

Editorial



Dr. Hans-Joachim Ziesing,
head of the "Energy, Raw Materials
and Environment" department, states:

"Political decisions have to be taken
if progress is to be made
in preventing climate change"

From December 1 to 10 representatives of more than 150 countries have been meeting at the Third Conference of the Parties in Kyoto with the aim of negotiating binding commitments for the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions. Even during the numerous preparatory meetings, substantial differences had emerged between the participating countries and groups of countries. The European Union has called for a cut in greenhouse-gas emissions of 15% by the year 2010 compared with the 1990 level, whereas the USA merely wants to bring the emissions level back down to its 1990 level between 2008 and 2012. Other countries, such as Japan and Canada, have proposed only very moderate reductions. It is too early to tell whether a compromise will be reached at the Conference and, if so, what form it will take. What is clear is that it would be a major setback for climate protection if the industrialised countries, which, given that it is they who are primarily responsible for the greenhouse effect are called upon to make particular efforts towards protecting against climate change, were to agree on a mere stabilisation or a minimal reduction. This could be misinterpreted in countries that have set themselves more ambitious targets as a sign that they can lower their sights.

Irrespective of whether or not a satisfactory outcome is achieved in Kyoto, the EU should stick rigorously to its targets. This call is to be directed not least to Germany. After all, the federal government has repeatedly restated its goal of reducing CO₂ emissions in Germany by 25% by the year 2005 compared with the 1990 level. So far around half of this goal has been achieved, but this has been largely due to the specific situation in eastern Germany. If the goal is to be reached in full by 2005, additional, effective climate-policy measures will have to be implemented very soon. Together with three other institutes, the DIW proposed – within the framework of a research project on behalf of the German Federal Environment Ministry – an action programme for the realisation of the national emission-reduction target. What is now required is that policy-makers move beyond merely propagating the target and finally implement the necessary policy measures.