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PRESS RELEASE

Climate Change Op-Ed for UNGA 2009

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On September 22, U.S. President Barack Obama will speak to world leaders on climate change during a special U.N. summit in New York on the eve of the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly.

The nations of the world are working hard right now to negotiate a new international agreement to combat climate change.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing our world today. Already its impacts are apparent and consequences severe. The science sends a simple and stark message: all countries must work together to combat climate change, and the time for action is now.

President Obama recognizes that the United States must be a leader in the global effort to combat climate change. We have a responsibility as the world's largest historic emitter of greenhouse gases. We know that without U.S. emissions reductions no solution to climate change is possible, so the U.S. will take the lead in building a 21st century clean energy economy.

President Obama is taking the U.S. in a new direction. The President called on the U.S. Congress to develop comprehensive clean energy legislation to cut emissions 14 percent from 2005 levels in 2020 and 83 percent in 2050. A bill has passed the House of Representatives and is making its way through Congress. The President's economic stimulus package includes over \$80 billion for clean energy. And recently instituted vehicle standards will increase fuel economy and reduce emissions.

But action by the U.S. and other developed nations is not enough. To preserve a safe and livable planet, all major emitting nations have to join together to take strong action. Developed countries need to reduce their emissions substantially by 2020 on an absolute basis, compared to a 2005 or 1990 baseline. Major developing nations like Senegal must take actions that will substantially reduce their emissions by 2020 on a relative basis, compared to their so-called "business as usual" path. There is no other way to contain climate change – the International

Energy Agency estimates 97 percent of future emissions growth will come from the developing world.

Senegal and other developing countries have a much different role to play. They should focus on preparing low-carbon growth plans – with financial and technical assistance where needed – to guide their longer-term development path.

The reality is that a new agreement is critical for all countries and especially important for those most vulnerable to the dangerous impacts of climate change. And a new agreement will benefit developing countries. It will provide financial and technological assistance both to lower emissions and to help countries adapt to the impacts of climate change. Be assured, a new agreement will not require developing countries to take steps that would stifle their capacity to develop and grow. All countries deserve the opportunity to lift their people out of poverty and raise their standard of living.

Ultimately, a climate change agreement must be not just about limiting carbon emissions but about providing a safe pathway for sustainable development. A new agreement must help answer the question of how the world can develop in the decades ahead without endangering our planet. Clean energy development is the only sustainable way forward. To facilitate this path, countries with advanced capabilities must stand ready to develop and disseminate technologies to countries in need.

If we work together, the effort to build a clean energy global economy can provide significant opportunity, driving investment, economic growth and job creation around the world. And it can be a means to bring energy services to hundreds of millions of the world's poor. In the world of communications, many developing countries skipped the stage of the traditional, expensive and often inaccessible wired phone service, going directly to mobile phones. We can do the same in the world of energy – with the right support, developing countries can leapfrog dirty phases of development using fossil fuels like coal and fuel oil to low-carbon technologies and clean energy opportunities.

The U.S. is clear in its intent to secure a strong international agreement, and I am confident that together we can meet the climate change challenge.

Ambassador Marcia S. Bernicat

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