

Shared Responsibility

CHUCK HAGEL outlines principles on which the United States and other countries can agree to combat climate change



Antonino Macias Martinez/ UNEP/Still Pictures

nations, such as China, which will soon be the world's largest emitter of man-made greenhouse gases.

I understand that developing nations cannot achieve greenhouse gas reductions until they obtain higher standards of living for their people. They lack clean energy technology and they cannot absorb the economic impact of the changes necessary for emissions reductions. Any future policy initiatives must recognize their limitations in meeting these objectives, and the necessity of including them in any successful future initiative.

Environmental initiative

It is in the interests of the United States and industrialized nations to help developing countries by sharing cleaner energy and environmental technology. They can then "leap-frog" over the highly polluting stages of development that countries like the U.S. have already been through.

Second, and related, global climate policy – like any environmental initiative – cannot be considered in isolation of economic and energy interests. Too often, environmental policy has been considered in a kind of vacuum, without sober analysis or appreciation of the economic implications of environmental objectives. Climate policies must combine action on the environment with the need for increased energy resources to fuel economic growth and development and to reduce poverty in developing countries. That was the message from developing countries at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. It will require a market-driven, technology-based approach that complements the world's environmental interests, and connects the public and private sectors.

Global climate change must be considered in the wider context of the challenge of economic underdevelopment and worldwide poverty. Five billion of the world's six billion people live in less developed countries. Half live on less than \$2 per day. One billion lack access to clean water sources, and more than 2.5 billion do not have proper sanitation. Forty million people are infected with HIV or living with AIDS – the leading cause of death in sub-Saharan Africa. There will be 8 billion people by the year 2025 and most of the world's population ▶

The question we face is not whether we should take action on climate change, but what kind of action we should take. Climate change is a shared responsibility for all nations, including the United States: it does not recognise national borders. Global climate policy affects the world's economic, energy, and environmental policies – and dealing with it requires a commitment of diplomatic leadership and coordination worthy of the magnitude of the challenge.

Earlier this year I introduced legislation with Senators Pryor, Alexander, Landrieu, Craig, Dole, Murkowski, Voinovich and Stevens, which I believe can help contribute to a new American and international approach to climate change. The legislation, which passed into law in July as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, emphasizes the linkages between global environmental, economic, and energy interests – and the priority of working closely with developing countries on them. The challenges of a clean

environment cannot be separated from the imperatives of growing economies, or from the challenges of global poverty and underdevelopment. Our approach built upon three principles, which I outlined at a speech at the United Nations earlier this year.

Energy technology

First, a workable global climate policy should include shared responsibilities and common standards by developed and developing nations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Developing countries are becoming the major emitters of these gases, but they are exempted from the Kyoto Protocol. Within the next 20 years, they are projected to account for two thirds of the growth in carbon dioxide emissions, as their populations and economies expand. Any reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the United States and other developed countries will be eclipsed by those from developing

growth will be in developing countries, where nearly one-in-three is under the age of 15.

Many developing world governments will not be able to meet the basic demands of their populations for jobs, health care and security. The strains of demography, frustrated economic development and authoritarian governments contribute to radicalised populations and politics. Part of the solution depends upon sound economic growth strategies. Global climate policies cannot be considered in isolation of the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment.

Climate policy

We are most successful in confronting the most difficult issues when we draw on the strength of the private sector. There is a role for diplomacy in global climate policy, but technological innovation will come from the private sector, and from public-private partnerships, which meld the institutional leverage of governments with the innovation of industry. Creating incentives for private sector participation and technological innovation will be critical to real progress on global climate policy.

Such policy must give priority to the development of alternative clean energy sources and renewable fuels. Advances in energy efficiency are directly connected to economic and environmental policies. The acceleration of alternative clean energy sources and renewable fuels will depend on technological innovations by private industry – another reason for incentives for public-private partnerships in our climate policy.

Economic output

I believe that greenhouse gas intensity – the amount of carbon emitted relative to economic output - is the best measurement for dealing with climate change now. It measures how efficiently a nation uses carbon emitting fuels and technology in producing goods and services, and captures the links between energy efficiency, economic development and the environment. For developing countries, improvements in greenhouse gas intensity can help improve an economy's efficiency and competitiveness. It can, and should, be the baseline measure for greenhouse gas

emission reductions for both developed and developing countries.

There is great promise for these clean fuel additives and renewable fuels in the United States, and around the world. We should work together to accelerate the development of corn and soy products, such as ethanol and bio-diesel, as renewable fuel sources – and of wind, hydrogen and nuclear power. Last year I toured the research and technical centres of three major automobile manufacturers in Detroit, and was particularly interested

work to be done, but this is the kind of technology that must be employed around the world to achieve meaningful results in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Global consensus

The science upon which we base our climate policy must reflect realistic measurements and achievable research objectives. The scientific community is not uniform in its assessments of the causes of climate change. There will



Mark Edwards/UNEP/Still Pictures

in the progress of advanced technology vehicles using fuel cells and clean diesel technology, and hybrids. These technologies have the potential to transform our transportation sector while supporting a proactive global climate policy.

Growing interest

Geologic storage – involving pumping carbon dioxide into the ground, rather than dumping it into the atmosphere – offers another example of the role that private industry and technological innovation can play in climate policy. BP has been using it in Algeria's Sahara Desert, Statoil has been working on it in Norway's North Sea, and Chevron Texaco is planning a project off the coast of Australia. An article in the Wall Street Journal early this year reported that, "the concept is drawing growing interest because it could curb global warming more quickly than switching to alternative energy sources or cutting energy use." There is still much

always be uncertainties and incomplete information.

A fresh injection of political will is needed to achieve a global consensus on climate change. The United States must be part of that consensus. Achieving reductions in man-made greenhouse gas emissions is one of the important challenges of our time. As a signatory to the UN Climate Change Convention, America must remain engaged in international initiatives to reduce manmade greenhouse gas emissions. America has an opportunity and a responsibility for global climate policy leadership, and – by harnessing our many strengths – we can help shape a worthy future for all people, and build a better world ■

Chuck Hagel, the senior US Senator from Nebraska, is Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion Subcommittee and of the Senate Banking Securities and Investment Subcommittee.