

In 1998 Hurricane Mitch left behind a trail of destruction and suffering in Honduras and Nicaragua. Hurricane Floyd in September was the most violent ever. Floods in China, Bangladesh and also in Germany, disastrous forest fires in Indonesia: we have every reason to take seriously these natural phenomena, which are possibly an indication of climate change.

That also means that no-one should be allowed to talk their way out of taking action by pointing out remaining uncertainty among scientists. Those who want to truly live up to their responsibility must act now.

And that brings me back to the tasks which you intend to tackle during the coming two weeks. I gladly recall that Kyoto was a great breakthrough. But it is not enough, of course, to simply leave the congress hall with a pile of papers. Rather, the Kyoto Protocol must enter into force as quickly as possible, by the year 2002 at the latest - i.e. ten years after the Rio Conference.

Furthermore, we need effective controls in order to ensure that the Kyoto arrangements really are implemented. It is therefore essential that we establish as quickly as possible how compliance with reduction commitments is to be monitored. The so-called flexibility mechanisms for implementing the reduction commitments agreed upon in the Kyoto Protocol must also be swiftly clarified.

Emissions trading or joint projects by industrialized and developing countries can be a meaningful addition to, albeit no replacement for, the industrialized countries' national climate protection measures, meaning that efforts in one's own country must be the key to implementing the industrialized states' reduction commitments.

For only if we as industrialized nations take the lead in climate protection can we expect developing countries to gradually limit and where necessary reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that developing countries must also undertake their own efforts in the medium term. Although their per capita emissions are still substantially lower than that of industrialized nations, they will increase considerably in future if they push ahead with economic development without climate-protection measures. On the other hand, developing countries are also being presented with considerable opportunities. The chance to enter into joint climate protection projects with the industrialized countries is likely to accelerate the development of a modern infrastructure.