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## International Environmental Intelligence Brief

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## Climate Change: Postmortem on Buenos Aires

Parties agreed this month to a Buenos Aires Action Plan to develop the flexibility mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol—mainly emissions trading and the Clean Development Mechanism—with a deadline to complete the work by the Sixth Conference of Parties in October 2000. The negotiations were almost as demanding as the Kyoto talks a year ago because Brazil, China, India, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Tanzania pressed to add resource transfer issues to the Action Plan that were unrelated to the mechanisms, according to press reports.

- The Action Plan is loaded with extraneous material, but some of it will fall away over the next two years because workshops and technical papers on the mechanism will ignore the other items.

In contrast to Kyoto, the negotiating process was handicapped by an absence of strong leadership.

### Collapse of the G-77

The most noteworthy feature of the talks was the dissension within the G-77 developing countries that hardliners China, India, and Saudi Arabia have dominated. Argentina's declaration of an emissions growth target created momentum for other developing countries to follow suit.

- Kazakhstan declared its intention to join the group of developed countries and undertake an emissions reduction target from 1990 levels.
- Several members of the Alliance of Small Island States will commit to an emissions growth target based on a switch to wind and solar energy that fits their unique circumstances.

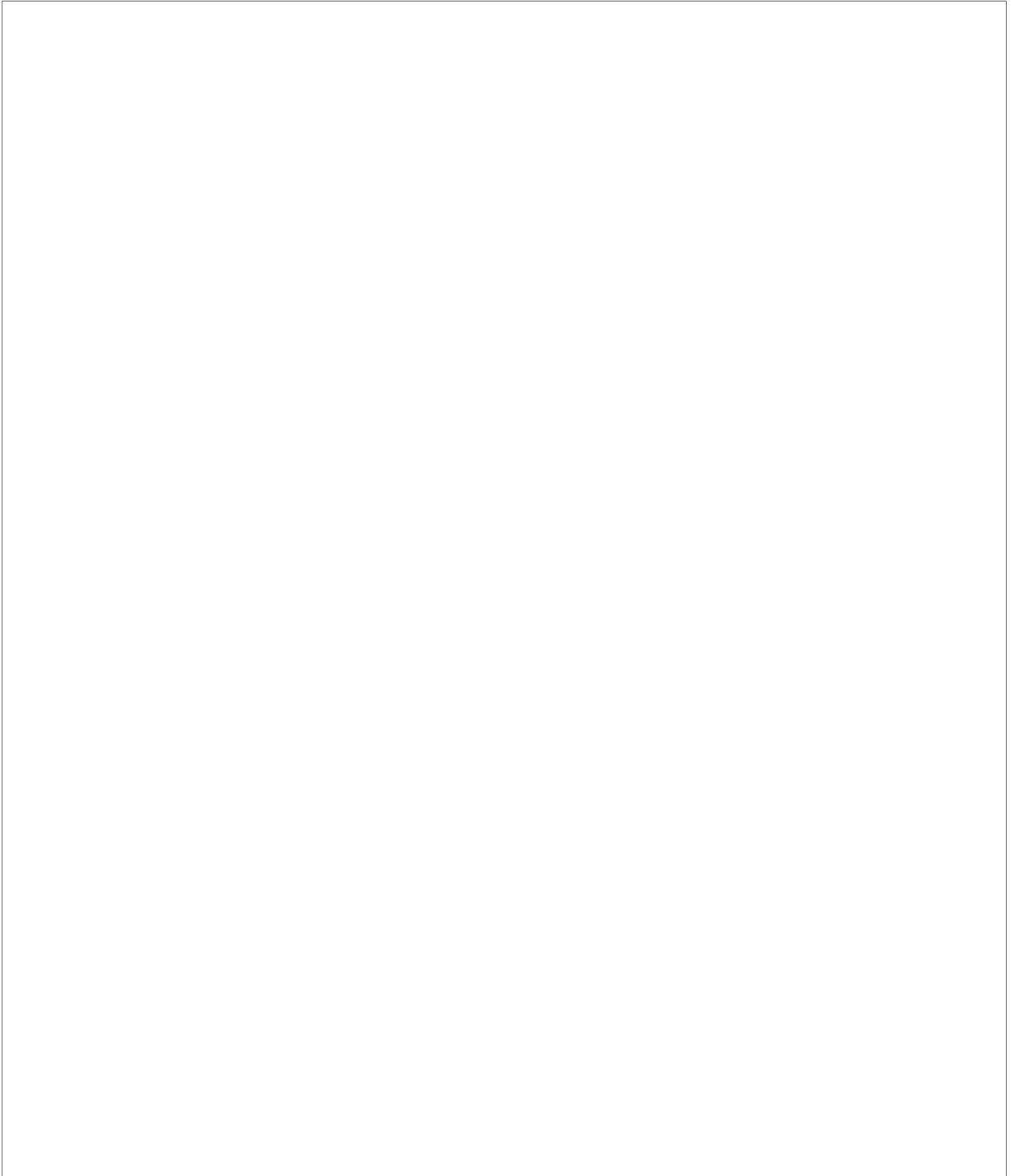
While not declaring emissions targets, the African Group publicly broke with the G-77 to accelerate CDM implementation. Honduras proposed an interim CDM as a vehicle to help rebuild Honduras in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

