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Working Group II
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
February 12-16
Geneva

The United States was one of several countries that pushed to establish the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 in order to improve our understanding of climate change and its implications. President Bush hosted one of the first meetings of the IPCC in 1989. James Baker's first speech as Secretary of State was to the IPCC.

The IPCC does not conduct its own research. Instead it draws on published literature to assess and summarize current understanding of the science and impacts of climate change as well as possible response measures to it. Each IPCC report is subject to three stages of review by hundreds of scientists worldwide. The IPCC conducted two previous assessments: in 1992 and in 1995. It is now in the process of conducting the Third Assessment Report (TAR), which will consist of three parts. The first part (addressing the causes of climate change) was recently adopted by IPCC Working Group I in Shanghai, China. The US press widely reported the conclusion of that report linking climate change to human activities and predicting significant additional warming over the next century.

Working Group Two (WGII) will meet in Geneva to assess the potential impacts of climate change. The report will touch on a wide range of issues related to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change including impacts on health, agriculture, biological diversity, human settlements, water resources, and insurance. Several hundred USG scientists and other experts provided extensive comments on previous drafts of this report. While we had technical concerns with previous drafts, they have been largely corrected. USG experts and scientists believe it is largely unbiased and represents the best assessment of the state of the science.

The Department of State will lead the U.S. delegation to the meeting in Geneva. (A list of the US delegation is attached). The part of the report most likely to receive press attention is the statement that 20th Century climate changes have already affected certain important physical and biological systems, leading to shifts in the ranges and behavior of some plants and animals.

The final working group of the IPCC will meet February 28-March 3 in Accra, Ghana. That group will report on potential response measures to climate change.

U.S. Delegation
Sixth Session of Working Group II
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
February 13-16, 2001
Geneva, Switzerland.

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