

Statement at hearing of the United States Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works and the Committee on Foreign Relations

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Distinguished Chairman, Honorable Senators, ladies and gentlemen. First let me say what a privilege it is for me to have the opportunity of testifying before these two important committees of the United States Senate as you consider issues which are at the center of my own life interests and concerns. It is particularly encouraging to know that you are addressing these issues at a time when the position of the United States of America in respect of them has never been more important to the human future.

We face an ominous paradox as the evidence of our destructive impacts on the earth's environment and life-support systems has become more compelling while there has been a serious loss of momentum in the political will to deal with them. The United States is at the center of this dilemma. Thanks largely to the leadership of the United States the world community has made impressive progress in its understanding of environment issues and their inextricable relationship with the economic development processes to which they give since the first global conference on the human environment convened by the United Nations in Stockholm in 1972 put the environmental issue on the international agenda. The world has looked to the United States for leadership in its national policies and legislation and in development of the system of international cooperation, conventions and agreements through which governments have sought to cooperate in managing issues that even the greatest nations cannot manage alone.

The recent retreat by the United States from its long standing role as the leading driver of these issues, as particularly evidenced by its withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol of the Climate Change Convention, threatens the progress that has been made in collaborative management of our environmental problems in the past thirty years and the prospects for the further progress that is so essential to our common future. This has cast a cloud over prospects for the World Summit on Sustainable Development which will convene next month in Johannesburg, South Africa and the unique opportunity it provides to give new impetus and momentum to the processes of international cooperation which the effective management of these issues requires. Thus your hearings are especially timely and important.

If I now speak candidly of some of the concerns I share with many others as to the position of the United States on the issues you are now addressing I do so not as a critic but as a long standing and committed friend of the United States with a deep affinity and admiration for the values and qualities that have made this such a great nation. Sharing these concerns as to the unilateral withdrawal by the United States of its support for international agreements and negotiating processes in which it has been such an active and influential participant, is not in any way to question its right to do so. Indeed it is understandable that with a new Administration and Congress the United States would take a new look at and bring new perspectives to bear on these issues, also that in its

preoccupation with the war on terrorism and other urgent issues it is taking your Government some time to develop its position on these matters.

I have great confidence in the sound instincts and values of the American people which in poll after poll affirm the continuing priority they accord to the environment issue and that through the processes of American democracy this will ultimately be reflected in the actions and policies of their Government. At the same time I must confess my deep concern as to the signals that have emerged thus far of the nature and the direction of the changes that are now in process.

It is particularly germane that this hearing is focusing on the international agreements and negotiating processes to which the United States is a party. These are perhaps the best indicators of the current state of political will towards international environmental cooperation and the prospects of revitalizing and strengthening it.

Let me review briefly the larger context in which I view the importance of your consideration of these issues.

At the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, the first global intergovernmental environmental conference, we lost our innocence. We recognized that much of what we had been doing in pursuit of our economic goals had, however inadvertently, been producing environmental damage and social dichotomies, which were undermining our quality of life and prospects for the future. The eyes of the more developed countries were opened to the very different perspectives and priorities of the majority of the world's people living in developing countries where the daily struggle for relief from poverty and progress towards a better life through development are the overriding priorities. As Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her memorable statement to the Conference stated, in developing countries "poverty is the greatest polluter".

The Declaration and Plan of Action agreed following intense negotiations at Stockholm recognized in a number of important respects the need to create a positive synthesis between the environment and economic development. It is, after all, through our economic behavior and practices that we have our impacts on the environment and these impacts affect our social as well as our physical environment. From this insight has emerged the concept of sustainable development, the process by which we bring the economic, environmental and social dimensions of the development process into apposite synthesis. Sustainable development should therefore be seen as the means by which our security, prosperity and well being can become secure and sustainable rather than as an end in itself.

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair said recently, "you don't have to be an expert to realize that sustainable development is going to become the greatest challenge we face this century".

The Stockholm Conference gave rise to a proliferation of initiatives - establishment in virtually all countries of environmental agencies, policies and regulations; a broad range of international treaties and agreements and an explosion in the number of environmental non-governmental organizations and citizen movements as well as a major expansion of the environmental programs of international organizations. The United Nations General Assembly in December 1972, based on the Conference's recommendation, established the United Nations Environment Program as the centerpiece of the emerging global network of environmental actors to lead the process of following up and implementing its results.

