

CHINA AND KYOTO

By Robert Jawitz, 10/13/08

The Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted for use December 11, 1997 in Kyoto. The purpose of this protocol was to have an international commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to respond to global warming. There were 182 parties that ratified the proposal. Noteworthy, the US was absent. President Bush said, explaining his refusal to ratify the treaty, the following, *"This is a challenge that requires a 100% effort; ours, and the rest of the world's. The world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases is the People's Republic of China. Yet, China was entirely exempted from the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. India and Germany are among the top emitters. Yet, India was also exempt from Kyoto ... America's unwillingness to embrace a flawed treaty should not be read by our friends and allies as any abdication of responsibility. To the contrary, my administration is committed to a leadership role on the issue of climate change ... Our approach must be consistent with the long-term goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere."* Bush was not acting alone in this action. Just before the Kyoto Protocol was finalized, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed by a 95–0 vote the Byrd-Hagel Resolution (S. Res. 98), which stated the sense of the Senate was that the United States should not be a signatory to any protocol that did not include binding targets and timetables for developing as well as industrialized nations or "would result in serious harm to the economy of the United States". On 12 November 1998, Vice President Al Gore symbolically signed the protocol. Both Gore and Senator Joseph Lieberman indicated that the protocol would not be acted upon in the Senate until there was participation by the developing nations.

On September 30, 2008, Germany hosted an international conference entitled "Entering a New Era of Transatlantic Climate and Energy Cooperation" in Berlin ostensibly to prepare for the November 30 to December 11, 2009 Climate Conference in Copenhagen. The purpose of the conference was to have a dialogue with representatives of various groups and governments from the US and Europe to secure US participation in new accords. Copenhagen will be the last opportunity for the world to address Kyoto before it expires in 2012 and to prepare for a post-Kyoto treaty. It was clear from one of the sessions that the BDI, the Federation of German Industries, was in agreement with the US position that China and India must be part of any new emissions targets of a treaty.

In a January 20, 2006 article in the IPS (Inter Press Service), it was said, "Yet, by signing and ratifying the U.N. Kyoto Protocol (Which it did as a *developing nation*), China stands to gain more than just accolades for its symbolic lead in the fight against global warming. The international mechanisms under the Kyoto treaty could give China much of the environmental investment it needs for free. Since it is a developing nation, China would be exempted from reducing its own carbon dioxide output under the protocol. Under the terms of the treaty, only industrialized nations, which are mainly responsible for the present high levels of gases in the atmosphere, must reduce their emissions by an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. But as the developing world's biggest polluter

(and now being the world's largest polluter), China stands to benefit substantially from the treaty because it provides for a clean development mechanism (CDM) that allows polluters in one country to earn credits by reducing GHG emissions in another.”

China did benefit substantially both politically and economically and will continue this advantage until 2012. It remains to be seen whether China will give up this advantage in a new treaty and it remains to be seen if the US will participate unless China does.