

THE UNITED KINGDOM  
OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Statement made by  
the Rt Hon John Gummer PC MP,  
Secretary of State for the Environment

to the second session of the  
Conference of the Parties  
to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Wednesday 17 July 1996

Department of the Environment - Global Atmosphere Division  
Room B251 - Romney House - 43 Marsham Street - London SW1P 3PY - UK

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

This very building ought to present us all with an awful warning. It is, after all, here that nations, full of good intentions, committed themselves to taking common action in the League of Nations - to prevent war.

It was here, too, that we failed to take that common action; we failed to stand up to powerful interests; we failed to call the bluff of the purveyors of falsehood who put their selfish concerns before the interests of the world community.

And today, we must not make those mistakes again. The credibility of the governments of the world is on the line.

At Rio, we developed countries agreed to return our emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. We developed countries accepted that as we had benefitted from the pollution we had caused, so we had to shoulder the burden of cutting those emissions.

Today we know, as the Canadian Minister admitted, that many developed countries are not reaching those targets. And, frankly, this is not good enough. We can't allow ourselves to be let off the hook, even with that first set of targets.

I'm happy to say that the UK will improve on its Rio agreement by between 4 and 8%. That is better than most, but it is still not good enough. That's why, at Berlin, I called on all developed countries to reduce their emissions to 5 to 10% below 1990 levels by the year 2010.

All developed countries need to do this, and to sign up now. I have to disagree with my Australian colleague when he said he was "looking for an effective and long-term regime". No developed country can properly avoid action - and action now. The time for looking is past.

As we rich nations shoulder our burdens, so too the developing nations must all follow the example of the best, and meet their Rio commitments. They too, as the Ghanaian Minister said, will need to recognise that their growth cannot so undermine the efforts of others that together we will not reach our aims. It cannot be that the people of the developed nations will continue along the path of duty, if they feel that they are not joined in this by the whole of the world.

And, therefore, we shall have to help those developing countries, not only through the GEF, but also by exporting only clean technology and not, in future, passing on our second-hand factories to pour out emissions in the third world - emissions which we would not tolerate in the rich countries.

It's for us to remember that this is one planet, one atmosphere, and the emissions do the same damage wherever we put them into the air. So we who have profited from pollution must act.

It's simply not good enough for major producers of fossil fuels, both oil and coal, to claim that their financial interests should stand in the way of progress in making significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The scientific basis for action is clear. If we are persuaded by the science, we ought to bring forward proposals for negotiation now. And none of us should give way to the commercial propositions which are hidden by the pseudo-science of those who pretend that what the world knows to be true can be put on one side because of an individual's desire to promote his particular and prejudiced view.

And there is no point in making medium- or long-term plans for dealing with climate change. The effects are here now. It's not just a question for our children, it's for us; I've looked round, Madam President, and I don't think there's anyone in this hall who's so old that he or she will not be affected directly by climate change within his lifetime - unless he falls under a tram in Geneva before the end of this Conference.

Therefore, I am proposing today a number of "no-regrets" policies and measures, on the precautionary principle, which will support the European Union's determination to have significant reductions. The United Kingdom is committed to the European Union, and particularly to its policies on these matters. I believe that these propositions would not only make significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions but also improve economic welfare.

And again I have to disagree with my Australian colleague, when he tried to make a distinction between economic needs and the needs of climate change. I think my Chinese colleague did the same. I have to say the two march hand in hand, and must not be divided.

First of all, we must remove subsidies on the use of fossil fuels. This is an essential first step, and is not met by quite a number of developed countries who could do so. There is no point in seeking to mitigate the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> whilst providing an inducement for people to use more.

Secondly, we need to introduce competition into energy markets, because competition brings benefits to consumers and provides incentives to energy efficiency and innovation.

In the United Kingdom, where we have done the first and the second, we have discovered the enormous advantages for the reduction of emissions.

Thirdly, we must make a significant increase in road fuel duties. Road transport is a rapidly growing source of emissions. Increasing duties would encourage greater fuel efficiency and also address air quality problems.

