

Thousands march in Montreal urging action on climate change

Written by

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C B C N e w s

Last Updated Sat, 03 Dec 2005 23:48:14 EST

Thousands of demonstrators braved frigid temperatures on Saturday as they marched through downtown Montreal urging the United States and other countries to do more to curb global warming.

The protesters converged on a square outside the Montreal conference centre, where delegates from 189 countries are meeting at a UN conference on climate change from Nov. 28-Dec. 9. They're formerly implementing the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and trying to plan for its successor.

Police said about 7,000 people ? some dressed as polar bears or sporting other elaborate costumes ? took part in the rally.

It was one of more than 30 demonstrations being held in cities around the world Saturday to urge stronger government action against climate change. In perhaps the largest rally, about 10,000 people marched past British Prime Minister Tony Blair's home on Downing Street in London.

The participants in Montreal came from across Canada, the United States and elsewhere, and included representatives of major environmental organizations, including Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund's Climate Change Program and the Sierra Club.

A number of politicians also came out to show support, including Parti Qu?b?cois Leader Andr? Boisclair, Quebec Environment Minister Thomas Mulcair, federal Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew, Bloc Qu?b?cois Leader Gilles Duceppe and Green Party Leader Jim Harris.

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'We will not wait for George W. Bush'

Kyoto ? which came into effect on Feb. 16, 2005 ? set legally binding targets for the greenhouse gas emissions from developed countries between 2008 and 2012.

The U.S. rejected Kyoto in 2001, making it one of the only major industrialized countries that didn't sign the protocol.

U.S. President George W. Bush has said he opposed it because he thought it would harm the American economy. He also objected to the fact that poorer countries producing proportionately large amounts of greenhouse gases, such as China, were excluded.

Washington has also repeatedly challenged widespread scientific predictions of the effects of global warming, such as catastrophic floods and droughts.

"We will move the world ahead. We will not wait for George W. Bush," Elizabeth May of the Sierra Club told the crowd of demonstrators. "Together we can save the climate. Together we will stop fossil fuels from destroying our future."

Continued U.S. resistance to caps on greenhouse gas emissions has been a key stumbling block as conference delegates try to prepare for the next round of talks about an environmental treaty that would replace Kyoto in 2012.

Delegates who back the Kyoto Protocol have also been trying to enlist the support of countries such as China, India and Brazil, which do not yet have specific targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions and fear such restrictions might hamper their rapidly developing economies.

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