



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and
International Environmental and Scientific Affairs*

Washington, D.C. 20520

January 15, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Ralph Bledsoe
Domestic Policy Council
The White House

FROM: Richard J. Smith, Acting *RJS*

SUBJECT: Global Climate Change

THE ISSUE

Global climate change poses policy issues of major importance to the United States Government. The topic has become a focus of interest in the Congress, in the media, and in international organizations.

As scientific research on global climate change has advanced over the past decade, global warming has become an issue in national and international fora. Significant uncertainties remain about the magnitude, timing and regional impacts of climate change. Still, global warming at an unprecedented rate in the coming decades appears likely, as a result of human activities (e.g., emissions of CO₂, NO_x, CFC's, and deforestation). Global warming within a century could be greater than that experienced over the past 10,000 years. The resulting changes will surely have broad implications for U.S. domestic and international policies.

AN ACTIVE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

Various individuals and agencies of the U.S. government have participated and will participate in a complex agenda of international activities addressing this issue. For example:

-- The World Climate Program (WCP), sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the U.N. Environment Program (UNEP), and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), recently has begun to focus more on changes in the decades-to-centuries time scale (it has traditionally focused on weather and seasonal-to-interannual variations).

-- A conference sponsored by UNEP, WMO and ICSU on the Role of Carbon Dioxide and Other Greenhouse Gases in Climate Variations and Associated Impacts was held in Villach, Austria, in 1985.

-- A non-governmental Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases (AGGG) was established to follow up on the 1985 Villach recommendations. On the AGGG's recommendation, UNEP, WMO and ICSU sponsored workshops on the science and response strategies in Villach and in Bellagio, Italy in 1987.

-- Planning has already begun for the WCP's Second World Climate Conference, to be held in 1990. (The First World Climate Conference was in 1979.)

-- In response to the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the Canadian Government has announced a major, policy-oriented conference on "The Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security," to be held in Toronto in June 1988. Lee Thomas, Bill Nitze and other Administration officials have been invited.

-- Last summer, the UNEP and WMO governing bodies called for establishment of an intergovernmental panel to assess the state of scientific knowledge about the magnitude, timing and regional impacts of climate change, in order to lay a sound basis for consideration by governments of possible responses.

-- The UNEP Governing Council also requested its executive director to report to the next GC on "the full range of possible responses by Governments and international agencies to anticipated climate change, including possibilities for reducing the rate of climate change...."

-- The OECD will consider at its spring Environment Committee meeting a work program in this field.

-- Proposals are currently under consideration in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for a statement on climate.

-- The International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP), being developed under ICSU, is a major multidisciplinary research program which will extend through the 1990's. U.S. participation is coordinated by the National Academy of Sciences, with extensive executive branch participation. For example, Dr. S.I. Rasool of NASA is coordinating a multinational IGBP group on data, which will hold a conference in Moscow in August 1988.

-- At the U.S.-Soviet summit, the President and General Secretary Gorbachev approved a bilateral initiative to pursue joint studies in global climate and environmental change under our bilateral environmental and space agreements. The joint statement also said the two sides will continue to promote broad multilateral cooperation in this field.

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

It is imperative that we develop coherent domestic and international policies to deal with this issue. The global change issue is inherently international; domestic policies and activities must take this into account. Conversely, positions the United States takes in international fora must be fully consistent with domestic policies. U.S. credibility on this issue will be enhanced internationally if we have a coherent national policy.

The Global Climate Protection Act of 1987, incorporated in the State Department authorization, states: "The Secretary of State shall be responsible to coordinate those aspects of United States policy requiring action through the channels of multilateral diplomacy...." The Act also states: "The President, through the Environmental Protection Agency, shall be responsible for developing and proposing to Congress a coordinated national policy on global climate change."

RECOMMENDATION

To assist the Department of State in fulfilling its mandate under the Global Climate Protection Act, I recommend that the Domestic Policy Council, through its Working Group on Energy, Natural Resources and the Environment (ENRE), take up the global climate issue. The ENRE Working Group, and as appropriate the DPC itself, should participate in developing U.S. positions on this issue in international fora, by providing guidance on relevant domestic policies.

I suggest the issue be placed on an early ENRE agenda, that the appropriate scientific agencies be asked (perhaps through the Committee on Earth Sciences) to provide a briefing on the state of the science, and that I provide a briefing on the international agenda.

The National Climate Program Policy Board should, I believe, be asked to keep the DPC informed (through ENRE), to refer issues as appropriate, and to develop options for consideration by ENRE on climate policies. Agencies should be asked to see that their participation in the Climate Board is at an appropriate level. (The Climate Board will also keep the Committee on Earth Sciences informed, particularly on science and program coordination aspects. As noted by Dr. Graham at the CES meeting last month, CES will work with the DPC on the science side.) Other relevant bodies (e.g., the Panel for

International Programs and International Cooperation in Ocean Affairs, the Interagency Group on Space Activities) should coordinate with and refer issues to the DPC as appropriate.

NASA (which has a major earth observation program) and NSF (which funds numerous domestic and international environmental research programs) should be invited to participate in ENRE meetings when global climate issues are on the agenda.

AN IMMEDIATE ISSUE

We should bring to the Working Group's attention now the U.S. position on the WMO/UNEP intergovernmental panel. We want to make the panel a responsible, workable forum for governments to consider what we know, what we need to know, and how the international community can and should respond.

The Climate Program Policy Board is preparing a paper on the U.S. position on the intergovernmental panel. We plan to have the U.S. permanent representative to the WMO (Richard Hallgren of NOAA) circulate the paper at a February 8 meeting of the WMO Bureau. In this way, we expect to be able to have a significant impact on shaping the intergovernmental panel. The paper will also guide U.S. representatives in consultations with the PRC and the Soviet Union in late January and early February, in order to lay the groundwork for the WMO Bureau meeting. We expect the paper to be ready later today, reflecting the discussion in this morning's Board meeting.