

# Kyoto wins key vote in Russian Parliament

Global warming pact will take effect after Moscow ratification

By Steven Lee Myers

**MOSCOW:** Russia's lower house of Parliament voted overwhelmingly Friday to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, clearing another hurdle for the international treaty aimed at reducing emissions blamed for global warming.

The Parliament's vote was widely expected after President Vladimir Putin's government endorsed the long-delayed treaty late last month, ending years of internal debate over its potential effects on Russia and its economy.

Nevertheless, environmental groups hailed Russia's latest step as a landmark in environmental diplomacy.

"The vote really does change the geopolitical landscape," Fred Krupp, president of Environmental Defense in New York, said in a telephone interview, expressing hope that it would accelerate efforts by treaty nations to begin reducing emissions.

Russia's upper house, the Federation Council, and Putin must still approve the treaty to make Russia's ratification final, but that is considered a formality at this point.

Once the process is completed and Russia delivers its signed papers to the United Nations, the treaty's provisions aimed at accounting for and reducing emissions of gases go into effect within 90 days — probably early next year.

After the United States, Australia and others rejected the treaty, Russia's ratification became essential.

Although 126 nations have already ratified the treaty, it could only take effect if supported by enough nations to represent at least 55 percent of the industrialized countries' emissions in 1990, and Russia was the only country left that produced enough to clear the threshold.

In 1990, Russia accounted for 17.4 percent of emissions, the United States accounted for 36.1 percent.

Kyoto was signed as a "framework" agreement in 1997 to meet scientific concern that consumption of oil, gas and coal was producing carbon dioxide so fast that the sun's heat was being trapped in the atmosphere — the so-called greenhouse effect.

The Parliament, or Duma, voted, 334 to 73, in favor of the protocol after only an afternoon of debate.

Although some officials in Russia have vigorously criticized the treaty's limitations, deputies cited the potential boon for Russia from one of its key provisions: the trading system to allow countries that produce excess gases to buy credits from those beneath their quotas or to earn credits by investing in emission-reducing projects.

**TREATY, Continued on Page 4**

## Russian vote endorses Kyoto

**TREATY, From Page 1**

Since Russian industry has withered since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country emits some 30 percent less gases than it did in 1990. One deputy, Anatoly Aksakov, told the Interfax news agency that the trade in emission credits could earn Russia \$20 billion to \$40 billion in investments.

A potential beneficiary could be Russia's energy monopoly, United Energy Systems, which is eager to modernize its power plants.

The Federation Council's chairman, Sergei Mironov, told Interfax that the upper house would vote Wednesday, although he cited political concerns, rather than economic or environmental ones.

His remarks suggested a widely held belief that Russia was backing the treaty to improve relations with the European

Union, whose members represent the core of the treaty's signatories.

"The government is acting on the basis of political pragmatism," he said.

*The New York Times*

### ■ Victory for the EU is seen

"It's a very happy day for Europe and for me," said Margot Wallstrom, the Swedish EU environment commissioner, said after the vote, Agence France-Presse reported from Brussels.

"It sends a very forceful signal to the rest of the world," she said. "It is also very much a victory for the European Union."

The outgoing head of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, said the news was good for generations to come. "We hope that the United States will now reconsider its position," he added.