

ECO



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Australia Ratifies the Kyoto Protocol – Finally!

The new Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, yesterday put pen to paper and ratified the Kyoto Protocol. This was one of his first acts after being sworn in as the new PM. Climate change was a defining issue during the federal election. Following Labour's landslide win and appointment of a new Liberal party leader, Brendan Nelson, there is now bipartisan support for Kyoto.

The Climate Action Network (CAN) welcomes this timely response and hopes it will herald a new era in positive initiatives for the world's climate. 2007 has been a remarkable year – sentiments echoed in the statements of both the outgoing and incoming Chairs at yesterday's opening.

However, there remains a cloud over the future role Australia might play, with its decision to remain Chair of the Umbrella Group of recalcitrant countries including the now completely isolated US Government.

Furthermore, there were tensions between Kevin Rudd and his environment spokesperson Peter Garrett during the election, when Mr Garrett's comment that Australia would sign up to post Kyoto commitments was contradicted by his leader. Mr Rudd indicated that Australia is still expecting major emitters such as China and India to accept binding targets, and possibly tying Australia's engagement in meeting its targets to participation by those countries.

Participants in the CAN Australia side event yesterday were exposed to the startlingly low baseline from which Australia has entered the Protocol, as it is among the worst carbon per

capita polluters in the world. There are plenty of opportunities for Australia to take significant action because of this low baseline.

CAN is hoping Australia will take a constructive role in negotiations at this meeting and is looking forward to positive engagement with the Australian Government delegation.

Australia as an Annex 1 country has an opportunity to lead on a number of issues: the transfer of solar and wind technologies, ground breaking developments of geothermal energy, and the development of new accounting mechanisms to ensure that all the emissions associated with forest management are properly measured and accounted for.

In addition to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, the new Australian Government has already committed to:

- undertake a comprehensive review of the costs for Australia of climate change (the Garnaut Review)
- establish a 20 per cent renewable energy target to be achieved by 2020
- finalise the design of a national emissions trading scheme
- establish a \$500 million fund to boost renewable energy
- establish a \$500 million fund for the development of "clean coal" technology.

This is a modest start considering the very favourable target for an increase in emissions which Australia negotiated. The country's reliance on fossil fuel power generation and huge coal exports

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Is Japan scrapping Kyoto?

What does Japan mean by the statement it made at the COP plenary yesterday: "It is essential to move beyond the Kyoto Protocol to a new framework in which the entire world will meaningfully participate in actions leading to global reduction of emissions.?"

Is Japan, the country that gave birth to the Kyoto Protocol, now saying that it should be scrapped on its tenth anniversary? There certainly is a need to build upon Kyoto by deepening the emissions reduction commitments for industrialised countries and expanding strategies to deploy clean energy technologies to developing countries. Does Japan mean to start the process all over again from scratch?

ECO is also troubled about what is missing in Japan's list of mitigation approaches, which include "the sectoral approach on bottom-up basis, the market-based approach and the public-private partnership." What happened to binding emissions reduction targets, which form the heart of the Kyoto Protocol?

Is Japan trying to go back to its old favourite proposal, "Pledge and Review", where each country can decide whatever action it wants to take, rather than negotiating the absolute binding emissions reduction targets that are needed to solve the problem?

ECO urgently requests Japan to clarify its position and to reassure the world it is not abandoning Kyoto. In fact, it is time for Japan to put forward its own specific proposal for Annex I emissions reduction targets for 2020.

Will the US Rise to the Challenge?

With Australia's announcement at yesterday's opening plenary session that it has ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the US finds itself truly isolated here in Bali. China even proposed yesterday to create a working group to negotiate targets for non-Kyoto industrialised countries (i.e., the US) in the range of 25 per cent to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, raising eyebrows. The US is the only developed nation that has not conceded mandatory targets and timetables are required to meet the ultimate objective of the Convention. President Bush's Major Economies Meeting in September 2007, with its focus on voluntary measures, only underscored how far the US is from the rest of the world. Australia's announcement yesterday on ratification served as an exclamation point to that reality.

US isolation internationally is matched only by the isolation of the Bush Administration domestically. A growing number of American businesses, states and municipalities are acting to fill the national leadership

vacuum by taking a variety of emissions reducing initiatives. The US Congress is also starting to exert leadership; later this week, a powerful committee of the Senate is poised to approve major legislation to adopt a mandatory, binding national cap-and-trade programme. The Congress is also moving forward on major energy legislation, as well as revamping the climate science research agenda.

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In recent weeks, the Bush Administration has indicated that it wants to play a constructive role in these negotiations, and

to work with other countries for a good agreement on the Bali Mandate. Lead negotiator Paula Dobriansky, in her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on November 13, stated; “We enter the Bali meeting with an open mind, prepared to consider ideas proposed by our negotiating partners, in pursuit of a post-2012 framework that successfully rises to the scale and scope of this challenge.”

If the Administration is serious about maintaining an open mind, listening to other Parties and playing a constructive role, then the positive actions of Australia and China have given it much food for thought. And if it is serious about taking action on climate change, it has come to the right place, at the right time. Other governments and civil society are watching carefully to see how US deeds at Bali stack up against its positive rhetoric. In particular, will the US join every other industrialised country in taking on mandatory emissions reduction commitments? Opportunities abound. Only time is lacking.

Youth demand to be engaged

More than 100 young people from over 12 countries across the globe have gathered in Bali to claim their voice and to be engaged at this climate summit. At the third International Conference of Youth held last Saturday, in preparation for attending these negotiations, they consolidated their expectations of a Bali breakthrough: A strong post-2012 mandate.

While not involved in negotiating the Kyoto Protocol, the youth are very concerned about the outcomes of the process in Bali as any decision made will directly impact their lives. Based on

this, any engagement with them must be thorough and sincere. They refuse to be considered as a special interest group; they are the next generation.

Delegates are urged to give the youth their voice by meeting with them and listening to their concerns, ideas and unique perspectives. With a host of activities planned this fortnight, the youth plan to make their presence known.

They want to present a strong case for negotiators to consider the youth as a vital dimension during their deliberations here.

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is a fundamental weakness that Australia urgently needs to address, as is its continued clear felling of mature and old-growth forests.

The status of the previous Australian Government's \$200 million Global Forest Initiative (GFI) is uncertain. Australian NGOs believe the most effective use of this money would be in the protection of remaining primary forest ecosystems in the Asia Pacific region and in capacity building, particularly for local communities, in forest management. The governance, implementation and roll out of the funds will be critical to the credibility of the GFI.

SHOE by Jeff Macnelly

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