We have an open-ended commitment for some years now to increase our fuel duties by 5% ahead of the rise in the cost of living, and that seems to me to be a proper way of addressing this in every country.

Fourth, we must improve the fuel efficiency of cars. Voluntary agreements with manufacturers can achieve the significant improvements in fuel efficiency which are technically possible, particularly when linked with increases in fuel duty.

Fifth, we must introduce a tax on aviation fuel. Every time we run one of these climate change conferences, we do a great deal to damage the global atmosphere, by the aeroplanes we travel here in. Planes make a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, and they do so directly into the upper atmosphere. Forecast growth is high and as yet aviation fuel is still exempt from tax. We have to do that on a global basis, and the UK has therefore, with other countries, called on ICAO to review the present exemption - and by review, we do not mean look at it and say that nothing can be done.

Sixth, we must renew efforts to improve energy efficiency. This saves consumers and industry money and can make a significant contribution to reducing emissions.

Seventh and lastly, we must improve efficiency standards for domestic appliances and office equipment. We should work together with manufacturers to see what scope there may be to increase minimum standards. And we must in that respect set the example in our own national and local government procurement and in the way in which we run our own offices. Some of the least energy efficient offices in Western Europe are owned by governments, and some of them owned by the governments who talk most about energy efficiency.

The attraction of these policies and measures is that they would have benefits for all countries, developed and developing. They can be done by us all. Most could also be adopted now by countries who are currently in danger of failing to honour their Rio commitments.

And most of us, Madam Chairman, are not prepared to hear serious countries seriously saying they cannot achieve by the year 2000 what they signed up to. Nor are we prepared to hear serious countries re-jig the figures in order to pretend that they have met those commitments.

So in conclusion, global climate change needs global action now. We have a clear message from the IPCC about what is in store for us if we do not act. The alarm bells ought to be ringing in every capital throughout the world.

We must not fail to create a universal partnership to cut greenhouse gas emissions significantly. The "After you, Claude" attitude to international negotiations is not enough, for it's in our lifetime that Claude is going to be affected by greenhouse gases.

To get a new agreement in Japan next year demands, Madam Chairman, a new urgency here in Geneva this week, and to give to this hall a new claim to fame: not as the place of failure but the place of global success.

# RECORD OF MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

COUNTRY: UK NAME OF SPEAKER: Mr Sumner  
 DAY: 17/7 TIME: 1 p.m. NOTE-TAKER: AJ STATEMENT PICKED UP? ☐ THURSDAY

## AGBM-RELATED ISSUES

The speaker indicated:	<input type="checkbox"/> a preference for an amendment <input type="checkbox"/> a preference for a protocol <input type="checkbox"/> that s/he cannot indicate a preference at this time <input type="checkbox"/> AOSIS <input type="checkbox"/> EU	Comments:
The protocol/ other legal instrument should include:	<input type="checkbox"/> mandatory policies and measures <input type="checkbox"/> voluntary policies and measures	Policies or measures specified: - remove subsidies on fossil fuels - introduce competition into energy markets - increase fuel duties - improve fuel efficiency of cars - introduce aviation fuel tax
Does the country support any particular target?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: <u>5-10</u> % by <u>2010</u> year <input type="checkbox"/> no	Comments: - improve effectiveness of domestic appliances

## SBSTA-RELATED ISSUES

Reaching targets within the country by the year 2000 (Annex I Parties)	Comments: <u>will improve reduction by 3-5%</u>
Development and transfer of technology	Comments: <u>export only clean technology to DCs</u>
IPCC Second Assessment Report (SAR)	Comments: <u>provides clear message to cut fossil emissions significantly</u>

## SBI-RELATED ISSUES

Should the GEF be the permanent financial mechanism?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Comments:
Activities Implemented Jointly (AIJ)	<input type="checkbox"/> in favour of pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> distinction made between JI/AIJ	Comments:
Preparation of non-Annex I communications	Comments:	

## OTHER COMMENTS:

No-regret measures → precautionary principle