

FOREWORD

With an increasing scientific consensus that man-made emissions of greenhouse gases will lead to dangerous interference with the global climate system, the world is searching for solutions. The United States, which ratified the 1992 Rio Framework Convention on Climate Change and its goal of preventing such dangerous interference, withdrew in 2001 from the Kyoto process that most industrialized nations consider the most feasible first step. As the world's political and economic leader and its largest emitter of greenhouse gases, what the U.S. does next about climate change is of intense interest.

At this critical juncture, the Aspen Institute in January 2002 convened a bipartisan and diverse group of scientists, economists, business and environmental leaders, and government officials at its Environmental Policy Forum to discuss the way forward.

The Forum, initiated in 2000 by the Program on Energy, the Environment and the Economy as part of the Institute's 50th anniversary celebration, is an annual dialogue on a topic of current interest and importance. A distinguished group of leaders are invited to learn from each other, to explore the sometimes competing values underlying policy disagreements, and to consider appropriate responses to the challenges identified.

Using the Aspen dialogue method to probe and build on the papers included in this volume, the Forum concluded that the scientific case for action is clear, voluntary actions alone are insufficient, and the U.S. economy needs an early, credible signal from government that a cost will be imposed on carbon emissions in the future.

Fourteen discussion papers were prepared for the Forum by experts on various aspects of the topic, including scientific, economic, and technological background; current mitigation activities; and policy proposals. These formed the basis of the dialogue and, along with the co-chairs' overview, comprise this volume. They are excellent summaries of complex scientific and policy issues, and they will be valuable to interested citizens as well as policy makers.

We were honored to have as the Forum co-chairs Frank Loy, Undersecretary of State and chief climate negotiator under President Clinton, and Bruce Smart, Undersecretary of Commerce for International Trade under President Reagan. Their extensive experience in business, government, and environmental groups, their knowledge of a broad range of environmental topics, their ability to frame the issues in a wide-ranging dialogue, and their congenial personal styles allowed them to focus the discussion, explore interconnections, and find many areas of agreement. Their overview and their conclusions are included as the introductory article in this volume. It is an effort to reflect the agreement of the group or of a majority where it existed, but not all participants share all of its conclusions, and they were not asked to agree with its final wording.

The papers were essential to the success of the Forum, but an equally important element was the expert contributions from all of the participants around the table. Using the rigorous discipline of informed dialogue and inquiry, the Institute's method enhances participants' ability to think clearly about complex issues, mindful of the value of differing viewpoints. The sharing of views in a spirit of candor and collegiality leads to the expansion of each individual's understanding and the creation of new thinking and insights.

The Forum was originally scheduled for September 13 to 16, 2001. The tragic terrorist attacks of September 11 forced its postponement to January 11 to 14, 2002. Some of those planning to attend in September, including a few authors of discussion papers, were unable to attend in January.

Anyone who has arranged a meeting or assembled a book knows how critical is the role played by administrative staff. I gratefully acknowledge the cheerful efficiency and patience with which Katrin Thomas kept track of the various drafts of the papers and handled the logistics of the Forum, including the challenges of rescheduling the meeting and all the transportation, lodging and other logistical complications that entailed.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank Jessica Catto. Her thoughtful leadership and commitment to sound environmental policy were a major driving force behind this Forum and book, her suggestions from the concept to the conclusion were consistently helpful, and her enthusiasm for the project has

been constant. I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Henry and Jessica Catto Foundation. Without their generosity and confidence in our work, the Forum could not have taken place.

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