



WBGU Secretariat
Reichpietschufer 60
8th Floor
D-10785 Berlin, Germany

Tel: +49 30 263948 12
Fax: +49 30 263948 50
Email: wbgu@wbgu.de
Internet: www.wbgu.de

Number 03/03e

PRESS RELEASE

Special report – Input to the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention due on 1-12 December 2003 in Milan

Climate Protection Strategies for the 21st Century: Kyoto and Beyond

Berlin, 25 November 2003. Today, the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) submits to the federal ministers Edelgard Bulmahn (Research) and Jürgen Trittin (Environment) its new report "Climate Protection Strategies for the 21st Century: Kyoto and Beyond". In their report, the Council's scientists underscore that dangerous climate change can now only be prevented if climate protection targets are set at substantially higher levels than those agreed internationally until now. In particular, anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions must be cut globally by 45-60% by the year 2050 relative to 1990. This means that industrialized countries have to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% by 2020. Industrialized countries have committed to reducing emissions by 5% by 2012 relative to 1990.

Only 1.4°C further warming still tolerable

The scope for action to prevent dangerous climate change has continued to narrow in recent years. The Council notes that now only a further 1.4°C global warming is still tolerable. The global mean temperature has already risen by 0.6°C since the onset of industrialization. Beyond a total warming of more than 2°C (and a rate of change of more than 0.2°C per decade) dangerous climatic changes become highly probable. Without vigorous climate protection policies, this threshold will be crossed in the 21st century. By dangerous climatic changes, the Council means, for instance, growing health hazards caused by the spread of malaria, increasing harvest failure risks, mounting freshwater scarcity due to increased drought frequency, and the onset of a cold period in the Atlantic-European region as a result of the Gulf Stream shutting down.

www.wbgu.de

Shaping commitments equitably

For global climate protection policy to succeed, all countries of the world will need to participate soon. For developing countries to gradually take up emissions reduction commitments, it is essential in the view of the Council that this process is shaped in such a way that these countries can exercise their right to development. This means that, for an interim period, growth in their emissions must be permitted. At the same time, the industrialized countries must continue to reduce their share in global carbon dioxide emissions. This process, continuous for both sides, should lead to equal per-capita emissions by the year 2050.

No alternatives to the Kyoto process

Speedy ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Russia is a further precondition for climate protection policy to succeed. In view of the numerous climate change mitigation activities in a number of states of the USA, and considering the potential for economic innovation stemming from climate protection policy, it can be expected that, over the medium term, the USA will support the Kyoto process again. The Council stresses that no alternatives are in sight and that therefore all actions that call the Kyoto Protocol into question set global climate protection policy back by years and greatly hamper efforts to prevent dangerous climate impacts.

Negotiating a separate protocol for natural carbon stocks

To prevent further valuable carbon stocks being lost, there is an urgent need to contain deforestation and the associated emissions. In the opinion of the Council, the accounting procedure for biological sources and sinks of greenhouse gases agreed in the Kyoto Protocol is not suited to provide incentives to preserve the key ecosystems of relevance to climate protection. The Council therefore recommends negotiating, in addition to the Kyoto Protocol, a separate agreement on the conservation of natural carbon stocks.

Smoothing emissions trading through a Climate Central Bank

To smoothen extreme price swings on the market for emission rights and thus allay uncertainties, the Council recommends supporting emissions trading by establishing a Climate Central Bank. Reliable emissions reporting by countries is key to targeted climate change mitigation and functioning emissions trading. Consequently, only such countries whose greenhouse gas inventories meet high quality standards should be allowed to sell emission rights.

Dovetailing climate protection with global sustainability policy

To attain climate protection objectives at costs that remain low over the long term, climate protection policy needs to dovetail consistently with global structural and development policy. Convergence of living conditions between industrialized and

developing countries is an important precondition to successful global climate change mitigation policy. To this end, the Council recommends intensifying technology transfer and opening, to the greatest possible extent, markets to products from developing countries. This development process will reduce the costs of climate change mitigation over the long term and will contribute to slowing population growth.

The context of the special report

The international community will need to take key strategic decisions in international climate policy over the next years if dangerous climatic changes are still to be prevented. Negotiations on the 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol will start by 2005 at the latest if the Protocol has entered into force by then. In its present form, the effect of the Protocol is still too weak. Even if the industrialized (Annex I) states achieve their 5% emissions reduction target, the anticipated global warming would be only slightly dampened. The 2008-2012 commitment period is just the first step. Further steps must follow.

Please direct your queries to the WBGU Secretariat, Tel. +49 30 263948 12. The press release and the full report can be downloaded at www.wbgu.de.

www.wbgu.de