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PRESS RELEASE

Vienna UN conference shows consensus on key building blocks for effective international response to climate change

(Vienna, 31 August 2007) – A round of climate change talks under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Austria today with agreement on key elements for an effective international response to climate change.

The “Vienna Climate Change Talks 2007” were attended by more than 900 delegates from Parties, representatives from Intergovernmental Organisations, NGOs and members of the press. They were designed to set the stage for a major United Nations conference in December in Bali. The meeting in Indonesia will seek to advance future action on climate change post-2012, when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires.

“Countries have been able to reassess the big picture of what is needed by identifying the key building blocks for an effective response to climate change,” said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer. “There is a consensus that the response needs to be global, with the involvement of all countries and that it needs to give equal importance to adaptation and mitigation.”

Government delegates also debated how the response can be enabled by an approach that opens the way for financial flows to climate-friendly and climate-proof investments. This was based on a report on the investment and financial flows relevant to the development of an effective and appropriate international response to climate change, presented to the conference by the UN Climate Change Secretariat.

“The report clearly shows that energy efficiency can achieve real emission reductions at low cost,” said Yvo de Boer. “It also shows that many cost-effective opportunities for reducing emissions are in developing countries, but also that industrialised countries need aggressive emission reduction strategies”, he said, alluding to the potential of the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM permits industrialized countries to invest in sustainable development projects and thereby generate tradable emission credits.

The conference comprised the last workshop of the “Dialogue on long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing implementation of the Convention” and negotiations under the Kyoto Protocol designed to identify emission reduction ranges of industrialised countries.



A number of Parties, including Indonesia as the host country of the UN Climate Change Conference 2007, in Vienna called for Bali to launch a formalised way to continue this work, which represents one of the options for taking the outcomes further.

At Vienna, the "Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments of Annex I Parties (industrialised countries) under the Kyoto Protocol, the AWG, officially recognised the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) indication that global emissions of greenhouse gases need to peak in the next 10 to 15 years and then be reduced to very low levels, well below half of levels in 2000 by mid-century, if concentrations are to be stabilised at safe levels.

The group also officially recognised that avoiding the most catastrophic forecasts made by the IPCC, including very frequent and severe droughts and water-shortages in large parts of the world, would entail emission reductions in the range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by industrialised countries. The mitigation potential of industrialised countries increases through the use of the CDM.

"This is a first step that has laid the groundwork for the Bali Conference", said Mr. De Boer. "It shows that Parties have the necessary level of ambition to move this work forward," he added.

About the UNFCCC

With 191 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol has to date 175 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 36 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

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