Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1243 (2001)[1]

Kyoto Protocol on climate change: need for committed international solidarity

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Climate change is one of the gravest challenges to sustainable development, the health and well-being of humanity and the global economy, and necessitates a joint, responsible and solidarity-based response from the international community.

2. Being aware of the importance of the issue at stake, the international community has, in the framework of the United Nations, drawn up a Framework Convention on Climate Change,[2]which is aimed at stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at safe levels. Over 180 states have so far become parties to this convention.

3. The Kyoto Protocol, signed in 1997, sets specific objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the industrialised countries that produce the greatest quantities of such gas. So far eighty-four states have signed the protocol, including thirty-four Council of Europe member states.

4. The Assembly regrets that only thirty-three of the parties to the protocol have ratified it to date, and that only four member countries of the Council of Europe[3]have done so and considers that it is necessary to follow with attention the ratification and, in due course, the implementation of the protocol.

5. The states signatory to the Kyoto Protocol are currently negotiating the mechanisms for its application, which should enable it to be ratified and to come into force by the end of 2002. The next conference of parties will be held in Bonn in July 2001.

6. The Assembly welcomes the fact that even before the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol several countries, particularly in Europe, have been actively endeavouring to approximate to the objectives set for them. Moreover, the European Union has introduced a special programme to help its member states to comply with the Kyoto objectives.

7. In this connection, the Assembly is particularly disappointed and concerned by recent statements from American officials, including President George W. Bush, to the effect that the United States of America, Observer state with the Council of Europe, is no longer intending to comply with the objectives set out in the Kyoto Protocol.

8. The abandonment of the Kyoto process by the United States – the world's largest economic power, which is responsible for over 25% of all global greenhouse gas emissions while accounting for less than 5% of the world's population – undermines the whole Kyoto programme and compromises the solidarity-based efforts of the international community to prevent climate change.

9. The US decision is liable to deter other countries from making a political commitment to the objectives of the Kyoto Protocol, thus jeopardising its rapid entry into force.

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1. Assembly debate on 25 April 2001 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 9058Doc. 9058, report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Behrendt). Text adopted by the Assembly on 25 April 2001 (13th Sitting).
2. Signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) on 4 June 1992, coming into force on 21 March 1994.
3. Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia and Romania.

10. Furthermore, the renouncement by President George W. Bush's Administration of the commitments entered into by his predecessors casts doubt on the credibility of the United States as a reliable partner prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility vis-à-vis the global challenges facing humanity.

11. The Assembly attaches great importance to the Kyoto Protocol as the first concrete effort by the international community to prevent the risk of climate change and make a practical contribution to sustainable development.

12. We are all jointly responsible for ensuring that future generations can enjoy a healthy, viable environment providing equitable living and development conditions for all the inhabitants of the Earth. Committed solidarity on the part of all countries is a vital condition for achieving this.

13. Consequently, the Assembly calls on:

a. the Administration of President George W. Bush to reconsider its decision and reconfirm the commitments entered into by the United States under the Kyoto Protocol;

b. the governments and parliaments of member states of the Council of Europe to sign and/or ratify the Kyoto Protocol and to take all necessary steps to ensure its entry into force in 2002;

c. the governments of member states of the Council of Europe to exert pressure on the United States and the other Parties to encourage them to honour their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol;

d. the governments and parliaments of member states of the Council of Europe countries to initiate a campaign to increase the awareness of their citizens of the global consequences of any possible delay in the signing and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.