

Germany continues on the road to success in climate protection

Greenhouse gas emissions in 2007 fell below base levels by 22.4 percent / Minister Gabriel calls for intensified efforts in the electricity sector

Germany has further lowered its emissions of climate-damaging greenhouse gases and is well on the way towards achieving the Kyoto target of minus 21 percent. According to current data published by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), last year's values fell below base levels (1990 and 1995 levels respectively) by a total of 22.4 percent; the emission reductions thus even exceeding the target envisaged for that year. It is therefore safe to assume that Germany will reach its Kyoto target for the period 2008 to 2012. Once approved by the relevant ministries, the new UBA report will be submitted to the EU and the United Nations.

Federal Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel: "The data prove how successful Germany's climate protection policy is. The emissions of industry, transport and private households, in particular, are declining. On the other hand, increasing emissions in electricity generation are of great concern. Therefore we must not relent in our efforts. On the contrary, we have to work harder in order to raise efficiency and reduce electricity consumption. We have made comprehensive proposals in that direction." The Minister had recently presented a national energy efficiency plan.

Emissions in 2007 reached 957 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is 2.3 percent less than in 2006 and 21.3 percent less than in 1990. Still Minister Gabriel warned: "On the whole the numbers look good, but this does not allow us to rest on our laurels. Let us be honest: Part of last year's success is solely due to the fact that because of the rise in VAT, people purchased heating oil and gas already in 2006 instead of 2007. In addition, the winter of 2007 was particularly mild. The numbers for 2008 therefore might not be as positive as those for 2007."

Minister Gabriel also pointed out that there were additional challenges in climate policy: "Kyoto is only a first small step. If we want to counter climate change effectively, we have to take giant strides. In the current negotiations on the EU climate package, we therefore advocate ambitious goals. Europe's goal must be a reduction of 30 percent by the year 2020 if other countries make comparable efforts."

The new data published by the Federal Environment Agency show the following tendencies:

- The transport sector has seen continuously declining emissions since 1999. This is primarily due to efficiency gains in motor cars and to the use of biofuels.
- The waste sector and agriculture have also contributed towards reaching the Kyoto target by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 40 million tonnes since 1990.
- Private households have seen significant reductions as well. Their emissions are currently 34 percent lower than in 1990. A clear tendency towards less emissions has been noticeable since around 2002. This is made possible among other things by efficiency gains in heating and better insulation as well as the increased use of renewable energies for heat generation.

- In the manufacturing industry, energy-related emissions have been in decline since 1990 with the exception of a small number of slight increases; these emissions are currently a good 40 percent below 1990 levels.
- Unfortunately, electricity generation has seen annual increases in emissions since 1999. This shows that the Federal Government's efforts in the renewable energies sector have not been sufficient to compensate for the increasing demand for electricity.

Background information:

Calculating compliance with Kyoto targets is a relatively complex task: compliance is calculated with reference to emissions in 1990 and for certain gases with reference to emissions in 1995. These base levels as well as the emissions of subsequent years are recalculated every year so that improved calculation methods have an impact not only on the current year but also on all previous years. In order to avoid this way of proceeding resulting in constant changes to the obligations under international law for the period 2008 to 2012, base levels for these obligations were fixed on the basis of the calculations made in 2006 in all Kyoto signatory states last year. This explains the differences between the reduction with reference to the Kyoto base levels of 1990/1995 (22.4 percent) and the recently calculated reductions with reference to the year 1990 (21.3 percent).