

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 21, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR FRED BERNTHAL
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BOB GRADY
BOYDEN GRAY
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BILL REILLY
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FROM: ALLAN BROMLEY
STEPHEN DANZANSKY

SUBJECT: Meeting of Global Change Strategy Task Force

The Global Change Strategy Task Force will meet Tuesday, May 22 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 340 of the Old Executive Office Building. An agenda is attached.

Our work will focus principally on the upcoming meetings of the IPCC working groups, which begin with Working Group 1 (Science) this week. Each working group is preparing a policymakers summary, which will in turn be incorporated into the summary document to be discussed at the next IPCC plenary meeting in August. Attached you will find the summary of Working Group 3 on Response Strategies, which is chaired by the U.S. The summary was the subject of a meeting of the Working Group on Climate at the State Department last Friday, and we should have available for tomorrow's meeting a compilation of the preliminary comments of the various agencies. Please review the summary and provide any comments at tomorrow's meeting.

Also attached you will find a statement of the U.S. Policy Overview on Global Change. It was prepared by the State Department in anticipation of the White House Conference on Science and Economics Research Related to Global Change, based on prior statements of U.S. policy, but was not subjected to interagency or White House Review at that time. It has subsequently been revised slightly. This document was also the subject of review by the Working Group on Climate, and we should have a compilation of comments on it available tomorrow also. Although this document will not be discussed at the Response Strategies Working Group meeting in Geneva which begins June 4, it will be helpful to have it as support for the positions of the U.S. delegation.

Please call Marcy Anderson at 6630 to advise of your attendance at tomorrow's meeting.

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of
Negotiations on a Framework Convention on Climate ChangeIssue to be Decided

When and where to initiate preparatory meetings for negotiations on a Framework Convention on Climate Change and when to hold the first formal session of the negotiations, which President Bush has offered to host in the United States.

Essential Information

One of the main objectives of the June 8 WMO/UNEP Joint Bureau meeting will be to decide when and how negotiations on a framework convention on climate change should be carried out. U.S. policy supports the early negotiation of a framework convention to be followed, if appropriate, by negotiation on specific protocols. The WMO/UNEP decision on timing of negotiations of the framework convention will take the form of a joint resolution instructing the heads of each organization how to prepare for the negotiations. An early draft of the proposed resolution legitimizes such action by noting and recalling key resolutions and/or decisions previously passed by the UNGA, WMO, and UNEP. The proposed resolution then authorizes the WMO Secretary General and the UNEP Executive Director to convene jointly:

"... immediately after the fourth session of the IPCC, an open-ended ad hoc legal and technical group to prepare a plan of action to negotiate a framework convention on climate taking into account preparatory work for the Second World Climate Conference (SWCC) and the work of the Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Environment and Development."

The draft further authorizes the heads of WMO and UNEP:

"to initiate formal negotiations on a framework convention through an intergovernmental meeting as soon as possible after the Second World Climate Conference taking into account the outcome of the Conference and discussions and recommendations of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly."

An annex attached to the draft resolution contains a timetable which shows the first preparatory meeting of experts taking place in October and the first negotiating session on the Framework Convention being held in the United States in December. We assume the latter date refers to December 3 - 7 and/or December 10 - 14. This would position the opening negotiating session about a month after the SWCC Ministerial, which ends November 7, and before the close of the UN General Assembly, which normally occurs just before Christmas.

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Proposed U.S. Position On Timing

The U.S. should concur with the view that preparatory meetings for the negotiations ought to begin in October in Geneva. Convoking an experts group preparatory meeting in October would help deflect efforts by the UNGA and the SWCC to influence negotiations, since we could then point out that the negotiating process is already underway under the auspices of WMO and UNEP. The IPCC, also located in Geneva and jointly sponsored by WMO and UNEP, would be available to provide secretariat support and technical advice as needed, thus reinforcing the link between the IPCC and the framework convention negotiations.

The U.S. should make a counterproposal on the timing of the first formal negotiating session, favoring early February rather than December, as proposed by WMO and UNEP. Since the U.S. would be hosting this event, it is unlikely that WMO and UNEP would contest our preference. Their only objection is likely to be that by holding the session in December, we could probably avoid having to contend with an UNGA resolution directed at the negotiations. The U.S. would take the position that once the negotiation prepcom process is underway, further comment or direction from other bodies is inappropriate.

Early February would remain our preferred date because February would give us more lead time to handle site selection and other organizational and financial concerns. With this later date we could also expect to see more progress at the expert level in the preparatory process. It also eliminates the need to compete with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the holiday season.

Recommendation

- 1.) That we propose to start the Framework Convention Preparatory process with an experts meeting in Geneva in October.
- 2.) That we propose to hold the first formal negotiating session on the Framework Convention on Climate Change in the United States in early February.

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U.S. GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Overview:

The United States recognizes that climate change presents a potentially serious threat to the global environment and that the international community should cooperate on measures to address this concern. We support the negotiation of a framework convention on climate change to provide the basis for enhanced international cooperation in addressing this issue.

