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Dear Charles

**PRIME MINISTER'S UNGA SPEECH**

I attach a revised draft speech for the Prime Minister for this occasion prepared by my Secretary of State. As you will see, the speech raises a wide range of issues but in view of the very tight timing it has not been possible to show it to other Departments first.

I am copying this to John Gieve (Chancellor of the Exchequer's office), Stephen Wall (Foreign office), Stephen Haddrill (Department of Energy), Roy Griffins (Department of Transport), Neil Thornton (Department of Trade and Industry), Andy Lebrecht (MAFF) and Myles Wickstead (ODA).

John

Roger Bright

R BRIGHT  
Private Secretary

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**DRAFT PRIME MINISTER SPEECH FOR UNGA**

During his historic voyage through the South Seas on The Beagle, Charles Darwin landed one November morning in 1835 on the shore of Western Tahiti. After breakfast he climbed a nearby hill to find a vantage point to survey the surrounding Pacific. The sight seemed to him like "a framed engraving", with blue sky, blue lagoon, and white breakers crashing against the encircling coral reef. As he looked out from that hillside, he began to form his theory of the evolution of coral; 154 years after Darwin's visit to Tahiti we have added little to what he discovered then.

What if Charles Darwin had been able, not just to climb a foothill, but to soar through the heavens in one of the orbiting space shuttles? What would he have learned as he surveyed the earth from that altitude?

Of course, we have learned much about our environment as we have looked back at it from space. But nothing has made a more profound impact on us than these two facts. First, as the British scientist Fred Hoyle wrote long before space travel was a reality, "Once a photograph of the Earth, taken from the outside is available.... a new idea as powerful as any other in history will be let loose". That powerful idea is the recognition of our shared inheritance on this planet. We know more clearly than ever before that we carry common burdens, face common problems, and must rise to common challenges.

Second, as we travel through space, as we pass one dead planet after another, we look back on our Earth, a speck of life in an infinite void. It is life itself, incomparably precious, that distinguishes us from the other stars. It is life itself - human life, the innumerable species of our planet - that we wantonly destroy. It is life itself that we must battle to preserve.

For over 40 years, that has been the main task of this United Nations. To bring peace where there was war. Comfort where there was misery. Life where there was death. The struggle has not always been successful. There have been years of failure.

But recent events have brought the promise of a new dawn, of new hope. Relations between the Western nations and the Soviet Union and her allies, long frozen in suspicion and hostility, have begun to thaw. In Europe, this year, freedom has been on the march. In Southern Africa - Namibia and Angola - better prospects for an end to war and the beginning of prosperity have been brokered by the United Nations. And in South East Asia, too, we can dare to hope for the restoration of peace after decades of fighting.

While the conventional, political dangers - the threat of global annihilation, the fact of regional war - appear to be receding we have all recently become aware of another insidious danger. It is as menacing in its way as those more accustomed perils with which international diplomacy has concerned itself for centuries.

For the first time in our history, people have woken to the realization that we have the power to change the environment of our planet. More than that, we know that we are already doing so in damaging and dangerous ways. This began long ago with the beginnings of civilisation itself. But it is mostly a product of the evolution of industrial society.

We can see those changes in the use we make of land: the forests we cut down and burn, the mountain sides we lay bare, the deserts we create.

We can see those changes in the way we exploit other resources: the fossil fuels that we burn, the rivers that we pollute.

And those changes can be perceived, too, in the steeply rising numbers - not only of human beings, but of the domestic animals and plants we bring with us.

It is now a common place that change is likely to be still more fundamental and more widespread. We are changing the sea around us, changing the atmosphere above.

Changes in the chemistry of our atmosphere, leading in turn to changes in the world's climate, could alter society in the most fundamental way of all. That prospect is a new factor in human affairs. It is comparable in its implications to the development of

nuclear energy at the end of the war. It could have equally far-reaching results.

