

December 16, 2009

President Obama
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

We write to you on behalf of the businesses and millions of Americans we represent to urge you to lead at this historic moment and secure a fair and ambitious plan for global cooperation to combat climate change. In particular, we ask that you reprioritize American policy to phase out the sizable taxpayer subsidies we provide the fossil fuel industry and instead significantly increase the U.S. investment in global efforts to protect tropical forests, provide humanitarian assistance to protect vulnerable communities from climate impacts, and speed the deployment of clean energy technologies. With strong leadership and new proposals in the coming days, the United States can and should secure additional financing commitments from other nations as part of a broader agreement from major emitters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A Copenhagen agreement should include a landmark global plan to protect tropical forests from the destruction that causes approximately 15% of the emissions that contribute to global warming. Backed by a broad coalition of businesses and conservation groups, many in Congress have already supported measures to finance global efforts to protect tropical forests in climate legislation. The House-passed American Clean Energy and Security Act includes strong financing for efforts to reduce emissions from global deforestation by 720 million tons annually by 2020 – emission reductions that are above and beyond the emission standards in the bill. Similar provisions are included in the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act that has been approved by the Senate Environment Committee. You have an opportunity to offer this as a supplemental commitment here in Copenhagen and ask other nations to match it.

From Biloxi to Bangladesh, poor families get hit first and worst by the effects of climate change. We must help the poor in poor countries adapt to the impacts of climate change, including increased water scarcity, extreme weather events, increases in diseases, and declining agricultural productivity. Since climate impacts act as "threat multipliers," such destabilization and the increase of refugees also will lead to security threats. Just as climate legislation in Congress must address impacts of climate on America's poor, a global agreement should make sure that such impacts do not make it more difficult for the world's poor to create better lives for themselves. The good news is that the solutions can help them climb out of poverty.

There are several opportunities to generate the necessary financing from innovative sources. At the G-20 and at the meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation nations, you helped lead an effort to phase out the subsidies of fossil fuels globally. These subsidies have been costing American taxpayers \$10 billion annually. International transport emissions from aviation and shipping were left out of the Kyoto Protocol. The loophole for these fast growing sectors should be closed through a global sectoral cap, and revenue generated should be directed to these priorities.

A successful Copenhagen outcome will include global targets for both emissions and climate finance. The United States should encourage and support a strong global commitment through 2020 for public finance of forest, adaptation and technology initiatives, backed by specific options for securing this funding. This effort will help advance global cooperation toward a more ambitious and fairer global deal that involves all nations.

We stand ready to support your leadership.

Sincerely,

Maggie Fox
President & CEO, Alliance for Climate Protection

Michael Eckhart
President, American Council On Renewable Energy

Daniel Magraw
President, Center for International Environmental Law

Mindy Lubber,
President, Ceres/BICEP
(Business for Innovative Climate & Energy Policy)

Jeff Anderson
CEO, Clean Economy Network Inc.

Fred Krupp
President, Environmental Defense Fund

The Rev. Mitchell C. Hescox
President/CEO, Evangelical Environmental Network

Benjamin K. Homan
President and Chief Executive Officer, Food for the Hungry, Inc.

Gene Karpinski
President, League of Conservation Voters

Larry Schweiger
President and CEO, National Wildlife Federation

Frances Beinecke
President, Natural Resources Defense Council

Carl Pope
Executive Director, Sierra Club

Stephen Smith
Executive Director, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Bill Meadows
President, The Wilderness Society

Kevin Knobloch
President, Union of Concerned Scientists

Jonathan Lash
President, World Resources Institute

Carter Roberts
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Gillian Caldwell
Campaign Director, 1 Sky