

10.28.09

Copenhagen and Beyond – The Responses of the World to the Climate Challenge

- Warm thanks to the Kyoto Club for the invitation to come here. It is very appropriate to be discussing the climate challenge in the context of a clean technology event, because innovation in low-carbon technology is absolutely key to addressing the climate challenge.
- Meeting the climate and clean energy challenge is a top priority for President Obama. In the past ten months, the United States has demonstrated its renewed commitment to these goals both by supporting domestic policies that advance clean energy, climate security, and economic recovery; and by vigorously reengaging in international climate negotiations.
- U.S. domestic policies:
 - The economic stimulus package passed early this year, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, contains over \$80 billion for clean energy investment.

- Historic new vehicle efficiency standards increase fuel economy and reduce greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks. The new standards will ultimately require an average fuel economy of 35.5 mpg in 2016.
- President Obama is working with Congress to advance comprehensive climate and energy legislation. Legislation that passed through the House of Representatives, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill, would reduce U.S. carbon emissions from 2005 levels 17 percent by 2020 and 83 percent by 2050. Similar legislation is now moving through the Senate.
- In his remarks at the September 22nd, 2009 UN Summit on Climate Change in New York, President Obama stated, “Taken together, these steps represent a historic recognition on behalf of the American people and their government. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. We are determined to act. And we will meet our responsibility to future generations.”

- We recognize that the United States must be a leader in the global effort to combat climate change. We have a responsibility as the world's largest historic emitter of greenhouse gases. And we are confident that the United States can and will take the lead in building the 21st century clean energy economy.
- As U.S. Climate Change Envoy Todd Stern said recently, the reductions envisioned in the U.S. legislation involve a seismic shift in the U.S. economy between now and 2050, with essentially a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in each decade up to 2050.
- We believe that whether we are speaking in terms of effort, cost, or emissions reduction in this century, the U.S. plans are comparable to those of the European Union and other developed countries.
- But action by the United States alone – or even by the entire developed world -- is not enough. The International Energy Agency estimates 97 percent of emission growth will come from the developing world. This much is clear: climate change is a global crisis that demands a global solution.

- There is simply no way to preserve a safe and livable planet unless major developing countries such as China, Brazil, and India play a globally responsible role along with the United States in the climate negotiations. These countries have taken steps to reduce energy intensity, boost renewables and strengthen vehicle standards. Yet they can and will need to do much more.

- The Administration is engaging allies and partners toward a global strategy to combat climate change on a number of fronts:
 - We are aggressively seeking an international agreement through the UN Framework Convention negotiating process.

 - We have established an invigorated dialogue among 17 of the world's largest economies through the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate.

 - We are elevating climate and clean energy to a top tier issue in key bilateral relationships.

- I would like to note here the important role that Italy played this summer, by hosting and co-chairing the Major Economies' Leaders' meeting this July in L'Aquila.

- Italy also is co-leading two of the Major Economies working groups that are looking at the way forward on different technologies, in this case, on bio-energy and on smart grids.
- An example of the renewed U.S. engagement is the proposal by President Obama at the UN climate summit to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. G-20 leaders at the 2009 Pittsburgh summit committed to phase out fossil fuel subsidies over the mid-term, providing targeted cash transfers and other appropriate support to the poorest affected. The OECD and IEA estimate that eliminating fossil fuel subsidies worldwide would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent or more by 2050.

Turning to the climate negotiations that are now underway:

- To meet the demands of science, we are seeking an international climate agreement that requires the following:
 - Developed countries need to make robust, absolute emissions reductions in the mid-term from a base year (for example, from 1990 or from 2005).

- Major developing countries must take actions in the mid-term that will significantly reduce their emissions compared to their business as usual path. These reductions must keep the world on an emissions pathway that is consistent with where the science tells us we need to be.
- Least developed countries need not make any commitments to reduce emissions. They should focus on developing low carbon growth plans, with financial and technological assistance. We will fully support them in this effort.
- Other developing countries, likewise, need not make commitments to *reduce* emissions. They should also focus on developing and implementing low carbon growth plans, with financial and technological assistance where needed, and implementing nationally appropriate mitigation actions to help guide them on a long-term sustainable development path.
- Importantly, developed and developing countries must agree to stand behind our respective actions internationally. Although we are agreeing to different actions, our commitment to carrying out those actions must be the same.

- Ultimately, an international climate agreement must be not just about limiting carbon emissions but about providing a safe pathway for sustainable development. The link between clean, sustainable energy and robust economic growth is the hallmark of the 21st century global economy. Building a clean energy global economy can provide significant economic opportunity, driving investment, economic growth and job creation around the world.
- Another important part of any international climate agreement will be technology. To meet the climate challenge, we need to promote and provide support for the development and dissemination of clean energy technology around the world, including in developing countries. The climate change agreement will provide access to technology and access to resources for all countries to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.
- The U.S. will continue to work hard toward combating climate change and reaching a strong international agreement that puts the world on a pathway to a clean energy future. Working together, we can meet the clean energy and climate challenge in a way that will drive sustainable, low-carbon economic growth in 21st century.