

Role of Government in Confronting Climate Change

•**1979 World Climate Conference**

- “growing appreciation that not only is humanity vulnerable to variations in climate, but climate is also vulnerable to the acts of humanity”
- Climate is a “resource”
- No decisions – more research needed.

•**1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro**

- 172 government participants; 108 heads of government (George H.W. Bush)
- Signing of the first international treaty on climate change – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or UNFCCC. 150 nations signed the treaty and agreed to the “stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.
- Set neither targets or timetables.

•**1997 Kyoto Protocol** – legally binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions – mostly CO₂.

- Countries agreed to a certain reduction in ghg’s below 1990 levels before 2012.
- Although Bill Clinton signed the protocol it was never submitted for approval b/c developing nations were not held accountable.
- Came into force on Feb. 16, 2005 when 55 countries had to sign (Iceland) & 55 % of global emissions were accounted for by the ratifying countries (Russia). U.S. never ratified this treaty. George W. Bush flatly rejected the treaty.

2009 Copenhagen – 193 countries --- Copenhagen Accord did not extend Kyoto. Each country including developing nations would reduce its emissions to increase no more than 3.6 F (2 C). Developed nations would help developing with achieving goals. Gone – binding targets.

2011: The United Nations Climate Change Conference, Cancun 2011, delivered a breakthrough on the international community's response to climate change. In the second largest meeting of its kind, the negotiations advanced, in a balanced fashion, the implementation of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, the [Bali Action Plan](#), and the [Cancun Agreements](#). The outcomes included a decision by Parties to adopt a universal legal agreement on climate change as soon as possible, and no later than 2015.

MARYLAND:

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) [pronounced Reggi] is the first market-based regulatory program in the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. RGGI is a cooperative effort among the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Together, these states have capped and will reduce CO₂ emissions from the power sector 10 percent by 2018.

2007 Environmental Sustainability Board:

Air and Water Quality, Green Infrastructure, Green Build-ing, Education and Outreach, Energy Conservation, and Land Acquisition and Preservation.

Green Central Station - website to learn about green business, workshops etc.

Ken Ulman was the second county executive to sign U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Introduced large rolling recycling bins. (Landfills emits methane.)

Fleet of hybrid vehicles for the county.

All traffic lights switched to LED lights. Based on the first year after the conversion of all 85 intersections, the lights are using 60% less energy.

Incentives to build green using LEED.

Preserving farmland and open space. (Avoiding deforestation).

Solar demonstration project on public library.

Incentives for individuals to install solar, geothermal, energy-saving appliances, and have extra insulation etc. Having energy audits.