

Opening Statement by the
United States of America
Ad Hoc Working Group/Berlin Mandate (AG/BM)
August 22, 1995

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The American poet/philosopher Walt Whitman once wrote "....that the more difficult passage is often the shorter one. It is sometimes the pathway which bristles with thorns, brambles and thickets."

Mr. Chairman, in Berlin, the international community chose to undertake a shorter passage toward achieving our goal of taking appropriate action for the period beyond the year 2000. This is a period which we believe bristles with "thorns, brambles and thickets" and a period which, while navigable, therefore requires us to chart our course very carefully.

Pursuant to Berlin, we are striving to develop a proposal which will enable us to take appropriate action for the period beyond 2000, including strengthening the commitments of Annex I Parties in Article 4.2(a) and (b) and reaffirming and continuing to advance the implementation of commitments in Article 4.1 in order to achieve sustainable development.

In order to make progress in our future work, it is imperative that we take stock of the past. Only a few decades ago, global climate change was an obscure concern relegated to footnotes in even more obscure scientific journals. Today it is a matter of major international discussions and a priority in domestic policy debates. I think it is safe to say that the Convention itself has been an historic achievement and remarkable success.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Convention has not produced the progress in limiting emissions that we had hoped. The national communications of Annex I Parties clearly demonstrate that they have adopted and continue to adopt national policies and corresponding measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They are thus meeting their commitments under the Convention, but reaching the Convention's aim remains elusive.