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United States Department of State

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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM *sk*  
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RELEASED IN FULL

TO: The Secretary  
FROM: OES - Richard J. Smith, Acting *sk*  
SUBJECT: Preparations for an International Conference on the Environment

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior Reviewer

SUMMARY

The OES Policy Coordinating Committee is reviewing a proposal to meet the President's campaign pledge to host an environmental conference. The proposal calls for a major conference to be held in 1991 focussing on a range of key environmental issues. We have reservations and will seek to keep the issue open for further study.

DISCUSSION

In the course of the campaign, then Presidential candidate Bush noted that "in my first year in office, I will convene a global conference on the environment at the White House. All nations will be welcome--and indeed, all nations will be needed." He added, "The agenda will be clear. We will talk about global warming. We will talk about acid rain. We will talk about saving our oceans and preventing the loss of tropical forests. And we will act."

In the weeks since President Bush took office we, Bill Reilly at EPA and several White House offices have thought hard about how best to honor this pledge. Options considered have included:

- A large high-level conference on a general environmental theme;
- A smaller, more tightly focussed conference of environmental experts; and
- Participation by the President in a major scheduled international environmental event.

None of those proposals has been judged acceptable. However, we have worked with the NSC staff and EPA -- under the auspices of the new OES Policy Coordinating Committee -- to develop alternative initiatives.

*Environmental Issues Paper (1989)*

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The proposal now under consideration would have the President announce -- possibly at the Summit -- that he will host a major environmental conference in Washington in the Spring of 1991. Key representatives of world governments, international organizations, environmental groups, and industry would be invited to attend. This conference would focus on general environmental issues and would be the culmination of one or more initiatives the President would launch at this year's Economic Summit.

Several of the President's Summit initiatives could require conferences in their own right e.g., global change, pollution prevention and the health of the oceans. A meeting on climate change is already scheduled for October. A pollution prevention conference and a state of the oceans conference could be held in the Spring and Fall of 1990, respectively. These conferences would be "feeders", leading to the President's conference itself in 1991. Work underway in various international forums could feed into the 1991 conference. Holding the conference in 1991 would also allow ample time for preparation.

This approach will be reviewed with all concerned agencies this week in our Policy Coordinating Committee. Informal soundings so far suggest it has some support. Officials at the assistant secretary level in several agencies agree it would fulfill the President's conference commitment. We are concerned, however, that a large meeting bringing together groups with disparate views could be difficult to manage and may not produce the desired outcome. We will express reservations at this week's PCC and will seek to keep the issue open for further consideration.

Whatever the decision on this initiative, a Presidential call for new work that draws on the resources of multilateral organizations should be backed by a commitment to meet our financial obligations to international organizations and provide additional resources as required. If the U.S. is to host one or more environmental conferences, or contribute to international organizations for this purpose, we will also require budgetary allocations beyond current projections.

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