### EU Disarray

While the Environment Ministers of Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the UK sat silent as developing countries pressed their case for more money to address climate change, French Environment Minister Voynet tried to forge an alliance with the G-77 with hints of additional financing.

Meanwhile, the Umbrella Group of non-EU developed countries maintained solidarity, which will be a key factor in completing the Action Plan on time. Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, and the US produced joint position papers that were the most substantive of any at Buenos Aires.

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## Southeast Asia Braces for La Niña

Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines to cope with heavy rains and floods in anticipation of a moderate to strong La Niña. Manila has established a task force to ensure food security and the stability of commodity prices and has earmarked \$15.6 million to help 500,000 families expected to be affected according to press reports; it also plans to increase imports to cope with possible rice shortages from crop losses.

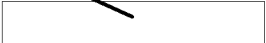
— [ ] Malaysia has cleared drainage systems, pruned trees to reduce storm debris, strengthened emergency preparedness, established shelters, urged developers to control erosion, and increased public awareness of La Niña and its consequences.

Despite these measures and public assurances by officials, a strong La Niña would exacerbate economic and societal difficulties in the region. In the Philippines—which expects at least five more typhoons in the next few months—some government officials [ ] say recession will follow if La Niña prevents the weakened agricultural sector from recovering.

— [ ] Malaysia says the Department of Irrigation and Drainage has warned of flooding in at least 5 percent or 220 square miles, of the Klang Valley, which includes Kuala Lumpur. [ ]

Indonesian meteorologists warn that heavy rains on ground charred this year and last year forest fires could produce flash floods and severe soil erosion and deplete fish stocks as toxic ash seeps into rivers, lakes, and coral reefs, according to press reports. Floods could destroy 1.6 million hectares of agricultural land—including 803,000 hectares of rice paddles and 302,000 hectares of plantations.

- Having imported a record 6 million tons of rice this year, Jakarta has enough to meet domestic needs through the main rice harvest next March.
- A strong La Niña, however, could reduce the rice harvest next year by as much as 10 percent and trigger new price hikes and civil unrest. [ ]



## Greek and Turkish Cypriots Pursue Stopgap Solutions to Water Crisis

Greece this month offered to sell Greek Cypriots 15 million cubic meter of water per year—roughly 6 percent of annual demand-consumption—in response to a three-year drought. The Greek Cypriots plan to set up two mobile desalination units by next June, according to press reports.

- The Cypriot Agriculture Minister in September publicly said that Greek-Cypriot reservoirs were almost 95 percent empty and that they would run dry by yearend without adequate winter rainfall or outside assistance.

The island draws 80 percent of its water from aquifers, but overpumping in response to the drying up of reservoirs has led to growing salinization of this source. The government is drilling new boreholes in search of untapped groundwater, according to press reports.

- These efforts are aimed at managing the water problem until a second large-scale desalination facility is ready in 2001.
- US experts, however, have dismissed desalination as a long-term solution because it is expensive and highly polluting.

