

recent developments

INTERNATIONAL

Editor: David Jones

Kyoto Protocol and Climate Change Developments

The European Union has legislated to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol legally binding on all of its member States, including the 10 new nations that are set to join in May 2004. This means that even though the Protocol is not yet in force (waiting on either Russia or the US to sign) the EU States will be required to comply with its provisions. In itself this is not overly surprising, as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme set to come online in 2005, was always aimed at achieving the emission reductions contemplated by Kyoto, with some member states already aiming beyond those. However, the move sends a clear signal to countries such as Australia and the US about the political stance they have chosen to take on the climate change issue.

On the Russian front, ratification is starting to look less likely. The argument for Russia's logical participation has always been that its Kyoto emissions target, being based on 1990 emission levels, would result in it receiving a "windfall" of emissions. ie. its emissions would already be substantially below its target level due to the country's economic slowdown of the mid to late 1990s. This would have meant that it would have a store of emission reductions that it could sell to other countries that were having difficulty complying with their targets, giving Russia a financial incentive to sign up. However, recent analysis by the UN suggests that its current period of rapid growth may take away this incentive – at the very least, the advantages are now far less clear.

Treaty for Protection of Albatrosses and Petrels

Following South Africa's signing of this Treaty in November, the TPAP entered into force on 1 February 2004. Australia, as one of the five key parties to this agreement, (Ecuador, Spain and New Zealand have also ratified) has been acting as the Interim Secretariat and will continue to do so until the permanent role is determined at this year's first meeting of the parties.

The TPAP provides primarily for the collection and analysis of information relating to these bird species, with management plans to be put in place based on this data, to protect them from impacts of fishing operations and habitat damage. To date, research is indicating that the main threat to these seabirds is entanglement in fishing long-lines, and comments from David Kemp (Australian Minister for Environment and Heritage) suggest that this practice will be at least the initial focus of the main policy and regulatory initiatives under the Treaty.

Upcoming Meetings

There are a large number of international treaty conferences throughout April and in the following months. These include:

- the sixth meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- the South African NGOs meeting on Governance and Accountability, which will examine the development of "best practice" procedures for non-government organisations in South Africa, and a Code of Good Governance for the not for profit sector. This is likely to have some interesting outcomes with much broader applicability;
- the second Annual Brussels Climate Change conference, which will look at developments within the EU, carbon trading markets and actions of major EU trading partners such as the US, Japan, Canada, Russia and Australia;
- Lagoon and Coastal Wetlands Conference, which will focus on values and functions of coastal lagoons and wetland systems, climate change impacts, adaptation strategies and sustainable use.

For more details on upcoming meetings and international developments generally, visit <http://www.iisd.ca/>.