

**INTRODUCTORY REPORT BY MR BERNARD ACCOYER,
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**6TH G8 SPEAKERS' CONFERENCE
BERLIN – 8 SEPTEMBER 2007**

***Climate protection and greater energy efficiency:
contributions by parliaments***

Madam Speaker,
Fellow Speakers,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

President Lammert, I would like to begin by thanking you for the invitation to come to Berlin and for the excellent programme you have organised for our three-day conference. I would also like to congratulate you on the high quality of the topics you have chosen for our work, and to thank my Canadian colleague, Mr Peter Milliken, for his valuable contribution on the topic truly essential topic which we are to address this afternoon.

“Our house is burning down and we’re blind to it,” Jacques Chirac said in Johannesburg in 2002. Five years later, the house is still burning down, and at an ever faster rate. The verdict is unanimous; scientists from throughout the world are in agreement about the gravity and urgency of the situation. The Earth is ill, seriously ill, due

to our actions. The recent trend for greenhouse-gas emissions is worrying, fossil fuels and natural resources are running out, and the number of climate refugees is already estimated at between 150 million and a billion.

But we are no longer blind to this, and tomorrow we will not be able to say that we did not know today. We are aware of the gravity of the situation, we know what will happen if we do nothing, or do too little, too late.

Because while the situation is alarming, it is not hopeless. And by assessing the price of our mistakes or inaction, we will also be better able to assess what action can be taken to correct them.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently estimated that investment amounting to 0.3% to 3% of global GDP would be enough to prevent climate change. Nicholas Stern's report, prepared for the British government, reaches a similar conclusion: a mere 1% of global GDP would be enough to significantly mitigate the effects of climate change.

We can act: which means, given the stakes involved, that we *must* act.

The challenge to be faced is considerable.

It requires the commitment of every nation.

Primarily the developed countries, which, in addition to bearing the main responsibility, due to their history, power and consumption, are also those best able to react, due to their technological and financial capacities.

And it was in this spirit that, at the European Council in March 2007, the European Union set a target of reducing its greenhouse-gas emissions by 20 to 30% by 2020, and a target of 20% growth in renewable energy.

But emerging markets will also have to participate in our collective efforts: China, as you know, is expected to pass the United States this year as the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. A concerted approach involving all of these countries therefore appears increasingly necessary, and it is in this spirit, in particular, that the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, has raised the idea of a gradual transformation of the G8 into a G13.

The tools developed within the framework of the Rio Convention and in particular the Kyoto Protocol – the latter inspired, incidentally, by American experiences regarding emission rights – are an essential contribution to fostering new energy solutions with lower carbon emissions. The international agreement which must be found

for the post-Kyoto period, from 2012 onwards, will have to continue this progress and reinforce the commitments made by each country.

I welcome the action taken in the United States by the House of Representatives in energy policy. The United States is a crucial part of the new global governance in the fight against global warming. President Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated that the United States must take the lead in facing this global challenge and help us in finding the way forward.

I also welcome the convergence between the American and European viewpoints in the most recent discussions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the consensus that has emerged from this regarding the absolute necessity of resolute action in this field.

In view of the conference about the post-Kyoto period that is due to be held in Bali in December, we must work on achieving greater convergence. This was the case in June, at the G8 summit of heads of state and government in Heiligendamm, where important progress was made. But we must go even further.

The size and urgency of the challenge is such that it exceeds the sole responsibility of governments; action must be taken by the whole of the state, at all levels of responsibility, using all means at its disposal.

And national parliaments have an important role to play in this fight, not just because of their role in the national legislative process and the ratification of international treaties, but also as a forum which generates proposals, evaluates and raises awareness.

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In France, the National Assembly has demonstrated firm commitment to a responsible energy policy.

The programme law of July 2005 established the fight against climate change as a priority of our energy policy. And this same law allowed the introduction of the "factor 4" target, i.e. a 75% reduction in greenhouse gases, and set out France's energy priorities: management of energy demand, energy diversification and research promotion. In the research field, the goal is to increase energy efficiency, particularly through the use of nuclear energy - a low-carbon form of energy, I should point out - which forms a major pillar of our greenhouse-gas management strategy.