Since 1972 we have learned a great deal more about the nature and the causes of our environmental dilemma and have made notable progress in developing the technologies, the tools and the capacities to manage these problems successfully. Indeed there have been many individual success stories which demonstrate that it is possible to bring our economic life into a positive balance with our environmental and social systems through the transition to a sustainable development pathway.

By the mid-1980's some of the momentum generated by Stockholm had subsided. Progress towards achieving the environmental objectives set there was lagging. In response the United Nations General Assembly decided to establish a World Commission on Environment and Development headed by Norway's former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Commission's report in 1987, *Our Common Future*, made a compelling case for sustainable development as "the only secure and viable pathway to the future of the human community". With the political impetus generated by the Brundtland Commission, the UN General Assembly decided to convene on the 20th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference in 1992 a Conference on Environment and Development and accepted the invitation of Brazil to host it.

Now known as the "Earth Summit" the Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 brought together more heads of government than had ever before assembled as well as an unprecedented number and range of civil society actors and media representatives. The Earth Summit agreed on a Declaration of Principles building on the Stockholm Declaration, a comprehensive program of action - "Agenda 21" - to give effect to these principles and Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity which provided the framework for continuing negotiations following Rio. It also mandated a negotiating process that led to the completion since then of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

As you know the United States has ratified the Climate Change Convention and the Desertification Convention and in spite its withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol it is still bound by its adherence to the Climate Change Convention to reduce its green house gas emissions. Although it has now opted to do this outside of the Kyoto Protocol the world community continues to look to the United States for the kind of parallel actions that will correspond to and hopefully exceed, the targets and timetables provided for by Kyoto.

While the results of the Earth Summit inevitably fell short in some important respects of the ambitious expectations that we had for it, the agreements it produced nevertheless

provided the basic foundations and guidelines for the transition of the world community to a sustainable development pathway. And the fact that there were agreed by virtually all world governments, most of them at the level of their leader, gave them a high degree of political authority. Nevertheless, as I cautioned in my closing remarks to the Conference, it did not guarantee their implementation. Unfortunately, this proved all too prophetic.

Agenda 21 provides a comprehensive road-map for the transition to a sustainable development pathway. Although it does not carry the force of law the fact that it was agreed by all the governments of the United Nations, most of them at the level of their heads of State or Government, gives it a high degree of political authority. While its implementation has thus far been and on the whole disappointing, it has nevertheless served as a basis for the adoption of their national Agenda 21 by a number of governments of which China was one of the first. It has also inspired the establishment of local Agendas 21 by more than 3000 cities and towns throughout the world and such important industries as the tourism and travel and the road transport industries. It is particularly important that at Johannesburg governments re-affirm their commitment to Agenda 21 and to strengthening and building on it in those areas in which it is still inadequate or incomplete.

The risks to the future of the earth's environment and life-support systems identified in Stockholm and elaborated in Rio de Janeiro remain, while the forces driving them persist - increased population concentrated in those countries least able to support it, and even greater increases in the scale and intensity of the economic activities which impact on the environment. These have reached a point in which we are literally the agents of our own future; what we do or fail to do, will in the first decades of this new millennium in all probability, determine the future course of human life on earth. It is an awesome responsibility the implications of which we have not yet recognized. Certainly they have not yet been reflected in our policies and priorities.

As an optimist I continue to believe that the necessary change of course is possible. But as a realist I am deeply concerned that despite all the knowledge we have gained and progress we have made we have still not demonstrated the degree of political will or sense of priority that such a transition requires.

The transition to a sustainable development pathway is, I submit, as essential to the future of the human community today as it was before the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, on New York and Washington. The preoccupation with the ominous consequences of these horrendous acts is understandable and, indeed, necessary. But we must not allow this to sidetrack or undermine our efforts to achieve economic, environmental and social sustainability and security.

The tragic events of September 11th dramatically brought home to us that the phenomena we now refer to as globalization, which has opened up so many new and exciting opportunities, has also united us in facing a new generation of risks, imbalances and vulnerabilities. Risks to our personal security, the security of our homes, offices and communities and, more fundamentally, risks to the earth's' life-support systems on which

the survival and well being of the entire human family depends. These risks and vulnerabilities are inextricably linked through the complex, systemic processes of globalization by which human activities are shaping our common future. They cannot be understood or dealt with in isolation. Nor can they be managed alone by any nation, however powerful. Indeed, they require a degree of cooperation beyond anything we seem yet prepared to accept.