There remain, however, significant scientific uncertainties regarding the magnitude, timing, and regional impacts of climate change. Furthermore, our understanding of the potential economic consequences of measures to limit or adapt to climate change is very limited. We thus support enhanced efforts to improve international understanding of the scientific and economic aspects of this issue.

Given the significant remaining scientific and economic uncertainties, we believe it is premature at this time to implement stringent measures for limiting greenhouse gas emissions solely to mitigate potential climate change. However, while we take steps to refine our understanding of the scientific and economic issues, we support implementing now those measures which are justified in their own right and which might also provide climate change benefits. Should an improved understanding of the climate change issue indicate that further mitigation efforts are warranted, these can be addressed through a protocol(s) to the framework convention.

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U.S. Position on Specific Issues

o International Cooperation:

-- We support international cooperation to assess all aspects of climate change. The United States has been a major supporter and contributor to the activities of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the primary international forum for addressing this issue.

-- We support the negotiation of a framework convention on climate change. President Bush has offered the United States as the venue for the first round of such talks. We believe the negotiations should begin as soon as feasible after completion of the IPCC's first assessment report.

-- Like the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the framework convention on climate change should include general obligations, cooperation in research and monitoring, exchange of information, conference of the parties, secretariat, and provision for possible subsequent adoption of protocols.

-- Specific agreements on measures for limiting or adapting to climate change should be addressed in a subsequent protocol(s) to the convention as our scientific/economic understanding develops.

o Scientific Understanding:

-- Climate change is arguably the most complex international science policy issue the world has faced. Because there remain significant uncertainties about the timing, magnitude, and regional effects of climate change, further research is essential.

-- This research effort must be international and encompass all the regions of the world. To address this issue the USG is undertaking by far the world's largest global change research program (\$1.1 billion in FY1991) and is planning to contribute to the WMO Climate Studies Fund to support increased international efforts in climatology. We urge all countries to increase their research efforts in order to advance the world's understanding of this problem.

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o Economic Aspects of Climate Change:

-- Although various formulas for limiting greenhouse gas emissions have been proposed, very little work has been done on the economic costs of measures to limit or adapt to climate change. Some preliminary studies show that the costs of stringent measures to limit greenhouse gas emissions could be severe.

-- More economic research, comparable to efforts underway in the scientific area, is needed to reduce the uncertainties regarding the economic impacts of limitation measures. The USG is accelerating work on this issue domestically. We support international efforts to address this vital issue, for example within the IPCC, OECD, and other multilateral fora.

-- More work is also necessary on the potential costs and benefits of global greenhouse gas limitation measures on U.S. trade and competitiveness as a result of economic restructuring and the development of new markets for advanced technologies related to global change.

o Interim ("No-Regrets") Measures:

-- While we are pursuing the serious scientific and economic research that is critical to any responsible approach to climate change, we support taking prompt actions that are fully justified on independent grounds and which might also be beneficial from a climate change standpoint.

-- As reflected in the President's February 5 speech, these so-called "no-regrets" measures include: (1) phasing out CFCs by the year 2000; (2) increasing energy efficiency measures, inter alia, through the National Energy Strategy, Clean Air Act, and new technology development; and (3) implementing a major domestic reforestation initiative and seeking to arrest tropical deforestation through multilateral channels.

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o Targets and Timetables:

-- We do not believe there is sufficient evidence at this time to warrant stringent measures, with potentially serious negative economic consequences, to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The global implementation of interim ("no regrets") measures such as those listed above could significantly limit world greenhouse gas emissions without imposing costly and politically divisive formal targets.

-- While we supported the Noordwijk Conference goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions as soon as feasible, the understanding of what greenhouse gas emissions limitations can be achieved without unacceptable negative economic impacts is unclear. Work is continuing domestically and in the IPCC and other fora to assess the economic implications of this and other goals.

-- Should an improved understanding of the climate change issue indicate that specific limitation efforts are warranted, these can be addressed through a protocol(s) to the framework convention. Such a protocol(s) must have the adherence of countries representing much of the world's land mass and population to be effective.

-- Should the international community eventually agree that greenhouse gas targets and timetables are necessary, we would support a comprehensive approach to consider all greenhouse gas sources and sinks collectively. In addition, we would support implementation mechanisms which are economically efficient and market driven.

-- We have thus proposed that any such protocol address all greenhouse gases, their sources and sinks, comprehensively. We have also proposed that the international community consider the economic advantages of a system of international emissions trading.

o Financial Aid and Technology Transfer Issues:

-- Within the IPCC, LDC representatives have called for: (1) the establishment of new funding sources for climate change related projects in LDCs; and (2) the transfer of technology to LDCs on preferential and non-commercial terms.

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-- The U.S. position is that: (1) existing financial assistance mechanisms and levels should be evaluated for their applicability to LDC climate change needs before the establishment of new sources or additional amounts of funding is considered; and (2) intellectual property rights must be protected in technology transfer arrangements, which should rely to the fullest possible extent on commercial exchanges and channels.

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