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DENVER SUMMIT: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

Under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, the over 160 Parties have committed to achieve to its ultimate objective (stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system). While there are different classifications of Parties (the major ones being Annex I: most OECD countries and Countries with Economies in Transition; and all other countries, including all developing countries, referred to as "non-Annex I Parties), not one can shirk from the threat of climate change.

The ongoing international negotiations to seek agreement on additional steps are being guided by the Berlin Mandate, a decision which came out of the First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) held in April, 1995. The Berlin Mandate calls on the Parties to "not introduce any new commitments for Parties not included in Annex I which developing countries have taken to mean that they will have no responsibilities in the new agreement. The United States disagrees with this interpretation, mainly because it disregards other language which states equally clearly that the Parties must "reaffirm existing commitments in Article 4.1 and continue to advance the implementation of these commitments." These are not empty words but instead serve as a roadmap for continued diligence to combat global warming and the other by-products of climate change. We submit that developing countries can do more to advance the implementation of their existing commitments and can agree to a future role in addressing the problem in the longer term -- without overstepping the bounds of the Berlin Mandate.

Description of Existing Commitments under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC)

In Article 4 of the FCCC, all Parties have explicit commitments which take into account common but differentiated responsibilities and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances. Some of these include:

- Develop, update and publish national inventories of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Formulate, implement, publish and update national /regional programs containing measures to mitigate climate change by addressing sources and sinks of emissions of greenhouse gases, and measures to adapt to climate change.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Alan Flanigan, Senior Reviewer

- Take climate change considerations into account, to the extent feasible, in social, economic and environmental policies and actions.
- Promote/cooperate in the development application and diffusion, including transfer, of technologies practices and processes that control, reduce or prevent emissions of greenhouse gases in all sectors.
- Promote and cooperate in education, training and public awareness related to climate change, and encourage the widest participation in the process.
- Communicate to the Conference of the Parties information related to implementation.

Elements of A Proposal for Developing Countries

Despite our differences, one area of potential compromise among the Eight is developing country involvement in the Kyoto agreement. While the EU and others believe that since developed countries have an historical responsibility for global greenhouse gas emissions, they should, as a first step, take significant action pursuant to the Kyoto agreement. They see a role for developing countries but only in future agreements as their contribution to the problem increases. Some have raised the concern that developing country opposition to inclusion of language regarding their commitments could pose a threat to the entire agreement.

The U.S. acknowledges that developed countries must take the lead but advocates that developing countries also must act. In our view, the elements contained in the U.S. proposal "continue to advance the implementation" of the provisions in the Climate Convention's Article 4.1, which already require all Parties to take a series of actions to mitigate climate change, and are fully consistent with the Berlin Mandate. They do so by being more specific, requiring action and reporting at the level of a specific action or activity. For example in Article 5 of our draft protocol text dated January 17, 1997, we propose that developing country Parties identify, implement and report on "no regrets" measures (actions taken for economic, social or environmental reasons and not explicitly to address climate change); submit an annual inventory of greenhouse gas emissions; and participate in a review of their national communications which would be designed to assist them in implementing "no regrets" measures, to seek to identify key sectors and technological options within them, and explore means to attain technology and know-how to implement the measures. We are not advocating new commitments; we are merely looking to include provisions that elaborate upon the existing Article 4.1 commitments and that can advance the global effort needed to respond effectively to the threat of climate change.

In addition, the U.S. believes that the Kyoto agreement is only the first step toward a more comprehensive, long-term approach to addressing climate change. It is

critical, therefore, that some provision for future action be included in the Kyoto context. Without some reference to developing countries' projected contribution to the problem, we will lose an important opportunity to send an appropriate signal to the world.

Contribution to the International Negotiations

The U.S. proposes that the summit nations formulate an effective strategy in the coming months to facilitate reasonable developing country Parties involvement in the Kyoto agreement. The timetable for the international climate negotiations taking place under the auspices of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM) provides several key decision points. Before the next session at the end of July 1997, our climate change experts will have a number of informal meetings to discuss this issue. As a first step, we should empower them from the highest levels to seek compromise language which will spell out developing country commitments that are consistent with the Berlin Mandate.

As a second step, we suggest that we send a unified demarche on behalf of the Eight to the Government of Tanzania, the current head of the Group of 77 and China, and to the Chinese, Indian and Brazilian governments, all of whom will have a major influence on the outcome of the negotiations. In this demarche, we could draw attention to the importance we place on this issue and our common desire to have it included in the Kyoto agreement. The U.S. would be pleased to lead a drafting effort with appropriate representatives from other summit countries.

Lastly, we could explore the option of a high-level communication from President Clinton and other heads of government. By placing the need for substantial developing country involvement in the Kyoto agreement at the top of our nations' agendas, we will send the strongest possible message to those countries which may continue to downplay the need to take any steps -- even those actions they would take for other reasons—to address climate change, and the need to acknowledge their future contribution to the problem.