Man's imagination usually operates within a limited distance and a limited timescale. But changes in our climate could apply with wide regional variations to the world as a whole. There is already a legacy of climate change from our past actions. This might need 30, 40 or 50 years to have its full effect. We simply do not know how or at what point climate change would find a new equilibrium.

There are no certainties at present, yet the area of agreement is growing. And that agreement - the result of the work of all our scientists - gives us cause for more concern not less. Let me give two recent examples from our own British experience.

I am proud of the contribution which British scientists have already made, principally through the British Antarctic Survey, to work on the ozone layer, and to the understanding of what its continuing depletion will mean for human health and the natural environment.

Our scientists continue to take a leading role in the vital task of understanding how the polar regions influence the climate of our planet. The latest data from British researchers in the Antarctic shows that we were right to take the warnings so seriously. We are at this moment entering a spring ozone depletion. It is at least as deep as the worst depletion known so far. It completely reverses

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trend observed last year and urges on us the need to strengthen measures taken so far to protect the ozone layer.

Other British scientists, working on the complexity of the systems that influence our climate, are discovering new factors which contribute to climate change. We now have evidence that the plankton, which forms one of the basic elements of the oceanic food chain, may also play a role in modifying the concentration of greenhouse gases. There is a risk that global warming could set off a series of reactions in the oceans which would further increase the concentrations of carbon dioxide.

Recent thinning of the sea ice over a large part of the Arctic provides evidence of a radical change in the pattern of surface currents. Although there is as yet no proof of thinning in the Antarctic ice, the latest data shows that the first-year ice which forms the bulk of its sea ice cover, is remarkably thin. It would probably be unable to sustain significant atmospheric warming without melting. The consequences of this do not stop at a rise in sea levels, devastating though this would be.

Sea ice separates the ocean from the atmosphere over an area of more than 30 million sq km. It reflects most of the solar radiation falling on it. So it helps to cool the Earth's surface. If this area were reduced, the extra absorption of radiation by the ocean would speed the warming of the Earth.

The lesson to be learnt from these phenomena is that global environmental change, resulting from human activities, may be able to accelerate itself.

There is a further example in the tropical forests. A recent study by our Meteorological Office on the Amazon rainforest showed that large-scale deforestation may affect climate directly, as well as causing an increase in carbon dioxide. As a matter of urgency we must improve our understanding of all these factors which influence our climate and our ability to predict future changes.

Our starting point for long-term action must be to secure the best possible scientific assessment. I am proud that the UK has taken on the task of coordinating that assessment within the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change. Their report will be before us at the Second World Climate Conference next year.

But even after that report, the need to deepen and strengthen our scientific understanding will continue. The IPCC will not be able to tell us where the hurricanes will strike; who will be flooded; or how often and severe the droughts will be. Yet we will need to know these things if we are to adapt to future climate change. We must continue to expand our capacity to model and predict climate change. It is the industrialised countries which have this expertise and we have the responsibility to develop it and share it.

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Britain has some of the leading experts in this field. We recognise our responsibility. I am therefore pleased to be able to tell you that the UK will be establishing a new Centre for Climate Change prediction. The centre will be based at our Meteorological Office and will spearhead the urgent effort to improve our predictive capacity. The centre will provide the advance computing facilities scientists need. And funding will be available to support experts from around the developed and developing world, who can come to the UK and contribute to this vital work.

While we need more research on what is happening already and on what is likely to happen, there is little doubt about how these problems arise. They are caused by the way we generate energy, the way we use land, and the way industry makes use of natural resources. These activities cause local problems like marine pollution, acid deposition and waste disposal. They also have global results - one narrow and one broad.

The narrow result is the production of halons and chlorofluorocarbons which, as we know, have the effect of seasonal thinning of the ozone layer. The broad result is the production of the so-called green house gases. These gases - carbon dioxide, methane, halons and CFCs, and nitrous oxide - block outward radiation, and result in an increase in the average surface temperature of the earth.



