



THE WOODS HOLE RESEARCH CENTER

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Leading scientists and scholars send open letter to Obama Administration urging action on climate issues.

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In an open letter addressed to President Barack Obama and the United States Congress, twenty leading scientists and scholars assert that the currently stated objectives in limiting the climatic disruption are grossly inadequate and urge the nation's leadership to take clear leadership towards meet the objectives of the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change, steps necessary to avert a "global climatic catastrophe".

In part, the letter reads:

"In many political circles around the world, the view has taken hold that nations should endeavor both to limit the buildup of carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas and a by-product of burning coal, oil and natural gas, to 450 parts per million and to limit the rise of global temperatures to less than 2°Celsius. We and many others are of the view that these objectives are inadequate to sustain the integrity of global climate and to hold the risk of ruinous climatic change to an acceptably low level. United States policy must provide a fully satisfactory U.S. contribution to global greenhouse gas reductions that move beyond these inadequate international limits."

The letter's authors point out that there is a gross discrepancy between what scientists see as acceptable limits of threat to global climates and what politicians are willing to accept in deflecting further emissions from burning coal, oil and gas, and from deforestation. The scholars emphasize that "The Waxman-Markey bill ... must be enacted this year ... but at its best will be only a first step."

Further, the signers suggest that the urgency is such that the issue should compete before the Congress with the Health Bill now being debated and that prompt national action is essential.

The 1992 Framework has been ratified by more than 180 nations, including the U.S. At the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009, decisions will be made on new international objectives in deflecting further climatic disruption. Progress towards decisive action addressing this issues in the United States is generally thought to be crucial in order for the negotiations at the COP lead to a significant international treaty to follow on the Kyoto Protocol.

The letter was initiated after discussion among four scholars long involved in the issues: J. G. Speth, currently retiring as Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies; Richard A. Houghton, Acting Director and Senior Scientist, The Woods Hole Research Center; William Schlesinger, Director of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; and George M. Woodwell, Director Emeritus and Senior Scientist, The Woods Hole Research Center.

[Click here to view full letter to President Obama and Congress.](#)

Questions may be referred to:



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