NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Office of the President

June 8, 2005

Dr. Robert May
President
The Royal Society
6-9 Carlton House Terrace
London SW1Y 5AG
U.K.

Dear Bob,

I am writing with regard to the press release issued June 7, 2005 by the Royal Society entitled "Clear science demands prompt action on climate change say G8 science academies". There, I was dismayed to read the following quote from you:

> "The current U.S. policy on climate change is misguided. The Bush Administration has consistently refused to accept the advice of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS). The NAS concluded in 1992 that, 'despite the great uncertainties, greenhouse warming is a potential threat sufficient to justify action now', by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases."

Your statement is quite misleading. Here is what the report that you cite actually said:

> "Despite the great uncertainties, greenhouse warming is a potential threat sufficient to justify action now... This panel recommends implementation of the options presented below through a concerted program to start mitigating further build-up of greenhouse gases and to initiate adaptation measures that are judicious and practical... The recommendations are generally based on low-cost, currently available technologies". (*Policy Implications of Greenhouse Warming: Mitigation, Adaptation, and the Science Base, p. 72; 1992*).

By appending your own phrase, "by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases" to an actual quote from our report, you have considerably changed our report's meaning and intent. As you know, a statement resembling yours was present in the Royal Society's initial draft for a G8 statement. However, it was removed for carefully explained reasons from subsequent drafts. Thus, the relevant statement in the final G8 text is as follows:

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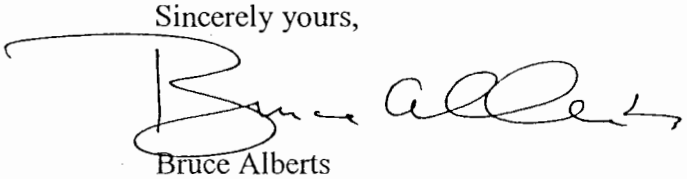
> "The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify nations taking prompt action. It is vital that all nations identify cost-effective steps that they can take now, to contribute to substantial and long-term reduction in net global greenhouse emissions".

The actual text of the G8 statement that we signed is perfectly consistent with what we have been telling our own government in a variety of reports since 1992, whereas your interpretation of our 1992 report is not.

As you must appreciate, having your own misinterpretation of U.S. Academy work widely quoted in our press has caused considerable confusion, both at my Academy and in our government. By advertising our work in this way, you have in fact vitiated much of the careful effort that went into preparing the actual G8 statement. As an unfortunate consequence, I fear that my successor, Ralph Cicerone, could find it difficult to work with the Royal Society on future efforts of this kind – both in this and other important areas for the future of the world.

Sincerely yours,



Bruce Alberts
President

Cc: Martin Rees
Bill Colglazier
Ralph Cicerone