

Press Release

Climate Change experts say international approach critical for effective response “The defining environmental issue of our time”

Paris, March 25, 2009 – Finding effective solutions to global climate change will require far greater international coordination as well as more aggressive introduction of incentive-based approaches according to speakers at an international conference on climate change policy held in Paris this week. The conference, “Climate Change Policy: Insights from the U.S. and Europe,” co-sponsored by **Stanford University** and the **French-American Foundation-France**, brought together some of the world’s leading climate change policy analysts, American and European policy-makers and business representatives.

Calling climate change, “the overarching and defining environmental issue of our time,” **California Air Resources Board Chairman, Mary Nichols**, said that further progress in California and elsewhere depended on intensified efforts in the face of the global economic crisis that has “shaken confidence and sown doubt about our ability to follow through on what we have started. President Obama’s commitment to combating climate change has provided us with important new momentum on which we need to build.”

Speakers voiced optimism that the U.S. appears ready to take an active role in helping to shape a new international climate change agreement when the world’s nations meet in Copenhagen later this year and the **U.S. Department of Energy’s Jacques Beaudry-Losique**, pledged that “the U.S. will be a full participant.”

At the same time, numerous challenges were identified that confront policy makers in the U.S. and Europe in developing credible and cost-effective responses to climate change, including:

- Equitably apportioning the increased costs of climate change controls
- Changing energy consumption behaviors worldwide
- Reversing the historic global dominance of fossil fuels and accelerating the still-miniscule proportion supplied by renewable energy sources
- Designing effective mechanisms that cap greenhouse gas emissions and provide for market-based trading systems
- Providing adequate visibility and policy stability to engage private sector resources and an acceptable basis for long-term investment and financing
- Clearly communicating to the public the justification for climate change measures

The urgency of the need for an effective climate change response was stressed by government officials from both sides of the Atlantic. **Nina Fedoroff, Science Adviser to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton**, warned that climate change had “profound implications for our future ability to feed ourselves.” **Karl Falkenberg, European Commission Director-General for the Environment**, said U.S. engagement on climate change was “desperately needed in order to negotiate meaningful international targets.”

Press Release

Other issues debated during the conference included exploring ways to bring developing countries into international agreements, encouraging research and investment of technologies such as low-carbon fuels, shielding low-income households from disproportionate energy cost increases and the implications for climate change of a wide array of government policies ranging from land use to building standards to consumer appliances to transportation.

The importance of a coordinated global response to climate change was emphasized by several speakers. **Harvard's Robert Stavins** called climate change "a classic global 'commons' problem requiring a global solution." Referring to the challenges of negotiating international agreements, **French Ambassador for Climate Change, Brice Lalonde**, underlined the importance of building trust through clear and open communications stating that "some countries are more afraid of proposed climate change policies than of climate change itself." Presenters from universities and research organizations in Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the U.S. shared perspectives on the European experience in trying to implement cross-border strategies such as the emissions trading scheme.

Stanford professor and conference moderator, Lawrence Goulder, commented, "We achieved one of our main objectives with this conference which was to advance understanding on both sides of the Atlantic regarding not only possible solutions but also some of the pitfalls to overcome in the area of climate change. A significant part of the value of these exchanges comes out of discussing what has not worked as expected -- and why -- in order to focus our resources where there is the highest potential for success."

Conference presentations are available at:

http://www.french-american.org/programmes/ccpsymposium_presentations.html

The French-American Foundation – France was established in Paris on 1976 with the mission to contribute to stronger French-American relations and improved mutual understanding of each other's policies and decisions. The Foundation works in close coordination with its sister organization, the French American Foundation in New York.

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