

Media Briefing

Friends of the Earth

21 November 2005

MONTREAL CLIMATE TALKS HOLD KEY TO SAVING THE PLANET

Friends of the Earth International to show strong presence at the UN climate negotiations

**UN Climate Change Conference
28 November to 9 December 2005
Palais des Congrès de Montréal**

Governments from 190 countries will meet in Montréal, Quebec, Canada on the 28th November for the United Nations Climate Negotiations which hold the key to future action on tackling emissions of greenhouse gases – and stabilising our fragile climate.

The 11th Conference of the Parties will be the first meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol – those countries which have signed up to the international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the period 2008-2012 - and is expected to attract high level government leaders and ministers from around the world.

The negotiations take place against a backdrop of mounting evidence that climate change is already happening around the globe. The 10 hottest years on record globally have occurred since 1991. In that same period, global sea levels have risen by about 20 cm.

Friends of the Earth International is calling on governments gathering in Montreal to agree on a firm plan for a new round of negotiations on the post 2012 commitments, with a clear timeline, starting in 2005 and running through to 2008. We want to see these negotiations build on the existing framework agreed as part of the Kyoto Protocol.

The situation is now urgent. Countries must recognise this danger and negotiate the emission reductions necessary to avoid disaster. It is expected that the US will at some point rejoin the international regime, but not while George Bush is in office. In the meantime Friends of the Earth believes that the bar for commitments must be raised, not lowered.

Friends of the Earth International Climate Campaigner Catherine Pearce said:

“The Montreal talks are crucial for achieving international action on tackling climate change. The participating countries must push for ward for urgent action and develop a process which will allow developing countries such as China and India to come on board.

“While it is of course disappointing that the world’s richest country and biggest polluter has not signed up to Kyoto, the US administration must not be allowed to hamper international action. It can only be hoped that the American administration will soon recognise how important this process is. We do not have the time or the need to begin this process all over again.”

What the science demands

Ecosystems are already showing the effects of climate change. Ice caps are disappearing from many mountain peaks; summer and autumn Arctic sea ice has thinned by up to 40 per cent in recent decades. Rising temperatures are threatening recognized “tipping points” – delicate thresholds where a slight rise in the global temperature can cause a dramatic change in the environment that itself triggers a far greater increase in global temperatures. Some recognised ‘tipping-points’ such as significant thawing of the Siberian permafrost, have already been crossed.

The current Kyoto commitments are based on modest targets for industrialized countries. But scientists and models demonstrate these modest targets are not enough to prevent dangerous climate change. Their evidence suggests that countries will need to adopt stronger agreements to curb climate change pollution, in the order of 30 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050.

Friends of the Earth International in Montréal

Friends of the Earth International will be in Montréal actively following the negotiations and calling for urgent international action from governments. We will be working with other groups, including people from the South, to show how climate change is an urgent issue that is affecting people’s every day lives in many parts of the world.

Friends of the Earth’s Climate Mosaic – The World Can’t Wait

Where: opposite the Palais des Congres, on the corner of St-Antoine Street and St. Pierre Street, next to the Intercontinental Hotel
When: From Monday 28th November.

Friends of the Earth will be creating a colourful, interactive 60m long mosaic, called The World Can’t Wait, made up of 3000 individual pictures and messages painted by thousands of people around the world, demanding action on climate change. The messages, in different languages, represent a world-wide call to action on climate change. *The Mosaic includes about 200 tiles from Ireland.*

Different events will take place around the mosaic and elsewhere in Montréal as the climate negotiations progress. People in the city will be invited to add their own contribution and messages will be updated as the talks go on. Ministers from around the world will also be invited to contribute a message and picture to the mosaic.

‘A World of Solutions’ Exhibition

Where: the Guy-Favreau Complex, Montréal
Friends of the Earth will be holding ‘paint-ins’ for people to add their contributions to the Climate Mosaic at the Complex Guy-Favreau, next to the Palais des Congres. The Complex will be transformed into an exhibition hall for the duration of the conference, themed “A world of solutions”. Many other international organisations and youth groups will be taking part.

Demonstration against Climate Change, 3 December

A demonstration against climate change on Saturday 3rd December around the world.

Friends of the Earth International will be taking part in demonstrations in Montréal and London. For more information: www.globalclimatecampaign.org/index-en.shtml

Climate debt: from concept to action

(Official side event)

Where: Palais des Congres

When: Monday 5 December: 19:30-21:00

This open session will examine current thinking around “ecological debt” and how this applies to climate change. “Ecological debt” refers to the resource overuse and consumption in Northern countries and the resulting environmental damage this brings. The paper assesses how climate debt can be best addressed, particularly in an effective international climate regime and draws together experiences of some of the affected communities in a call for climate justice.

Speakers include: Roque Pedace, Friends of the Earth Argentina, Prakash Sharma, ProPublic - Friends of the Earth Nepal, Carolina Hermann, Friends of the Earth Brazil and Stephanie Long, Friends of the Earth Australia. Chaired by Tony Juniper, Vice Chair, Friends of the Earth International.

