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Opening Statement to the
Sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the
U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change
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Mr. President and distinguished delegates:

I am delighted to be here at the opening of the Sixth Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change. I would like to thank the Dutch government and the people of The Hague for their gracious hospitality.

We meet at the dawn of a new century to embrace a great challenge. Human beings are changing the atmosphere on which we depend.

This challenge is like no other. It touches the lives of every citizen in each country on the globe. It threatens the fragile balance of the natural world that sustains us. It involves not a rivalry between a few nations, but cooperation among us all. It demands technological innovation and bold leadership, now and in the years ahead.

The challenge of climate change grows at a pace that can seem slow by the standard of political systems, but astonishingly quick for natural systems trying to adapt.

More than a decade ago, nations from around the world first met to begin shaping a response to this challenge. At Rio, we adopted the Framework Convention on Climate Change. At Kyoto, we adopted a protocol with legally-binding emissions targets and important elements of a long-term solution to this challenge. Here in The Hague, we meet with the eyes of the world upon us to take the next step forward.

We bring to this hall vastly different circumstances. We are from nations large and small, rich and poor, inland and coastal, tropical and temperate. We are from different cultures, backgrounds and religious traditions, and bring different expectations to these talks.

Can we overcome our differences to reach a successful outcome? We can and we must.

During the next two weeks, we must move forward in the fight against climate change. Let me state in the strongest possible terms: **The United States is committed to making real progress here and now and to shaping a treaty that can be ratified.**

Events since the Kyoto conference have strengthened our resolve. The science grows more compelling each day. In our country, the business community is increasingly

embracing the need for action. Concern about climate change is widespread among the American people.

Just last week, President Clinton called for limits on carbon dioxide emissions from U.S. power plants, the source of more than a third of our emissions. This approach has growing support in many quarters in our country. The President also released the first-ever assessment of climate change impacts on the United States, underscoring the importance of this issue to our people and our livelihoods. And as he has on so many occasions in the past, President Clinton forcibly articulated our commitment to an international agreement to address global warming.

Industrialized countries must take the lead in meeting this challenge and in taking domestic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the United States, we are beginning to turn the tide. In 1998 and 1999, the U.S. GDP grew by more than 8 percent while greenhouse gases grew by only about 1 percent. We are challenging the historic link between economic growth and emissions growth – proving that the two do not need to go together.

Here in The Hague, we must begin our work quickly, resolving as many issues this week as possible. We should not underestimate the amount – and complexity – of the work before us. We must resolve issues early where possible, leaving for final negotiations among Ministers only the most sensitive political issues. We must work hard with open minds to resolve differences and achieve our common goals.

In the next two weeks, the United States will work with all Parties to craft sound decisions that include:

- Strong, market-based rules for the flexible mechanisms;
- An airtight accounting system;
- Binding legal consequences for failure to meet targets;
- Rules that recognize the role of forest and farmlands in fighting climate change;
- A prompt start to the Clean Development Mechanism, with rules to ensure its workable operation and environmental integrity;
- Help to provide the technology and capacity developing countries need to combat climate change and adapt to its impacts.

As we did last year in Bonn at COP-5, we will urge a new process among developed and developing countries to explore ways in which all countries can promote strong economic growth and fight poverty while meeting the challenge of climate change.

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The United States is committed to assisting developing countries in their efforts to abate emissions and adapt to climate change. Let me give you a small flavor of what we have done:

- In 55 countries, the U.S. Country Studies Program has helped to fund national communications and build capacity to address climate change.
- The U.S. is devoting one billion dollars over five years to promote sustainable development that minimizes growth in greenhouse gas emissions and reduces vulnerability to climate change.
- The U.S. will spend more than \$100 million to accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy technologies around the world.
- A dozen U.S. agencies spent more than \$600 million in efforts to assist the victims of Hurricane Mitch.

As is often said, climate change is a global problem that requires a global solution. The United States is strongly committed to helping lead efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to working with other nations to craft an international agreement that will stand the test of time. Our work at this conference must help put nations on the road to ratification.

Mr. President, I am pleased to announce that today President Clinton is signing the United States' instrument of ratification for the Convention to Combat Desertification. This innovative agreement is already playing a significant role in helping countries around the world fight dry land degradation. With hard work and patience, we can all join together to meet the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

In conclusion, the United States delegation comes to The Hague determined to make real progress here and now. Working together, we can succeed.
