

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

JUL 29 1988

Dear Senator Chafee:

Thank you for your July 12, 1988 letter to President Reagan, co-signed by three of your colleagues, regarding global climate change. I fully agree that we cannot afford to ignore this issue, which has significant implications for all societies. Accordingly, the Administration is taking an active role in international efforts to address the climate change issue in a responsible manner.

We need a solid program of international scientific research and economic analysis on the causes and effects of global climate change in order to develop realistic options for adaptation or mitigation. It is important that policymakers have a common understanding of the state of scientific knowledge and uncertainties, and that the scientific community understand the needs of policymakers.

We therefore have strongly supported the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization. The Panel is to meet for the first time in November 1988. We have urged that governments name to the Panel policy-level representatives who will be able to address the many implications of the global climate change issue, which affects sectors as diverse as agriculture, energy, health and natural resources. We hope the Panel will succeed in focusing the attention of governments appropriately on this issue.

The Honorable  
John Chafee,  
United States Senate.

Coordinated international assessments of the magnitude, timing and potential impacts of climate change should be carried out under the auspices of the Panel. The results of these assessments, along with other pertinent information, will provide a basis for considering a wide range of options to deal with global climate change, including the possibility of a climate convention.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Nitze's statement that it would be "premature at the current moment to contemplate an international agreement that sets targets for greenhouse gases" accurately reflects the position of the United States Government and is consistent with responsible scientific opinion. We believe that developing a common understanding by policymakers of the state of the science is a prerequisite for consideration of possible responses by the international community. Through strong support of scientific research and the Intergovernmental Panel, the United States Government is leading this process.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

*151 EF*  
J. Edward Fox  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs

The Honorable  
George J. Mitchell,  
United States Senate.