



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and  
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Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 27 1988

TO: Richard Hallgren, U.S. Permanent Representative  
to the World Meteorological Organization

FROM: Richard J. Smith, Acting *RJS*

SUBJECT: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The attached statement of U.S. Government views on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to be established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has been agreed by the National Climate Program Policy Board. As you discussed with Bill Nitze, this statement will serve as your guidance at the February 8 WMO Bureau meeting. It will also serve as guidance for your consultations with WMO President and PRC Permrep Zou Jingmeng this week, for Lee Thomas and his delegation in their discussions in Moscow next week, and for Bill Nitze when he meets with concerned UNEP officials at the UNEP Governing Council Special Session in March.

I believe it important that we take an active role in shaping this panel to meet U.S. Government objectives. The panel should not undertake scientific work itself; sufficient mechanisms exist within WMO and elsewhere, which should be used, not duplicated. At the same time, we believe calls for negotiation of an international legal instrument to address the issue are premature. What we need is an intergovernmental forum to provide an interface between science and policy. The panel should both identify for the scientific community information needed by policy makers to evaluate possible response strategies, and communicate to policy makers what is known -- and what is not known -- about climate change, in order to ensure that consideration of climate-related policies is based on solid scientific information. In this way, governments, and the intergovernmental community, will be able to address the issue responsibly.

Governments, rather than individuals, should be invited to participate in the panel. The government representatives should reflect the full range of their governments' policy interests, including, for instance, energy and agricultural policies as well as science and environmental policies.

Attachment:

U.S. Position Paper: Intergovernmental Panel  
on Climate Change

cc: National Climate Program Policy Policy Board Members:

AID - Dr. Nyle Brady  
USDA - Dr. Ewen Wilson  
DOC - Dr. Joseph Fletcher  
DOD - Dr. Ronald Kerber  
DOE - Dr. Joel Snow  
HHS - Dr. Lowell T. Harmison  
HUD - Mr. Jack Stokvis  
DOI/USGS - Dr. Richard Poore  
Justice - Mr. F. Henry Habicht, II  
DOT - Mr. Nicholas Krull  
Treasury - Mr. Hazen Gale  
EPA - Mr. Richard Morgenstern  
FEMA - Mr. Robert T. Jaske  
NASA - Dr. Shelby Tilford  
NCPO - Dr. Alan Hecht  
NSF - Dr. Eugene Bierly

CEQ - Alan Hill  
Commerce - J. R. Spradley  
DOE - Ted Williams  
EPA/OIA - Sheldon Myers  
Interior - Martin Smith  
OPD - Jan Mares  
OMB - Norman Hartness  
OSTP - Dr. Beverly Berger  
State/IO - Sandy Vogelgesang  
USGS - Ray Watts

January 27, 1988

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE <sup>1</sup>

1. Introduction

The USG supports action taken by WMO and UNEP to establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Panel) with the charge of overseeing a review of the scientific knowledge of natural and man-induced climate change, possible societal responses, and their impact on society. The purpose of this review, much like that done by these international agencies for ozone depletion, is to provide governments with a sound consensus of scientific evidence on climatic change and resulting impact on natural and human systems from which policy options can be developed. The U.S. intends to contribute actively to the formulation of the function of this panel and its operation.

2. Background

The atmospheric concentration of radiatively active substances (e.g. carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, methane, and nitrous oxide) is reaching such a magnitude that the radiation balance of the atmosphere may be seriously modified and result in climatic change over the next few decades.

In June 1987, following a request by governments, the Secretary General of WMO and Executive Director of UNEP were asked to establish an intergovernmental panel to carry out internationally coordinated scientific assessments of the magnitude, timing, and potential consequences of climate change caused by the ongoing increase of atmospheric concentrations of radiatively important trace gases (greenhouse gases). This action was based on the facts that:

- o Evidence exists that the level of trace gases in the atmosphere is increasing.
- o There is a growing international concern about the possible consequences of the increasing atmospheric concentrations of radiatively important trace substances.
- o Several nations have undertaken independent scientific assessments of this issue during the last few years, e.g., the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, and the USA.

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<sup>1</sup> Drafted by staff of the NCPO. Reviewed and approved by NCP Policy Board at meetings on 6 and 15, January, 1988.

