

It is expected that the new Clinton-Gore Administration will alter the direction of United States environmental policy. According to a recent report on United States public policy issues the new administration will work toward strengthening *The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, address global warming through energy efficiency and technology transfer initiatives, and attempt to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000.⁵⁵

SCOPE OF THE CONVENTION

The final Convention text represented a compromise.

The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant position provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.⁵⁶

Developed countries agreed (i) to assist developing nations with the technology and resources they would need to meet their obligations under the treaty; (ii) to limit emissions of greenhouse gases; and (iii) to publicly report on their progress. One of the central principles of the Convention states "that any policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost." The Convention was signed by 154 nations, and will become legally binding when ratified by 50 countries. For further detail on the Convention the reader is referred to Appendix C, where *The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* appears in its entirety.

Minister Jean Charest informed the Committee that an analysis of the Climate Change Convention had been conducted. This analysis indicated that Canada could ratify the Convention without the passage of new legislation. In fact, Canada's *Green Plan* commitment to stabilize the emission of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by 2000 already parallels the basic requirements of the Convention. Jean Charest spoke very positively about this initiative and pointed out:

... that what we are proposing to Canadians is something that makes economic sense in itself. We don't expect any undue hardship to come from this policy, quite the contrary. Our commitments in the area of climate change are all going to make good economic sense in themselves.⁵⁷

112. Prime Minister Mulroney signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro on 12 June 1992, and pledged that Canada would ratify the Convention by the end of 1992. In September, The Council of Energy Ministers advocated prompt ratification, and additional support for early ratification came in November from the CCME. On 4 December 1992, in an historic ceremony in Delta, British Columbia, the Prime Minister signed the document ratifying the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

113. Probably no other document coming out of UNCED has been so soundly and loudly criticized as the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Opponents of the final document, particularly environmental groups, claim that the lack of targets and timetables render the

⁵⁵ N. Maloley, "Environmental Issues in a Clinton/Gore Administration," *Washington in Transition*, Buron-Marsteller, Washington, D.C., December 1992, p. 5.

⁵⁶ U.N. General Assembly, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, U.N. document A/AC.237/18, 1992, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Environment*, Issue No. 45, 16 November 1992, p. 29.