

G7/P8 ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING
Climate Change

OBJECTIVES:

RELEASED IN FULL

Obtain agreement on three areas:

the importance of taking a serious step in Kyoto in December, 1997;

the importance of participation from the developing world, to include binding commitments;

the need for concrete steps in technology development.

BACKGROUND

In January 1997, the United States introduced a proposal for a protocol to the Convention. The proposal set forth a comprehensive design for a new legal instrument, but did not include specific numbers for a reduction objective. The U.S. proposal is built around four factors and it is fundamental to us that all be included in the new instrument. It calls for:

- 1) binding emissions budgets or targets for developed country Parties (unlike the current Convention, which only calls for Parties to "aim" to reduce emissions – a goal few are meeting);
- 2) a medium-term focus (e.g. 2010 to 2020) rather than unrealistic, near-term (2005) objectives;
- 3) maximum flexibility for each developed country to implement its emission budget in ways that make sense in its national circumstances and are most cost-effective; and
- 4) participation by all countries, including appropriate action by developing countries (while the initial responsibility lies with developed countries, solving the problem requires that developing countries also take part, since they account for a growing proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions).

Our proposal engendered considerable discussion at the latest AGBM negotiating session (March 3-7, 1997, in Bonn), with particular skepticism directed toward our ideas on developing country participation and some of our "flexibility" proposals. Substantial diplomatic and technical work will be required to ensure that the Parties will reach agreement in Kyoto.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Alan Flanigan, Senior Reviewer

The developed countries have generated most of the greenhouse gases now in the atmosphere. The lead on taking action to reduce such emissions must, therefore, come from developed countries. Kyoto presents us with the next best chance to do this.

An increasing percentage of GHG emissions now comes from the developing world. China is already the second largest emitter, and India is the fifth. Within fifteen years, the developing countries will be creating most of the greenhouse gas emissions. Any plan to solve the problem of increased loading of GHGs must include their participation.

While it is neither politically possible nor economically realistic to have the developing world agree to reduction targets at Kyoto, it is essential that we agree both to concrete steps they can take now (consistent with the Berlin mandate), and to a future step for developing countries that includes limitations on their emissions.

Our freedom of action is artificially restrained by the current state of deployment of existing climate-friendly technology and the pace of advancement and innovation in these technologies. The G7/P8 should commit themselves to (i) increasing public funding for appropriate technology (perhaps with a specific percentage increase), (ii) the initiation of public-private partnerships in key sectors where emissions and opportunities are greatest (model is the Program for a New Generation of Vehicles [PNGV], a Federal program for the development of vastly improved automobiles), and (iii) increased efforts at technology transfer.