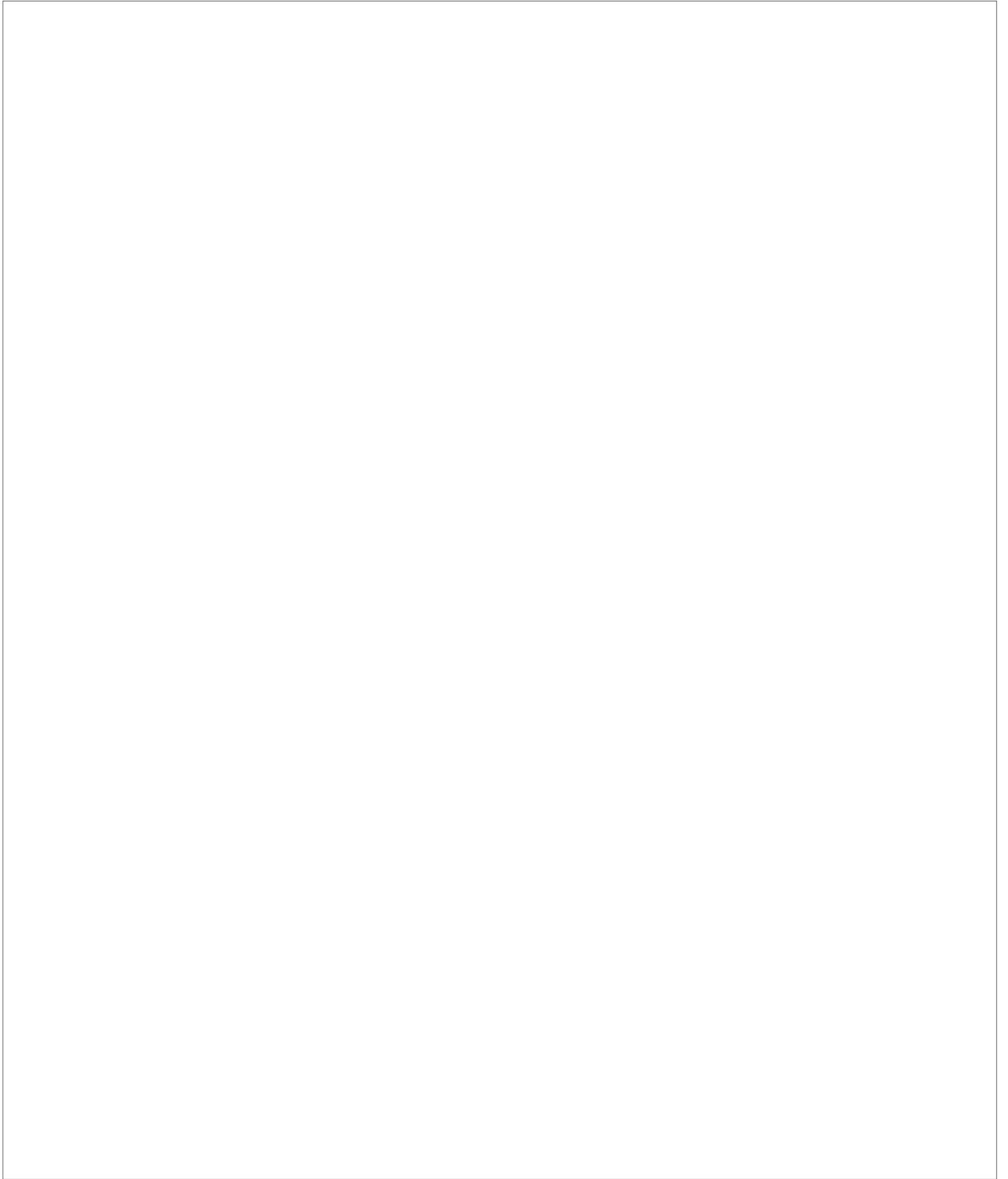
*The Greek Cypriot government so far has shown reluctance to raising water-use rates for Cypriot farmers.*

Turkey this summer began delivering drinking water to northern Cyprus in massive seaborne balloons in an effort to boost supplies until a pipeline is constructed from the mainland. The balloon project was scheduled to deliver 3 million cubic meters of water to the Turkish Cypriots in its first year, but a series of technical difficulties has limited its effectiveness, according to press reports.

A Turkish firm is conducting a feasibility study for a 78 km underwater pipeline that would pump 75 million cubic meters of water per year to northern Cyprus.

## Cooperative Efforts Face Uphill Battle

Turkish Cypriots are dragging their feet on a Greek Cypriot proposal to build a dam on a river in the south that would feed into the Morphou aquifer—the largest source of groundwater for both communities. Turkish-Cypriot leader Denktash has offered to share water from the balloon project with the Greek Cypriots, but the Turkish pipeline feasibility study has looked at ways to prevent water provided by Turkey from trickling to the Greek-Cypriot side, according to press reports.

