climate change. Experts point out that reductions of emissions now are more effective than even larger reductions made later. Early action will serve as an "insurance policy" against potential disasters. The reduction of greenhouse gases will also help to solve other environmental problems such as acid rain, particle emissions and ozone layer depletion.
5. Climate change is a global problem concerning the whole planet. Emissions in any country will add to the total atmospheric content of greenhouse gases; hence, global action is necessary.
6. The main responsibility for reducing emissions lies with the industrialised countries which at present are the prime producers of emissions. However, the developing countries will represent an increasingly significant percentage of global emissions. Their emissions will grow and may need to grow in order to meet with their requirements for development.
7. The most important greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, is mainly caused by production and use of energy by fossil fuels. The target is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions globally by over 60%. The allowed average will then be 0,2 tonnes per capita (assuming world population of 10 thousand million), as compared to the present value of 3 to 5 tonnes in many industrialised countries. The world energy system is so large and energy plays such an important role in economic well-being that a noticeable reduction of carbon dioxide emissions will be difficult to achieve quickly. Hence, the reduction must be started immediately. The industrialised countries must cut emissions as fast as possible so as to allow developing countries to have larger emissions than at present.

1. Assembly debate on 1 October 1992 (13th Sitting), (see [Doc. 6550](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology, Rapporteur: Mr Tiuri). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 October 1992 (13th sitting).



8. Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are important greenhouse gases, but fortunately most countries are already reducing their emissions in order to respect the international agreement for ozone layer protection. Sources of other greenhouse gases (methane, nitrous oxide) are diverse and not yet well known. More research and monitoring are needed to assess procedures aimed at controlling them.

9. The Assembly is persuaded that there exists no simple solution to the problem of climate change. A combination of all possible policy instruments is needed, although in spite of these, global warming can still reach dangerous levels. Several responses will need to be considered including prevention strategies (reducing emissions), compensation strategies (reforestation) and socio-cultural strategies (adapting to new conditions).

10. In the light of the above-mentioned, the Assembly calls on member states to implement the following policy responses to climate change:

10.1. Encourage international co-operation and legal instruments: member states should give their full political, scientific and technical support to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to the 1990 level must be achieved before the year 2000 by all industrial countries. The agreement on future additional reductions by over 60% must be negotiated as soon as possible.

10.2. Stabilise carbon dioxide emissions at their 1990 level in 2000: the final target is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions globally by over 60%. A realistic but ambitious goal would be to limit carbon dioxide emissions to their 1990 level in 2000 and cut them by more than 30% by 2025. Realising this objective implies conserving energy, improving energy efficiency and switching to energy production systems causing less or no carbon dioxide emissions.

10.3. Review and adjust energy policies: especially regarding efficient energy use, transmission of electric energy and the promotion of renewable sources of energy.

10.4. Review and adjust energy programmes: at present the official energy programmes of many member states indicate a growth of carbon dioxide emissions by some 20% by 2000. According to the programmes, energy use per capita will stay almost constant but this will be achieved by using more electricity produced with fossil fuels which cause increased emissions. On the other hand several member states have announced plans to stabilise emissions by 2000 and cut them by 20% to 30% by 2005. The programmes must be checked, adjusted and co-ordinated so as to achieve the desired reduction. The energy programmes of developing countries must also be reviewed, in order to achieve a real global view of emission rates.

10.5. Promote energy conservation and energy efficiency: in the long term, there is a great technical potential, to reduce emissions by conserving energy and by producing and using energy more efficiently. With the promotion of research and development, together with appropriate policies, in the next two decades this rate could reach 25% in transport, 50% in homes and offices, and 30% or more in industry. However, these savings will be partly cancelled owing to the increasing use of energy and to the growing world population. Taxation on carbon dioxide emissions can be one way to promote savings. If applied, taxes should be globally agreed in order not to distort world trade.

10.6. Promote energy production methods and fossil fuels emitting less carbon dioxide: emissions from fossil fuel plants can be reduced by switching to fossil fuels producing less carbon dioxide (in decreasing order of emissions: peat, coal, oil, gas) and by applying new combined cycle technologies.

10.7. Review development of nuclear power in the light of waste and safety problems: promotion and development of nuclear power is not advisable as long as problems connected with nuclear waste and security are not solved. Because of transboundary effects, it is essential that governments co-operate to develop internationally agreed codes of practice covering technical, economic, social, health and environmental components of existing nuclear energy policy. In particular, it is necessary to reach international agreements to prevent accidents in nuclear power plants as a result of civil wars, etc.

10.8. Promote research on clean energy and nuclear safety: this will require research and development into environmentally sound and economically viable alternatives to nuclear power, such as renewable energy, as well as into means of increasing the safety of nuclear energy.

10.9. Promote research, development and demonstration of renewable and other sustainable energy sources: the Assembly has adopted an extensive text on renewable energy sources (see [Resolution 974 \(1991\)](#)). Considerable inertia in the world energy system, due to its magnitude and investments, makes fast changes difficult, but with strong policy backing in the research, development and

demonstration phase, the share of these energy sources could exceed 10% of world commercial energy needs during the first decades of the next century. Research on fuel cells and fusion energy should also be promoted.

10.10. Review aid and technology transfer programmes to developing countries: special new assistance, particularly financial assistance, should be provided to developing countries for modernisation of power plants, for construction of more efficient fossil fuel plants and for the development of renewable energy sources. Forestry projects should be supported. Converting part of the debt into payments towards these efforts should also be considered. In former central and eastern European socialist countries there is great potential for saving energy and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by technology transfer. The European Energy Charter is an important step in the right direction in utilising large energy sources with environmentally friendly technology.

10.11. Promote reforestation and care of forests: about 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions are due to the deforestation of some 17 million hectares every year. Aid programmes to stop deforestation in developing countries and to help reforestation will significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Member states should engage in international action for saving the rain forest and other forests in tropical regions. In industrial countries the proper management of forests can make them carbon dioxide "sinks" during the next decades.

10.12. Encourage research into the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by road traffic: development of the production of vehicles and fuels which limit carbon dioxide emissions must be promoted. Structural measures to meet the needs of mobility in society with a view to limiting carbon dioxide emissions must also be taken.

10.13. Promote international monitoring and co-ordination on climate change issues: it is high time for governments to consider seriously creating a global climate observing system, designed to meet the needs of climate change detection and response monitoring.

10.14. Enhance scientific research: scientific research on climate and on climate change and its effects must be encouraged. Data acquisition, collection and analysis must be vigorously supported. The use of remote sensing satellites should be extended and co-ordinated. Dialogue within and between involved scientific disciplines must be stimulated in order to reorientate scientists to working in a more global perspective.

10.15. Improve information transfer to policy-makers: given the complex relationship between greenhouse gases, climate, environment, technology and economy, it is an absolute necessity that policy-makers obtain the best and most up-to-date scientific data. The success of future policy responses in controlling climate change will depend on a continuous dialogue between scientists and policy-makers.