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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 9, 2007

Dear Colleague:

On January 16, we introduced S. Res. 30, calling for the United State to return to a leadership role in international climate change negotiations.

The Fourth Assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently indicated that:

- “Global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activity since 1750 and now far exceed pre-industrial levels . . .”
- “Most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to increases in heat-trapping pollution in the atmosphere.”
- “Without action to curb global warming pollution it is very likely that heat waves and heavy precipitation events will continue to become more frequent and hurricanes are likely to become more intense.”

The physical consequences of global warming may include shrinking polar ice caps, retreating glaciers, stronger storms, and altered animal migration, growing seasons, and rainfall patterns. If we continue business as usual, future consequences may include rising sea levels, the spread of diseases, abrupt climate shifts that could shut down the Atlantic cycle that warms Europe, or shrink the Amazon rainforest, which provides twenty percent of the oxygen we breathe.

These changes would profoundly alter the assumptions on which the economic, political, and security arrangements of our world have been constructed. Our national borders, our cities, our cultures, are all built around patterns of rainfall, arable land, and coastlines that will be redrawn as global warming proceeds. By one estimate, 200 million people, in the coastal cities such as New York, Tokyo, Cairo, and London, in low-lying countries such as Bangladesh, and the islands of the Pacific and Caribbean, could be permanently displaced by climate shifts.

The Biden-Lugar Resolution states that the evidence of the human role in global warming is clear, that the environmental, economic, and security effects will be costly, and that the response must be international. The resolution recognizes that there are real economic benefits from both reducing the waste and inefficiencies inherent in greenhouse gas emissions, and the new markets created by climate-friendly technologies.

Most important, it calls for the United States to resume its role as leader in the international effort to address this global threat. Without the leadership of the United States, the largest historical source of greenhouse gases, developing nations such as China will have an excuse to avoid commitments to reduce their own emissions, which will soon surpass ours.

The resolution calls for United States participation in negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – signed by the first President Bush – and in other fora. The objective of these negotiations is to construct agreements that will protect the economic and security interests of the United States, and commit all major emitting nations – developed and developing – to significant long-term reductions in emissions. The resolution also calls for a bipartisan Senate observer group – based on our experience with arms control negotiations – to monitor talks and ensure that our negotiators bring back agreements that all Americans can support.

We believe that a new international consensus that includes both the United States and the developing nations will require flexible and innovative approaches. We are convinced that the time is now for the United States to revive international climate change negotiations by returning to a leadership role.

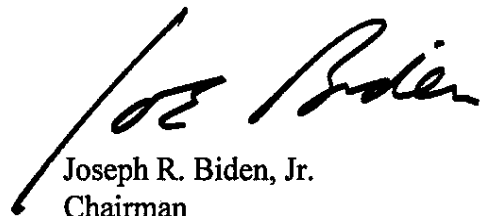
Our resolution has the endorsements of the League of Conservation Voters, the National Environmental Trust, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Fund, the Pew Center on Climate Change, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the United States Public Interest Research Group, and Citizens for Global Solutions.

If you would like to cosponsor, or have any questions, please have your staff contact Jim Greene at 224-5042 or Mark Helmke at 224-5918.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Chairman