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UNITED KINGDOM MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS.

845 THIRD AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Duncan Slater Esq CMG
Room WH 231
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Prime Minister

You may like to
6 May 1989

*Very good speech
M.T.*

see the speech which

Crispin Tickell gave
this afternoon (our time) in
New York, launching our
initiative for a Global

Dear Duncan,

GLOBAL WARMING

I have tried my hand at a speech for which you asked on global warming. A draft is attached.

Climate Convention. CAP 2/5

In preparing the draft I have of course drawn on what happened at the Prime Minister's seminar on 26 April, subsequent correspondence between No 10 and the FCO and Department of the Environment, and the notes prepared by MAED. Frankly if the speech were to be limited to the points made by Bob Peirce in his letter of 28 April to Charles Powell, there would be very little of substance to say, and our initiative would die before it was born. Most interested governments already accept the idea of a convention, and most also accept the need to strengthen existing institutions. Thus if we are to take any initiative and produce a credible alternative to the woolly thinking of the Hague Declaration, we have to go further and plant some more original ideas, perhaps for consideration later on. For that reason you will find that I introduced some thoughts of my own which will be familiar to you, but modifying them in such a way as to present them as points to be considered rather than specific proposals. Even they will not cause much surprise.

On the arrangements for the speech, we have done our best to create a platform and arouse interest. The timing is of course very tight but there is no alternative if we are to spike the guns of the opposition. The plan is for me to deliver the speech to a special plenary meeting of the Economic and Social Council around 10.00 am on 8 May, and to follow this up with a press conference at the United Nations an hour later. We have alerted the press, both British and foreign, and I have offered to give radio and television interviews to the BBC and others. In view of the excellent publicity which the Prime Minister's seminar received, we have now created expectations which must not be disappointed. The draft should, I hope, meet them; but I fear that anything substantially less would risk creating anti-climax.

We shall need your comments on the draft as soon as possible. Obviously I should like to be in a position to circulate the text of my speech at the time I deliver it, and above all to have it available for the press by 11.00 am. Perhaps you could ring me at home (212 688 5508) on Sunday evening (from 10.00 to 11.00 pm your time) or on Monday morning (from 12.30 pm your time) to keep me informed of progress your end.

Yours truly

Crispin

Crispin Tickell

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GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr President,

I congratulate my colleague the Danish Ambassador on his appointment as President of the Economic and Social Council and thank him for arranging, at short notice, this unscheduled meeting of the Council.

The Council recently agreed in informal consultations that environmental issues would be a major theme at the Second Regular Session to be held in Geneva this July. We welcome this decision. At last year's General Assembly political leaders from many countries expressed alarm at the degradation of the environment of our planet. More recently the governments of several member states have made proposals for coordinated international action. We have noted with interest the letter from the Soviet Foreign Minister to the Secretary-General proposing the formation of a Centre for Emergency Environmental Assistance. We are also studying carefully proposals which will be discussed at the forthcoming Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to strengthen the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change.

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The British government has long been concerned at the prospect that the steady increase of the so called greenhouse gases - in particular carbon dioxide - in the atmosphere could lead to a rise in average global temperature with incalculable consequences for human society. This problem is comparable in its scale and complexity with that which arose from the discovery of nuclear energy more than fifty years ago. It is an inter-generational problem of a kind which time-bound governments have never before had to deal with. The atmosphere knows no boundaries, and the winds carry no passports. Just as member states of the United Nations came together to take action on damage to the ozone layer, so we now need to come together to see how to cope with the wider problem of likely global warming.

This is not the occasion to spell out some of the possible consequences. It is sufficient to say that a warmer world with wide variations of temperature in different places and latitudes would involve major changes in the character of the earth's surface, and the society which we have built upon it. There would be shifts in patterns of rainfall so that what is now fertile could become arid, and what is now arid could receive unmanageable rainfall. There could be greater climatic instability with higher incidence of storms, hurricanes, floods and droughts. There could be rises in sea level which could affect low lying areas and the large proportion of the world's population now living in them. There could be disruption of the intricate webs of life on a scale now hard to imagine. For if

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comparable changes have taken place in the past, they have never happened at such speed. Scientists have not yet succeeded in devising models which could spell out for every region or country what warming would involve for each of them. But we can safely say that within a human time scale there would be no winners: only victims.

In the last few days the British Government has completed a review of the actions it believes should be taken by the international community. My Prime Minister held an all-day meeting or seminar on 26 April attended by people from a wide cross-section of society: scientists, industrialists, politicians, academics and others. Now the Government has drawn some broad conclusions. I convey them first to the Economic and Social Council. We shall further develop them at the meeting of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, which begins in Nairobi next week. We shall do likewise at the Second Session of the Economic and Social Council in July, and at the General Assembly in New York in the autumn.

There are three main areas in which international work is required. First we need a framework in which to operate. Next we need to look at institutions. Last we need to establish a basis for action to manage the consequences of a warmer world. I shall have a word to say about each.

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First the framework. Let me remind you of the terms of the resolution A/Res/43/53 adopted unanimously by last year's General Assembly. In operative paragraph 10 we invited the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to initiate action leading as soon as possible to a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to - among other things - "the identification and possible strengthening of relevant existing international legal instruments having a bearing on climate"; and "elements for inclusion in a possible international convention on climate". Work on this comprehensive review is proceeding, and we look forward to the results and recommendations. We also welcome other work which has taken place on this subject, notably at a meeting in Ottawa last February.

