

June 12, 2008

DPI/NGO BRIEFING ON  
“Kick the Habit: Towards a Low Carbon Economy”  
Thursday, June 5, 2008, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

1. Background Information:

On the occasion of this year’s World Environment Day (WED), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), is asking countries, companies and communities to focus on greenhouse gas emissions and how to reduce them. This briefing is an occasion for the DPI/NGO to focus on the problem of greenhouse gas emissions and how we can reduce them.

This is an occasion for us to highlight the resources and initiatives that can promote low carbon economies and life styles. Examples presented included improved energy efficiency, alternative energy sources, forest conservation and eco-friendly consumption. The speaker panel examined the state of our environment and discussed ways in which people can contribute towards a carbon neutral economy

World Environment Day is commemorated each year on June 5. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. This occasion is one of the principle vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment.

Moderator:  
Eric Falt, DPI/NGO chair

Speakers:  
H.E. Ms. Rosemary Banks, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

Mr. James Sniffen, Information Officer, United Nations Environment Program, New York office

Ms. Miriam Horn, Environmental Defense Fund

Ms. Wendy Gordon, Founder, The Green Guide, National Geographic

2. The moderator, Eric Falt, welcomed everybody and introduced each of the Speakers with their backgrounds. He indicated this conference is closely aligned to “World Environment Day”.

Before the speakers spoke, Mr. Falt outlined the purpose of the two films that were being shown now.

3. The first film shown “Global Warming” showed New Zealand’s efforts in combating global warming there. It was their biggest challenge. New Zealand has an abundant water supply. They are using wind fans to Reduce emissions. The film outlined New Zealand’s many efforts.

Their biggest challenge and their biggest efforts are their cattle and livestock farms. New Zealand believes that they can become climate change neutral. New Zealand is trying to show the way to a greener climate to the world, but It is not easy.

4. The second film by UNEP Climate Neutral Network showed examples of problems, fuel cars, etc.

5. The first speaker, Ms. Rosemary Banks, has been at the United Nations since June 2005. She has served in her countries’ government of New Zealand since 1975. New Zealand is the host for this meeting. New Zealand is a founding member of UNEP.

In New Zealand, World Environment Day is a whole week of celebrating. They were one of the first countries to work for a carbon free future. Most of their power comes from Hydro-Electric plants. They are challenging everyone to become carbon neutral. She stated that it is not sufficient for everyone to become green. They must do more.

New Zealand has introduced legislation on energy strategy and building codes so they can become carbon neutral. Ms. Banks indicated that it was not easy even for their small country. They have rewarded New Zealand companies that work for carbon neutral such as their wine industry. They have also given out their awards to the people of New Zealand and compared their efforts to achieve carbon zero in their neighborhoods. Many towns and cities in New Zealand are working to reduce carbon emissions.

6. The second speaker, Mr. James Sniffen, joined UNEP in 1991. He stated that “Kick the Habit” is the theme for the World Environment Day. Climate Neutral is their goal. He indicated that other countries and companies are joining their efforts to reduce carbon emissions. He indicated that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has taken the lead on efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Mr. Sniffen indicated that UNEP is preparing many publications and texts on climate change efforts to be distributed at the United Nations. He stated that to become climate neutral, we must reduce all emissions. how we use energy is critical

Mr. Sniffen stated that each of us can help. There are seven billion of us on planet earth. Each of us must educate our families and children on this critical issue. It includes insulation we use in our homes, how much water we use and we must reduce how much time we use air conditioners.

We must change our electric light bulbs. Another area is what we do with our food waste. Each of us must only recommended appliances. We must also turn off televisions when not being used. There has to be no driving days and we must buy hybrid cars only.

Mr. Sniffen indicated that tree planting, one for each person on the planet would be an ideal goal. Each of us must encourage others to participate in this climate change effort. The World Environment Day is a global effort. UNEP's goal at the United Nations is to have a global treaty by 2020. He ended by stating that the global public wants climate change efforts to continue.

7. The next speaker, Ms. Miriam Horn, indicated that the Environmental Defense Fund is the largest organization involved in Climate Change. She is a Graduate of Harvard and continued her environmental studies at Columbia.

Ms. Horn indicated that she has been traveling and speaking on climate change world-wide. She indicated that we have to come up with constructive solutions to the problem. The most serious effort to date was the United States sulfur dioxide proposal that was signed into law at the United Nations.

The emission trading system has been very successful. European carbon constraints has become big business. It has opened doors all over the world. In New Zealand, they have started using low carbon livestock. Many new products have evolved from these efforts. One is better bio-fuels. Others have included wave energy and wind energy. She ended by stating that climate change will result in a better environment and bring more jobs.

8. The last speaker, Ms. Wendy Gordon, has an undergraduate degree from Princeton and a Master's degree from the Harvard school of Business. She showed a short film titled "Lighten Up On the Planet". Her organization is a pioneer activist organization on climate change.

Their first effort over the last twenty years was on food safety. She and her organization work every day to determine the best ways for people to change their behavior. She indicated that there have been many books on the subject of "Tree Greener". Ms. Gordon indicated that the world's leading scientists agree on the problem. The increasing intensities of storms are the consequences.

She indicated that some of the things that we should do that will help are turn our thermostats down two degrees, run the dishwasher only when full and wash clothes in cold water. Other things are that we should make sure our car tires are properly inflated, dry half of our clothes on the line, and clean the refrigerator coil regularly. In each case the savings per year would be substantial.

9. Questions/Answers:

9.1 Ms. Miriam Horn indicated that the Environmental Defense Fund has released essays on this important subject. She stated that we need important structural changes to take place in order to take action. We can do this individually. If we took action we could reduce carbon by eighty percent by 2050. We need the leadership in Congress to get this important task started.

9.2 Ms. Wendy Gordon indicated that there are now a number of Chief Executive Officers working to leverage change.

9.3 Mr. James Sniffen indicated that the United Nations starting a video on this important subject.

9.4 Ms. Rosemary Banks stated that New Zealand is creating more efforts on behalf of the climate Change Environment.

9.5 Mr. James Sniffen also indicated that China has been a leader for environment change to take place in their cities.

9.6 Ms. Wendy Gordon commented that smaller cars are better and easier for the environment. She also commented that China is helping their citizen action efforts on climate change.

9.7 Ms Miriam Horn commented that China is the world's leader in effecting the world's climate.

9.8 Ms. Rosemary Banks stated that in most large economies, agriculture is not a leader in the problem affecting climate change. An example of this is the United States. New Zealand is different. Agriculture there is the problem.

9.9 Ms. Wendy Gordon indicated that some New Orleans housing programs are active on combating global warming reduction there.

9.10 Mr. James Sniffen commented that meetings on this subject in Bonn were on a back road to reduce any emissions. There have been some funding initiatives but the developing world will be most affected.

9.11 Ms. Miriam Horn concluded by stating again that the public on this subject is most important.

PDC George Weinstein  
National UN Chairman