

Opening Statement for Chairman Edward J. Markey
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
“Forging a Global Solution for Global Warming: International Perspectives”
September 26, 2007

We are honored to have our distinguished guests here today to share with the Select Committee their perspectives on forging a global solution for global warming.

This week began with 150 high-level representatives of governments, including over 80 heads of State, gathered at the United Nations demonstrating their commitment to meet the scientific urgency of global warming with equal political urgency. The message to all countries was clear. We need action now to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of global warming on the people and the planet.

The week will end with the world’s biggest polluters participating in a different conversation hosted by President Bush at the White House. The premise of the conversation at the White House is not “action now”, but rather “more talk and less action.” Instead of setting concrete targets for actual reductions of global warming pollution, the President appears to be conducting a global filibuster in which he will ask the biggest sources of the gases which could doom us to share “aspirational” goals. Instead of action, we will get more hot air. The world is not fooled. It knows that “aspirational” goals are really just “procrastinational,” and if the President keeps this up he is going to leave us all with the dangerously “perspirational” impacts of global warming.

The single most effective way of advancing the negotiations of the next international climate change agreement would be for the United States to commit to mandatory domestic reductions of heat-trapping gases. Later today, I will send a letter signed by dozens of my colleagues to the President asking him to work with Congress to enact such legislation.

If other countries are looking for action in Washington, DC, they should look to the Congress. This summer the House and Senate both passed energy legislation that could lead to significant reductions in global warming pollution once the two bills are reconciled. Key provisions in these bills could lead to a 44 percent reduction in emissions from our current trajectory.

We can’t mortgage our children’s and the planet’s future by continuing to emit global warming pollution in the atmosphere unabated. We need to achieve real reductions now. The energy bill will be a significant down payment on these necessary emission reductions.

But we’re not stopping there. To further reduce global warming pollution, the House will soon consider legislation that will put us on a path for 80 percent reductions in our emissions by 2050.

We can invest all the money we want on research and development, but to truly transform our energy system, we must put in place the policies that drive the deployment of the renewable technologies and energy efficiency strategies that result in big payoffs in money saved, jobs created, and global warming pollution eliminated

And we have an obligation to adopt such policies. When the Chinese and Indians look up in the sky, they see “red, white and blue CO2.” The United States alone is responsible for over a quarter of the carbon dioxide increase seen in the atmosphere in the last 150 years. While China’s total annual emissions may now equal those of the United States, U.S. emissions are still four times greater than China’s on a per capita basis.

We won’t avert climate catastrophe without all countries doing their fair share to control global warming pollution. To bring everyone on board, the United States must lead, not impede, by making the commitments to saving the planet that we have already seen from Europe and Japan. We don’t stand a chance if the United States does not live up to this responsibility.

The recent 20th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol to protect the ozone layer reminds us of what it takes to ensure a successful international environmental treaty:

- United States leadership,
- Flexibility in the face of evolving science, and
- Fair and binding commitments for developed and developing countries based on their circumstances.

We have done it before and we can do it again. Congress is committed to achieving these requirements in the next international global warming agreement. Participants in President Bush’s meeting should ask if he is.