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CLIMATE WATCH

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U.S. Asks INC to Rethink Treaty

The U.S. State Department has declared that the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change doesn't go far enough in dealing with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions after the year 2000. A statement by the U.S. delegation to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) said the climate treaty, signed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, is "inadequate" and called on the INC to "begin a process...that will lead to consideration of future actions." No specific recommendations were offered. The statement came at a meeting of the INC held from February 7 to 18 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The delegation quoted the purpose of the Framework Convention — "the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" — and said that these requirements are not being met. Stating that "this threat will not disappear in the year 2000," the delegation also said that the current goal of the Clinton Climate Change Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels by the year 2000 is not adequate in scope.

The Global Climate Coalition expressed serious concern over the policy change, calling the move "inappropriate" and "premature" in a letter to White House Chief of Staff Thomas F. McLarty. Congressman John Dingell, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, also expressed his concern in a letter to the State Department. (See page 2.)

Several countries — including Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait — agree with industry representatives that the current commitments are more than adequate given the lack of scientific information on climate change. These countries also said that they prefer to wait until 1995, when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will deliver its next scientific assessment, before deciding what needs to be done on the issue.

The INC meeting was another in a series being held before the first Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention, scheduled for March 1995 in Berlin.

GCC States Dismay Over Policy Shift

Concerned about the impending policy change by the State Department in the week preceding the INC meeting, the Global Climate Coalition sent the following letter to White House Chief of Staff Thomas F. McLarty.

"The Global Climate Coalition (GCC) has been briefed by members of the State Department that the U.S. delegation to the 9th Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meeting will state that the commitments of the industrialized countries under the Framework Convention on Climate Change are 'not adequate.' We are very concerned this may be perceived as the first step toward mandatory targets and timetables.

"The GCC believes this is an inappropriate policy position for the U.S. government and that it is premature to consider reopening the treaty because:

"1. There is no new scientific information to justify such a change in policy. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Second Assessment Report is not due to be completed until the fourth quarter of 1995. Scientific data since the signing of the Framework Convention does not support increased concern over the possibility of man-induced global warming.

"2. The relevant technical, social and economic impacts of climate change and the cost of mitigation efforts are not established with any reasonable degree of certainty. Mitigation efforts which go beyond those called for in the treaty and President Clinton's Climate Change Action Plan could have a significant negative effect on the U.S. and international economy.

"3. The Climate Change Action Plan, with its correct emphasis on voluntary actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, is less than four months old. Many businesses and trade associations have indicated that they will participate in cost-effective voluntary action plan programs, such as Climate Challenge, Motor Challenge and Green Lights. To conclude that the efforts now being taken are 'not adequate,' even before these programs are under way, could be seen as a repudiation of voluntary actions and could discourage participation by many organizations in these programs.

"4. National Action Plans by developed countries, including the U.S., are currently unavailable or unassessed and are not required to be filed until eight months from now. All of these plans must be evaluated before a determination of 'adequacy' can be made.

Continued on page 2

Executive Director's Column

CLIMATE TREATY CHANGES MAY STIFLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

By John Shlaes

The Global Climate Coalition is very concerned about statements made by some countries, including the United States, that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change does not go far enough in dealing with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions after the year 2000. The U.S. delegation to the recent Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meeting, held in Geneva from February 7-18, stated that the climate treaty, signed at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, is "inadequate" because it does not address the post-2000 period. The U.S. delegation called on the INC to "begin a process that will lead to consideration of future actions," although no specific recommendations were offered. However, statements offered by Germany and several developing countries went even further, calling for global carbon taxes, international motor vehicle fuel economy standards and extraordinary reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from OECD countries by early next century.

Such calls for changes to the convention are inappropriate and would increase the burdens on major industrialized countries. As some nations noted, the international community has no information that would warrant commitments more stringent than those agreed to just 18 short months ago at the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro. In many respects, scientific uncertainty about global climate change may be increasing, not diminishing, even for very basic components of the science. For example, one recent *Scientific American* article concluded, "We don't really know what's happening with respect to CO_2, the most important man-made greenhouse gas." Despite much effort to date, the reality is that much of global climate change science and modeling is very much in an embryonic state. Public policy on climate change, particularly in international fora, is getting far ahead of science and easily could lead to costly mistakes in policy-making.

As negotiations continue, we hope that the United States will join with other countries that have called for a process that will ensure a fair and frank discussion of the many remaining issues. It is disturbing to note that many countries that are as yet unable to attain the current aims of the convention want to "leapfrog" those aims to establish international regulations and/or taxes. All of this without an adequate understanding of the underlying science and economic impacts of those decisions, some of which could dramatically limit economic growth worldwide.

