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Greens celebrate Kyoto Protocol first anniversary

A common statement by the Greens in the European Parliament and the European Green Party

Protect our climate

We must stop climate change - urgently. New information confirming and deepening the scientific consensus on climate change is reported almost on a daily basis; evidence of melting ice caps, drought, floods, storms, loss of animal species and the spread of disease from rapid increase of global temperature. According to scientific reports, limiting warming to + 2°C might be already too high to avoid a tipping point, leading to melting of the Greenland ice sheet and a rise in sea level of up to 7 meters with catastrophic consequences. And, so far, we are not even on track to meet the reductions needed to limit warming to 2°C.

Safe energy future

A low emission economy without nuclear risks is not a utopia. **Most of the technology is already available,** e.g. low energy houses, low-emission vehicles, efficient appliances, wind, hydro, biomass, solar and geothermal energy **-** and with the right policies and economic incentives it can be deployed faster. Efficiency "negawatts" are the biggest energy source in Europe today.

Moving Europe towards a safe zero emission economy will have many other benefits: cleaner air, health care savings, better security of supply, and savings in economic terms as well as in natural resources, not to mention lower risk of accidental or terrorist nuclear accidents and proliferation.

Putting an end to oil-dependency would help to secure our energy supply. It will make us less dependent on crisis regions and free us from supporting the ecological and human rights violations often linked to oil-extraction, as well as lower the risk of wars over this important resource.

EU must lead the global fight

The world relies on Europe to drive the international process in finding solutions. The wealth of Europe was built with the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and industrialised countries must take responsibility for the ecological debt. The **good news is that the costs will only be a fraction of current military spending**, and nothing compared to the costs of climate change, if measures are taken early enough.

The Kyoto Protocol, which was signed in 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005, was a first step in the international effort to stop dangerous climate change. The EU committed along with industrialised nations to reducing 8% of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2008-2012 from the 1990 level.

The Protocol, and its implementation by countries which have ratified it, is important for taking that first legally binding step to reduce emissions and for setting the rules on international accounting of emissions. The entry in force of the legal framework against the opposition of the US administration is perhaps the biggest success in the history of EU diplomacy.

The EU must keep to its leadership and meet Kyoto Protocol targets mainly with domestic measures. The national allocation plans for industrial emissions for the period 2008-2012 in the EU **Emissions Trading Scheme** will have to show the seriousness of EU governments in responding to the challenge of climate change. Additional measures identified within the European Climate Change Programme need to be rapidly put in place throughout the EU. The main responsibility for deployment of clean technology is with the industrial countries. If Europe does not reduce its own emissions, we cannot expect poorer countries to commit to any restrictions.

On the other hand, the EU must push ahead with the international agenda. The EU must present its own reduction targets for 2020 and 2050, in the order of 30% and 80% from 1990 levels respectively. Economic actors need the long term perspective to make the right investments. European commitments will also set the tone for the international negotiations.

The negotiations for the Kyoto second commitment period and future revision of the protocol started in Montreal in December 2005. The EU needs to focus diplomatic efforts on major emitters and developing countries to find an agreement in time to avoid any gap after 2012. The world cannot wait for the United States to change track, but must keep the door open for their re-engagement. The international community must build on the Kyoto Protocol "infrastructure" and legally binding reduction targets for the main emitters. More countries will need to agree to binding limits on their greenhouse gas emissions. The integration of reduction efforts in developing countries can be done in stages and by sectors of economy taking into account the differences in their capacity to act.

Assistance to adaptation to climate change must be an integral part of the international agreement. **Climate change is proving expensive already**: 30 000 premature deaths in Europe due to a heat wave during the summer of 2003, devastation caused by intensity of hurricanes such as Katrina, drought and famine in the Horn of Africa. Most of the adverse effects will be most destructive in the developing world.

Window of opportunity

The EU must urgently invest more in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. **Yet, new innovation will remain in laboratories unless the right market incentives rewarding savings and zero emissions are in place**. We cannot have one without the other.

Within the EU a remarkable share of energy infrastructure is up for renewal within the next 10-15 years. Countries such as China and India are experiencing massive increases in energy production every year. The window of opportunity to shift to more sustainable sources and to deploy better technology must not be missed.

The EU is a leader in renewable technologies; every effort should be made to facilitate the transfer of that know-how to the developing world. As a third pillar of international climate policy the **EU must establish ambitious technology partnerships with developing countries to support research, deployment and transfer of low-emission technologies**. Public funding and EU initiatives must be geared to finding genuine solutions to climate change, which do not lead to other risks to society. Carbon capture and storage must be recognised as a temporary solution with limited potential, and we must not loose sight of the priority in developing renewable energy sources.

Nuclear is not a solution

Reducing global emissions must not lead to other threats - health risks, radioactive waste, proliferation or terrorism. **Relying on nuclear energy undermines genuine solutions to climate change.** The IPCC concluded in 1996 that just to increase the share of nuclear to 47% of the world's electricity needs would require the construction of around 70 reactors per year until 2100. Other studies state that, considering the age of many of the operating reactors, 80 reactors would have to be planned, built and started during the next ten years only to maintain the status quo. Any significant increase in nuclear capacity would mean the construction of fast-breeder reactors producing weapon grade material and a massive increase in nuclear waste reprocessing activities. Twenty years after the Chernobyl disaster we should not forget the catastrophic consequences for health, ecosystems, social and economic systems of nuclear accidents.

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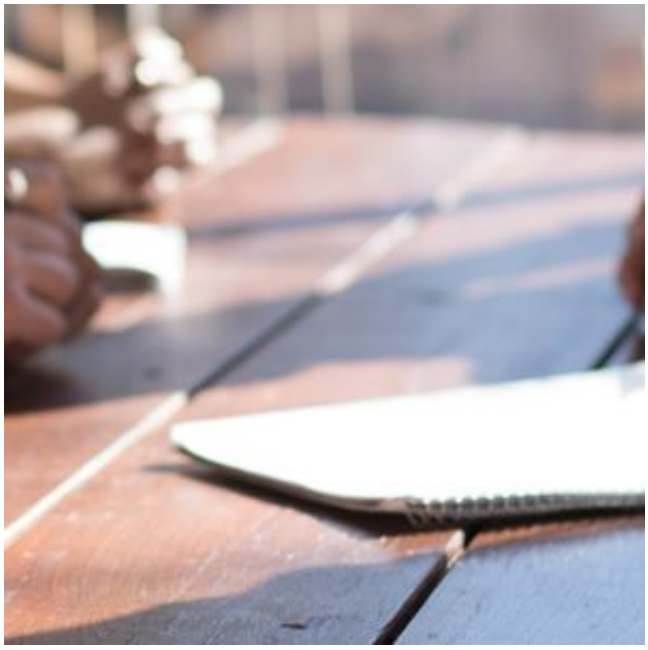
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