These are problems which deserve action by us all. The need for more good scientific evidence, and the awesome scale of the international co-operation which is clearly required, should not provide excuses for inaction. We have to start work sensibly and to start work now. We must start while we have the time.

Fortunately, we have a precedent on which we can build. The world community has already begun to deal with the narrow but important problem of ozone depletion. We should use that work as the model for the way we tackle green house warming.

Initial fears in the 1970s about the effect of halons and CFCs led to early but unco-ordinated action to regulate them. The Vienna Convention in 1985 and the Montreal Protocol in 1987 established landmarks in international law. They aimed to prevent rather than cure a global environmental problem. The work of the British Antarctic Survey confirmed the true extent of damage to the ozone layer and removed any doubts about the need to take action. The London "Saving the Ozone Layer Conference" earlier this year helped raise political awareness of the problem. We are honoured to host next year's meeting in London of the Montreal Protocol parties. That conference will represent another major step towards the goal of protecting the stratosphere. We hope that agreement will be reached there to tighten up controls on CFCs and halons and to phase out Montreal CFCs by the end of the century. It is indicative of

the scale of these global problems that even these ambitious targets may not prevent the doubling of stratospheric chlorine concentrations by the year 2000.

Tackling global warming will be even more difficult and more complicated than this. The problem goes to the roots of modern society. It will have implications for many economic activities, and implications too for the legitimate aspirations of people worldwide to enjoy higher living standards. The signs of global warming are highly unwelcome. For a long time they went unrecognised, but as evidence has mounted in the last few years things have changed. There has been a growing understanding of the global nature of the problem.

Climate change is possibly the greatest challenge to sustainable development facing the international community and, therefore, the United Nations. All countries will be affected by it. All countries have a common interest in working together to cope with it. Those of us who through industrialisation have unwittingly contributed to the problem must recognise our special responsibility for helping others to overcome it. We must reach agreements which are seen to be equitable. And no country must take advantage of another in putting them into effect.

The British approach is based on five simple principles. First, we must work together to deal with these problems, using and strengthening existing international institutions. Just as would

happen with trade agreements, co-operation will have to be binding and properly monitored. Otherwise, there will always be fears that those nations that accept and abide by environmental agreements will lose out competitively to those that do not.

Second, environmental diplomacy must be based on good science. We must not leap into the dark. We must use science to cast a light ahead, so that we can move forward step by step in the right direction.

Third, our environmental practice should also be based on good economics. The Brundtland Report was right. To save our environment, we do not need to abandon growth. Indeed, even if that was possible it would certainly do more to destroy our environment than to save it. In too many parts of the world, it is poverty not development which is the most toxic element in the environment. What we need is growth that is securely based. Growth that can be sustained. Growth that does not plunder the planet today and leave our children tomorrow to deal with the consequences.

Sensible growth and modern technology can enhance our environment not destroy it. They are most likely to do so if we combine intelligent government regulation with the use of market forces, much the best way of securing a community's goals in the most cost-effective way. To practice good, environmentally-friendly economics, we shall need at both the national and the international levels to cost more carefully the environmental consequences of what

we do, and to look again at how we define and describe growth and prosperity in our economic accounts.

The fourth principle on which our approach is based is that each country has to make its own individual contribution to solving the global problem. The aggregate of what we do individually will comprise the international response to environmental danger.

And, finally, those of us who are better off must offer a helping hand to those who are poorer.

Let me now turn to how I believe we should put those principles into practice.

It must be right to base our framework for international action on the work of the United Nations and its agencies. We wish therefore to strengthen the World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme. We have recently increased our contribution to UNEP. We hope that others, who can afford it, will do the same.