Indeed U.S. industry is already working with government on designing a variety of programs to promote a wide range of voluntary actions. These actions will reduce the growth of emissions in a cost effective way both in the United States and abroad, as well as facilitate the transfer of tech-

Continued on page 3

McLarty Letter *Continued from page 1*

"5. There has been no 'process' for the development of a U.S. position on the adequacy of treaty commitments. Such a process should include careful evaluation of the views of the public, the business and scientific communities, the members of Congress and the various agencies within the federal government working with voluntary programs.

"Industry has worked in good faith with the U.S. government in the development of the treaty, and President Clinton's Climate Change Action Plan and its implementation. Precipitous action by the United States to change the treaty before it is implemented is not in keeping with the spirit of government/industry partnerships and cooperation. We urge the Administration to review the points we have made and revise its position."

Rep. Dingell Questions Climate Policy Shift

In a February 2 letter to Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Eleanor G. Constable, Rep. John Dingell (D-Michigan), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, voiced concerns about the unexpected U.S. policy shift on the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"The proposed U.S. position will give Europe and other countries a political advantage," Dingell said. "I fear that they will take the opportunity to focus criticism on the U.S. for not supporting Convention changes at this time, in order to take the spotlight off their shortcomings."

Such a turn of events would be "unfortunate," Dingell continued, "particularly since the Clinton Administration deserves great credit for having developed and made public a National Action Plan several months ago." Many nations not only "lag behind the United States in this regard," but also "are resisting the idea of open reporting of their emissions and other data" necessary to measure the effectiveness of the environmental plans, he said.

Dingell asked the State Department to reconsider its position and to give the convention a chance to work: "The Convention will not go into force until later this year and the Parties have not met yet. Many actions under the Convention have not been taken by the Europeans or others....

"I do not believe it is wise for the United States to lead with its chin on this matter at this time, particularly since the U.S. lacks specific proposals regarding modification.... After all, international agreements are heavily dependent on the goodwill and performance of the Parties. Much under the Convention can be achieved now without engaging at this early stage in trying to change the document."

Dingell also said it is "not clear" to him that any nation, including the United States, has performed a review of the best scientific, technical, social and economic information, as directed by the convention. He suggested that the U.S. delegation propose establishing a process to "review the adequacy of the commitments to see what, if any, appropriate action in 1995 or 1998 is needed."

"NIGHTLINE" BLASTS POLITICIZED SCIENCE

"Nineteen ninety-three was the year of the backlash about environmental hype and hoax. The quality papers finally...had articles that questioned some of the assumptions about environmental disasters and pointed out for the first time that there were other views, that the scientific community was not in agreement on many of these issues...."

So said Fred Singer, executive director of the Science and Environmental Policy Project in Washington, DC, in an interview for "Nightline" last month. What made the "Nightline" story so interesting, in addition to Dr. Singer's comments, was the source of the segment itself. According to Mr. Koppel, "A few weeks ago, Mr. Gore called to draw our attention to some of the forces, political and economic, behind what he would regard as the anti-environmental movement."

It turned out that the vice president had been pitching a story, not about his views on global warming, but on his view of the skeptics who disagreed with him. "The vice president suggested that we might want to look into connections between scientists who scoff at the so-called greenhouse effect, for example, and the coal industry." Connections with other special interests were brought up as well by Mr. Gore.

Mr. Koppel went on to examine Mr. Gore's accusation in addition to the broader, and more substantive, story of the growing skepticism by climate scientists concerning the veracity of the computer models that have been used to make dire predictions about future global temperatures. "The important thing that seems to be getting lost these days is the examination of data with an open mind," said Mr. Koppel.

On the issue of the vice president of the United States calling a news anchor to pitch a story impugning the motives of a specific scientist, Mr. Koppel had a very definite opinion in his

Continued on page 4

SCIENCE UPDATE

LATEST DATA SHOW WARMING FORECASTS INACCURATE

Average global temperatures since 1979 have risen only one-fourth as much as was predicted by theories of an enhanced greenhouse effect, said Drs. John Christy and Richard McNider of the University of Alabama at Huntsville (UAH) Earth System Science Laboratory.

Supported by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the UAH team has been analyzing NASA satellite data from the past 15 years. Their findings show slight temperature drops over this period. The satellite data, which measure the temperatures of most points on Earth every 12 hours, provide more complete coverage of the globe than previous networks of surface-based or balloon-launched thermometers.