- o The results of an international assessment, sponsored by WMO, ICSU, and UNEP and carried out by the International Meteorological Institute in Stockholm 1983-1985 (SCOPE 29, 1986), were presented at an international nongovernment conference held in Villach, 1985. This conference made specific recommendations for actions by governments and intergovernmental organizations.

This WMO/UNEP initiative to establish an intergovernmental panel reflects the need for an orderly process to ensure that research and impact assessment studies proceed together, and that adequate research will precede legal or regulatory activities. Furthermore, it was stated that this mechanism should avail itself of balanced scientific expertise and provide for participation of governments and organizations.

Based on these decisions by WMO and UNEP it is proposed that the Panel be established, and that the activities of this Panel be organized along two parallel tracks: one track on climate research and environment impact, and, a second track on social - economic impacts and response strategies. The initial responsibilities of the Panel should be to develop an overall plan and timetable for its activities.

### 3. Functions of the Panel

The panel initially will be requested to develop an overall plan for its activities. The principal functions of the panel should be to:

- o Guide the scientific review.
- o Identify information needed by policy makers to evaluate policy impacts of climate change and appropriate response strategies.
- o Ensure that the scientific issues be reviewed by scientists in an environment free of policy directives. In this regard, the preparation of the scientific review for ozone depletion by UNEP and WMO is a useful model for the Panel to follow.

In carrying out its functions the Panel should take account of a wide spectrum of inter-related activities:

- o The further development and implementation of a long-term monitoring system making it possible to diagnose accurately the current state of the climate system, and the factors having an influence on climate.
- o The improvement of our knowledge of the sources and sinks

of the major radiatively important trace gases, development of more reliable methods for predicting their future atmospheric concentrations under present use patterns and alternative assumptions.

- o The promotion of research aimed at improving our understanding and prediction of changes in the climate system.
  - o The development of methods and integrated regional studies of the consequences of a climate change on natural and human ecosystems.
  - o The evaluation of the extent climate change can be delayed or mitigated through various means.
  - o The review of potential impact of current and planned national and international policies related to greenhouse gas induced climate change.
  - o The development and evaluation of strategies for adjustment to a climate change.
4. Modus Operandi of the Panel

The Panel should be established by the summer of 1988. In determining modes of operation and membership the Panel should be guided by the following:

- o Membership of the Panel should include representatives of countries making major contributions to the knowledge related to the various aspects of the greenhouse gas issue. It should be small enough so that it can function efficiently. Membership of the panel should include equitable geographic representation.
- o Representatives of relevant international organizations (WMO, UNEP, FAO, IOC, ICSU and others) should be invited as observers to the meetings of the Panel.
- o The Panel may establish ad-hoc working groups for carrying out its mandated responsibilities. The WMO/ICSU Joint Scientific Committee (JSC) for the World Climate Research Programme (WRCP) and the UNEP Scientific Advisory Committee for the World Climate Impact Program (WCIP) on climate impact studies should be recognized as scientific advisory bodies.
- o The chairman of the Panel shall report on its activities to the Executive Council of WMO and the Governing Council of UNEP, and should keep other relevant organizations informed.

- o The mandate and the work of the Panel and its working groups should be assessed periodically by the WMO Executive Council and the Governing Council of UNEP.

A small secretariat will be needed to provide assistance to the Panel, e.g., organization of meetings of the Panel, follow-up on decisions made by the Panel, preparation of publications, and distribution of relevant material.

## 5. Activities of the Panel

The activities of the Panel should be carried out as a two-track effort. There is a need, however, for these efforts to be interactive. Elements of Track I have been underway for some years; Track II is only now beginning.

### Track I.            Assessment of the Science

These activities will concentrate on reviewing and assessing the state of the scientific information related to the individual components of the greenhouse gas issue, ranging from the emission of the major greenhouse gases, their ability to modify the radiation balance of the earth and thereby cause a climate change, to the evaluation of the consequences of a climate change for natural and human ecosystems.

### Track II.            Assessment of the Social and Economic Effect of Climate Change and Societal Responses

These activities will concentrate on assessing the social and economic effects of climate change and of potential responses. Methods development, effect studies and then review of assessment should be included in any activity in this track.

## 6. Relation of the Panel to AGGG

With the establishment of the Panel the WMO/UNEP/ICSU Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases (AGGG) should conclude their work.