Stockholm, in its historic Declaration stated that “to defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind - a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of world-wide economic and social development”. It thus pointed up the systemic linkages between the environment and the issues of peace and security, economic and social development through which human activities are shaping our common future.

In a 1973 Foreign Affairs article I stressed that the principal insight arising from the Stockholm Conference was the need for a ecological, systemic approach to the management of the issues through which we are impacting on our own future. This is essential to our understanding and management of the broader complex of issues and processes that we now generally refer to as globalization.

The September 11th, 2001 tragedy demonstrated dramatically the vulnerabilities of even the most advanced and powerful of societies to destructive attacks, however misguided, by relatively small groups of alienated people. This underscores the need for international cooperation, not only to conduct the war against terrorism, but also to deal with the whole complex of issues integral to the globalization process. These include eradication of poverty, environmental protection, notably the risk of climate change, meeting the development and security needs of developing countries, and redressing the gross and growing imbalances that divide rich and poor and nourish the enmities and frustrations that are the seedbeds of conflict.

Peace and security are an indispensable pre condition to sustainability and overcoming poverty. War and violent conflict produce devastating damage to the environment. And the human costs of such wars and conflicts go far beyond the immediate deaths and suffering that result from them in destroying and undermining the resources on which even larger numbers of people depend for their livelihoods. This essential link between peace and sustainable development is the reason that United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan undertook to revitalize the University for Peace headquartered in San José, Costa Rica, and that it has established a strategic partnership with the Earth Council to re-enforce its capacities in the field of environmental security.

International cooperation is as indispensable to the effective management of the other elements of the globalization process as it is to the prevention of terrorism. But cooperation based on coercion will not long be effective. Sustainable cooperation requires a true sharing in the decision-making and in responsibilities on the part of the majority of nations which can only be achieved if the major nations of the world take the

lead. We regret the retreat from multi-lateral cooperation on these issues on the part of the United States which has performed such immensely valuable service to the world community in leading it so effectively through most of the period since World War II. No individual nation in the position to replace the United States in this role and while we continue to hope for and expect the return to leadership on the part of the United States, we cannot afford at this critical time to allow a leadership vacuum to prevail which would put at risk the very future of life on earth as we know it. There are some encouraging first signs of the emergence of a new configuration of leadership in the ratification by the European Union, and Japan of the Kyoto Protocol to the Climate Change Convention despite its repudiation by the United States. I look to my own country, Canada, to do so too. The need for new and revitalized leadership is reinforced by the sobering realization that much of what has been agreed in the past has not been implemented and there is a disturbing tendency even to back-track on past agreements. It is important to be reminded that Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration in affirming the right of states to develop their own resources in accordance with their own environmental policies, have the “responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond their limits of national jurisdiction”. Implementation of this principle would in itself require those states which are contributing disproportionately to the deterioration of the global environment, as for example in continuing to produce more than their share of green house gas emissions, to take the measures required to reduce their impacts. This responsibility is at the very heart of the challenge to the new generation of leadership which must be faced at Johannesburg.

The power and the influence of the United States in today's world is unrivaled and indeed without precedent in history. This gives the United States a freedom of action not enjoyed by other nations. Other nations are not in a position to hold the US accountable for the performance of its obligations under international law. Nevertheless when it does act unilaterally it inevitably pays a cost in terms of the resentment and reluctance of others to cooperate on other issues of importance to the United States. It is important to note that already there is clear evidence that even traditional friends of the United States have not followed it in opting out such important international agreements as the Kyoto Protocol, the Land Mines Convention and the International Criminal Court. This is a departure from their long standing practice of following the US lead even in instances where they are not entirely comfortable with it.

The unprecedented power of the United States carries with it unprecedented responsibility, particularly at a time when the human future depends on the actions we take or fail to take in this generation. When the United States acts selectively to carry out its international obligations or to force other nations to carry out theirs it serves to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of international law which is the indispensable foundation for world peace, security and order. As the principal architect of the system of international treaties, conventions and agreements which constitute the current imperfect but indispensable international legal regime and the only nation capable of insisting on enforcement, what the United States does or fails to do is an immense and often decisive influence on the behavior of other nations. The world community must be

grateful to the United States for having for most part exercised its responsibility admirably. But in those instances in which it has not done so or has insisted only selectively on enforcement by others of their international obligations, this is an understandable cause of concern, even dismay, on the part of other nations for its weakening effect on the entire process of international law and prospects of its equitable enforcement.

