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[Loose Materials Re: U.S. Delegation to the UNFCC (U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change) Conference of the Parties-4 Press Briefing, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 11/11/98]

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U.S. Delegation to the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties-4
Press Briefing
Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 11, 1998

Stuart Eizenstat, Head of U. S. Delegation/Under Secretary of State
Todd Stern, President's Climate Change Coordinator

Buenos Aires, Argentina
November 11, 1998

OPENING STATEMENT BY MR. EIZENSTAT:

Good evening. I'd like to start by highlighting some of the very encouraging developments that have occurred today. On behalf of the United States, I'd like to commend President Menem and the people of Argentina for the historic announcement that was made today, and the resolute action that represents to confront the challenge of climate change. Argentina's pledge to voluntarily take on a binding emissions target in the 2008-2012 period, represents a significant breakthrough, indeed the breakthrough of this conference.

Argentina is the first developing country to make such a commitment, and its leadership provides a model for other countries. This is just the kind of meaningful participation that we need in order to make the promise of Kyoto a reality. President Menem's announcement demonstrates that indeed we have come a long way in the year since Kyoto. It also underscores the need for continued progress, in particular the need for new pathways so that developing countries can become full partners in the effort to address climate change. Only then can we realize a truly global response to what is so clearly a global challenge.

Also today the Republic of Kazakhstan indicated to us and to several other nations, that it plans to announce tomorrow its intent to join Annex I and Annex B, and to assume a binding target to abate their emissions below business as usual during the 2008-2012 compliance period. This too is a very significant development. It demonstrates a growing desire by non-Annex I nations to have access to the opportunities offered by Kyoto's market mechanisms of emissions trading and joint implementation. We have met with our Umbrella Group counterparts and we agreed to grant Kazakhstan observer status within our group.

Both of these announcements -- by Argentina and by Kazakhstan -- underscore the critical importance of the marketplace in achieving our common goals. Both countries recognize that action on climate change is not only in the global interest, it's in their national interest. This was so eloquently stated by President Menem in describing how they have been able to achieve an average of 6% growth since 1990 with emissions at only 1%, and as he put it, that the only sustainable growth is clean growth. In taking on binding commitments, they seek, in part, to take full advantage of the flexibility mechanisms agreed to in Kyoto. These mechanisms not only enable us to reduce emissions while enhancing economic growth, they also provide an important means of achieving broader participation in this effort. Again, these announcements underscore the need for new pathways so that more nations, whatever their circumstances, can take on and

act on their convictions and chart their own sovereign paths to abating emissions.

Thank you very much. Todd Stern and I will take your questions.

THE TIMES/LONDON: I don't know much about Kazakhstan apart from the fact that it's got some excellent rocket launch pads. But I presume a bit like the Soviet Union, of the Soviet Union countries, its economy probably is collapsed or suddenly gone down since 1990. Would we assume that they would have therefore some hot or certainly tepid air to trade with other Annex I countries?

MR. EIZENSTAT: Not necessarily because it depends on what kind of a reduction they take -- if it's an abatement reduction, that would not necessarily be the case. This whole hot air issue ought to be put in the following context. First of all, in Kyoto, the industrial countries who signed on to Annex I had an overall reduction of 5.2% -- that's already built into the treaty, so that is a locked in, binding commitment once countries ratify it. Second, it's important to understand that one of the reasons the European Union was able to take its commitment was because of the collapse of the East German economy and its integration into West Germany. So, this all has to be put into a reasonable context, and, again, in terms of Kazakhstan, it really depends on the type of commitment they make, but if they take certain abatement commitments, that would not be the case.

QUESTION: INAUDIBLE

MR. EIZENSTAT: In other words, that would be reducing the rate of increase of what otherwise would occur from a business-as-usual standpoint. Still being able to increase their emissions, but from a lesser trajectory than would otherwise occur.

THE INDEPENDENT/LONDON: Can you just tell us, put us right as to whether or not Vice President Gore is expected here. And, if so, is there a schedule for the Vice President?

MR STERN: The Vice President is not coming here.

QUESTION: INAUDIBLE

MR. EIZENSTAT: The Vice President is not coming. He never intended to come. He's not coming.

NORWEGIAN NEWS AGENCY: Could you please inform us what countries the U.S. has had informal consultations on voluntary commitments.

MR. EIZENSTAT: We haven't simply had consultations on voluntary commitments, we have had consultations on all of the outstanding major issues which are: how to get the process of

determining rules and procedures for all the flexibility mechanisms, and we include in that the bubble -- which has to be just as transparent as joint implementation, as Clean Development Mechanism, and as trading. You can't have Europe behind a wall while everybody else is responsible for transparent rules, and I think that at least some members with whom we've met today of the EU have said so very clearly that they expect to have such transparency, so that's been one set of issues. The second has been the issue of 4.8 and 4.9 -- the question of adaptation and compensation. And the third is 4.2 (a) and (b) which is what kind of reviews, and we've had an extensive set of meetings with countries that range from Mexico and the AOSIS countries, to a variety of African countries, to the U.K., to Germany, and many others. We will have further discussions with other developing countries later this evening.

Thank you.

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