

## **The Activities of the Russian Academy of Science's Council Concerning the Kyoto Protocol and Discussions Around Climate Change**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The ratification of Kyoto Protocol by many countries in 1997, which was aimed at lowering the emission of greenhouse gases to limit their impact on global anthropogenic climate change, has not only economic but also political aspects. In many countries to make the decision concerning the accession to the Protocol politicians, scientists, economists, representatives of business and public organizations were involved. In Russia, a situation has arisen where politicians, not trusting the conclusions of international experts in the field of climate change, turned to the expert assessment of domestic scientists. Scientists have thus become very important actors in the process of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, being guided in making recommendations by both their scientific research and their vision of the development path of Russia. In the latter aspect, the opinion of scientists could coincide with the point of view of Russian politicians, who, in formulating their positions on the Kyoto Protocol, were guided by the need to defend Russia's national interests.

The interest of the Russian government in accessing the Kyoto Protocol, according to the assistant of the president, Andrei Illarionov, was associated with the G-8 meeting held in Genoa in 2001. The heads of state of the eight countries had a very emotional discussion for two and a half hours about the need to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was neutral in the discussion, proposed to organise a conference where politicians, scientists and business representatives could discuss all issues related to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This proposal was supported unanimously and in 2003 Russia hosted the World Conference on Climate Change.

Since 2001, the Russian president had received a large number of appeals from the heads of foreign states about the need for Russia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. At a meeting of the Security Council, Vladimir Putin instructed Andrei Illarionov to find out whether the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was in Russia's national interest. Not fully trusting IPPC, Andrei Illarionov decided to address the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yuri Osipov, and a well-known climatologist, Yuri Israel, with a request to involve Russian leading scientists in the discussion of this issue. Russian scientists were also involved in the discussion of the Kyoto Protocol's adoption plan by the Russian Government: On May 17, 2002. Viktor Khristenko addressed the Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Sciences Nikolai Laverov with a request to prepare proposals for the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

On January 16, 2004, the first meeting of a scientific seminar on the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol took place at the Russian Academy of Sciences. According to the plan, President of the Russian Academy of Sciences Yuri Osipov will head the seminar, but he transferred this right to Yuri Israel. The discussion of the scientists at the meeting focused mainly on technical issues: how adequately climate models reflect the impact of carbon dioxide emissions and at what concentration of carbon dioxide will irreversible adverse climate change occur. Yuri Izrael pointed to the dual role of carbon dioxide: doubling its quantity in the



atmosphere made it possible to increase the yields of major crops and feed an additional 1 billion people, but this fact was outweighed by the negative aspects of anthropogenic warming.

Andrei Illarionov, who was present at the meeting, raised the question of the connection between the rate of carbon dioxide emissions and the rate of economic growth. He expressed the opinion that since human civilization is based on the consumption of hydrocarbons, the adoption of the Kyoto agreements could have a negative impact on Russian economy. He regarded the Kyoto agreement as discriminatory and not universal, since the main sources of carbon dioxide emissions like the USA, China, India, Brazil, Mexico and Korea, as well as a number of developing countries, did not impose any restrictions on themselves. According to Andrei Illarionov, scientists should answer the main question: to what extent is the Kyoto Protocol justified and whether it should be ratified, and if not ratify, then what other global problems should be brought to the attention of the world community?

On May 17, 2004, President of the Russian Academy of Sciences Yury Osipov outlined his position on the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol by Vladimir Putin. Yury Osipov noted that during the discussion, scientists had the opinion that the Kyoto Protocol does not have a scientific basis and is not effective for achieving the final goal of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. If Russia would ratify the Kyoto Protocol, then it would be impossible for its economy to double the GDP.

In 2012, the seminar participants again came to a negative conclusion about Russia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. According to the scientists, achieving the objectives of the protocol would require reducing the emission of greenhouse gases over large limits and over the centuries, not decades. The development of renewable energy and the use of biofuels also could not give a tangible effect. Yuri Izrael proposed to influence the climate by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and introducing an additional amount of aerosols into the stratosphere. The reasons for such a negative attitude of scientists towards the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol and their scientific discussion during the discussion are in the focus of my research.