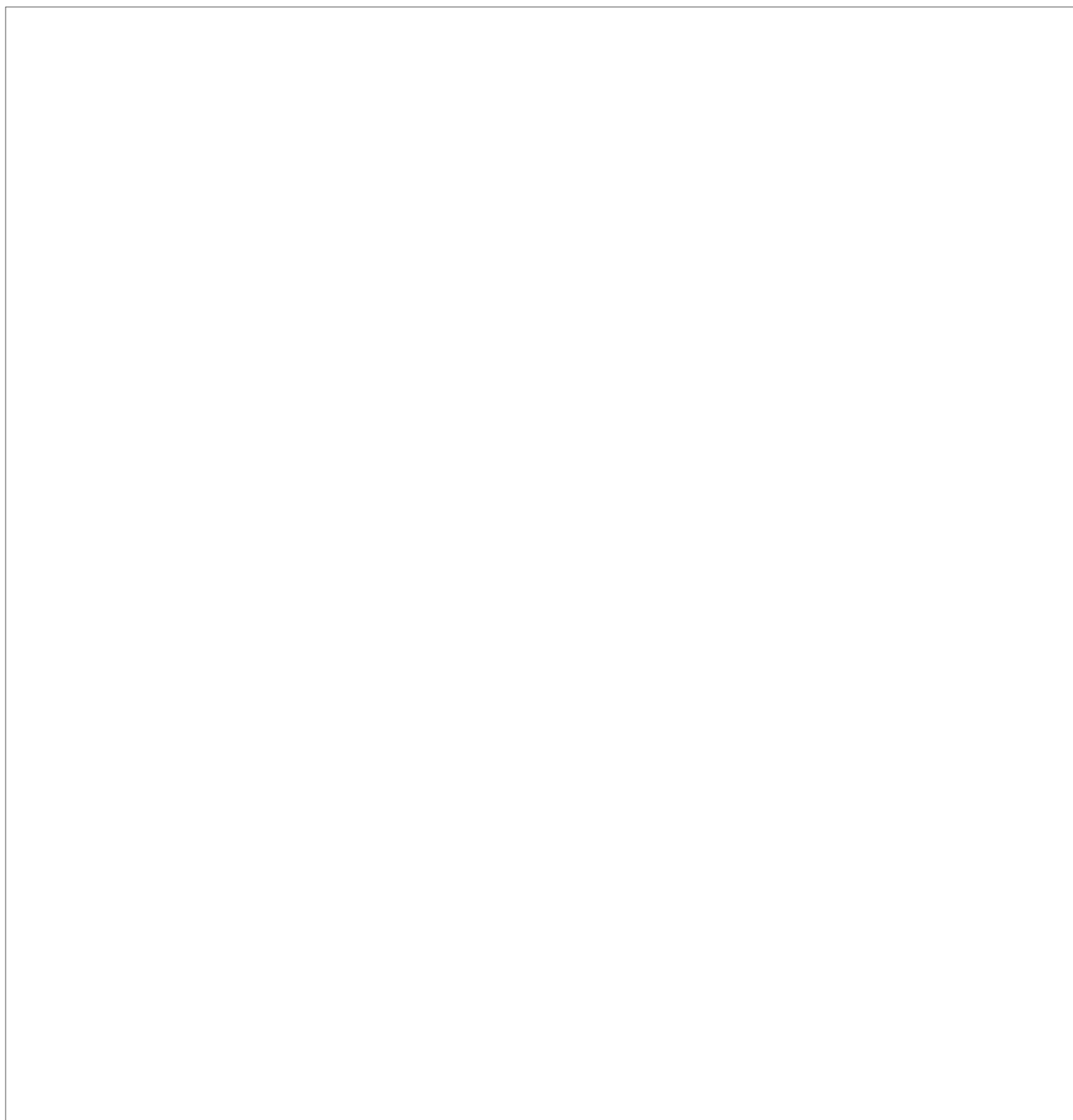


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## In Brief

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### Japan-Russia accord

Japan and Russia have signed an agreement expanding their environmental cooperation that includes a promise by Tokyo to help finance Russia's required CFC phaseout under the Montreal Protocol.

Tokyo might be prepared to contribute as much as \$2 million. Other provisions include plans to monitor forest absorption with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Tokyo will view the accord as a means to stake out an early claim to the potentially lucrative Russian market for emissions reduction ventures.

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Selected International Environment-Related Meetings

30 November-3 December	Third Defense Ministerial of the Americas	Cartagena
30 November-11 December	Second Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Desertification	Dakar
1-4 December	Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Third Intersessional Group Meeting	Yokohama
14-15 December	UNIDO-Sponsored Workshop on Efficient Energy Technologies in CEE and CIS Countries	Vienna
15-16 December	Ministerial Meeting on Prior Informed Consent	Madrid
25-29 January 1999	Second Meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Persistent Organic Pollutants	Nairobi
15-19 February	Sixth Session of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group on a Biosafety Protocol	Cartagena
1-5 March	UN Commission on Sustainable Development Ad-Hoc Working Group on Oceans	New York

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