



Society for Conservation Biology

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November 25, 2009

The Honorable Lars Løkke Rasmussen
Prime Minister of Denmark
Christiansborg
Prins Jørgens Gård 11
DK-1218 Copenhagen K

By Email and Postal Service

To the Attention of:

The Hon. Connie Hedegaard, Chair of the Conference of Parties

The Hon. Lykke Friis, Minister, Energy and Climate

Dear Mr. Rasmussen:

As you prepare to convene the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Society for Conservation Biology, a global network of over 10,000 conservation professionals from 140 countries, offers the attached Climate Change Policy Principles. We hope they will provide both scientific and policy guidance for the meeting and for the negotiations following it.

We offer this with no illusions about the impact that a short and simple document will necessarily have. But short statements have at critical times mattered, so we hope that our message will be useful, for the principles are direct and the power of the science is profound.

In recent months our peer-reviewed journal, *Conservation Biology*, and our magazine, *Conservation*, have carried articles about the rapid melting of the glaciers that supply the rivers on which twenty percent of the world's population rely for water, and what may be the first episode in a series of droughts that could turn the entire Amazon rainforest into a savannah. If that happens, the best of commitments you have discussed to date, even if met, will have been wiped away, for by growing normally that single forest sequesters roughly half the carbon dioxide that all of Europe and Japan emit each year. In 2005, one drought caused that rain forest to reverse its role for the year and emit nearly as much CO₂ as it usually stores. The net impact on the atmosphere was equal to that of all the CO₂ pollution of Europe and Japan combined. The sequestration rates of other tropical rainforests from Malaysia to Costa Rica are also declining in the face of increasing ambient heat. The ramifications of that decline and the potential loss of such forests are profound.

We therefore request that you make available to the Conference of the Parties these eleven principles, supported by citations to peer-reviewed research, and developed by policy experts in the natural and social sciences. These principles are intended for national and local policy makers as well as those working with the United Nations. In 1992 the Rio Conference on the Environment and Development agreed to the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The goals of those two treaties are still as interdependent as ever, and we encourage you to highlight the essential contributions biodiversity can make to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The transition set out in the principles we propose offers great hope for a truly sustainable society that brings us closer to the “peaceable kingdom” with sufficient food and water and less scarcity and fear. We urge a shift of resources from warring over dwindling resources to the task of restoring them, moving together toward a world in which all peoples and species on the earth may live in harmony.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Luigi Boitani
President
Society for Conservation Biology

Attached: SCB Climate Policy Statement

Cc: Christian Steinberg, Royal Danish Embassy, Washington
Interested Parties