Website blog

Daily updates on the negotiations written by our campaigners will be available on the Friends of the Earth website – see www.foe.co.uk

Background to the UN negotiations in Montreal

The Kyoto Protocol, established in 1997, came into force in February 2005. There are now 140 countries which have signed up to the treaty. The Protocol was borne from, and is firmly embedded in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, drafted and adopted in 1992. This has been signed by 189 countries worldwide. The Convention sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared global resource. Its stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The Montreal negotiations are particularly important because they represent the first opportunity for governments which have signed up to legally binding measures to meet under the Kyoto Protocol. Thirty six countries are currently bound by the Protocol, committing to mandatory targets for the period 2008-12, when the first commitment period ends. There is wide agreement that this first round of commitments will not save the climate from catastrophic change but is a base to build on for the future.

Negotiations under the Protocol automatically exclude those governments which have not yet signed up to the Protocol. These governments, which include the United States and Australia, can participate as observers but not block the negotiation process.

Issues on the Agenda

The international climate negotiations will take place from 28 November – 9 December 2005. Joint meetings of the Conference of the Parties and Meeting of the Parties will be convened during a joint high level segment from 7-9 December, attended by ministers from around the world.

Critical agenda items include compliance with and legal enforcement of the Kyoto Protocol, the capacity and role of the established funds for adaptation in developing countries, and a review of the adequacy of existing targets, including demonstrating

progress in meeting them.

This meeting also offers the first legal window, under the Kyoto Protocol, by which negotiations on the shape of the international climate regime after 2012 can proceed. Articles 3.9 and 9 of the Kyoto Protocol, require that countries begin in 2005 and 2006 to both review and amend the Protocol in preparation for the end of the first commitment period.

What can be achieved

Friends of the Earth International is calling for governments gathering in Montréal to get agreement on a clear plan to start a new round of negotiations on the post 2012 commitments, with a clear timeline starting in 2005 and running through to 2008. We want to see these negotiations to begin within the Protocol, between those countries who have signed up to Kyoto and build on its existing structure.

Friends of the Earth International believes that although the Protocol requires certain improvements and amendments to include more countries and strengthen certain provisions, it is not necessary to begin international negotiations from scratch under the Convention. The Protocol itself is based on robust, legally-binding cuts in emissions – the only solution to addressing climate change. It is important that future commitments are based on similarly legally binding targets for industrialized countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As the conclusions from the G8 Summit made very clear, the Bush Administration is not going to change its position and engage constructively in any concrete steps to tackle carbon emissions. Friends of the Earth International urges the other countries in the negotiations not to allow the multilateral process to be paralysed by the US rejection of serious joint action to reduce global emissions.

The Bush Administration does not reflect the interests of many state leaders and individuals in the US. In February, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels challenged mayors across the country to join Seattle in taking local action to reduce global warming pollution by taking on Kyoto style targets, through the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. One hundred and sixty six cities across 35 states have now signed up. A Senate resolution this summer acknowledged the threat of climate change and the need for a mandatory cap on emissions.

The international community must press on and find ways of engaging larger developing countries of which some have already started to develop national mitigation measures. Industrialised countries, responsible for most of the current levels of warming, must provide finance and technology for mitigation activities in developing countries.

Future Framework:

The international Climate Action Network has set forth a clear proposal for the post 2012 regime including more ambitious absolute and binding reduction targets for industrialised 'Annex I' countries; commitments from rapidly-developing, non-Annex I countries to advance their development goals in a sustainable manner, largely funded by the industrialized world; and increased adaptation measures for the most vulnerable countries and communities.

Any agreement to launch negotiations is not expected to include any details on types and level of commitment. But these negotiations must result in industrialized countries

making further, mandatory emission cuts, in the order of 30 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. The agreement should also include key elements such as technology transfer, land-use and forestry, adaptation and the legally binding nature of the regime.

Other international processes

The international negotiations in Montreal stand alongside other international partnerships which have recently been announced:

G8 Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy, Sustainable Development, announced at the G8 Summit on 8 July. Participating countries include – G8 countries, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, South Korea and Spain. The aim of this process is to:

- a) address the strategic challenge of transforming our energy systems to create a more secure and sustainable future
- b) monitor implementation of the commitments made in the Gleneagles Plan of Action and explore how to build on this progress
- c) share best practice between participating governments

The first meeting was held in London on 1 November 2005. Discussions were designed to be complementary to the UNFCCC. The dialogue meeting does not aim to set any expectations or outcomes. The one day meeting explored mechanisms, financial investment and co-operation between countries to accelerate the development of low carbon technologies.

Friends of the Earth has expressed concern that Tony Blair's address at the conference appeared to move away from a target-based approach to addressing climate change. While this appears to conflict with the official EU and UK positions, it also presents a false choice between targets and technology. The reality is that without both, we cannot achieve either.

The Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate Announced on 28 July, the Asia-Pacific Partnership involves Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and USA. The partnership, led by the US and Australian governments, will look to develop technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rather than having specific targets. The first meeting, originally set for November, is now due to take place in Australia in mid January. Friends of the Earth has previously queried the significance of the partnership which does not include clear targets or funding commitments and stands outside the Kyoto Protocol.