

PRIME MINISTER

GLOBAL CLIMATE SEMINAR: 26 APRIL

Following the model of your successful Broadcasting Seminar, I thought it would be helpful if the participants had in advance an annotated agenda and programme. I attach a draft based on a contribution from the Department of the Environment.

Content for it to go out in this form?

Yes - it is very good.

Thank you very much.

DOMINIC MORRIS

11 April 1989

mt

PRIME MINISTER'S SEMINAR ON GLOBAL CLIMATETHURSDAY 26 APRIL

Concern has mounted this decade that man-made emissions of the so-called greenhouse gases could alter the climate during the next century. There remain significant uncertainties in the science which need to be resolved. However if technologies need to be developed and put in place to mitigate this effect they may require very long lead times. The emission of greenhouse gases is a global problem and one that cannot be solved by any one country alone.

0930 Welcome and introduction by the Prime Minister followed by

Scientific assessment of climate change and its impact (to be introduced by Professor Tom Wigley, Director, Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia).

It is well established that certain gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons, ozone) affect the radiative heat loss of the Earth, and that the concentration of these so-called 'greenhouse' gases is increasing. It is less clear what will be the resultant effect on the climate or when that change will take place. Recent reviews have put the range of warming as an increase in global average temperature between 1.5 and 4.5 C above pre-industrial levels by as early as the middle of the next century. Towards the upper end of this range effects may be discernible on agriculture and natural ecosystems. The prospects that sea levels would also rise by 20-140 cm have been of particular concern.

What is required to improve our understanding of this effect and its timing?

Has the greenhouse effect already begun?

Is the co-ordination of international research adequate to the task?

1020 Coffee

1035 Measures to mitigate the greenhouse effect
(introduced by Dr. Ken Currie, Head Energy
Technology Support Unit, Harwell).

A number of measures can be taken which reduce the emission of greenhouse gases but which are already justified in their own right. These include the phase out of chlorofluorocarbons ('CFCs') and investment in cost-effective energy conservation measures. Possibly the most difficult measure is to control the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide. Options include the wider use of nuclear power and renewables, large scale reafforestation and possibly direct removal of the carbon dioxide from flue gas.

What is the potential of nuclear and renewable energy in reducing carbon dioxide emissions?

What is the relative importance of the options to improve energy efficiency?

What options are open to developing countries?

1130

Responses in the International Context (introduced by Sir Crispin Tickell, UK Ambassador to UN).

No one country can solve the problem of greenhouse gases alone. Effective action can only take place at the international level. One set of greenhouse gases, the CFCs, are already under the control of an international protocol developed by the United Nations Environment Programme. Negotiating this protocol has amply shown the difficulties involved, particularly in accommodating the aspirations of developing countries. UNEP and the World Meteorological Office have now jointly formed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which is to report in under 18 months on possible legal instruments and responses.

Is there a need for an international climate convention?

Are current frameworks up to the task in hand?

What special provisions are necessary for developing countries?

1230

Lunch

1400

Summary of morning session and general discussion (introduced by Dr. Martin Holdgate, Director, International Union for the Conservation of Nature).

The United Kingdom in its opening statement to the IPCC reconfirmed its commitment to action based on sound scientific evidence but believed that some action was already justified. In particular the UK urged wide ratification and strengthening of the Montreal Protocol on CFCs, economic pricing of

energy sources to promote development of energy alternatives and energy efficiency, and better land use practices to reduce deforestation. Since then the UK has given substantial support to the work of the IPCC. This March it hosted the successful Ministerial Conference 'Saving the Ozone Layer'.

How should the UK advance its approach in the international community?

1510 Prime Minister's summing up

1530 Tea