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Ministers Call for Action to Reduce Impacts of Global Warming

Delhi Declaration links climate change to sustainable development

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Washington – Environmental ministers and senior officials from some 170 countries meeting in New Delhi reached agreement on a final resolution that highlights the need for aid to help developing countries adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-8) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, held from October 23 to November 1, adopted the so-called Delhi Ministerial Declaration, which calls for strengthening international collaboration on climate change and addressing the issue in the broader context of sustainable development.

The declaration, focusing on ways to help developing countries adapt to climate change, urges governments to promote technological advances through research and development, increase renewable energy resources, and promote the transfer of technologies that can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming – especially carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels.

The Plan of Implementation adopted last September at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, also underlined the importance of developing cleaner technologies in key sectors such as energy, and called for greater efforts to promote technology transfer, including through the private sector.

"Significantly, in the Delhi Declaration you have built upon a number of groundbreaking achievements reached at the Johannesburg World Summit," said U.S. Under Secretary of Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, who led the U.S. delegation. "The relationship between sustainable development and climate change is an important one and its reference in the declaration is most meaningful."

U.S. Senior Climate Negotiator Harlan Watson told convention delegates that the United States is committed to a sustainable climate change policy. He said this policy is based on the "common sense idea" that economic growth is key to environmental progress, because it is growth that provides the resources for investment in clean technologies.

"We are also working to foster technological advances through research and development, investing in institutions and initiating public-private partnerships that will promote sustainable development and climate change policy," he added.

Recent climate disasters around the world, including droughts in India and floods in the



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United States and throughout Europe, have served as potent reminders of some of the expected consequences of global warming. The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted that by 2100 average global surface temperatures will be 1.4 to 5.8 degrees Celsius higher than in 1990.

The Delhi Declaration also calls for early ratification of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which commits 37 industrialized countries to reduce their overall emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases during the period 2008-2012.

"Industrialized countries have only 10 years to meet their Kyoto emissions targets – and the evidence today is that most of them still have a great deal of work to do to reduce their greenhouse gases," said Joke Waller-Hunter, the convention's executive secretary.

In March 2001, the Bush administration said that the United States would not ratify the protocol, asserting that it would hurt the U.S. economy and does not apply to developing countries. Instead, the administration has promoted a pro-growth strategy of cutting greenhouse gas emissions relative to the size of the economy. U.S. officials said the country will cut its greenhouse gas intensity, which is how much it emits per unit of economic activity, by 18 percent over the next 10 years.

For the protocol to take effect, 55 governments, including developed countries representing at least 55 percent of that group's 1990 carbon dioxide emissions, must ratify the treaty.

So far, 96 countries have ratified the protocol, including developed countries accounting for 37.4 percent of carbon dioxide emissions. Supporters hope the accord will become effective early next year once it is ratified by Russia and Canada.

One of the conference's biggest accomplishments was the adoption of operating rules for the protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), a tool to channel private sector investment into emissions reductions projects in developing countries. The mechanism offers industrialized countries credits against their Kyoto targets while promoting sustainable development. The first projects are now expected to be approved during the first quarter of 2003.

The conference also concluded three years of work on the procedures for reporting and reviewing emissions data from developed countries. The result, according to a U.N. spokesman, is an unprecedented international system for ensuring that national data on greenhouse gas emissions are comparable and credible. This is vital for safeguarding the integrity of the Kyoto agreement and promoting compliance with its emissions targets.

The meeting also provided guidance on the priorities for two new funds established last year. The Special Climate Change Fund and a least developed country fund are intended to help developing countries adapt to climate change impacts, obtain clean technologies and limit growth of their emissions.

Developed nations have already committed to provide \$410 million annually by 2005, but up to now little progress had been made on drafting guidelines for disbursement of the funds.

Delegates also agreed on improved guidelines for national communications from developing countries. Governments issue these communications on a regular basis in order to share information with others about their climate change policies and activities.

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