Critics of the UAH results say the temperature drop does not invalidate global warming predictions; rather, they say, it merely reflects the temporary cooling effects of volcanic eruptions, such as El Chichon in 1982 and Mount Pinatubo in 1991, as well as the El Niño phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean.

To respond to these critics, the UAH team generated mathematical models that excluded any cooling resulting from these events and found a warming trend of 0.09 degrees Celsius (about 0.162 degrees Fahrenheit) per decade. Climate models have predicted a warming trend of at least 0.3 degrees Celsius per decade.

A trend as small as 0.09 degrees Celsius per decade probably represents nothing more than natural variations in the global climate, the UAH team concluded. "But it could also be the magnitude of an enhanced greenhouse effect," Christy said. If this possibility proves true, however, the potential for a dangerous future global warming still will be much lower than previously thought. "The most rapid increase in greenhouse gases has been in the past 15 years. Since that follows more than 100 years of accumulated greenhouse gases, you would expect to see the greatest impact in the years since 1979," McNider said.

The UAH team's results appeared in the January 27 issue of *Nature* and were presented on January 26 at the American Meteorological Society's Fifth Conference on Global Climate Change Studies in Nashville, Tennessee.

For more information, call Dr. John Christy or Dr. Richard McNider at 205/895-6257.

Treaty Changes *Continued from page 2*

nology and know-how to developing countries. It is clear that the greatest source of future greenhouse gas emissions will not be the United States or its industrialized counterparts, but rather developing countries. It makes little sense then to reopen the treaty or negotiate new agreements to establish even more stringent targets for the industrialized West, where reduction efforts are already under way, while ignoring the majority of future emissions growth elsewhere. Proposed new treaty requirements also do not recognize the fact that the economic impacts of those decisions could dramatically limit economic growth worldwide.

The GCC has been committed to working with our administration, the Congress and the international community to ensure that the decisions being made in these negotiations are consistent with goals for economic growth, job creation and competitiveness in the United States and elsewhere. We agree with the U.S. government that resolution of this issue will require broad international participation. Countries will need time to develop new ideas and approaches and evaluate the impacts of new international relationships. Let's work on a process to enhance both the economy and the environment, rather than race ahead and perhaps take on new commitments that will stifle growth instead of enhancing it.

UPCOMING EVENTS

White House to Hold Climate Change Conference in April

On April 21, the eve of Earth Day, the White House will host a one-day climate change conference at George Washington University. Although the agenda for the meeting is still tentative, Matt Genteel at the White House Office of Environmental Policy (OEP) said that it will be scheduled around a series of interactive "break-out sessions." The exact format of these sessions will be determined by the agencies that lead them. OEP is also considering including a panel discussion. OEP recently sent invitations to several federal agencies, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, utilities, and other private sector organizations, and hopes to have a guest list prepared by the end of March. OEP also has tentative plans to prepare a conference packet or some other type of publication that will be available either during or after the conference.

For more information, call the White House Office of Environmental Policy at 202/456-6224.

Global Climate Change Conference

The Air & Waste Management Association, along with a host of other scientific societies and U.S. government agencies, is sponsoring a conference entitled "Global Climate Change: Science, Policy, and Mitigation Strategies." The conference will be held April 5-8 in Phoenix, Arizona. The purpose of the conference is to bring together a group of people to exchange the latest information on the science, technology, policy, social and economic impacts, and mitigation/adaptation strategies associated with global climate change.

For more information, call Pam McCalla at the Air & Waste Management Association, 412/232-3444, or fax [412/232-3450].

MARSHALL INSTITUTE FINDS NO WARMING

On March 3, the George C. Marshall Institute released a study that casts doubt on global warming. The report, written by former National Academy of Sciences President Frederick Seitz, listed the following findings:

- Satellite data show "insignificant temperature change in the last 15 years, despite high levels of [greenhouse gas] emissions."
- The lifetime of atmospheric carbon dioxide — a major factor in the greenhouse effect — may be closer to 10 years than to the conventional estimate of 50 years.
- There is a correlation between the rise and fall of the Earth's temperature and solar activity.

"Nightline" *Continued from page 3*

closing remarks. "The issues have to be debated and settled on scientific grounds, not politics," he said. "The measure of good science is neither the politics of the scientist nor the people with whom the scientist associates. It is the immersion of hypotheses into the acid of truth."

"There is some irony," said Mr. Koppel, "in the fact that Vice President Gore, one of the most scientifically literate men to sit in the White House in this century, that he *[sic]* is resorting to political means to achieve what should ultimately be resolved on a purely scientific basis."

Copies of the "Nightline" transcript are available from GCC.

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