The World Climate Conference next year should provide the springboard for the next major initiative on international environmental co-operation. We believe that Conference should see the beginning of detailed work on a framework convention on climate change. The precedent to which I have already referred is the work

on the ozone layer. We should aim to have that Convention ready for adoption by the time of the World Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. I hope that all of us in the European Community and the OECD can accept a special responsibility for meeting that timetable. We may have slightly different ambitions. Some may want to go faster, some slower. I believe that the timetable I have suggested is realistic and should be broadly acceptable.

With our unique and valued Commonwealth links, we will discuss with them how all the members of the Commonwealth can work to that timetable too. We recently had a full discussion of the environment at our bi-annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

A framework convention on climate change would be followed by specific binding protocols on different aspects of the problem as the scientific understanding and the political will come into balance. There is no reason at all why work on some of the protocols should not go forward hand-in-hand with the negotiation of the convention, though that should obviously have the first priority.

At the very least, a framework convention will need to include a mechanism to ensure that protocols can be negotiated and brought into effect with the minimum of bureaucratic red tape.

These protocols must be binding and there must be an effective supervision and monitoring regime.

The United Kingdom only ratifies international agreements we know we can honour. All countries must realise that their words of intent must be backed up by action. At the same time we must ensure that the convention and its protocols have wide ratification.

The negotiation of some of those protocols will be extremely difficult. No issue will be more contentious than the need to control emissions of carbon dioxide, the major contributor to the greenhouse effect. Doing nothing is not an option that we can afford to consider. But, first, we need sound scientific analysis of the impact of emissions from different sources and the ways in which these can be reduced. The United Kingdom would like to consider extending and prolonging the role of the IPCC after it submits its report next year. That would provide an authoritative scientific basis for the negotiation of this and other protocols.

On such an authoritative basis, we should agree global measures which may well include targets for controlling emissions of green house gases, and the way in which individual countries should contribute to their achievement. There are few better examples than this of the need for a multilateral rather than a unilateral approach to world environmental problems. The challenge for our negotiators on issues like this is as great as in any disarmament treaty and time

is short. That makes it doubly essential to ensure that the IPCC's work remains on target, and that we do not allow ourselves to be diverted into fruitless and divisive arguments.

Every nation will need, as I have said, to make its own contribution to the world effort. I want to single out four things that we are doing in Britain.

First, we will be introducing over the coming months a comprehensive and integrated system of pollution control to deal with all types of industrial emissions whether to air, water or land.

Secondly, we will be drawing up over the coming year our own environmental agenda for the decade ahead. This will cover energy, transport, agriculture, industry and all the aspects of government which affect the environment. We shall be looking at what further needs to be done to reduce air pollution, in addition to the £2 billion programme of improvements to reduce emissions from our power stations. We will be promoting greater energy efficiency to reduce the fuel burnt in our homes and offices, our factories and our power stations. We shall be looking at the role of non-fossil fuel sources in generating energy. We want to strengthen controls over vehicle emissions. We will be reviewing the impact of agriculture on the quality of our air and water and on the beauty of the priceless heritage of our countryside. We intend to plant new

woods and forests, for example around some of our towns and cities. We shall not only control pollution by our industries, we shall want to encourage them to develop new technologies to clean up the environment.

Third, we are looking at the implications of sustainable development for industrialised economies like our own. Three things are clear. We need to use market-based incentives to promote good environmental practice. We have already done this to encourage greater use of lead-free petrol. We have to cost the impact on our environment of all our principal activities in government and industry. And we need, as well, to see how our national accounts encompass environmental costs and benefits. At present, cleaning up pollution - the spillage of oil along our coasts, the discharge of chemicals into a river - counts as an enhancement of our national prosperity. International co-operation on the environment, and our own commonsense, should encourage us to take a more sensible view of what really constitutes development and prosperity.

Fourth, we are substantially increasing our investment in research into global environmental problems. I have already mentioned the Climate Change Centre that we are establishing. We are also, of course, supporting the British Antarctic Survey's crucial contribution to the World Ocean Climate Programme and the voyages of our aptly-named research ship, the "Charles Darwin". We have also provided more money for the European Space Agency's Earth Resources Satellite.



