

Kyoto Protocol

What is it?

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol is a legally binding agreement under which industrialized countries are required to reduce by 2010 their collective emissions of six greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent compared to levels in 1990. As of October 2004, 126 Parties had signed and 120 Parties had ratified or acceded to the Treaty.

Why is it important for U.S. women?

Despite scientific evidence the Bush administration continues to downplay the risks of global warming from greenhouse gases. U.S. legislation calling for voluntary agreements with corporations to cut emissions has been ineffective, with levels rising 4.9 percent in the last five years. The problem is likely to worsen with the weakening of the Clean Air Act and the pursuit of an energy policy dependent on fossil fuels.

Current Status

The U.S. has signed but not ratified the Kyoto Protocol making it clear that it will not ratify unless emissions targets are included for developing countries. In place of Kyoto the administration has proposed the Clean Air Act and Clear Skies Initiatives, which would actually increase pollution by 584 million tons during that same ten-year period. (*National Wildlife Federation, 2004*)

Myth vs. Reality

Myth: *The U.S. economy will be harmed.*

Reality:

- Corporate interests have promoted this myth to save billions of dollars by not investing in cleaner technology. The Energy/Natural Resource sector as a whole (includes electric utilities), gave over \$64 million in donations to political parties during the last election year.
- A responsible energy policy would reduce dependence on foreign oil, save consumers billions of dollars at the gas pump, improve trade relations, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. (*Greenpeace, 2003*)

Myth: *All nations are equally accountable for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.*

Reality:

- Two-thirds of global emissions of carbon dioxide come from developed countries and unless they take action it is projected that they will still be the source of over half the world's emissions.
- Developed countries have released emissions since the Industrial Revolution, making them primarily responsible for the climate change problem.
- Many developing countries are already reducing their emissions growth, in some cases lowering emissions more than many industrialized nations. (*Greenpeace, 2003*)

Myth: *Greenhouse gases won't be effectively curbed.*

Reality:

- The Kyoto Protocol is just the beginning in what must be an ongoing commitment to reduce greenhouse gases globally.
- Under the current U.S. plan, emissions will actually grow to 36 percent more than Kyoto levels by 2010 and 50 percent more than Kyoto target levels by 2020. (*World Wildlife Fund, 2003*)

Myth: *Climate change is unproven and part of a left-wing agenda.*

Reality:

- Scientists project that during our children's lifetimes, global warming will raise the average temperature of the planet by 2.7 to 11 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Some regions of the world have already warmed by as much as 5 degrees Fahrenheit. In Glacier National Park scientists predict there may not be a single glacier left in the park by 2020. (*Sierra Club, 2003*)

Find Out More

UNFCCC <http://unfccc.int/resource/convkp.html>

World Wildlife Fund www.wwf.org

Sierra Club www.sierraclub.org

Greenpeace www.greenpeace.org

National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org

How U.S. Unilateralism Harms Women

Multilateralism vs. Unilateralism

At the United Nations, where countries and interest groups meet to decide economic, social and political issues, the United States wields enormous influence. As a permanent member of the Security Council, it has veto power over UN decisions. Whether or not the U.S. cooperates and compromises with other nations largely determines whether the UN can succeed in its mission of promoting global equality, development and peace.

Thus far, the United States has tried to use its influence to establish a double standard of international

rules, seeking to condemn its enemies but exempting itself from UN scrutiny. Portraying itself as a world leader in human rights and environmental issues, the U.S. has failed to sign or ratify many major treaties or "conventions." U.S. unilateralism is not new, but the George W. Bush administration has taken it to new extremes. The pre-emptive war in Iraq is the most explicit case to date. A multilateral U.S. foreign policy would advance international law and human rights, including women's rights and support a strong and effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its center.

What's a Treaty / Convention / Protocol?

They are all agreements, binding under international law, made between two or more political authorities, like governments. The name (treaty, convention or protocol) has no relation to the strength of the agreement, but only shows the importance the involved parties attributed to it. All multilateral agreements between three or more parties go through the following stages before they take effect:

Step 1: The draft—usually written by working groups of government delegates to the UN and its sub-organizations.

