

International Law on Climate Change

1. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was opened for signature at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio and committed signatories' governments to a voluntary "non-binding aim" to reduce atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases with the goal of "preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with Earth's climate system."
 - a. These actions were aimed primarily at industrialized countries, with the intention of stabilizing their emissions of GHGs at 1990 levels by the year 2000
 - b. The Senate consented to ratification on October 7, 1992 and President Bush signed the instrument of ratification October 13, 1992.
 - c. UNFCCC entered into force March 21, 1994.
2. Conference of the Parties (CoP)
 - a. In 1995 signatories began meeting annually for the purpose of developing further agreements to implement the goals of the UNFCCC
 - b. At CoP 3 in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted by the parties
 - c. CoP 16 will be held in Cancun in December
3. Kyoto Protocol
 - a. Kyoto's goal is to reduce GHG emissions to 5% below their 1990 levels by the year 2012
 - i. This amounts to about a 30% reduction by 2012 based on GHG trajectories
 - b. Requires member countries to quantify and reduce (or in some cases, increase) their GHG emissions by a preset amount by the year 2012
 - i. Individual country goals range from an increased output of 15% (Spain) to 0% reduction (Russia) to 21% reduction (Germany).
The proposed reduction goal for the U.S. was 7%.
 - c. Promotes Cap and Trade market mechanisms
 - d. Kyoto went into effect on 2/16/05; will expire at the end of 2012
 - e. The U.S. never ratified the Kyoto Protocol