

# eco



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## COP10: Time to Celebrate

The world proved Bush wrong. As the Climate Action Network (CAN) long predicted, the Kyoto Protocol is about to enter into force. This is something to celebrate and be proud of. Only three years ago the world was presented the dark and devastating news that the Bush Administration had rejected the Kyoto Protocol and was not going to join the rest of the world in tackling climate change. Many, particularly the self-centred Administration, thought that meant the death of the Protocol. But to the great advantage of the planet, most countries joined together and formed a new club – the Kyoto Club. COP10 is a time for the Kyoto Club to take a moment to reflect on what they have achieved and celebrate the moment in an appropriate manner.

What does the Kyoto Protocol's entry into force mean?

For a start, it provides an increased level of certainty on: science, multilateralism, emission reductions, and business planning for the future.

When 130 countries ratify an international agreement, they do so based on a strong set of indicators and scientific backing. Binding themselves to commitments to reduce their emissions is not a small task. It must be done with near certainty that the problem is real, has clear impacts and must be avoided. The world has clearly stated: "We are convinced. It is time to act seriously on climate change."

The action of these 130 countries is also a clear and certain sign that multilateral cooperation is both preferred and necessary, and that this is the only way to tackle climate change. This rejects the Bush Administration's isolationist approach, and gives a strong commitment that the global community will tackle this huge and urgent threat together.

The Kyoto's Protocol's entry into force brings certainty that the industrialised world will reduce its emissions, 12 years after the Earth Summit in Rio, due to its binding emission reduction targets. Without this certainty and the compliance system which aims to keep everyone honest, the upward trends of pollution would have continued. As a legally binding international treaty, the Kyoto Protocol now ensures that those that have joined meet their commitments. They are not empty promises: the start of the EU's cap-and-trade system next month is just one example of the real policies and measures being put in place in response to the Kyoto Protocol.

There are also positive implications for business. While some companies have already started assessing what it would mean to account for CO<sub>2</sub> in their books like any other liability, this will now become the norm. Giving an economic value to avoiding greenhouse gases should trigger the switch to cleaner forms of

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## So, Bush Won. Now What?

As delegates assess where we stand at the beginning of COP10, the excitement over Russia's ratification and Kyoto's upcoming entry into force might be tempered by questions of what the recent US election means for efforts to protect the climate.

Yes, George W got reelected. Nothing can be done about that at this point. What is needed now is an honest assessment of what that means for international progress on climate change. It seems the question on everyone's mind is: "What can we do to get the USA back into a multilateral system to address climate change?" If its actions over the last four years which included pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol, opposing domestic emissions and renewables policies, and undermining the science of climate change were not evidence enough of their steadfastness, the Bush Administration has, since the election, reiterated its opposition to mandatory emission controls and said it was "premature" to consider next steps for the Kyoto Protocol. These have eliminated any hopes of a change in policy.

In his first term, President Bush distinguished himself as the most destructive force in international climate efforts and there is no reason to believe

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energy because the dirtier ones just got more expensive. This will play itself out in the beginnings of an international carbon market, effectively driving the energy sector to less carbon intensity in the future.

The final clarity that Kyoto Protocol's entry into force brings is that the US is both out of sync and missing out. The rest of the world has decided action is needed, is getting on with the job, and will directly learn the lessons of early market development. Their companies and industries will benefit first from becoming cleaner and more efficient. The international community will benefit from knowing that together it is beginning to tackle a threat at least as great as terrorism. It is also certain that the US, the world's biggest polluter, must join this club, but only if it embraces the certainties that others – from the UK to China, and from Bangladesh to Russia – already have.

We all know that the Kyoto Protocol is only a small step to a much larger challenge, but we also know that the Protocol's entry into force will place the world on a different track; one that must speed up and get more serious if we are to avoid the most dangerous impacts and stay below a rise of 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

**Science Speaks**

Over the last year the science of climate change has become more urgent and worrying than ever. The Arctic Council served the starkest warning, documenting drastic changes in the polar regions, including a rapid depletion of the Greenland ice sheet. But recent research has shown glacier retreat across the world, already affecting water supplies in parts of the Andes. A recent paper in *Nature* concluded with a high level of confidence that warming to date has doubled the chance of events such as the European heat waves of 2003. Ignoring the science is becoming harder by the day.

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there will be any change in his second term. It is therefore critical for the international community to continue to work around the Bush Administration, as they have done since COP6 at The Hague. The entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol is a triumphant victory for the global community and it is vital that the leadership shown to get to this point continues unabated.

While the US election result is certainly a setback, it is important to remember that bringing the US back to the climate change negotiating table as a constructive party was going to be a difficult multi-year effort no matter who won the election. However, it is worth noting that the pressure for action, both domestically and internationally, is building and will eventually bring the US back to the table. Businesses in the US are already pointing to the lost trading and market opportunities as a result of not being part of the Kyoto Protocol process and will only increase their pressure on policy makers as the global community goes forward. In addition, states in the US are implementing their own emission reduction programmes in an effort to fill

the leadership gap left by the Bush Administration.

The US Congress is also making progress, but still has some way to go before it is ready to commit to taking action on climate change. The domestic political will for such action must be established first before any constructive international reengagement can take place. While most of the effort to push for domestic action must happen within the US, the best thing the international community can do to encourage that shift is to continue with the implementation and further elaboration of the Kyoto Protocol. Countries must also make it clear to the Bush Administration that climate change is a top foreign policy priority. As Bush attempts to rebuild diplomatic bridges in his second term, progress on his policy priorities must be linked to real action on US emission reductions, and misleading business-as-usual programmes must no longer be tolerated. Until the US has developed the domestic political will to act, it is the unfortunate reality that the global community must go forward without it. Failure to do so would just be another victory for Bush.

**Fossil of the Day**

The much anticipated Fossil of the Day awards ceremony commences today. While it has always been a popular event with most delegates and observers, ECO was fascinated to learn it also had great value to at least one Party which featured prominently on the receiving end of the awards, year after year.

Early in the morning of the final day of COP9 in Milan, members of the Saudi Arabian delegation headed by its dynamic leader, Mr Al-Saban, were seen having their photographs taken in front of the Awards area.

A member of the delegation who was later asked about the significance of the photography session that morning said the Saudi delegation viewed receipt of the Fossil awards as a matter of national pride and aspired to get as many as possible to show how effective (obstructive) it was.

**Diego**

As Diego arrives in Buenos Aires, there is growing concern in the international community about the impact of COPs on their host cities. A rise in the concentration of UN delegates can lead to mass migrations of fleeing locals, severe disruptions in the beer and beef markets, and a melting of resolve leading to rising levels of disillusionment.

Annex 1 Parties have promised assistance in dealing with these impacts as soon as the affected cities produce a full analysis of the problem, including impacted areas, the names of everyone who is affected, might be affected or has heard of the UN, and all the delegates' favorite colours. Saudi Arabia has moved that if any efforts to reduce delegation size are taken, full compensation should be awarded to the airlines, and assistance given in finding more diverse opportunities for the newly idle delegates.