

International debates

Copenhagen – Going beyond Kyoto

Prepared: 28 October, 2009

By ANSTO's Strategy, Government and International Relations team.

The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The major feature of the Kyoto Protocol is that it sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community (Annex I countries) for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

These targets amount to an average cut of five per cent against 1990 levels over a five-year period from 2008-2012. The Protocol also provides for a "Clean Development Mechanism", under which those industrialised countries could gain credit for reducing emissions by investing in clean energy projects in developing countries. The definition of "clean energy" excluded nuclear energy.

The Kyoto Protocol limits Australia's greenhouse gas emissions over that period to 108 per cent of its 1990 baseline, which equates to nearly a 30 per cent reduction from its 'business as usual' projections.

Australia was one of three countries - the other two being Norway and Iceland - granted an increase of its emission levels on its 1990 base; an argument won on the concept of 'differentiated targets' based on a country's particular economic circumstance. Australia did not ratify the Protocol until 2007.

In 2012, the Kyoto Protocol runs out. To keep the process moving forward, there is an urgent need for a new climate protocol. The United Nations climate change conference, to be held in Copenhagen in December, aims to provide the climax to two years of international negotiations over a new global treaty to address the causes and consequences of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Governmental representatives from some 180 countries are expected to attend the conference, accompanied by other governmental representatives, NGOs, journalists and others.

An important part of the scientific background for the political decisions taken on the conferences is provided by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The major issue will be the magnitude of GHG reductions that will be possible, given the variability in emissions reductions that countries are pursuing in national legislation. A key challenge will be finding a process that incorporates both developed and developing nations

in an equitable process, given that the developed nations have been, to date, the major emitters.

Another key issue will be whether nuclear power will be included as part of the Clean Development Mechanism, given the increasing commitment to nuclear power around the world.

Following is a list of links to external websites where further information on this debate can be found.

NOTE: ANSTO takes reasonable care in selecting which sites to list in this section, but it is the responsibility of users to make their own decisions about the accuracy, currency, reliability and correctness of information contained within these links.

Links

Linking to external websites should not be taken to be an endorsement or a recommendation of a third party product or service offered by these sites. The opinions and recommendations of these external sites do not necessarily reflect those of the Commonwealth or ANSTO

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the world's centre of cooperation in the nuclear field. It has established a website that deals specifically with the upcoming conference. See: [IAEA Copenhagen](#) and the [Copenhagen Climate Council](#). Also see the IAEA's paper, [How the energy sector can deliver on a climate change agreement in Copenhagen \(PDF format\)](#).

[COP15](#) is the official site for Copenhagen conference delegates, with additional links to news, blogs and commentary.

Also see the Parliament of Australia library - Climate change discussions and negotiations [calendar](#).

The Garnaut Climate Change Review presented its [final report](#) to the Prime Minister of Australia and the eight States and Territories on 30 September 2008.