

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE OF ADVISORS ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

May 15, 1998

President William J. Clinton
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you have stated so clearly, the issue of climate change presents the United States and the world with one of the great challenges of the 21st century. Measurements and analyses by climate scientists have been reinforcing almost daily the conclusion of the 1995 assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Global impacts of human activities on climate are real, are already being experienced, and are likely to grow in the next century to levels highly disruptive to human well-being, in countries both rich and poor, unless adequate countervailing actions are taken.

The Kyoto protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change is a strong first step toward meeting the climate challenge. But if the judgment of the IPCC and the great majority of climate scientists about the probable course and consequences of anthropogenic climate changes proves correct, as we in PCAST think likely, then meeting the emissions limits set in Kyoto is only a down payment on the changes required over the long run. The development of a plan to address that longer run challenge should begin now.

At the heart of this issue are the respective roles of the industrialized and developing countries in the creation of the problem and in its solution. Ways must be found for the developing countries to achieve their economic aspirations without concomitant increases in greenhouse-gas emissions, and ways must be found to maintain and expand the prosperity of the industrialized countries while their emissions are being reduced.

Technology must be a cornerstone of the solution. And as you have noted, this should be seen more as an opportunity than as a burden. Your Climate Change Technology Initiative is an excellent beginning to accelerate development and deployment of new technologies. These advances in technology will bring a range of environmental and

economic benefits. The firms and countries that learn first and best how to provide the goods and services that people want in energy-saving and emissions-reducing ways will prosper from this knowledge. How far and how fast emissions reduction ought to proceed, and at what cost and benefit, are key questions for industrial, transition, and developing countries alike as they work to achieve the goal of the climate treaty-- "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system."

What must now be fashioned to supplement those agreements is a global collaborative framework for greenhouse-gas reductions. Robust and comprehensive international cooperation among industrial, transition, and developing countries in research and development on advanced energy technologies could serve as the cornerstone of such a collaborative framework. This could provide the basis for delivering the increased quantities of affordable energy that meeting the economic aspirations of the developing countries will require, while simultaneously reducing their greenhouse-gas emissions.

PCAST would be pleased to review, in concert with the NSTC, the existing array of international cooperative activities in energy R&D in which the United States is engaged, and to participate in the generation of recommendations that would make them a more robust basis for addressing climate change in the context of global economic development and related issues of capacity building and international competition. The insights gleaned from such a review would also have important implications for our broader international S&T engagements, helping us analyze the broader issues of the Federal activities and strategies in international science and technology. Strong international cooperation is going to become a much more important tool in achieving our international objectives, from climate change, to biodiversity, to emerging infectious diseases. We look forward to pursuing these possibilities with you further.

Sincerely,

/s/

John A. Young
Co-Chairman
