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(partial listing)**

January 29, 2007

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University

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On January 17 a group led by representatives of the Center for Health and the Global Environment and of the National Association of Evangelicals released "An Urgent Call to Action: Scientists and Evangelicals Unite to Protect Creation." They sent their "Urgent Call" to political and religious leaders and released it through the media, speaking as if for a broad consensus of both scientists and evangelicals on a wide range of environmental issues. **They do not speak for any such consensus, and you as a leader have both the right and the need to know that.**

While we commend our fellow evangelicals and their scientist colleagues for wanting to promote good stewardship of the environment and protect the world's poor, we insist that motives and passions not be confused with sound science and sound economics. Many people of good will, evangelical faith, and solid scientific and economic judgment can and do disagree with some of their judgments and believe that some policies they promote would harm the people they seek to help.

While there are good reasons for concerns about certain types of pollution, habitat conversion, and resource misuse, we do not believe we are on the verge of making the Earth "a different kind of planet." In contrast, great environmental improvements—such as declining levels of air, water, and solid waste pollution—in economically advanced countries stretching back over fifty years justify expectations that as the rest of the world grows wealthier it, too, will experience the same environmental improvements. A clean, healthful environment is a costly good. When people are worried about putting food in their stomachs, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads, they understandably care little about air and water pollution, climate change, or habitat conversion.

The principal reason given for fearing that we will "remake [the Earth] as another kind of planet," as the "Urgent Call" put it, is alleged catastrophic human-induced global warming. But we believe the

scientific evidence better supports the view that climate change in the past 30 to 150 years, as well as what may be projected with reasonable confidence into the foreseeable future, has been and will be:

- well within the bounds of natural variability, in which Earth’s climate has warmed and cooled cyclically throughout its history;
- largely natural in origin;
- unlikely to be catastrophic to humanity or the rest of the biosphere;
- not susceptible of significant reduction by any actions we take;
- far from the most serious threat to humanity and the rest of our environment.

Further, we believe:

- the **costs of** achieving even tiny **mitigation** of future temperatures through any policy of greenhouse gas emissions reductions would far **outweigh the benefits**, and
- the **benefits of adaptation** to whatever temperatures the future brings—warmer or cooler (and geologic history assures us that they will be both)—can **outweigh the costs**.

This view is ably defended in “A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming” (enclosed and at www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/CalltoTruth.pdf), which documents extensive scientific evidence in support. The document has been endorsed by about 150 leaders so far, including 27 evangelical and 15 non-evangelical scientists with expertise in climate change and related sciences, and 13 evangelical and 2 non-evangelical scholars with expertise in environmental, developmental, and related economics, as well as about ninety theologians, pastors, and leaders of Christian education and missions. (They are listed in the enclosed “Open Letter,” online at www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/OpenLetter.pdf.) The enclosed paper “Important Developments on Global Warming in 2006” (online at www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/GlobalWarmingSummary2006.pdf) documents additional scientific evidence against the hypothesis of catastrophic human-induced global warming, including refereed studies that attribute the vast majority of climate change, not just historic but recent, to variations in output of energy and solar wind from the sun as well as other natural causes. Additional resources are available on our website, www.interfaithstewardship.org.

We heartily concur with the “Urgent Call” that infectious diseases, pollution, and habitat destruction are significant threats to the well being of humans and other species. Yet far from despairing, we point to the lesson of history that **as societies become increasingly wealthy, they can afford—and they choose—to invest more in protecting and improving their environments**, increasingly solving those very problems. That is why the world’s most advanced economies also have the cleanest, most healthful environments; why they are able to protect large and growing areas of natural beauty and habitat; and why they have largely eliminated such poverty-related diseases as malaria, tuberculosis, and typhus and other water-borne illnesses.

But we are deeply concerned that **the effort to mitigate future global warming would, by restricting the supply and raising the price of energy, seriously slow economic development for the world’s poor**. It would thus prolong by decades or generations the tragedy of about 4 million premature deaths every year, mostly among women and children, because of indoor air pollution from burning wood and dried dung as principal heating and cooking fuels because they lack electricity, and because of water-borne diseases springing from the lack of sewage sanitation and drinking water purification. **What these poorest of the world’s poor need far more than a reduction of global average temperature by a fraction of a degree fifty years from now is the economic development**

that will allow them to electrify their homes and workshops; treat their sewage; and purify their drinking water.

We agree that “the protection of life on Earth is a profound moral imperative,” but we believe many of the problems named in the “Urgent Call” are exaggerated and not well supported by empirical evidence. Further, we find it highly dubious, in light of Earth’s recovery from great natural disasters that dwarf human impact, to call the changes named in the “Urgent Call” “irreversible.” We do indeed face some serious environmental problems, but exaggeration serves not to inform helpfully but to mislead, sometimes to paralyze, and often to cause wrong prioritization and poor policy decisions. Leaders and the public are better served by calm presentation of scientific evidence and economic analysis with as little bias as is humanly possible.

We are disturbed also by the lack of clarity of the precise relationship between the National Association of Evangelicals and the collaborative effort and “Urgent Call.” In a letter to the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance dated January 25, 2006, the president of the NAE wrote:

Recognizing the ongoing debate regarding the causes and origins of global warming, and understanding the lack of consensus among the evangelical community on this issue, **the NAE Executive Committee**, while affirming our love for the Creator and His creation, **directs the NAE staff to stand by and not exceed in any fashion our approved and adopted statements concerning the environment contained within the Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility.**

The “Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility” (www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf) never even mentions global warming or climate change, much less endorses a position on it. **In the absence of a clear action by the Executive Committee or Board of Directors, it appears the collaborative effort and its “Urgent Call” do not represent a consensus of the board or the 30 million members of the Association’s member churches.**

In light of all these considerations, we urge you to **keep an open mind on the complex scientific and economic issues** surrounding climate change and to refrain from precipitous action meant to mitigate global warming—action we are convinced will fail but will be extremely costly to the world’s economy and harmful to the world’s poor. We also assert that **the perspective expressed in the “Urgent Call to Action” does not represent a consensus of either evangelicals or scientists and economists.** To the extent that there is a consensus on global warming among evangelicals, we believe the perspective we present better represents it. But **the most important issue is not consensus but truth, and we both urge you to pursue that and, gladly embracing the Apostle Paul’s instructions to pray for all in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2), commit ourselves to praying for your success in finding it.**

Sincerely,



E. Calvin Beisner
National Spokesman
Interfaith Stewardship Alliance