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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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The world's population is increasingly at risk due to accelerating climatic disasters, according to Alden Bryant, president of the Berkeley, California-based Earth Regeneration Society.

Bryant recently concluded a European tour during which he exchanged data on the climate emergency with scientists and environmentalists in Moscow, Hamburg and London.

This was followed by participation in a United Nations conference on "Earth Regeneration and the Environment" held December 9 in New York in honor of the 40th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Bryant's paper on "Human Rights, Environment and Climate Stabilization" emphasized that emergency measures beyond anything imagined in the past must be taken to protect human societies.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Government of Malta and the Earth Regeneration Society (ERS) with Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) assistance. Addressing climate change for the first time in its history, the UN General Assembly on December 6 unanimously adopted a resolution calling for a comprehensive review of climate change, its economic and social impact, and response strategies to "delay, limit or mitigate" its adverse effects.

The historic resolution was in response to a resolution first presented in October by Malta calling for "conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind."

Bryant's summing-up paper at the conference called for development of a "common international understanding" on removal of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the earth's atmosphere, replanting and saving of the world's forests, soil remineralization, and "financial and resource transfers between developed and lesser developed countries to expedite climate stabilization programs."

The implementation of physical work on soil, forests and energy to reduce CO₂, Bryant said, can come about through use of a "CO₂ budget." Such a plan envisions CO₂ reduction goals set for all global areas, taking into consideration each region's "specific conditions of soil, trees, ground cover, food production, people, their culture and history."

It is time, he said, "when much of the best science, technical and social talent must be brought together to work out carbon-reducing activities beyond any previous plans."

Among UN conference speakers were Malta UN Ambassador Alexander Borg-Olivier; Gregory C. Watson, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Science and Technology; Dr. Kenneth E.F. Watt, professor of Environmental Studies, University of California at Davis; Dr. Elias Habte-Selassie, Institute for Social Studies at the Hague; and Ann Fagan Ginger, professor of Peace Law, University of California, Berkeley.

Watson said that climate changes "that run the spectrum of extremes from blistering heat and bitter cold to periods of severe drought and massive flooding" are the "most challenging problems that will confront humanity during the next decade."

He called upon governments to give this problem "immediate and serious attention." Climate stability and a sustainable future, he said, depend upon stopping the wreckless destruction of the world's tropical forests, initiating world-wide tree planting and soil mineralization programs and stepping up "research and development of alternatives to fossil fuel energy sources."

The November 7-10 Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany, World Congress on "Climate and Development: Climatic Change and Variability and the Resulting Social, Economic and Technological Implications" saw more than 400 scientists and environmentalists, including Bryant, exchange views on strategies to address global climate change.

Participants from Third World countries posed the dilemma caused by the industrialized nations being the major contributors to accelerating climate change while the developing world feels the consequences most drastically.

UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cueller told the Congress that developing as well as developed nations must "launch major worldwide sustained initiatives to understand the phenomenon (of climate change) and to incorporate viable measures within their development strategies to combat it."

One UN role, it was announced, will be the involvement of all social groups in the political decision-making process on climate change because of its economic and social impact on these social groups, "especially the socially and economically disadvantaged."

Bryant's Hamburg paper called for "closing the gap" between (a) the threat to human life from rapidly increasing climate intensities (10 to 15 years), since we are now in the transition from interglacial to glacial conditions, and (b) a maximum global climate stabilization program to remove excess CO₂ from the atmosphere through acceleration of soil-forest-energy work to protect human life (25 or more years).

Istvan Lang, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, announced at Hamburg that his country will develop a CO₂ budget. It is the first country to do so.

In Moscow, Bryant met with members of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and with the International Department of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, on climate stabilization as well as with members of "Travels for Peace and Environment," a non-governmental organization devoted to preventing the degradation of nature through "citizens' environmental diplomacy."

Bryant's meetings in London included two in the House of Commons — one with the environmental head of the Labour Party, and the second as speaker for the first organizational meeting of the "Tory Green Initiative," a new group of MPs and others established to bring environmental and climate issues into the work of the Tory Party.

CLIMATE AT THE CROSSROADS

In Bangladesh over 25 million people are homeless, with many dead in a land ravaged by flooding. In Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, including Yellowstone National Park, over a million acres have burned. The effects of heat and drought we also see on television. It is all part of the accelerating cycle of climate change.

Heat and drought are hitting U.S. farmers heavily. Heat and drought are physically destroying the farms of the midwest and the southeast, and economically destroying the farmers. Some members of Congress are talking of financial support to save the farms for the future. This is the third blistering year for the southeast and the second year for the midwest. In Africa and other places it has been ten years and more. Now it is accelerating in the U.S. What is happening?

We see heat, drought and famine in the lower latitudes in summer, as well as flooding. We have been experiencing record freezing, and snow storms, in the higher latitudes in winter. Flooding, tornadoes and hurricanes have happened during more than just summers. The warming of the world nearer the equator (more evaporation) is generating the cooling nearer the poles (condensation, cloud cover, snow cover). The warming of the "greenhouse" effect is producing its opposite, the cloud cover and climate intensities over Europe, Scandinavia, the USSR, Canada, and parts of the U.S., and similarly in the southern hemisphere.

