



Background Note:

Climate Change and Sustainable Development – an opportunity for European global leadership

The European Union, like the rest of the world, is facing the enormous challenge of climate change, which threatens its economy and its security. Having achieved advanced economic status using fossil fuels as the prime source of energy, it must now face the reality that if the newly emerging and fast growing economies of China and India seek to do the same, the sustainable future of whole planet is at stake.

At the same time, it is increasingly clear that to play an influential role in the world, Europe must continue the process of unification, a dynamic that has slowed over the past decade and faced a major set back in the French and Dutch referendums of the proposed constitution settlement.

The issues are intimately related: the crisis of global warming demands a bold and coherent vision for the future if it is to be resolved. Europe uniquely has the experience and capacity to provide this vision but to do so, it urgently requires a constitutional settlement and a clear view as to how to build a relationship with the developing world that is based on sustainable economic development.

Although hopeful signs can be detected, the present American administration, while conceding that global warming is the result of anthropogenic activities, is not yet prepared to commit itself to a necessary level of emissions reductions. And while Europe has demonstrated leadership within the Kyoto process, this by itself, cannot resolve the crisis. Nor has it been a sufficient inspiration to the people of the European Union, who need to be convinced that any sacrifices they may make will be matched by global reductions of carbon emissions.

The Union needs a revitalisation, a 'new deal' that will enable its citizens to enjoy sustainable economic growth and energy security. But this is not a goal in which the Union's environmental policies can exist in a vacuum: the distinction between foreign and domestic policy is dissolving; Europe's future well-being and security cannot be separated from that of others in the world. Climate change does not just require new perspectives for social and ecologically sound growth but also for European Foreign and Security Policy.

Furthermore, there is growing evidence, that the European Union needs to rekindle the commitment and enthusiasm of its citizens, many of whom have no direct experience of the traumas Europe experienced in the last century.



Showing how Europe, in an increasingly interdependent world, must share responsibility for enabling the poor world to share in the benefits of globalisation, can offer a new sense of purpose for the young, as well as appealing to their own sense of survival.

The purpose of the event will be to bring together key stakeholders to examine the relationship between European Foreign and Security policies and climate change, and also to explore possibilities for a common position of the European Civil Society and European Parliament.

While not concentrating on the scientific aspects of global warming, most of which, thanks to the Stern review and the IPCC report are now well known, the roundtable discussion "*Climate Change – the creation of a North-South Climate Community*" will stress the urgency of situation but concentrate on examining:

- The issues of energy and environmental security facing Europe;
- The role of the environment in engaging European citizens;
- Creating a new relationship with the developing world linking climate change and sustainable development with India as a special case study;
- The importance of a constitutional settlement for European global environmental policy;
- The rule of international law in implementing environmental legislation.

NOTE:

The background note was prepared by Action for a Global Climate Community (www.climatecommunity.org) for the roundtable discussion "*Climate Change – the creation of a North-South Climate Community*" taking place on the 18th of April 2007 in Brussels.