In drawing the lessons of our experience in the last 30 years, it is clear that we have made a great deal of progress, notably in improving but by no means resolving, the more immediate and visible environmental conditions in the more industrialized countries. Impressive improvements have been effected in the environmental performance of industry and in development of technologies which promise solutions to most problems as, for example, the prospect of emission-free motor vehicles and the transition to a hydrogen-based energy economy. At the same time, developing countries have become more aware of and concerned with the environmental problems which inhibit their own development. These problems exact immense human and economic costs, produce deteriorating conditions in their cities, and destructive exploitation of the natural resources on which future development depends. They undermine the immense challenge of meeting their growing needs for water and ensuring its quality, prevention and care of destructive and debilitating diseases, and most of all their primary need to lift their people out of the quagmire of poverty. Yet developing countries which are custodians of most of the world's precious biodiversity resources are expected to care for them with only sporadic and limited support from industrialized countries. As their economies grow they will contribute increasingly to the more remote and less visible global problems for which the industrialized countries are largely responsible, notably the risk of climate change which affects the interests and the future of all nations.

Despite progress on many fronts, the environmental health of the earth which was first diagnosed at Stockholm has deteriorated overall since then while the forces driving it persist-increased population, primarily concentrated in developing countries, and even greater growth of the world economy. The benefits have been largely concentrated in industrialized countries, even as newly developing countries, notably China, are now accounting for an increasingly large share of the global economy.

As their economies grow, developing countries are finding that the environmental impacts of their development are undermining the purposes of development and exacting a heavy cost in terms of impacts on their natural resources, human health and productivity. At the Stockholm Conference developing countries made clear their willingness to participate in international environmental cooperation insisted that they required "new and additional resources" to enable them to do so. This has been a constant refrain in all international fora in which these issues are discussed and negotiated since then.

One of the most disappointing trends since the Earth Summit in 1992 has been the lack of response by OECD countries to the needs of developing countries for the additional financial resources which all governments at Rio agreed were required to enable them to

make their transition to a sustainable development pathway and to implement international agreements. What has been particularly discouraging is that progress towards meeting with these needs has been further set back since Rio as a number of donors have reduced their Official Development Assistance. Thus the commitment by the United States and others at a recent United Nations Conference in Monterrey to increase their assistance is a welcome signal. This should not be seen as charity but as a necessary investment in our own environmental security. An especially urgent priority is to complete agreement on replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, the only new source of funding the environmental needs of developing countries to result from the Earth Summit.

With the reductions in Official Development Assistance we must be more innovative in motivating private capital -now the principal source of financial flows to developing countries- to contribute more to meeting their environmental and sustainable development needs.

We have for the first time in history the capacity to meet these monumental challenges. Indeed, on a global basis we are the wealthiest civilization ever and have the capacity to produce wealth at an unprecedented rate. It is clearly a question of how we set our priorities for the use of our wealth. Business leaders at Rio made the point that our current approach to setting those priorities is not sustainable- that we must “change course”. And I am convinced that if we do not make this change of course in the first years of this new millennium the prospects for the world's future will be ominous indeed.

Much of what we must do to meet these formidable challenges has already been articulated and agreed at Stockholm, Rio and various other international for a and affirmed in a variety of international agreements. But implementation depends on motivation and this is at the heart of our current dilemma. Most of the changes we must make are in our economic life. The system of taxes, subsidies, regulations and policies through which governments motivate the behavior of individuals and corporation continues to incent unsustainable behavior.

At the deepest level, all people and societies are motivated by their moral, ethical and spiritual values. To build on these a set of basic moral and ethical principles which are broadly acceptable is certainly not easy. But a process that has taken several years and involved millions of people around the world has succeeded in producing a “peoples” Earth Charter as a major contribution to establishing the moral and ethical foundations for sustainable development.

I am pleased to say the United States has been deeply involved in the Earth Charter movement. The distinguished, American Professor Steven Rockefeller, chaired the committee which drafted the Charter in cooperation with people of different faiths and beliefs throughout the world. Some 500 organizations in the United States have joined with thousands around the world which have contributed to and/or endorsed the Earth Charter. These include the Humane Society of the United States, the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, the Orion Society, the Sierra Club, the World

Resource Institute, the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the United States Conference of Mayors as well as dozens of individual cities and towns.