Saudi Arabia has had snow on its mountains, but now for the first time in recent history, on the desert. It is similar in the Southern Hemisphere. About 30,000 sheep froze to death in Australia December 2, 1987, from a cold front and storms coming in from the Antarctic and hitting West of Melbourne (latitude similar to San Francisco, 37 degrees). Most of them had been sheared, but such cold was not expected in the summer.

Normally trees would work against the greenhouse effect, by replacing the excessive carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere with oxygen. However, high latitude forests are now sick from inadequate soil minerals (therefore burn faster), and tropical forests are being overcut.

Geologists have identified 20 to 25 glacial cycles, in the last two million years, varying from about 70,000 to 120,000 years in duration. It is the glaciers that grind rock into dust and provide the remineralization of much of the earth's surface — the minerals which are essential for life on the planet.

In between are interglacial periods, the last one about 10 to 12,000 years in length. We are at the end of the present one. Worldwide, soil minerals are depleted (25 to 40% in many areas of the world). Forests are dying rapidly now, particularly in Europe and some parts of North America. Forest fires are becoming far more disastrous. Some forest areas are being totally destroyed from two directions: populations needing firewood (and having insufficient government reforestation program) and multinational corporations seeking short-run higher profits with disregard for the future. Atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen this century from around 280 parts per million to 350 ppm, the highest since the last transition from an interglacial to a glacial period (over 120,000 years ago). Burning fossil fuel, oil and coal, produces carbon dioxide, thus speeding up the natural cycle of climate change.

With regard to the present climatic cooling, particularly cloud and snow buildup, the most knowledgeable scientists include Kenneth E.F. Watt, C. Bertrand Schultz, Maynard Miller, Gifford Miller of the U.S.; Hubert H. Lamb of England; Alexis Dreimanis of Canada; Victor Kovda of the USSR; and German scientists studying cloud cover and also the specific snow and storm conditions in Tibet.

There are summer extremes and winter extremes each of which is becoming more destructive. Conditions are also very different from the equator to temperate to polar latitudes. Parts of central Brazil, for example, have had both drought and flood near each other at the same time.

Early computer models omitted some major parts of the system such as effect of forest and swamps, dying and burning forests, soil conditions, and cloud and snow increase. The paper on "Matrix of Climate Theories" June, 1987, by Dr. Fred Bernard Wood, shows 10 aspects covered by the 'warming only' approach (of which three disagree with observed data), and 46 aspects which are covered by the full climate cycle approach.

The solution to climate stabilization includes basically remineralizing the soil (with good rock dust, as in Austria and six or more other countries), reforestation, conservation, and alternative energy technology development (the best in solar, wind, alcohol fuel, hydrogen fuel, and other — not radioactive processes). We now have to do the job of nature ourselves. We have the machines. All of us together are the potential work force.

The solution requires full employment internationally on soil, forest and energy programs. Earth regeneration. Re-establish and maintain the balance between the earth and the atmosphere. This means international negotiations to transfer resources from military use to climate stabilization use on an emergency basis. This means support from industrialized countries to lesser developed countries where most of the world's fastest growing forest areas exist. This is the new economics of climate stabilization. After six to nine years of massive work worldwide, we can see where we are. How fast can we clear the world's atmosphere of excess carbon dioxide? If no action, then in 10 to 15 years we may all be seriously at risk.

Legislative action in the U.S. has started. The "Emergency Climate Stabilization/Earth Regeneration Act of 1988" is in Congress for first review, submitted by the California Democratic Council (CDC). In October 1987 the AFL-CIO at its national convention included "jobs, food and climate" in its program. The California Democratic Party has had the issue of CO₂, warming, glaciation, reforestation, and international cooperation in its platform since 1984; CDC, since 1983. The International Society for General Systems Research has had sessions on the full climate cycle and solution programs at its annual meetings since 1986. The main resource for these actions has been the Earth Regeneration Society, Inc., of Berkeley, California.

In the U.S. Congress, no one sub-committee has a sufficiently broad range of action. It is time for a comprehensive task force drawn from relevant committees.

The United Nations 3rd Special Session on Disarmament received input from a meeting, sponsored by the World Federation of Scientific Workers, which included the recommendation that future discussion of disarmament and development should include "climate stabilization" on an emergency basis. Material was sent to all 159 delegations to the U.N. and there was follow up with the delegates and international press. The U.N. Environment Programme is developing a new and more comprehensive approach to climate stabilization, for submission to the General Assembly of the U.N.

Can we reduce CO₂ and stabilize climate in time? We know that we are now in a period of international transition from confrontation to cooperation in many areas. This is now clearly one of the areas most critical to our survival. The realities of climate stabilization have been discussed, as co-evolution of the earth and humans, since the mid 1970s. The "crossroads of climate" are upon us!

Alden Bryant, President Earth Regeneration Society

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