
PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP: RESPONSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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The Bush administration is committed to protecting the world's natural resources through responsible environmental policies that include promoting sustainable development, controlling and reducing the use of toxic chemicals and pesticides, preserving tropical forests, and pursuing innovative approaches to climate change, according to John Turner, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. Turner previously served as President and Chief Executive Officer of The Conservation Fund, a national non-profit organization dedicated to public-private partnerships to protect land and water resources.

An expanding global population, rapid conversion of critical habitat to other uses, degradation of critical air, water, and land resources, and the spread of invasive species to non-native habitats pose a serious threat to the world's natural resources and to all of us who depend on them for food, fuel, shelter, medicine, and economic and social well-being. Many environmental problems respect no borders and threaten the health, prosperity, and even the national security of Americans. When people around the globe lack access to energy, clean water, food, or a livable environment, the economic instability and political unrest that may result can be felt at home in the form of costly peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions or lost markets. Pesticide contamination of food and water, polluted air, and invasive plant and animal species can take their toll on our welfare and economy. Policies that distort markets and provide incentives for unsustainable development intensify the problems. Addressing them and achieving sustainable management of natural resources worldwide require the cooperation and commitment of all countries.

In a world where half the human race — 3 billion people — live on less than \$2 a day and billions lack adequate access to safe water, sanitation, and electricity, responsible policy must promote sustainable development. This means achieving social and economic development while protecting the environment.

As recognized by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), good governance within countries and internationally is essential. Sustainable development cannot be achieved where corruption is pervasive, markets closed, private property unprotected, and private contracts unenforceable. Developed and developing countries alike require a foundation of good governance in which free markets, sound institutions, and the rule of law are the norm.

WSSD underscored that sustainable development depends on the combined efforts of all stakeholders — government, civil society, and the private sector — working through partnerships to achieve results. At the summit, the United States launched a number of collaborative commitments to action, including five new “signature” partnerships in health (HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis), water (Water for the Poor), energy (Clean Energy Initiative), hunger (Initiative to End Hunger in Africa), and forests (Congo Basin Forest Partnership), as well as other key initiatives on oceans, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, housing, geographic information, and education, among others.

President Bush has made support for sustainable development a major goal of his national security strategy. On February 5, he presented his groundbreaking Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) to Congress, calling it a powerful way to

“draw whole nations into an expanding circle of opportunity and enterprise.” The \$5 billion MCA, pending congressional approval, will be based on genuine partnerships between the United States and those developing countries that govern justly, invest in their people, and promote economic freedom. The MCA will build on our international leadership in financial support for sustainable development. In addition, the United States has long been the largest contributor to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the world’s leading financial institution focusing on global environmental benefits for developing countries. This administration recently pledged to raise our contribution to the GEF to \$500 million over the next four years.

The United States plays a leading role in international environmental policy. We are active in efforts to control toxic chemicals around the world. We have led the way in integrating environmental and economic policy, in part by incorporating environmental agreements into free trade agreements. The United States is active in efforts to preserve critical habitats, and in the protection of endangered and threatened species. Around the world, in more ways than can be summarized here, we work to keep development, trade, and environmental protection on track. Our goal is a more prosperous world, one healthy for its people, with room for the sustainable ecosystems that provide habitats for people and wildlife around the globe.

The United States is a key player in international initiatives to reduce the use of toxic chemicals and pesticides. It has led efforts to conclude the Stockholm Convention, a treaty to deal with persistent organic pollutants (POPs). POPs are toxic chemicals that persist in the environment for long periods, and are transported globally through the atmosphere and oceans. The United States and many developed countries have phased out the most problematic POPs, but they continue to be used in large quantities elsewhere. The Stockholm Convention calls for a virtual phase-out of the 12 most hazardous POPs, plus others that may be listed in the future. This administration has attached a high

priority to ratification of the Stockholm Convention and is working hard to obtain the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate and the enactment of its implementing legislation.

We have also been working multilaterally to address the worldwide effects of mercury emissions. Mercury accumulates as it moves up the food chain; it is found in high concentrations in certain species. People living in the Arctic are at particular risk, because they rely on diets of fish and marine mammals with very high concentrations of mercury. Earlier this year, the United States led an effort to set up a program to help developing countries reduce mercury emissions, especially from power and chemical plants. Over the past two years, the United States has provided about \$1 million in funding for this effort.