Step 2: The presentation to the General Assembly—which debates the amendment and votes on whether to adopt the treaty text. The adoption process formally establishes the form and content of a treaty.

Step 3: The opening of the treaty for signatures—which allows states who wish to become a party to the treaty to sign on. Signing on shows that the states have begun the process required by their governments for ratification and agree to refrain from acts contrary to treaty objectives.

Step 4: Ratification—where a country expresses formal intent to be bound by treaty provisions and to bring its national laws into compliance. The ratification process differs in each country. In the U.S. international treaties require a two-thirds majority in the Senate to become law.

Step 5: Entering into force—compliance by ratifying governments is induced by international diplomatic

pressure and domestic political and legal considerations. The United Nations has no enforcement mechanisms and most treaties are non-self-executing, which means that they cannot override domestic laws. A treaty usually specifies a number of nations that must ratify the agreement before it goes into effect.

Note: Programs of Action (such as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action) are non-binding agreements which acknowledge a countries' concurrence with the document but do not require reports on progress or specific plans for implementation.

5 Ways to Get Involved

- 1. GET THE FACTS** Find out the U.S. position on key international treaties and how this effects rights at home.
- 2. CONNECT** Join groups organizing for state or municipal ratification of UN Treaties by visiting www.wildforhumanrights.org/cedaw_around_us.html
- 3. SPREAD THE WORD** Use the facts to sensitize your community. Circulate a petition. Distribute flyers. Create a website.
- 4. SPEAK OUT** Launch a campaign that targets local and national media to cover more events at the UN and more foreign affairs.
- 5. TAKE ACTION** Contact elected officials—ask questions, demand answers, insist on action.



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Women's Environment & Development Organization

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

What is it?

The CEDAW Convention, which is legally binding for all ratifying states, has the potential to be a powerful instrument for promoting gender equity. CEDAW offers not only words, but an enforcement mechanism for implementing steps towards equality. The Convention was introduced in the United Nations in 1979 and is now ratified by 174 nations.

Why is it important for U.S. women?

U.S. women comprise only 14 percent of the Congress and 22 percent of state legislatures, are paid \$.70 for every \$1 a man makes for the same work and face repeated attacks on their reproductive rights. CEDAW has a broader definition of discrimination than national or most state and municipal laws and can address policies that inadvertently discriminate against women. It can be implemented locally as well as nationally. In San Francisco, where CEDAW has

been implemented, contracts for city projects can only be given to companies where women work at all levels. A review board has also been established to evaluate everything from the distance between city lights to zoning laws.

Current Status

CEDAW has languished in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the last eight years awaiting action from the administration. The U.S. is the only industrialized country in the world that has not ratified CEDAW.

Myth vs. Reality

Myth: Ratification will require changes to the Constitution and place the U.S. under the jurisdiction of the United Nations.

Reality:

- Ratifying states must submit periodic reports on progress. They are neither required to change any existing law or impose any new laws.
- Legislation to implement CEDAW, or

any UN treaty must be brought before the House and the Senate in the same way as any other bill. (*Working Group on the Ratification of CEDAW, 2004*)

Myth: Women will be forced to fight alongside men in armed combat.

Reality:

- Women are not required to serve in the military or engage in combat. The Treaty does not even reference women in the military.
- In 1997 the CEDAW Committee emphasized that women's absence from the military hinders diplomacy and peace-keeping efforts.

Find Out More

UN CEDAW Committee www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw

U.S. Working Group on the Ratification of CEDAW www.womenstreaty.org

UNIFEM www.unifem.undp.org

Women's Environment and Development Organization www.wedo.org

International Criminal Court (ICC)

What is it?

The ICC is a permanent tribunal that will investigate and try individuals for the most serious international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The ICC is the first standing court of its kind and an important human rights and international justice forum.

Why is it important for U.S. women?

