

I think we are making progress on the definition of the rules to be incorporated in the Protocol. The consultations which I have held since our last meeting and in recent days confirm my optimism. The proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions set out by the European Union constitutes a positive step, although of course it does not resolve the entire issue. There is still clearly a need for precision as to the way in which the European Union and its Member States will assume these new responsibilities for reduction of emissions.

Along the lines set out in Article 22, paragraph 3 of the Convention, and this is by no means a simple point and we need to work on it, consultations with Parties whose economies are in a period of transition shows that many of them are in a position to reduce their emissions in the short term. As is noted in the Convention, it would probably also be useful within the terms of the Protocol to establish conditions which will make it possible for those States with economies in transition to comply with their reduction commitments with a certain amount of flexibility, but without creating artificial advantages which would affect the overall effort.

At the current state of negotiations, it might be said that apart from those groups, there are two governments whose definitions are the key to the success of the process. We are all awaiting those definitions in due course and I trust that they will indeed be produced because those two governments have good reasons to hope that the negotiating process will be completed entirely successfully. No one can assure us of a bed of roses and efforts will be needed to comply with the commitments which developed countries will assume under the Protocol.

World economics statistics show that developed countries as a group have grown over the years in which they increased their greenhouse gas emissions, despite the commitment they had entered into not to increase such emissions. The developed country which grew most draws attention to its own example as an economic model for others; but it is also the country which increased its emissions most. It could be said that this growth occurred without internalisation of costs, that is the growth occurred at the expense of future generations which is exactly what all governments condemned in Rio in 1992 and a few weeks ago in New York. Meanwhile, we are faced with a series of meteorological phenomena which are similar to those which would occur as a consequence of climate change.

We still do not have enough experience to draw conclusions, but the day before yesterday in my City of Buenos Aires, in the middle of winter, we recorded temperatures which would be considered high for summer to the surprise of all inhabitants who were looking forward to winter. I have heard of droughts and floods affecting all continents and tropical storms are increasing in number, frequency and area producing serious economic damage.

Those who object to the measures which have to be taken because they might reduce growth rates do not convince us. These measure would not prevent growth in developed countries which continue to grow. They would simply be growth at a slightly slower rate. It is not reasonable to seek to maintain by force the level of growth which is not sustainable and which may be the cause of damage seen today and the cause of much greater damage in the future.

Distinguished colleagues, may I invite you to begin our work with an open mind and with imagination, ready to find formulas for cooperation and compromise.

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