

America is ready to tackle global warming

President-elect, Congress, citizens poised to act

Greenpeace USA climate change policy experts are available for comment in Poznan: Kert Davies, +48 506-960-897; Meg Boyle, +48 500-878-383.

Greenpeace USA climate policy specialist Meg Boyle:

“The idea that countries at the climate change negotiations in Poznan should ‘wait’ for the U.S. before taking action is a weak justification to do nothing. The U.S. has a new President-elect, a new Congress, and key leadership prepared to act now.

“It may have been easy to abdicate responsibility while the do-nothing Bush administration was in office—but that excuse leaves the White House next month. The world needs to get serious about climate change today.”

For eight years the Bush administration made the United States an obstacle to international climate change negotiations. But the election of Barack Obama, coupled with substantial progress made in the US Congress on domestic climate change legislation, bodes well for global efforts to combat the crisis.

Nevertheless, many countries are claiming that they are waiting to see how the new administration will respond to climate change before they are willing to act. But the urgency of the crisis requires as much progress to be made in Poznan as possible so that a final deal can be reached in Copenhagen next year.

This briefing outlines evidence of the support President-elect Obama and the US Congress have shown for both international climate negotiations and for a strong domestic climate change law.

President-elect Obama supports strong domestic action on climate change and has pledged to “engage vigorously” in the international climate negotiation process.

Obama’s policy platform explicitly addresses the international dimensions of the climate crisis and his campaign statements include commitments to:

- Support technology transfer to developing nations;
- Provide adaptation assistance for developing nations;
- Address tropical deforestation while protecting local communities and biodiversity and offering incentives to maintain and manage forests sustainably.

“Your work is vital to the planet.”

On November 18, 2008 President-Elect Obama made the following statement about the Poznan climate talks:

“Let me also say a special word to the delegates from around the world who will gather at Poland next month: your work is vital to the planet. While I won’t be president at the time of your meeting and while the United States has only one president at a time, I’ve asked members of Congress who are attending the conference as observers to report back to me on what they learn there. And once I take office, you can be sure that the United States will once again engage vigorously in these negotiations, and help lead the world toward a new era of global cooperation on climate change.¹”

“We need to be engaged.”

In a September 2008 speech as part of the Meridian Global Engagement Series in Washington DC, Obama senior energy and environment advisor Howard Learner said that Obama is well positioned to realign with the developed and developing world. Calling it time for the US to step up, re-enter the international community, and aggressively negotiate, he said “we need to be engaged in the run-up to Copenhagen.”

On domestic emissions reductions targets

Obama has committed to 80 percent reductions in US greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2050².

Obama supports major investments in clean energy.

To stimulate the US economy, Obama pledged to create five million new green jobs by investing \$150 billion in clean energy over the next ten years and put at least one million ultra-efficient plug-in hybrid vehicles on the road.

Obama supports requiring the United States to get 10 percent of its electricity from clean sources by 2012³.

Leaders in the United States Congress recognise the need for a law that sets science-based emissions reduction targets to address climate change.

In 2008, 152 members of Congress outlined the strongest plan yet to address the climate crisis in a statement of principles delivered to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. The principles, championed by Representative Henry Waxman of California, call for reduction targets that would achieve at least 25 percent reductions below 1990 levels by 2020 and a long-term target to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

The principles also call for auctioning emission allowances rather than giving them to polluters; investing auction revenues in clean energy and efficiency technologies; and returning revenues to consumers, workers, and communities to help them transition to a new energy economy. These

¹ full transcript:

<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/18/obama-climate-message-amid-economic-woes/>

² Obama-Biden New Energy for America Plan: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newenergy>

³ Obama-Biden New Energy for America Plan: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/newenergy>

principles would protect the ability of states to enact even stronger targets, and include measures to protect against trade disadvantages to U.S. industry. Finally, the principles call for dedicating a portion of climate auction revenues to help address harm from the impacts of global warming⁴.

Rising leaders in Congress.

Prior to the COP14 negotiations in Poland, Rep. Henry Waxman, who introduced the above principles, was named Chair of powerful the House Energy and Commerce Committee by a vote of his colleagues. Together Waxman's and Obama's leadership bode well for domestic action on climate change.

SIDE EVENT

**“U.S. Progress on Climate Change, What the Bush Administration Isn't Telling You”
Thursday 11 December
Pavilion 11 (GWEC)**

Greenpeace organizers from the United States will describe their experiences working with communities from around the country committed to climate action and present a video showing Americans calling on their leaders to act on climate change.

Lunch will be provided.

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⁴ principles at: <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=1893>