The environmental movement has its roots in the concerns and initiatives of people well before it moved on to the agendas of governments. Today the primary impetus to environmental action and responsibility comes from civil society, with the support of scientists and the increasingly constructive engagement of industry. The alarm bells being sounded by some sectors of industry as to the high costs to economy of environmental measures, notably the reductions in greenhouse gas emission called for under the Kyoto Protocol, are countered by the increasing in evidence that such measures open up more new opportunities for industry than they negate.

Surely we must accept that the benefits of environmental security and sustainability are well worth and indeed less expensive than the ultimate costs of inaction. The United States has long accepted the high costs of maintaining its military strength and indeed this has produced an important economic spin-offs as for example in driving United States leadership in development and application of new technologies. I am convinced that in applying the same approach, the costs of environmental security would produce even more opportunities and benefits to the economy.

What, then, can be expected from the Johannesburg Summit? First and foremost there must be no retreat from the agreements reached at Stockholm, Rio de Janeiro and other international fora and the many legal instruments to which they gave rise. Indeed it is important that there be a strong re-affirmation by governments in Johannesburg of their commitments to these past agreements and to implementing and building on them in the post-Johannesburg period. In this respect, the position of the United States will be pivotal.

An a priori requirement for this is the successful completion of agreements on the issues that were left on resolved in the final preparatory meeting in Bali, Indonesia. It is now too late in the process to seek consensus on new initiatives but not too late to place new initiatives on the table in Johannesburg. These could include:

- A commitment to strong support for United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in strengthening the capacities and coordination of the organizations, programs and agencies of the United Nations which deal with the environment, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.
- A call for the establishment of a Consultative Group on Clean Energy (CGCE), or similar entity, drawing on the successful experience of the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR). Its purpose would be to provide an international consultative mechanism, not a new organization, to facilitate private - partnerships in identifying priorities for research and development of sustainable energy technologies, particularly those most relevant to the needs and interests of developing countries. It would also help mobilize and deploy the financial and

- technological assistance required to ensure their availability to developing countries under conditions conducive to their adoption and use.
- A call for governments to undertake a review of the system of fiscal, tax and other incentives, regulations and policies through which they motivate the behavior of individuals and corporations to provide positive incentives for environmentally and socially sound and sustainable development.
 - Recognition of the Earth Charter as an important expression of the commitment by civil society of the world and ethical basis for sustainable development.

The convening of this hearing by your two extremely important and influential committees demonstrates your deep sense of the interest in and responsibility of the United States for its position on these issues. Recognizing that their fundamental nature does not lend itself to quick or easy solutions, there are none-the-less some very practical measures which you could undertake to make an important contribution to resolving them. You are, I understand, about to receive a report by the General Accounting Office of the current status of existing international agreements and their implementation. These could provide the basis for mandating a continuing process of monitoring, adherence to and performance under such agreements by the United States and others. The results could be incorporated in periodic reports very much like the reports that the State Department issues in respect of human rights. Such a monitoring and reporting system would provide an important stimulus to implementation of both the letter and the spirit of these agreements.

Developing countries face very special constraints both in negotiating and implementing international agreements because of their lack of sufficient financial resources to support the professional and technical expertise that this requires. Yet their active participation in and adherence to these agreements is essential to their effectiveness. A very modest investment by the United States in supporting the strengthening by developing countries of their own capacities to negotiate and service, these agreements would represent an important contribution to alleviating one of the main obstacles to negotiating and implementing them effectively. It would also require only a very modest investment to increase support for the international secretariats which are responsible for the servicing of such agreements. Of course, others would follow the US lead if it were to take such initiatives. This could be a small but important step towards the revitalization of US leadership.

If the United States were to take a lead in presenting or supporting such initiatives it would have an immense impact on prospects for success at Johannesburg.

This threats face in common from the mounting dangers to the environment, resource life-support systems on which all life on Earth depends are as great or greater than the risks we face of conflicts with each other. The revitalization of the system of international cooperation of which the United States was the primary architect is the only feasible basis on which we can manage the risks and

realize the immense potential for progress and fulfillment for the entire human family which is within our reach.

All people and nations have in the past been willing to accord high priority to the measures required for their own security. We must give the same kind of priority to civilizational security and sustainability. This will take a major shift in the current political mind-set. If this seems unrealistic in today's political context we should recall that history demonstrates that what seems unrealistic today becomes inevitable tomorrow. Necessity will compel this shift eventually the question is can we really afford the costs and the risks of waiting. Most of all we need the renewed leadership of this great nation. I commend you for this encouraging manifestation that this renewal is well under way.