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Meetings with German Members of Parliament - Energy Tax

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

February 24, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR KATIE MCGINTY

FROM: PATRICIA BLISS-GUEST

RE: MEETING ON WITH MEMBERS OF THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT'S
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

As a general matter, we assume that the German members of Parliament are interested in acquiring a sense of the direction that international environmental policy will take under the new administration. To this end, the more forthcoming that you can be with regard to the administration's goal of playing a leadership role in advancing international environmental objectives, the more positive the meeting should be.

In particular, we think it likely that the following issues may be raised:

Global Climate

As you know, Germany remains committed to creating a convention with specific targets and timetables. Thus, it is likely that your visitors will be most particularly eager to gain any hints they can about possible announcements of a changed U.S. policy at the upcoming INC/FCCC session (March 15-20, New York).

A second issue of note is ratification of the convention. To date, twelve countries have ratified the convention; fifty ratifications are required for the convention to enter into force. At the December INC/FCCC meeting, German representatives and others from the EC were talking about ratification as a block by the end of 1993. What are the prospects for German ratification? Would Germany still expect to submit its instrument of ratification simultaneously with other EC member states?

A third likely topic of interest is efforts to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP). Germany has offered to host the first COP meeting (and the UNGA, in its 1992 resolution on climate appears to have accepted the offer). Timing of the first COP meeting is at present cautiously projected for some time toward the end of 1994 or early in 1995. German negotiators have, to date, made plain their interest in having the "prompt start" meetings of the INC/FCCC prepare amendment(s) and/or protocol(s) to introduce targets into the convention. Some other nations (notably Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil producers) have indicated their intention to block such moves. What are the expectations in the German Parliament for COP 1?

Finally, there is the issue of national action plans on climate change. As you know all too well, the draft US plan was released in December, and public comments on it are due by March 8. In December, the Germans released a detailed outline of their prospective plan. The outline in many (but not all) respects resembles the outline of draft US plan. What is the expected date for release of Germany's action plan? Will there be a process for public comment/input?

Biodiversity

The US fully supports international efforts to promote the conservation of biological diversity. To this end, the administration is interested in seeking ways to enable the US to sign the biodiversity convention.

However, we continue to have serious concerns with respect to the provisions of the Convention concerning finance and technology transfer (intellectual property rights issues in particular). We understand that other countries, such as Switzerland, are having their own difficulties in proceeding with ratification due to similar concerns. We are interested in seeking the cooperation of like-minded states with a view to finding means to resolve our concerns so that we may become a party to the convention. We understand that Germany may be supportive of this effort, and we would welcome their collaboration.

What are the prospects for ratification of the Convention in Germany? What is the timing? Do they anticipate any problematic issues in the national process for ratification?

Global Environment Facility

We recognize that 1993 will be a critical year for the GEF in light of both the replenishment and the restructuring exercise that will proceed throughout the year. The US hopes that the GEF can be restructured in such a way as to meet the interests of the donor countries for efficiency and for high quality projects and the interests of the recipient countries for universality, transparency, and easy access to information and resources. We believe that we will all be better off if the GEF is used as the principal funding mechanism for projects that promote global environmental benefits, including those arising from the climate change convention and the biodiversity convention.

We expect that the US will be a significant contributor to the replenished GEF. However, economic realities being what they are, we do not foresee a tripling of the present level of funding as the German government suggested at Rio. What is current German thinking as to the appropriate level of funding for the

GEF in the next three years?

Commission on Sustainable Development

We have high expectations for the Commission on Sustainable Development, and we are looking forward to its first substantive session in June. We think that the Commission will have an important and large task to keep Agenda 21 under review. We hope that the Commission can be used both to review national implementation of Agenda 21 (successes, failures, problems, new issues that arise) as well as the activities of the UN system. In order to carry out such a review, we think it important that governments and UN bodies prepare reports each year addressing those sectoral issues on the agenda of the CSD for that particular year. On the basis of the reports the secretariat should prepare an analysis of the progress being made in implementing Agenda 21, the common problems, and emerging issues.

→ We are pleased that Germany was elected to be a member of the CSD. What are their expectations for how the CSD will operate?

Negotiation of Desertification Convention

We see this negotiation as an opportunity to reinforce Agenda 21's recommendations on desertification, to promote local participation in addressing practical environmental problems, and as an opportunity to promote rationalization of international research and assistance activities.

We were encouraged by the pragmatic atmosphere of the organizational session in New York at the end of January, and we hope this mood continues at the Nairobi meeting May 24-June 3.

Given generally tight foreign assistance budgets in the industrialized countries, we do not think it likely that the Convention can elicit substantial increases in assistance to developing countries to combat desertification: programs in this area probably will have to be financed by a "package" of funds from existing bilateral and multilateral assistance entities. We recognize that there will be pressure from countries with desertification problems to include appropriate activities within the scope of the GEF. This is an issue which we will need to consider seriously with other donors.

Our delegation appreciated the exchanges of views it had with the German delegation in New York, and we look forward to future cooperation during the negotiations.

National Follow-up to Agenda 21

We think a very important follow-up to Agenda 21 will be for

each country to prepare a national strategy. Given the US election and transition, our own efforts are still in a preliminary stage, but we are committed to developing a national strategy. We intend to use a process that will involve broad outreach not only to state and local governments, but that will also include a wide range of nongovernmental organizations and diverse public interests. Already, there are numerous activities being organized outside the federal government to advance the UNCED agenda.

What are the German plans for developing a national strategy? Is there already an on-going process? If so, what is the timing and how is it being run?

Montreal Protocol

The November meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol resulted in adoption of a series of amendments. We are now preparing for the start of the ratification process on these amendments, although it is difficult at present to assess when the Senate might consider the materials for advice and consent to ratification.

Are there any plans in Germany at present concerning consideration of the Copenhagen amendments for ratification?



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