



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

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7 February 1989

*Sen Charles*

French Prime Minister's Environmental Initiative

*FILE WITH D.M. 7/2/89*  
In my letter of 1 February I promised further advice for the Prime Minister's discussion with M Rocard on 8 February of his proposed Conference and Declaration on the Environment.

In speaking to M Rocard the Prime Minister may wish to begin by expressing our thanks that France will be represented at the London Ozone Conference. That Conference and M Rocard's own environmental initiative shows that both Governments are fully seized on the need for action in this field.

The Prime Minister might go on to say that the British Government have studied carefully the draft Declaration which M Rocard gave to Sir Ewen Fergusson. We welcomed M Rocard's intention to develop his initiative within the existing UN framework. But we have to say frankly that we still have a number of doubts about elements of the initiative. The draft Declaration envisages the creation of a new authority; we would have difficulty in committing ourselves to such an authority without studying its implications and we wonder how it would relate to the existing United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). We also have difficulty with the concept of economic sanctions; in our view sanctions simply do not work, and they would be particularly difficult to apply in the environmental areas. Furthermore, the concept of compensation to certain countries for taking action will have major financial implications for the developed countries, given that developing countries are already major contributors to certain problems affecting the climate (eg deforestation) and important potential contributors to others (eg fossil fuel power generation and use of CFCs). Finally, is it realistic to seek progress globally yet exclude the involvement of some of the largest and most important countries, the USA, Soviet Union and China? (The Prime Minister might comment that China's annual coal consumption of 850m tons is already ten times that of the UK or Germany, and is planned to increase to 1200m tons by the year 2000.)

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The Prime Minister might invite M Rocard to contemplate some amendment. The Hague meeting could be useful in giving a political impetus to work on the global environment and particularly on the greenhouse effect. But this might best be done with a more general Declaration which did not attempt to create new institutions but rather to reinforce the work already going on. The Declaration might stress the importance of tackling, on a global scale, the threats to the Earth's atmosphere. ~~It might then make a favourable reference to the activities of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change (IGPCC), which has already made a good start, and to look ahead to the World Climate Conference which is due in 1990.~~ We would find it much easier to subscribe to a Declaration along these lines.

The question of British representation at the Hague meeting also arises. The meeting seems likely to attract a substantial attendance. The Dutch Prime Minister's letter of 6 February to the Prime Minister gives the latest state of play. Mr Lubbers also urges the Prime Minister to support the initiative.

If we were completely absent from the Hague, this would be inconsistent with the prominent role we are now playing on environment issues internationally; and would lose us the chance of influencing the Declaration and subsequent work. We note from your letter of 27 January that the Prime Minister is not inclined to attend the Conference. The Foreign Secretary does not wish to recommend at this stage that the Prime Minister should attend, although we might wish to look at this question again if M Rocard shows unexpected flexibility about the content of the Declaration, or if it seems likely that the vast majority of other states participating would be represented by their Heads of Government. If the Prime Minister does not attend, then the Foreign Secretary believes that we should be represented either by himself or by Mr Ridley. Mr Ridley thinks that it may well be that our case should be argued more on environmental than on diplomatic grounds. The Foreign Secretary is inclined to agree with this, although if other countries are represented by Foreign Ministers it may be right for him to attend. He will offer advice on this point in due course.

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I am copying this letter to Deborah Lamb (Department of the Environment) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*

*R N Peirce*

(R N Peirce)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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filed in Environmental affairs : Pt. 7

and Rain