Beyond such specific laws on environmental and energy issues, Parliament, and in particular the Assembly over which I preside, also

supports the fight against global warming each year during the vote on the budget bill. And Parliament also pursues the same goals in exercising its power of scrutiny over the application of laws. Tackling the environmental and climate challenges we face is one of our main priorities; and it is against this yardstick that we measure all projects put to us in this context.

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Parliament's legislative powers are not the only means it has at its disposal in the fight against climate change. Parliament can, and must, serve as a forum for evaluation and scrutiny, and thus as a forum which generates proposals. I welcome the fact that this is precisely one of the priorities set by President Nicolas Sarkozy in the institutional reform which he has set in motion.

Thus, the field of energy and climate change is generating a multitude of parliamentary initiatives, many of which originate in the work of the Parliamentary Office for Scientific and Technological Assessment. This body is made up of deputies and senators and, since its creation in 1983, has been tasked with providing Parliament with the scientific and technological information on which to base its decisions.

In 2002, for example, the Office adopted a report produced by the Senate evaluating the scope of climate changes, their causes and likely

impact. The report underlined the gravity of this phenomenon and also contained a series of proposals.

And it was in this spirit that the National Assembly set up in 2005 a parliamentary working group on the greenhouse effect. This working group concluded its work, which was of substantial scope, with a very significant report entitled "The greenhouse effect, the major challenge", presented in April 2006 by Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, now ecology minister. The report's conclusions formed the basis for the measures adopted by the French government in June 2006 in its amendments to the "Climate Plan".

I would also like to say a few words about one key aspect of the institutional reform under discussion in France, an aspect which I see as particularly important: the creation, in the near future, of a permanent committee on sustainable development at the National Assembly. This committee will have legislative powers and will be able to carry out evaluation. The topic of climate change is, undoubtedly, likely to be one of this committee's top priorities.

Thus, the battle against global warming will, more than ever, be at the very heart of the deliberations, the initiatives and work of the French National Assembly.

And the evaluation work carried out by Parliament and the bills it presents on climate change can also contribute to informing the public and raising awareness.

The unanimous support in Parliament for the conclusions of the working group on the greenhouse effect, which I have already mentioned, has made a major contribution to the major impact of this report and the French people's interest in climate problems.

Beyond their customary powers, parliaments can also launch other initiatives – which are undoubtedly less common, but nevertheless interesting. Last year, for example, the National Assembly received former US Vice-President Al Gore and staged a viewing of his film. This event had a major impact on the decision-makers from all parties who attended it and received very positive coverage in the French press.

Parliament has an essential role to play in the battle to halt climate change. Parliament as a body, as well as each deputy individually, must serve as an interface between citizens and the authorities; it must listen to the currents of public opinion, whilst informing people and stimulating debate across the country.

We are currently seeing a strong increase in awareness in France in this context. This was reflected during the recent election campaign,

for example, in the commitments made in this field by almost all of the presidential candidates.

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We will only be able to tackle climate change effectively if all the industrialised nations take a common approach; only in this way will it be possible to convince the emerging countries to make concrete commitments in a process of managed reduction of greenhouse gases.

And this joint approach, this cooperation, must not stop with the governments: our parliaments will be more effective in protecting the climate if they succeed in working together in consistent and concerted fashion.

In this respect, I welcome the "Gleneagles Process" begun at the G8 summit held in July 2005, which aims to develop a lasting dialogue between parliamentarians in the G8 states and the emerging countries. The meetings held in this framework in Washington in February and Berlin in June were very useful steps. The French National Assembly strongly supports this process. Let us continue to work together to make progress in this context.

Finally, I should like to stress the importance which I personally place on these issues. I represent a constituency in the Alps and, in this

capacity, I have been successful in initiating measures, measures which were undoubtedly modest, but which I view as significant - promoting the generation of electricity from biogas, for example, or the introduction of environmental taxes for cars.

Colleagues,

We have a historic responsibility, a responsibility to future generations, to leave behind a livable planet. Time is running out. After our discussions today, for which I would like to thank President Norbert Lammert, I am convinced that, together, we will go much further in our own parliaments in our efforts to halt global warming and enhance energy efficiency.

It is our future and the future of our children which is at stake.

Thank you very much.