

# The Environment Shared Goals and a Common Mission

Paula J. Dobriansky



AP/WWP Photo by Luis M. Alvarez

A bald eagle—once an endangered species in the United States and now revitalized—flies over Lake Okeechobee, north of the Florida Everglades.

*The United States, a leader in protecting the environment, is committed to helping countries around the world achieve sustainable development while preserving their natural resources and promoting clean air, clean water, and thriving ecosystems.*

*Dr. Paula J. Dobriansky is the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs. Her portfolio includes oceans and international environmental and scientific affairs.*

The U.S. record of achievement in addressing environmental issues over the past 30 years is impressive. Today, we treasure the clear skylines of our great cities, the swimable waters of lakes and rivers, and our national parks, forests, and wilderness areas. The symbol of our nation, the bald eagle, can be seen again nesting within 35 kilometers of the nation's capital.

The modern environmental movement in the United States began with the launch of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Key pieces of U.S. environmental legislation followed, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, and the Superfund Law of 1980, designed to clean up heavily polluted waste sites. Many of these laws and environmental initiatives were among the first of their kind in the world.

In sharing with other nations our experiences of the last 30 years, we have learned that clean air, clean water, and thriving ecosystems are fundamental and shared goals for all nations. We have also learned that environmental issues are not constrained by national borders and that the Earth is an interconnected system.

To address global environmental challenges, the United States is an active partner in more than 200 international environmental treaty negotiations, including agreements to protect the ozone layer, preserve wetlands, safeguard endangered species, conserve natural resources, promote sustainable fisheries, and reduce hazardous chemicals.

The United States is also taking concrete actions to address some of the world's greatest development challenges, such as improving human health, conserving natural resources, increasing economic development, and alleviating poverty. During the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, the United States was at the forefront of international efforts to champion sustainable development.

The United States put forth nearly \$1 billion as part of our Water for the Poor initiative, with the aim of realizing the U.N. Millennium Declaration goal of halving the proportion of people who lack safe water by 2015. In the two and a half years since WSSD, this partnership has improved water and sanitation services for more than 8 million people.



AP/WWP Photo by Natacha Pisarenko

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky (left) talks with U.K. Minister of State for Climate Change and Environment Elliot Morley at the 10th International Convention on Climate Change in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 2004.

We also have partnered with governments and the private sector to form the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, devoting \$53 million dollars and leveraging tens of millions more. This initiative promotes economic development, poverty alleviation, and improved local governance through natural resource conservation and improved resource management, including control of illegal logging and wildlife poaching and trafficking.

The United States is committed to assisting other nations, particularly developing countries, meet the energy

needs of their people, grow their economies, and address environmental concerns presented by air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. These multiple objectives can be achieved by developing clean, efficient, affordable energy technologies for the long term, while continuing to improve and deploy the current generation of lower-emission technologies. This year alone, the United States will spend more than \$3 billion to develop, deploy and commercialize cleaner and more efficient energy technologies, such as hydrogen, nuclear, clean coal, and renewables.

The United States is also leading international efforts to build a coordinated, sustained, and comprehensive Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). When deployed, GEOSS will help us improve environmental forecasts and provide early warnings of natural disasters. Because effective policies are based on sound science and accurate data, this global system of measurements will help the world community take appropriate actions to protect the environment while safeguarding people and fostering economic growth.

The people of the United States take pride in protecting our environment, and we remain committed to this endeavor for the benefit of future generations. We are fully engaged in leading international efforts to meet the complex challenges of global environmental issues, and we reaffirm the critical role of all nations in this shared mission of protecting the health of our planet.. ■