

Kyoto Protocol and Climate change

What is at stake? What has to be done? ¶ A short list of Green proposals

Temperatures in the world will rise by between one and six degrees by the end of this century if we don't change our ways. This warming will damage farming and ecosystems. It is likely to leave many animal species extinct. Sea levels will rise. The supply of fresh water will shrink. Many of the rivers that provide the world's clean water will begin to dry up. Most of these effects will first hurt the poorest in the developing world.

In Europe the last decade was the hottest in 500 years. The World Meteorological Office linked the extreme weather patterns to climate change.

A recent Pentagon scenario painted a dramatic picture of climate change. Wars and natural disasters could cost millions of lives and threaten the United States more than terrorism. Yet the only measure proposed by the Bush administration was the introduction of minimal 'voluntary' obligations to cut relative carbon emissions. As a result, rather than stabilising levels of emissions, the US will instead produce 30% more greenhouse gases by 2010.

The heat-wave that hit Europe during the summer of 2003 killed at least 20,000 people, and resulted in economic losses in excess of €8bn. There were 142 natural catastrophes recorded in the world in 2003 - the highest number since reporting of this kind began.

The world needs progressive policies to stop climate change.

Greens leading the fight

- European Green environment ministers played a vital role in negotiating the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas reductions.
- The Greens insisted that the European Union prepare itself for a reduction of emissions and a trading system even when the Kyoto Protocol's future was uncertain.
- The Greens put pressure to extend emissions trading to include air transport from 2008
- The Greens ensured that nuclear energy is not an acceptable replacement for energy coming from fossil fuels
- The Greens have promoted renewable energies - wind, solar and biomass - which will not only save the climate but also create jobs
- The Greens have ensured that the EU's Kyoto targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8% before 2012 became legally binding

Greens for the future

- We want to reduce EU emissions by 30% by 2020, and at least 80% by 2050
- We will continue to work to reduce energy wastage and make appliances more efficient
- We want to introduce ten million new solar panels in Europe before 2009, and make 25% of the EU's energy renewable by 2020
- We want the US - the biggest global warmer - to rejoin the fight against climate change
- We believe that industrialised countries must ensure that developing countries have access to clean technology

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