

3. Overview of Status of Country Commitments

National commitments to responses to stabilize or reduce greenhouse gas emissions are a primary focus of the INC and are engendering intense discussions in many OECD Member countries. As noted above, some OECD Member countries have developed their response strategies further. But Table 6, which provides an overview of the status of OECD countries' formal commitments to actions to deal with climate change, is largely unchanged from the 21 June 1991 version of this update¹. Outside the OECD, few countries have either adopted targets or committed themselves to specific strategies for dealing with global climate change. Therefore, the message of Figure 1 remains the same, that is, the OECD Member country undertakings, if achieved, would account for only about a 4 per cent reduction of estimated global emissions of CO₂, which comprises the largest proportion of greenhouse gases, by 2000. Emissions of CO₂ would otherwise be expected to grow by 29 per cent by the year 2000. Nor has there been any significant change in the national approaches taken to commitments to deal with climate change. These approaches are set out in Box 1.

Box 1

Characterisation of Approach to Commitments by OECD Member Countries

- unilateral commitments to targets, backed by funded plans of action (e.g. Netherlands, Denmark);
- unilateral, but preliminary and/or conditional commitments to targets (e.g. Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom);
- targets adjusted for need for economic growth (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Greece);
- targets based on per capita emissions (France, Japan);
- commitment to a set of policies which will stabilize emissions (United States).
- regional targets balanced out by allowing economic-growth-adjusted targets of some countries to be offset by the more aggressive targets of other countries (e.g. the European Community).

1. There have been minor modifications, notably bringing Sweden under the EFTA agreement on targets rather than having its own formal target, changes in the comments and base year for Canada and in the comments for New Zealand and Finland.