

Kyoto Protocol goes into effect



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TOKYO, Feb. 16 (Xinhuanet) -- The Kyoto Protocol on global warming officially went into effect at 0500 GMT with 34 industrialized countries legally bound to control pollution.

The agreement, negotiated in Japan's Kyoto in 1997 and ratified by 140 nations, is an adjunct to the 1992 UN treaty on climate change.

The protocol targets carbon dioxide and five other gases that can trap heat in the atmosphere, and are blamed for rising global temperatures that are melting glaciers, raising ocean levels and threatening dramatic and potentially damaging climate change. Enditem

Backgrounder: Kyoto Protocol

BEIJING, Feb. 16 (Xinhuanet) -- The United Nations Kyoto Protocol, which aims to curb the global warming process, comes into force on Wednesday with most of the industrialized countries ratifying it while the United States and Australia holding out.

The protocol will have legal force for its participants from Feb. 16 after meeting twin conditions -- backing from at least 55 countries and support from nations representing at least 55 percent of developed countries' carbon dioxide emissions.

It passed the second hurdle in November 2004 when ratified by Russia and now has backing from nations representing 61.6 percent of emissions. The United States, the world's biggest polluter, has pulled out, saying Kyoto is too expensive and wrongly omits developing nations.

The treaty was agreed at a 1997 UN conference in Kyoto, Japan by 159 countries that are members of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, it

took almost four more years of negotiations to complete its rulebook and then nearly three more years to get the deal ratified so that it could take effect.

A total of 141 nations have ratified the pact, according to UN data.

It commits the industrialized countries who have ratified it to reduce the amount of six greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆.) by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels during the five-year period 2008-2012.

These greenhouse gases are trapping the Sun's heat, causing the Earth's surface to warm and thus changing the planet's delicately-balanced climate system.

Only 39 countries -- relatively developed ones -- have target levels for the 2008-2012 period, adhering to the principle set under the UNFCCC that richer countries should take the lead.

Each country negotiated different targets, with Russia aiming for stabilization at 1990 levels and the European Union trying for an eight percent cut. Developing countries don't have to cut back. Signatories have some flexibility in how they attain these emissions reductions.

Under a 2001 deal made by environment ministers in Germany, countries overshooting their targets in 2012 will have to make both the promised cuts and 30 percent more in a second period from 2013. They rejected the idea of a financial penalty. Enditem

Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-02/16/content_2582878.htm
<http://www.sdnbd.org/sdi/convention/>

About Kyoto Protocol

The negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol and its rulebook

When they adopted the Convention, governments knew that its commitments would not be sufficient to seriously tackle climate change. At COP 1 (Berlin, March/April 1995), in a decision known as the Berlin Mandate, Parties therefore launched a new round of talks to decide on stronger and more detailed commitments for industrialized countries. After two and a half years of intense negotiations, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted at COP 3 in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997.

The complexity of the negotiations, however, meant that considerable "unfinished business" remained even after the Kyoto Protocol itself was adopted. The Protocol sketched out the basic features of its "mechanisms" and compliance system, for example, but did not flesh out the all-important rules of how they would operate. Although 84 countries signed the Protocol, indicating that they intended to ratify, many were reluctant to actually do so and bring the Protocol into force before having a clearer picture of the treaty's rulebook. A new round of negotiations was therefore launched to flesh out the Kyoto Protocol's rulebook, conducted in parallel with negotiations on ongoing issues under the Convention. This round finally culminated at COP 7 with the adoption of the Marrakesh Accords, setting out detailed rules for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. As discussed above, the Marrakesh Accords also took some important steps forwards regarding the implementation of the Convention.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol and its rulebook

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol shares the Convention's objective, principles and institutions, but significantly strengthens the Convention by committing Annex I Parties to individual, legally-binding targets to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Only Parties to the Convention that have also become Parties to the Protocol, however (that is, by ratifying, accepting, approving, or acceding to it), will be bound by the Protocol's commitments, once it comes into force. The individual targets for Annex I Parties are listed in the Kyoto Protocol's Annex B. These add up to a total cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of at least 5% from 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008-2012.