

FOREWORD

The United States remains divided about the necessity of action on climate change, whether any action should be voluntary or mandatory, the depth and timing of needed cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, and the structure of a national policy to reduce such emissions. This division has to date resulted in the absence of significant action at the national level. Nevertheless, many participants in the debate, whether supporters or opponents of mandatory action now, believe that such action will be taken sooner or later and that advance work to design effective policies is in the interest of all.

In this uncertain environment, the Aspen Institute, in collaboration with the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, invited a group of interested and knowledgeable people with diverse backgrounds and views on the issue to a three-day dialogue in November 2003 at the Institute's Wye River Conference Center in Maryland. The focus was not on whether mandatory action should be taken, but rather on what policies would be preferable if Congress were to decide such action is necessary.

The participants were chosen to represent a diverse set of constituencies, but they were invited as individuals and were not asked to speak for their organizations. They were also assured that their participation in this effort to outline an optimal plan did not necessarily indicate their support for mandatory action. The resulting dialogue allowed participants to look at policy questions from new perspectives. An informal atmosphere and a not-for-attribution rule encouraged candid exchanges and creative thinking.

The dialogue was co-chaired by Eileen Claussen, President of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, and Robert W. Fri, Visiting Scholar and former President of Resources for the Future. Their long experience with the substance and politics of environmental policy and their gentle but focused approach in guiding the discussion was largely responsible for the broad areas of consensus described in the co-chairs' summary report that follows. Although the participants were not asked to agree with the exact wording of this report, the co-chairs believe the items of agreement they have noted are an accurate reflection of the meeting, and all participants have had the opportunity to review the draft and to ensure that points of agreement are not overstated.

The starting point for the dialogue was the May 2003 report, *Designing a Mandatory Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program*, commissioned by the Pew Center and written by Robert Nordhaus and Kyle Danish of Van Ness Feldman P.C. The executive summary of their paper, six additional papers commissioned for this dialogue, and the foreword and executive summary of another relevant and timely paper published by the Pew Center, are included in this volume. Some concepts mentioned but not discussed in detail in the Co-chairs' summary report are explained more fully in these papers.

All Aspen Institute dialogues rely on the assistance of many people for their success. This was no exception. The Institute wishes to thank Eileen Claussen, Bob Fri, Bob Nordhaus, Kyle Danish, and Vicki Arroyo not only for their contributions as co-chairs or authors of discussion papers but also for their invaluable assistance in designing the agenda and framing the issues for discussion. David Harrison, Neil Sampson, Neil Strachan, and Naomi Peña also contributed to the substantive underpinnings of the meeting with their discussion papers, and Sally Ericsson and Nikki Roy were very helpful in identifying participants. Katrin Thomas planned and implemented the administrative arrangements for the meeting with her usual efficiency, conscientiousness, and good humor.

The Institute is also very grateful to The Energy Foundation and the UN Foundation for their financial support for the project, and to AEP, Exelon, Rio Tinto, and Toyota corporations for their assistance for printing and distributing this report. Without their generosity and commitment to our work, this dialogue could not have occurred.

Finally, we are grateful to all the participants, whose dedication to the cause of good public policy led them to devote a beautiful Fall weekend to this effort, whose political experience and knowledge of the issues ensured credibility, and whose collegiality and focus on results led them to the productive outcome reflected in this report.

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