


THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 8, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ROGER BALLENTINE 

RE: Report on the Fifth Conference of the Parties (COP-5) of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

I am pleased to report a positive outcome to last week's climate meeting in Bonn. As you know, COP-5 was an important intermediate step in the hard task of finalizing the Kyoto Protocol at COP-6 next year. While this COP did not address the most difficult issues that divide countries (such as the EU proposal to "cap" the Kyoto Mechanisms), it was critical that we come away from the meeting with a clear sense of the path to COP-6.

The COP agreed on a greatly stepped-up schedule of technical and high-level meetings. As expected, we did not prevail in setting the date of the COP for spring 2001, instead settling for November 13-24 of next year. We found more convergence than expected on many of the substantive elements of the package that will need to be finalized for COP-6. We were able to make substantial progress on such key technical areas as the Kyoto mechanisms, sinks, and compliance.

Strong U.S. support for an intensified process helped us deliver the primary message we hoped to convey: that the Administration is serious about climate change and serious about the Kyoto process. We repeatedly described the many actions we are taking at home and the initiatives you have proposed to our counterparts from other countries, the press, the business community, and the environmental community. It is clear, however, that many countries (including China and those in the EU) and the environmental community continue to criticize the U.S. for not taking stronger action.

Our efforts to secure greater developing country participation under the Kyoto Protocol continue, although the outlook for success in the near term is not promising. Argentina announced its desire to take on an emissions mitigation target that appears to be based on sound economic analysis. Kazakhstan proposed an amendment that would allow it to take on developed country obligations. Although the amendment failed, the Kazaks will pursue their intention take on such obligations over the next year. In the U.S. statement on the way forward, we proposed a dialogue on developing country participation, which we expect to pursue over the coming months.

We had a number of important bilateral meetings. Our meeting with the Chinese was difficult, as they believe that the U.S. should take action before they can be expected to participate. It is clear that they do not yet understand the economic and other benefits available to them through technology transfer, the Clean Development Mechanism, and other joint, cooperative efforts. The Indian government has a new environment Minister who is not yet familiar with this issue. The Indians too were cautious, but we had a positive discussion about the joint statement negotiated by Secretary Richardson. Undersecretary Loy and I hope to travel to India in the near future to seek to build on that progress and to develop some sort of breakthrough agreement that you could announce as part of any Presidential visit next year.

I had a lengthy one on one meeting with British Deputy Prime Minister Prescott. While we discussed the strong disagreements that we have with the EU regarding the flexibility mechanisms, we had a very positive exchange. The British are very interested in the idea of a joint climate change event between you and Prime Minister Blair. They would like to focus on the economic opportunities of fighting climate change and how the developing world can grow their economies and reduce their emissions. This, of course, has been your message as well.

The COP-5 outcome leaves us with an exceedingly ambitious schedule for next year that will have numerous domestic implications. Our domestic initiatives will receive greater international scrutiny, and our domestic opponents will mobilize as we get closer to COP6.

cc: The Vice President
John Podesta
Martin Baily
Charles Burson
George Frampton
Neal Lane
Gene Sperling
Larry Stein
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