



Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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1 November 1990

Dear Charles,

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*Tim Shinn*

*Background to your visit to*

*Geneva on Tuesday*

Second World Climate Conference

As you know, the Ministerial segment of the Second World Climate Conference (SWCC) is to take place in Geneva on 6-7 November. The Prime Minister is to address the opening session of the Conference on 6 November. This letter provides some background information.

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I Procedure

The Prime Minister will be the first Head of Government to speak, following President Koller, President of the Swiss Federal Council and King Hussein of Jordan. The Prime Ministers of France (Rocard), Malta (Adami) and Tuvalu (Paeniu) and (we expect) the caretaker Prime Minister of Norway (Mrs Brundtland) will speak after her.

Also present will be the heads of the organisations sponsoring the Conference. They are:

Obasi, Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

Tolba, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

Saouma, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO

Menon, President, International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU)

Each of the main speakers is to be introduced by the head of one of the sponsoring organisations. The Prime Minister will be introduced by Dr Saouma. She should be aware that the UK was a leading member of a group of countries which sought to replace Dr Saouma when he last stood for re-election for a third term in his present post. We have also been active in pressing for reform of the FAO, including its Tropical Forestry Action Plan.

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## II Objectives

The aim of the conference is to:

(a) consider the present and future work of the World Climate Programme, established after the First World Climate Conference in 1979; and

(b) assess the state of knowledge on climate change, in particular the First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

We hope it will thus set the stage for the negotiations on a framework convention on climate change and related protocols which are due to begin in Washington early next year, and be completed before the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil.

## III Ministerial Declaration

There have so far been a number of negotiating sessions on the draft Ministerial Declaration which is to be adopted at the end of the Conference. These have achieved little and officials are to meet over the weekend before the Conference to try to sort out the remaining difficulties.

The eventual text will have to accommodate a wide spread of national interests. Most of the OECD is keen to write in ambitious targets for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The US remains very cautious on targets in particular and the science in general. The Brazilians are understandably reticent on the subject of forests. Most of the third world are principally interested in a strong text on additional aid and technology transfer.

Our principal aims (which ought to be achievable) are that the declaration should unambiguously endorse the scientific conclusions of IPCC and should give a firm political endorsement to the need to achieve agreement on a framework convention on climate change by 1992.

An eventual agreement is likely to turn on:

(a) targets for greenhouse gas emissions. Some developed countries are pressing for agreement on firm targets. But the Americans have made clear that they will not commit themselves to limiting emissions at this stage. We shall be working to avoid a damaging split among developed countries while looking for language which will encourage the US to set itself a strategy before too long.

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(b) the terms for provision of financial and technological assistance to developing countries. We accept that developing countries will need help in tackling the impact of climate change. Our objectives are to tie such assistance to developing countries' real needs and to their taking real action, and to avoid any specific commitment to provide additional resources in PES terms over a given period.

(c) the question of the need for, and nature of, any international legal instrument on forests. We support a forestry protocol to a climate change convention. We have also accepted that a separate instrument addressing wider forestry issues may be called for. The FAO has proposed negotiation of a forestry convention under its auspices. We have reservations about the ability of the FAO to lead such negotiations, and about the wisdom of aiming for a legally binding instrument as an initial goal. A non-binding forestry Charter (in addition to the forestry protocol) might be the right way forward.

IV Future Negotiations

Following publication of the IPCC report of last August, an organisational meeting took place in preparation for negotiations on a climate change convention. The meeting agreed a negotiating timetable leading up to the proposed signature of the Convention at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The main unresolved points were:

(a) the negotiating forum: we favour a joint WMO/UNEP technical forum. Some Latin American countries (led by Brazil) favoured a UN specialised conference, which we believe would lead to excessive politicisation. But the Brazilians have since dropped their proposal, opening the way for a possible compromise;

(b) the timing of negotiation of protocols (eg on greenhouse gases and forestry) to a convention. We believe that discussion, even if not formal negotiation, on those subjects is bound to take place in parallel with the negotiations on a convention. But the Americans and certain third world countries are reluctant to accept this.

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These issues will now be addressed at to the UN General Assembly later this month. But they are also likely to come up at the Second World Climate Conference itself.

*Yours ever,  
S L Gass*

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