In the meantime I set out the British approach. It has two main aspects. First we believe that we should seek to establish as soon as possible a simple framework or umbrella convention, which would set out general principles or guidelines. In doing so we could follow the precedent set by the Vienna Convention of 1985 on the ozone layer. The drafting of principles and guidelines for good climatic behaviour should not be too difficult, and could be completed fairly soon. We have ideas about what might be covered and how it might be expressed.

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Secondly we should fit specific Protocols into the framework as scientific evidence requires and permits. Again we could follow the precedent of the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer which was fitted into the broader Vienna Convention on the same subject. In this fashion we could establish arrangements sufficiently flexible to make early progress on problems which might otherwise prove intractable. It will be easier to decide on what subjects we need specific Protocols after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has reported next year.

Next I turn to the question of institutions. In our view time does not allow us the luxury of trying to create something new. We all know the difficulties and complexities. In any case there is no need for new institutions. We have institutions enough already. The challenge we face is how to make best use of them, and if necessary adapt them to changing circumstances.

Let me enumerate what already exists. There is the World Meteorological Organization which has long done an admirable job. There is the United Nations Environment Programme with responsibility for coordinating the functions of Specialized Agencies and other UN associated bodies with environmental responsibilities. There is the World Climate Programme with its subsidiary programmes. Perhaps most relevant at present is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with its three working groups. As you know the Intergovernmental Panel is charged to report to the second World Climate Conference in June 1990. In doing so it will take account of last year's General

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Assembly resolution to which I have already referred.

The difficulties which most existing institutions have so far encountered arise from lack of support, in particular financial support, from their members and the international community generally. The United Nations Environment Programme has particularly suffered in this respect. In our view it needs urgently to be strengthened. The British Government has already more than doubled its contribution, and we urge other Member States to do likewise. But more money will not be enough by itself. Institutions must change and adapt. We need to look again at the status of the United Nations Environment Programme and consider whether it might be promoted into a Specialized Agency. Without sufficient resources or status, it can hardly be expected to achieve its aims, particularly in coordinating the environmental work of other Agencies.

The forthcoming report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will be of particular importance as it will lay out the scientific basis for future international work on this subject. The Panel was created with this specific purpose, and in the normal way of things would not necessarily continue after the publication of its report. But in view of its quality, we believe that thought should be given to its prolongation, perhaps in the form of some Intergovernmental Commission whose task would be to negotiate and monitor the global framework convention on climate, consider the future mandate and status of the United Nations Environment

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Programme, and report from time to time as appropriate.

You may wonder to whom such a body should report. It could of course report to the present Intergovernmental Panel's parent bodies the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. But one of the more central organs of the United Nations system might also be involved. Work on a matter of this importance requires high level political direction. For that reason there could in future be a role for the Security Council which could take up environmental issues from time to time under Article 34 of the Charter.

Most of the existing United Nations or United Nations-associated bodies have an environmental dimension to their work. I need only mention the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the various international financial institutions. The World Bank and the regional development banks have recently worked out new environmental guidelines. We need to consider whether the specific problems of global warming are sufficiently taken into account by these bodies.

Last I come to the most difficult problem of all: the basis for the actions which the international community will need to take to cope with what is above all an international problem. This is not the occasion for examining the detailed reasons for global warming. As we all know, it has arisen from changes in the use of land; changes in the way in which we generate and use energy; and changes

the transformation of agricultural into industrial economies. All actions to mitigate global warming and adapt human society to it relate to these three areas. No-one planned what has happened. Only one or two forecast it. But we now have to live with it.

The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will obviously be critical in deciding on specific actions. We need consensus on the science if governments are to work successfully together and draw conclusions for policy. In the meantime we must recognize that as with the ozone layer, the problem arises substantially from the process of industrialization, and in particular the consumption of fossil fuels. Those countries which have contributed most, albeit unwittingly, to the problem, have particular responsibilities. It will be for them to give the leadership when the time comes by discouraging the further build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But if the burning of fossil fuel is a major component of the problem, it is by no means the whole problem. Changes in land use, in particular deforestation, are important worldwide. They are often the result of pressures generated by an increasing human population with associated species of animals and plants.

Naturally the industrial countries must, as with chlorofluorocarbons, be ready to help the rest of the world. Such help should relate to land use, energy, and industrial development. There is no need for everyone to follow the same path and make the same mistakes. We have to find means to help others leapfrog over

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the technologies which have caused the problem. Such help can be given in many ways, some through multilateral, some through bilateral channels. For our part we have already put new emphasis in the British aid programme on help for forestry and help on research into substitutes for chlorofluorocarbons. Others are doing likewise.

These are no more than the outlines of the British approach towards one of the most difficult and challenging problems of our time. We need the right framework; we need the right institutions; we need the right basis for future actions. This planet is the only one we have got. Its good health is our good health. We need to bequeath to our successors the marvellous world we inherited from our predecessors. Our species has evolved through its ability to adapt. We must continue to adapt in order to survive. The United Nations has a central role in making that possible.