As one of the world's largest trading and investing nations, and as a major aid donor, we naturally intend to play our part in helping poor countries to rise to the environmental challenge.

We should not approach this task by attempting to bully others into accepting blanket "green conditionality" for the help we give them. We have to proceed on the basis of partnership, equality and encouragement.

We need to ensure that the international aid agencies to which we contribute are conscious of the environmental dimension of their programmes. I am pleased that the World Bank have given the environment growing priority.

In our own bilateral programmes, there are several ways in which we can help. We can assist the process of economic reform in developing countries so that their economies are more securely based. We can offer training and technology to develop the capacity to monitor and improve the environment. We can provide cash for environmental projects.

In Britain, we believe we should play a specially useful role, under the aegis of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, in helping to conserve the world's precious forests. Our history has given us a particular expertise in this sector. We intend to increase the money we make available for tropical forestry. Earlier this year we

signed a £40 million forestry agreement with India. And we signed a further technical co-operation agreement with Brazil to help that country with the work she is doing - so important for the whole of mankind - to preserve her priceless Amazon rainforest. All together we have forestry projects in over 20 countries. We wish to do more. We intend to increase our aid for forestry in the coming year by a further £20 million.

The loss of tropical forests has led to the growing loss of genetic diversity on our planet. It is astonishing but true that our civilisation, whose imagination has reached the boundaries of the universe, does not know, to within a factor of ten, how many species the earth supports. What we do know is that we are losing species at a reckless rate, species which could perhaps be helping us to advance the frontiers of medical science. We need to work towards another global convention as well - a convention on the conservation of biological diversity that gives us all responsibility for the safeguarding of our genetic resources.

For our part, the United Kingdom is willing to help developing countries draw up and implement their own national conservation strategies to protect and manage their reserves of plants and animals.

We are also prepared to assist the transfer of technology to countries, whether poor or better-off, to deal with the toxic wastes which are a by-product of economic development. It is essential to

control and where possible reduce the movement around the world of those hazardous wastes. One way to cut down the amount of waste that is shipped would be for all developed countries to deal so far as they possibly can with the waste they themselves produce. What they must not do is to dump waste - dump it in the sea or dump it on poorer countries.

Let me briefly summarise my argument today.

The environmental challenge which confronts the whole world demands an equivalent response from the whole world. We should work through this great organisation and its agencies to secure world-wide agreements on the way to combat climate change, the thinning of the ozone, and the loss of precious species. We need a realistic programme of action and an equally realistic timetable. Each country has to contribute, and those countries who are industrialised must contribute more to help those who are not.

The work ahead will be long and hard. We should embark on it, hopeful of success not fearful of failure.

I began with Charles Darwin. Darwin's voyages were among the high-points of scientific discovery. They were undertaken at a time when men and women felt with growing confidence that we could not only understand the natural world but master it, too. Today, we have learned rather more humility. But another of the beliefs of Darwin's era should help to see us through - the belief in reason.

Reason is humanity's special gift. It motors our imagination. It allows us to understand the structure of the nucleus. It enables us to explore the heavens. Now we must use our reason to find a way in which we can live with nature, not dominate nature.

At the end of a book which has helped many young people to shape their own sense of stewardship for our planet, its American author quotes one of our greatest English poems, Milton's "Paradise Lost". When Adam in that poem asks about the movements of the heavens, Raphael refuses to answer. "Let it speak," he says,

"the Maker's high magnificence, who built  
So spacious, and his line stretcht out so far;  
That man may know he dwells not in his own;  
An edifice too large for him to fill,  
Lodg'd in a small partition, and the rest  
Ordain'd for uses to his Lord best known."

We need our reason to teach us today that we are not, that we must not try to be, the Lords of all we survey. We are not the Lords, we are the Lord's creatures, the trustees of this planet, charged today with preserving life itself - preserving life with all its mystery and all its wonder.