

Kyoto Starts. Brazil Gives Example.

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One of the internationally agreed mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions was set into motion November 18, as Russia officially gave its ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to Kofi Annan, secretary-general to the United Nations.

The Russian ratification means the protocol will enter into force on 16 February 2004.

To coincide with this development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) announced the registration of the first Clean Development Mechanism project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil.

Once registered with the UNFCCC, companies that invest in the project will receive 'certified emission reductions' in return. These can then help industrialised nations meet their Kyoto Protocol commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The project is located in the Nova Iguaçu municipality, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It aims to capture methane emissions from a landfill and convert them into electricity, and also control the polluted water ('leachate') that leaks out of the landfill.

The project designers say this process will not only reduce methane emissions, but will also have positive effects on the local environment and human health.

Draining the leachate will improve the quality of ground and surface water. Capturing methane, and burning the portion of the gas that is not converted into electricity, should improve local environmental and human health.

In addition, NovaGerar, the British-Brazilian joint venture that will run this project, will donate approximately 10% of the electricity it generates to the local municipality, to power public buildings such as schools and hospitals.

The Clean Development Mechanism helps link sustainable development with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It also promotes collaboration between North and South.

When the Kyoto Protocol enters into force in February, 30 industrialised nations will be legally bound to meet targets for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

After carbon dioxide, methane is the greenhouse gas whose build up in the atmosphere has been most affected by human industrial activities.

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