The ICC offers a framework for finding peaceful solutions to international conflicts and will help to defend the rights of women and children worldwide. Until now perpetrators of war crimes and crimes directed at women have enjoyed impunity. The ICC will enable women to seek redress for gender-based violence such as mass rape, sexual slavery and trafficking.

Current Status

The U.S. is one of only seven nations to vote against the formation of an ICC in 1998. Though the Clinton administration signed the treaty in 2000, the Bush administration later withdrew its signature in 2002, becoming the first nation in the world to "unsign" a UN treaty. Since then the U.S. has continued to campaign against the ICC creating a precedent for other nations to back away from their commitments to treaties. (*Human Rights Watch, 2004*)

Myth vs. Reality

Myth: Politically motivated cases will be brought against U.S. leaders or soldiers.

Reality:

- There are numerous safeguards to prevent this. Crimes will be defined in ways that correspond closely to the U.S. Code of Military Justice
- If a U.S. citizen or military personnel was accused of a crime the ICC must defer to the U.S. courts, waiting at least six months while the U.S. investi-

gates and if necessary, prosecutes. (*Human Rights Watch, 2004*)

Myth: The Constitutional protection of due process will be compromised.

Reality:

- The ICC has extensive due process guarantees, many secured by U.S. negotiators.
- There are no rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights that are not also guaranteed by the ICC except for the right to trial by jury because of the impracticality of trying someone like Slobodan Milosevic or Saddam Hussein in front of a jury of their peers.

Find Out More

ICC Secretariat www.un.org/law/icc

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice www.iccwomen.org

Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org

Amnesty International www.amnesty.org

International Conference on Population & Development (ICPD): Programme of Action

What is it?

The ICPD Program of Action was agreed upon by 179 nations at a UN World Summit in Cairo, Egypt in 1994. It signaled a major shift from population control to a people-centered and rights-based approach to family planning and reproductive health. The Conference recognized for the first time that economic, social, environmental and political factors are essential to better health, stability and development for the world's people.

Why is it important for U.S. women?

The ICPD Programme of Action places women at the center of policy related to reproductive health and the overall well being of communities and families. It promotes women's full integration into political, economic, social and environmental arenas, elevating the quality of life for everyone.

Current Status

The Bush administration has restricted U.S. funding to any non-U.S. organization that provides comprehensive reproductive health services including abortion and denies support to groups that receive funding for these services from other donors. Known as the "Global Gag Rule" the policy is a ban on the demo-

cratic right of free speech abroad. In the U.S., the administration continues to roll back women's rights by passing the so-called partial birth abortion ban and enforcing abstinence-only education in public schools.

Myth vs. Reality

Myth: Sexual promiscuity in girls will be encouraged.

Reality:

- Abstinence-only sexuality education doesn't work. There is little evidence that teens participating in these programs abstain from intercourse longer than others. Instead when they do become sexually active they often fail to use condoms or other contraceptives.
- Students in sexual education classes do not have sex more often or earlier but do use contraception and practice safer sex more consistently.
- The U.S. has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the developed world and American adolescents are contracting HIV faster than almost any other demographic group. Experts cite restrictions on teens' access to sex education and contraception. (*Planned Parenthood, 1999*)

Myth: The number of abortions worldwide will increase.

Reality:

- The aim is to help people plan the number and spacing of their children and to avoid unintended pregnancies that result in abortion.
- In Russia the increased availability of modern family planning methods has resulted in a greater than one-third drop in the abortion rate.
- The introduction of modern contraception in Hungary coincided with a 60 percent reduction in abortions. Similar results can be seen in Chile, Colombia, Mexico, South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.
- In the developing world 150 million married women want to limit or space their pregnancies but lack access to contraceptives that would make this possible. (*USAID, 1999*)

Find Out More

Planned Parenthood Federation www.ppfa.org

International Women's Health Coalition www.iwhc.org

Center for Reproductive Rights www.crlp.org

UNFPA www.unfpa.org

Women's Environment and Development Organization www.wedo.org

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