
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Peter Hills is Professor and Director of the Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Hong Kong. He holds degrees from the University of London, York University (Toronto), and the University of Aston in Birmingham. He has acted as a consultant to international agencies including the UNDP, ILO, and the Asian Development Bank. His major research and teaching interests relate to environmental policy, sustainability studies, and corporate environmental governance. He has published extensively in the fields of environmental policy, ecological modernisation, and energy policy and planning.

Russia's decision in late September 2004 to ratify the Kyoto protocol came as something of a surprise to some observers. On closer inspection, it appears to be primarily a political rather than an environmentally-motivated decision, although it is nonetheless to be welcomed. Russia's ratification of the Protocol now allows the international community to move forward to transform the 1997 agreement into an international treaty. This positive development came shortly before the announcement that the rate of increase in atmospheric CO₂ concentrations has accelerated significantly over the past two years.

The challenges surrounding the pursuit of sustainable development are intensifying almost by the month, but in a world currently dominated by concerns about the price of oil and its implications for continued global economic growth, such issues appear to have been largely forgotten. The task of demonstrating that the transition to a world far less dependent on fossil fuels is not only feasible but necessary is clearly an urgent priority.