Interim report on the scientific facts of climate change: findings and recommendations for decision-making

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The European Parliament adopted by 566 votes to 61, with 24 abstentions, a resolution on the scientific facts of climate change (findings and recommendations for decision-making).

The interim report on this issue had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Karl-Heinz **FLORENZ** (EPP-ED, DE) on behalf of the Temporary Committee on Climate Change.

MEPs welcome the recognition by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) at their meeting in Bali that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment Report (IPCC AR4) represents the most comprehensive and authoritative assessment of climate change to date.

The resolution recalls that the scientific consensus as expressed in IPCC AR4 leads to the conclusion that the level of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must be reduced by between 50% and 85% compared to 2000 to avoid serious risks to the planet. Nearly all Member States are making good progress in their efforts to comply with their individual EU burden-sharing targets, thus raising the likelihood that the EU will reach its Kyoto target by 2012. Nevertheless, Member States will have to reduce GHG emissions in a more ambitious way if they are to meet the long-term targets adopted at the March 2007 European Council, which means reducing their GHG emissions by between 60% and 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels.

The Parliament considers that the scientific consensus on the origins and causes of climate change is well established and recognised worldwide. Scientific evidence from all continents and most oceans shows that many natural systems are already affected by regional climate changes due to historic carbon emissions from the industrialised countries. Furthermore, it has been scientifically proven that the underlying causes of global warming are mostly man-made.

MEPs reiterate their commitment to the EU's strategic objective of limiting the global average temperature increase to not more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, but believe, notwithstanding this, that all efforts to curb emissions should in fact aim at staying well below the 2°C target, as such a level of warming would already heavily impact on our society and individual lifestyles and would also entail significant changes in ecosystems and water resources.

While recognising that scientific progress has always been marked by uncertainties, MEPs condemn scientifically unsubstantiated efforts to portray the results of studies into the causes and effects of climate change as doubtful, uncertain or questionable. They believe that further research is essential for responsible decision-making but consider that the level of knowledge acquired to date is sufficient for the urgent formulation of policies that will ensure the necessary reduction of GHG emissions to limit global warming to 2°C, as well as measures for adaptation to current climate change. MEPs emphasise that the window of opportunity for starting the mitigation efforts needed to achieve the 2°C target will close by the middle of the next decade.

The resolution highlights that further analysis and research is needed as regards the effects of climate change, such as the impact on economic competitiveness, the energy costs and social development in

Europe, the role of land use, the role of forests and deforestation, the role of the maritime environment and the external costs of climate change as a result of industry, particularly transport, including quantifying the impact of pollution caused by air transport. MEPs also believe that further research is needed into the impact of the policy of promoting biofuels and their effects on the increase of deforestation, the expansion of cultivated land and world food supplies.

The IPCC is invited to publish an overview of its assessment reports aimed at the public. MEPs are convinced that individual changes in lifestyle patterns are necessary and should be a part of educational attempts to communicate the causes and effects of global warming. They call on the scientific community and political representatives to join forces to raise awareness among the public and to campaign for small steps that could make the difference.

The Parliament calls on the Temporary Committee on Climate Change to continue its work and, at the end of its mandate, to present a final report containing recommendations as to actions or initiatives to be taken on the EU's future integrated policy on climate change, in line with the EU objective of limiting global temperature increases to below 2°C and in accordance with the findings and recommendations of IPCC AR4.