

## Voice of America (VOA)

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### **Nations Meet to Discuss Global Climate Change**

By Brian Byrnes  
Buenos Aires

More than 6,000 delegates from 194 nations have gathered in the Argentine capitol of Buenos Aires for the 10th annual United Nations Convention on Climate Change. Monday's opening ceremony allowed participants to reflect on recent accomplishments and look to the future.

With hopes of developing new strategies to slow global warming, delegates, lawmakers and NGO representatives kicked off the 10th Conference of Parties convention on Monday in Buenos Aires.

The Climate Change Convention will be the last before the Kyoto Protocol officially takes effect in February. The environmental community is still glowing from the recent decision by Russia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol which made it legally binding. The convention's Executive Secretary, Joke Waller-Hunter of the Netherlands, addressed the convention Monday and congratulated delegates for their achievements.

"At this COP we celebrate two major milestones in the climate change process," she said. "The 10th anniversary of the entry into force of our convention and the forthcoming entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. Both milestones provide us with renewed political momentum giving us an excellent opportunity to look back with pride and look forward with hope."

The United States and Australia are the only two large developed countries which have not signed onto the accord, which requires participating nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by five percent. The U.S. and Australia account for one-third of the world's gas emissions.

U.S. Senior Climate Negotiator Harlan Watson made it clear in his address during the opening ceremony that the Bush administration's stance was unlikely to change during the course of the two-week conference.

"Many here today are looking forward to the Kyoto Protocol's entry into force, the United States have chosen a different path and I want to make clear that we are taking substantial actions," he said. "The United States remains committed to the framework convention and we are doing much to contribute to its objective."

Without U.S. support of the Kyoto Protocol, much of the conference will likely focus on what environmental standards will be put into place after the Kyoto accord runs out in 2012.

Delegates will also likely examine just how much climate change the planet can handle and what other processes can be implemented to slow global warming.

Greenpeace is one of the dozens of non-governmental agencies attending the conference. On Monday morning, 2,000 Greenpeace activists unveiled a giant ark in front of Buenos Aires landmark Obelisco to draw attention to the world's environmental problems.

Greenpeace International Climate Campaigner Stephanie Tunmore says her agency plays a vital role during these U.N. negotiations.

"I think it is for the NGO community to actually shine the spotlight on," she said. "This is what climate change means. There are millions of people who will lose their lives, that's what it means, more storms, more floods, more hurricanes, it means the ice sheets melting, you know keep this in your mind when you start to negotiate, its not all about national interest, this is a global problem, we need a global solution."

A global solution to global warming is still far from fruition, but delegates seem optimistic that their recent accomplishments will help advance the effort even more.