

MONTREAL CLIMATE CONFERENCE OPENS WITH "NOTHING LESS AT STAKE THAN OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE"

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Speaking from Montreal ahead of tomorrow's opening of UN negotiations on a second round of targets for the Kyoto Protocol, Pat Finnegan of Grian said today that "there is nothing less at stake here for the next two weeks than our collective future".

He also said the time had come "for Ireland to mobilise its collective ingenuity, talents, imagination and skills and get ourselves out from under the unwanted, un-needed and poisonous cloud of fossil fuel emissions that threaten not only the planet's ecological future, but the very fabric of human society as we know it"

The conference (Note 1) marks the 11th. time the UN has met since 1995 in an attempt to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere in order to prevent further global warming, dangerous climate change and increased frequency of the sort of highly-damaging severe weather events the world has become increasingly used to witnessing.

This year's Atlantic hurricane season has beaten all previous records, with 25 named tropical storms, including the well-publicised Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, battering both rich and poor countries alike all around the Caribbean, leading to thousands of lost lives, devastated cities, destroyed infrastructure and agricultural systems all bearing witness to the danger of inaction against the fossil fuels that cause climate change.

Pat Finnegan said: "There is nothing less at stake in Montreal for the next two weeks than our collective future. Climate change is arriving far faster and on a far larger scale than many scientists had initially predicted and many policymakers were inclined to believe."

"Recent scientific findings have shown the atmosphere is far more sensitive to greenhouse gas emissions than was initially imagined, and also that some of our most basic assumptions about the way ecosystems respond to climate change were misplaced."

"Here in Montreal over the next two weeks, statesmen, politicians and business leaders are obliged under the rules of the Kyoto Protocol to start to negotiate emission reduction targets for a second Commitment Period beyond 2012 when the current set of rather slack targets expires."

"The challenge is that many wealthy countries are still not reducing their emissions even by reference to what was designed to be a relatively easy pathway in the first period to 2012. Ireland is one of these countries." (Note 2)

"In order for human society to collectively get to grips with this deeply threatening situation, wealthy and well-resourced countries such as Ireland need to show far more political leadership and commitment to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions."

"For the Irish position at the conference Grian is calling yet again for the Taoiseach (who is not actually attending, unlike Tony Blair) to sign us up for the sort of 50-70% reductions in emissions by 2050 that NGO's have been demanding since 1995, and which have recently been formally adopted as official European policy by the Council of Ministers in Strasbourg."

"Ireland needs to mobilise its collective ingenuity, talents, imagination and skills and get ourselves out from under the unwanted, un-needed and poisonous cloud of fossil fuel emissions that threaten not only the planet's ecological future, but the very fabric of human society as we know it".

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Note 1: UNFCCC COP 11/COP-MOP 1 represents the 11th Conference of the Parties (COP-11) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the first Meeting of the Parties (MOP-1) to the Kyoto Protocol.

This is the first meeting of Parties to the Protocol since it entered into force of international law earlier this year.

The USA and Australia are not currently part of the Protocol and may therefore possibly be excluded if necessary from certain decisions to be taken over the next two weeks.

China, India, Brazil, Indonesia and other large developing countries, however are part of the Protocol (rather contrary to what most people tend to believe) and are all operating policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is despite the fact that, under the rules of the Framework Convention they do not have to accept targets until richer countries have reduced their own emissions (which by and large they haven't, including in Ireland, see below).

Note 2: Recently-released government projections show that by the end of the First Kyoto Commitment Period in 2012, Irish emissions are projected to be at 130% of 1990 levels, the highest level ever, and more than double our Kyoto limit of 113% of 1990 emissions.