

BILL OF RECOMMENDATIONS: U.S. YOUTH ON CLIMATE CHANGE



UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE, Montréal 2005

The upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference is an historic event because the year 2005 marks the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, the binding legal agreement negotiated by the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). From November 28 to December 9, 2005, the first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP) will be held parallel to the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP) in Montréal, Canada. This conference is set to be the largest intergovernmental climate conference since the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997. It is expected to draw 8,000-10,000 participants.

Youth participation in proceedings of the convention is compromised by the lack of youth representatives on the government delegations that are party to the convention and the Protocol. However, the decisions being taken significantly affect our lives at present and in the future.

Youth everywhere recognize that their future is at stake at the negotiating table and that future generations will live in the shadow of today's policies. Youth deserve a voice in determining a global course of action. We, as youth of the United States of America, have organized to achieve that voice.

Our instrument for education and advocacy is **SustainUS**, a network of United States youth dedicated to educating about and advocating for sustainable development. We differ in our backgrounds and in our beliefs, but we share a commitment to our common future. Our national program, Agents of Change, offers young people from all over the country the opportunity to take part in high-level meetings at the United Nations that directly affect the world that we as young people will inherit.

This conference is additionally significant because it is the first time these negotiations have been in North American since before the Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed in 1992. The United States, along with another developed nation, Australia, has rejected the Kyoto Protocol and will only legally participate as a party of the COP to the Convention, and not the MOP of the Protocol. SustainUS and the youth of America are working to address climate change directly in our communities, institutions of learning, and in our personal lifestyles. The position of the United States government with regards to climate change is out of touch with mainstream America, including with what is happening in the corporate business sector.

SustainUS also affirms our aligned position with the larger non-government organization (NGO) community regarding how the COP and the MOP are to proceed. The top priorities of the NGO community with which we agree that are particular to the proceeding of the meetings include:

1. The Parties must begin the process of deciding commitments for the post-2012 time period.
2. The MOP should formally adopt all decisions of the Marrakech Accords, which have been previously discussed and agreed upon regarding how to implement the Kyoto Protocol.
3. Proposals for the implementation of rules for issuing carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism should warrant against “streamlining” efforts that would allow the issuance of credits for no or insignificant activity, which would allow countries to meet their compliance targets with no new actions.
4. The MOP does not need a new amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to have meaningful compliance provisions in the Protocol. What the MOP does need is a decision reaffirming compliance and enforcement procedures in the Kyoto trading and national target systems.

What follows are elements of our collective vision for the world we hope to inherit and the country we call home. This Bill of Recommendations is a statement compiled by SustainUS on what the international community and the United States need to do regarding climate change in order to reach our shared long-term goal of a secure and sustainable world with a stable climate. This bill was compiled by the SustainUS Policy Team through a collaborative and consultative process with a working group of youth.

Bill of Recommendations

The Role of Youth

- The most pressing issues to do with climate change have to do with our major consumption of fossil fuels through agriculture/distribution and transportation. Youth can work towards greater sustainability by supporting local organic (or more natural) farmers and using renewable modes of transportation.
- Youth should take the lead in peer-to-peer education on climate change and explore various avenues to empower people to get more involved.
- Governments should set aside funds for citizen groups and especially youth groups to provide them with resources for practical measures to address climate change.

The Role of Science:

- Support further research into carbon sequestration and hydrogen.
- Support chemical methods of carbon capture.

The Role of the United States & the International Community:

- Support a carbon tax.
- Support flexibility mechanisms, and technology transfer.
- Support sustainable development funds for developing countries.

- Support a comprehensive climate change policy. That means incorporating all approaches, including cap & trade, investments in science and technology incentives.
- Establish a long-term target for atmospheric CO2 concentration. One way of getting at this is through a long-term emissions target, something on the order of 60-80% reductions by 2050.
- Voluntary caps don't work.
- More funding for research to lower greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and lower vehicles' reliance on fossil fuels.
- The international community needs to recognize that the affects of climate change has an impact on peace & security.

The Role of the International Community:

- Support a fund for adaptation.
- Support new models which take into account emissions reductions which cannot easily be certified, because it is difficult to establish a baseline- i.e. smarter urban planning.
- Support international coordination of green building standards.
- Support recognition of "early action" in non-member states (which gives encouragement to businesses say in China or the US to reduce emissions, rather than giving them an incentive to emit lots now, so they have a higher baseline to reduce from later).
- Draft a climate change mitigation plan. We need to start thinking about how to help people whose lives will be irreversibly altered by climate change (adaptation strategies, for the work-oriented).

The Role of the United States:

- The U.S. government should stay engaged. Although bilateral and multilateral discussions on climate change are important, they should not replace the UNFCCC as a venue for climate change deliberations and action.
- SustainUS supports local municipal and state governments who are stepping up to address climate change.
- SustainUS calls for greater commitment to public transportation as a method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on nonrenewable energy.

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