

Press Release

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PACE rapporteur John Prescott issues stern warning to US at Copenhagen

Strasbourg, 16.12.2009 – The rapporteur of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) on climate change, former British Deputy Prime Minister and EU Kyoto negotiator John Prescott (United Kingdom, SOC), today issued a stern warning to the US that they must do much more to help a secure a deal at Copenhagen.

Addressing a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) at the Danish Parliament, Mr Prescott publicly criticised the US Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern for saying emissions were "just maths".

"Well, let me give my interpretation of the maths," said Mr Prescott. "The US emits twenty tonnes of CO2 per person a year compared to about six tonnes for China, two for India and less than one for Africa. The US also, according to the World Bank, has a GDP per person seven times higher than China. Such remarks offend anyone with a sense of fairness and certainly go against the agreed UN principle that governs climate change negotiations – that of common and differentiated responsibilities, as we emphasised in our [PACE resolution](#). In other words, the polluter pays."

"That attitude certainly makes the relationship, and the possibility of an agreement between rich and poorer countries, much more difficult," he added. "It's not just about maths. It's about equity and social justice, which President Obama has talked an awful lot about in the last few months."

Mr Prescott, who negotiated on behalf of the EU at Kyoto in 1997, is attending the UN Climate Change Conference as part of a 13-member delegation from PACE.

He said President Obama should make the most of his executive power to increase the US emissions target. "The US President now has the power, confirmed by his courts and his Environmental Protection Agency, to act to reduce the threat of greenhouse gases to the health of his nation without the necessary agreement of Congress. That's why I think it is possible that the US could make a greater contribution than its target of a 17 per cent emissions cut."

"So the world calls upon China, the US and Europe to make a greater contribution to secure a credible political agreement at Copenhagen. Or, as the Assembly has called it, a New Earth Deal. Because if we don't, our children and our children's children will never forgive us."

Mr Prescott pointed out that PACE had proposed to create a legally-binding "right to a healthy environment" by incorporating such a right into the European Convention on Human Rights. He also invited the IPU to meet in Strasbourg in 2011 so that the world's parliamentarians can assess whether their governments are living up to the commitments made in Copenhagen.

[PACE resolution ahead of Copenhagen](#)
[Mr Prescott's daily video-diary from Copenhagen](#)

For interviews, please contact PACE Communication Unit at +33 (0)3 88 41 31 93.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group); EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).