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D. Rowland

ODD 15/2/81

Prime Minister

SECOND WORLD CLIMATE CONFERENCE: UNGA DEBATE

I am sure you and colleagues will be interested to have a brief report on the outcome of the Second World Climate Conference and its implications for the General Assembly debate on climate change that is about to start.

Your speech at the opening ceremony was very well received. Among a good deal of rhetoric, the continued stress we place on the science of climate change as the basis of policy made a very favourable impression. It effectively bridged the scientific and Ministerial sessions of the conference and ensured that the discussions which followed maintained a proper balance.

The main issues which we had identified in advance were the endorsement for the IPCC Report, the need for a global response, the respective roles of developed and developing countries, and the need for an early start on negotiations on a framework convention. In all these areas the final Declaration fully reflected our position.

The IPCC conclusions were not seriously questioned, and the Declaration incorporates their main findings while recognising the uncertainties which the IPCC identified in our understanding of the science of climate change. I believe that there will be strong support for the continuation of IPCC's work, and that we will retain our leading role in Working Group I.

The Declaration explicitly recognises the need to initiate a global response to climate change as a common responsibility of all countries. This response should however be based on the best available scientific and technical knowledge, and take full account of the need for sustained economic development. This reflects very well the balance we have sought to achieve.



The discussion on targets and strategies among the developed countries was predictably one of the most difficult to resolve. The agreement we had reached in the European Community on 29 October undoubtedly assisted our position greatly. The willingness of key Member States to adopt a non-confrontational approach set the tone for the discussion. The final Geneva text welcomes the commitments which the Community, with its member states, and other developed countries have already made, and urges all developed countries to establish "targets and/or feasible national programmes or strategies which will have significant effects on limiting greenhouse gas emissions." This was as far as the US were prepared to go in Geneva, despite severe pressure on their position from other OECD countries. We were able to play an important role in brokering the final agreement which does indicate some movement from the US.

With the declaration developing countries have recognised that, within the limits feasible, they should take action to respond to climate change. The framework that we agreed at the London revision of the Montreal Protocol proved an invaluable basis.

In retrospect the most important consensus in the Declaration is on the need for an early start to negotiations on a framework convention on climate change, to be completed by 1992. Some 137 countries, more than ever before, have agreed to this, and negotiations will begin in Washington in February 1991. The remaining hurdle is the UN General Assembly Debate which will decide who should manage the negotiations. As you argued strongly in your speech, we believe that UNEP and WMO are best qualified to undertake this task. However, Brazil, who are to host the 1992 UNCED have been pressing for a special negotiating committee convened directly by the General Assembly and for the head of the Secretariat for the negotiations to be appointed by the UN Secretary General. I believe this approach would risk dispersing UNEP's special expertise, and could lead to major delays in the negotiations. I have considered how best to



support our Mission in New York during this key debate, and officials from my Department will be visiting New York to lend their support. I understand that Douglas Hurd is considering what more the FCO might do to help ensure the right outcome from the Debate.

I am copying this to Douglas Hurd, to other members of MISC 141 and to Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "CP".

CP

15 November 90

*Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence*