Through its work on trade and the environment, the United States has helped advance the integration of economic and environmental policy. In the early 1990s, the United States was the first country to propose inclusion of environmental components in a trade agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement. Over the past two years, this administration has worked to ensure that our free trade agreements (FTAs) with a growing number of countries include mutually supportive environmental cooperation agreements. When we recently concluded FTAs with Chile and Singapore, we also signed agreements that will support their efforts to implement strong environmental policies.

We have been increasingly active in forest conservation. In a recent Environmental Investigation Agency special report on illegal timber transshipped through Singapore, a lead article highlighted “U.S. Leadership on Illegal Logging Issues.” This administration has made illegal logging and associated trade and corruption a global priority. In 2001, the United States was a lead sponsor of a Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Ministerial hosted by Indonesia and the World Bank. The historic declaration from the ministerial provided fresh political will and commitment to address these

issues. An African Forest Law and Governance Ministerial is planned for October in Yaounde, Cameroon. Additionally, planning for a Latin American ministerial is underway.

In 2002, President Bush directed Secretary of State Colin Powell to “develop a new initiative to help developing countries stop illegal logging, a practice that destroys biodiversity and releases millions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.” In response, we have devised a strategic initiative to assist developing nations in combating illegal logging, associated trade, and corruption in the forest sector.

One of my bureau’s first priorities was to develop a major partnership on forests. We started a partnership based on a South African proposal for an initiative in the Congo Basin. We announced the partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in September 2002. The Congo Basin Forest Partnership stands as one of the summit’s success stories. It will help central Africa preserve threatened forests and endangered wildlife and address poverty. The partnership is a remarkable achievement — the first time 29 governments, international organizations, and environmental and business interests have joined to meet our goal of sustainably managing tropical forests. We hope to provide the people of the region with a sustainable livelihood, stronger institutions, improved natural resource governance, and networks of parks and protected areas.

The Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA) authorizes the United States to negotiate debt reduction and debt-for-nature swaps to help protect forests in developing countries. In return for specified debt relief, partner countries agree to spend an equal amount on local forest conservation. The TFCA agreements already concluded will generate \$60.3 million for forest conservation activities in six countries over the life of the agreements.

Often referred to as the rainforests of the sea, coral reef ecosystems are among the most biologically

diverse on Earth, with a higher species density than any other. In addition to being critical fish habitat, reefs provide food and employment, protect coastal areas, and are a major tourist destination. In response to ongoing degradation of reefs, the United States has worked with other countries to establish the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). One of the first partnerships of its kind, ICRI has become a driving force for international efforts to protect coral reef ecosystems by mobilizing governments and stakeholders, and to improve scientific reef management.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) is among the oldest and most successful international environmental treaties. Over the years, CITES has helped protect dozens of species — including elephants, crocodiles, whales, and tigers — some of which have been brought back from the edge of extinction. A founding member, the United States continues to play an active role. In November 2002, at the Twelfth Conference of the Parties, the United States opposed the relaxation of protections for Minke and Bryde’s whales. We expressed concern over resumed trade in African elephant ivory, and endorsed a carefully controlled export program to allow certain countries to gain resources for management of their elephant populations. We also addressed trade in Bigleaf Mahogany and Chilean Sea Bass, two species of commercial importance, to defend them against illegal logging and overfishing.

President Bush has committed the United States to innovative new approaches to climate change. The Bush administration is pursuing measures that will reduce domestic greenhouse gas emissions, relative to the size of the economy, by 18 percent over the next decade. This strategy will demonstrate U.S. leadership by slowing emissions growth and, as the science justifies, stopping and then reversing that growth. During the past 14 years, the United States has led the world in climate change research, investing more than \$20 billion. To maintain U.S. leadership, the Bush administration is working with partner countries on clean energy technologies,

including hydrogen, fuel cells, clean coal technology, and carbon capture and storage. The United States continues to work to advance the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is intended to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate. The United States is also a leading supporter of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the pre-eminent international body dealing with scientific, technical, and socio-economic information on climate change.

Since June 2001, the State Department has spearheaded U.S. partnerships on climate change with key countries, covering issues from climate change science to energy and sequestration technologies to policy approaches. Partners include Australia, Canada, China, seven Central American

countries, India, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the European Union. And on July 31 the State Department hosted an Earth Observation Summit. This ministerial-level meeting initiated new efforts to develop an integrated Earth observation system in order to improve understanding of global environmental and economic challenges.

Prosperous societies are able to devote more of their resources to environmental protection, both to protect human health and preserve natural habitats. The United States will continue its efforts to promote a sustainable future for the Earth's people, its wildlife, and the many beautiful and vital ecosystems that are threatened by reckless exploitation. We will not lose sight of environmental goals as we develop the whole range of our policies around the world. ●