



Earth Legacy Declaration

A Call for America's Recommitment to Global Environmental Leadership

More than three decades ago, the United States and other nations, led by their scientists and people, first recognized the need for international cooperation to preserve the natural systems upon which all life depends. From the outset, the U.S. has been a leader in building scientific understanding of the environment and in taking meaningful action to protect it. We have made progress with increased public awareness, concern, and efforts underway to address pressing environmental issues in practically every nation and through a myriad of international environmental institutions, agencies, and treaties. Yet there is strong scientific consensus that climate change, loss of wildlife, and toxic pollution -- just some of the signs of the degradation of our planet -- remain unchecked. World population expected to grow from 6 to 9 billion by mid-century, spreading industrialization, increasing urbanization, and rising consumption are creating enormous pressures on the air, water, and land of our small planet.

Without urgent action to reverse current trends, the degradation of the Earth's environment will undermine our public health, national security, and economic interests. Climate change and other environmental factors are contributing to the emergence and spread of dangerous new epidemics, such as West Nile virus. Continued emissions of toxic pollutants worldwide threaten food safety and cause long-term health effects here. Without progress towards sustainable development, income disparities will widen and the absolute number of people living in poverty in the developing world will increase. The result will be more social and political unrest with the prospects of even more terrorists, wars over water and other resources, and millions of environmental refugees.

Environmental threats do not recognize national boundaries; and no country alone can be held accountable for these problems or their solutions. The United States needs to do its fair share in cooperation with other countries. The U.S. is the richest and most powerful nation on the planet, and one of the world's biggest polluters and consumers of resources. The U.S. is one of the few countries with the scientific and financial resources to make the investments in new energy, transportation and other technologies that can reduce the pressure on the planet's ecosystems and resources. The U.S. leadership is essential to stimulate needed involvement of all nations.

However, over the past decade, the United States has relinquished its lead role on global environmental issues, missed opportunities to make progress and reversed earlier gains. The

U.S. has declined to join a number of important environmental treaties and has been inconsistent at best in its support of global environmental institutions. Environmental protection and sustainable development have become less a priority or focus for American national security and foreign policies. The debate on global environmental issues in the U.S. has become increasingly counterproductive and often ignores the robust scientific knowledge about the challenges we face.

We need a new consensus and foundation upon which to build a renewed U.S. commitment to protect the global environment. To these ends, we call upon the Congress to establish an independent commission to examine the state of scientific understanding and current efforts to protect the global environment, to assess the impact of continued global environmental deterioration on U.S. interests, and to make recommendations for United States environmental leadership.

We call upon our fellow citizens to support the creation of such an "Earth Legacy Commission." We need a national discussion on the fundamental questions of what legacy we will leave our children and grandchildren, and what actions we must take as a nation to ensure that the world we hand down to them is as safe, healthy, and bountiful as the one we inherited.

Earth Legacy Declaration -- Signatories as of June 4, 2004

The Honorable John B. Anderson
Former U.S. Representative to Congress from Illinois

The Honorable E.U. Curtis Bohlen
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs

Ambassador Jonathan Dean
Advisor on International Security Issues, Union of Concerned Scientists
Former U.S. Representative to the NATO-Warsaw Pact Force Reduction Negotiations in Vienna

Dr. Anne H. Ehrlich
Senior Research Associate, Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford University

Dr. Paul R. Ehrlich
Bing Professor of Population Studies, Stanford University

Ambassador Richard Gardner
Former Ambassador to Spain and Italy

Dr. Peter Gleick
President, Pacific Institute
Academician, International Water Academy

Ambassador James Goodby
Former Ambassador to Finland
Former Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Security and Dismantlement

Ambassador Thomas Graham
Former Special Representative of the President for Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Denis Hayes
Co-Founder, Earth Day
President, Bullitt Foundation

Christian A. Herter, Jr.
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environmental Affairs

Dr. John P. Holdren
Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy, Harvard University

Professor Phillip Landrigan
The Ethel H. Wise Professor of Community Medicine and Chairman of Community and Preventive Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City

Dr. Thomas E. Lovejoy
Former Chief Biodiversity Advisor to the President, World Bank
Former Assistant Secretary for Environmental and External Affairs, Smithsonian Institution
President, Heinz Center for Science Economics & the Environment

Ambassador William Luers

Former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Venezuela
President and CEO, The United Nations Association of the United States of America

Ambassador Princeton N. Lyman
Former U.S. Ambassador to South Africa and Nigeria
Former Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs
Ralph Bunche Senior Fellow and Director of Africa Policy Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

Dr. Michael McCally
President, Physicians for Social Responsibility
Clinical Professor in the Department of Community and Preventive Medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City

Ambassador David D. Newsom
Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia

Professor John C. Ogden
Professor of Biology at the University of South Florida
Director of the Florida Institute of Oceanography

Professor James Gustave Speth
Dean, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies
Former Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
Former Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

The Honorable Russell E. Train
Former Chair Council on Environmental Quality
Former Administrator Environmental Protection Administration
Chairman Emeritus, World Wildlife Fund

Ambassador Robert E. White
Former Ambassador to Paraguay and to El Salvador
President, Center for International Policy

Dr. George M. Woodwell
Founder and Director, Woods Hole Research Center

The Honorable Timothy Wirth
President, U.N. Foundation
Former Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs
Former Senator from Colorado

Note: Organizational designations are for identification purposes only.

Earth Legacy Campaign - Member Organizations

Americans for Informed Democracy
Center for International Environmental Law
Citizens for Global Solutions
Coalition for American Leadership Abroad (COLEAD)
Coral Reef Association (CORAL)
Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Day Network
Environmental Law Institute
Lawyers Alliance for World Security
Maryland Global Affairs Coalition
National Peace Corps Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Sierra Club
Sister Cities International
SustainUS (Youth Network for Sustainable Development)
Trust for Lead Poisoning Prevention
United Nations Association -USA
Worldwatch Institute

For more information about the campaign, see www.earthlegacy.org.