

Statement by Senator Benjamin Cardin at the OSCE PA Fall Meetings Athens, Greece, October 9, 2009

Thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to address my OSCE colleagues on the important and timely issue of climate change. I want to first thank our Greek hosts, Mr. Sioufas, President of the Greek Parliament, and the head of the Greek delegation to the PA, Mr. Skandalakis and the rest of the Greek delegation for the tremendous work they have put into hosting this meeting and for their incredible hospitality.

On a beautiful day in Athens, it is hard to think about what devastating effects climate change could have here -- the impact in terms of increased drought and the decline in tourism. In my own home state of Maryland, the people of Smith Island are watching their island vanish under rising sea levels. For my state's watermen -- their very way of life is disappearing as rising temperatures destroy the habitat the Chesapeake Bay's fish, crabs, and oysters depend on.

The science is clear. No nation will escape the impact of climate change. And the economic and social impacts could lead to security consequences. For example, we are going to see more frequent drought leading to crop failures, which in turn can lead to food scarcity and conflict in the very places where citizens are already struggling to cope. Around the world we are already seeing climate refugees, and this region, in particular, understands the political and economic impact of migration.

This exodus of climate migrants highlights the very real security and humanitarian concerns we all face. It is our duty to act—and to act now.

I know what you are thinking: What is the United States up to? Where is U.S. leadership? Will the Congress pass meaningful climate change legislation? And if so, when?

I'll be the first to admit the United States is behind the curve in terms of domestic action on climate change. We face an economic crisis, an energy security crisis, and a global climate crisis.

But what people forget is reviving our global economy is inextricably linked to re-thinking how we solve our energy challenges. Investing in new technologies creates new jobs. Diversifying our energy sources creates competition – stabilizing and lowering energy prices. And thinking beyond fossil fuels buried in unstable or unreliable countries makes all of us more secure.

Our dependence on old ways, old patterns and old resources puts us at a financial and national security disadvantage. Those same fossil fuels we burn to drive our cars, power our homes, and heat and treat our water, are polluting our air, making our children sick and raising our planet's temperature. The good news is that in solving our challenge of energy security we can also grow

our economy and clean our environment.

I have been working with my Senate colleagues to draft legislative to solve these problems by putting a limit on the pollution in our air, funding the development of new domestic sources of clean energy, and investing in a new transportation infrastructure that is less dependent on foreign fuels and creates jobs. Our legislation will encourage renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, expand nuclear energy and recognize that we can do much better in energy efficiency. A recent report indicated that the US could meet 40 percent of its target on carbon reduction through energy efficiency alone.

The House of Representatives passed its version of climate change legislation in June, a cap-and-trade plan that would require steady reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and would set a national standard for renewable electricity. That legislation would provide the right incentives for the free market economy to help solve global warming.

Last week my colleagues Senator Kerry and Senator Boxer introduced a similar bill in the Senate, but with even stronger emission reduction targets. In a couple of weeks, we expect to discuss that bill in the Environment and Public Works Committee, on which I am a member. There are other committees with jurisdiction over parts of this bill, and they will want to have their own discussions, including the Foreign Relations Committee where I am also a member, so it's not clear at this time just when we will have a bill that can be voted on by the full Senate.

Specifically, I have worked on our energy bill to promote a major investment in new, cleaner transportation. The cities of Europe are filled with models of easy to use public transportation systems. We know America's outdated transportation infrastructure and our car culture are ruining our environment, weakening our economy, and leaving us dependent on oil imports.

We have a lot of catching up to do to build a clean, efficient public transportation system that uses alternative fuels. Yes, we need to conserve more and drive less, but we also need to convert more and drive differently. We can convert to plug-in electric vehicles powered by renewable energy sources. We can and should invest in hydrogen fuel cell technology and ethanol from algae, switch grass and other sources of biomass that do not directly affect food prices. Alternative sources can power our cars in new ways we've not yet seen and power our country with new jobs we desperately need.

As President Obama has said, "the nation that leads the world in creating a new clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century's global economy."

Our legislation's investment in clean and secure energy sources will free us from our dependence on foreign oil and create nearly 2 million jobs. The Obama Administration is not just waiting

around for Congress to act. In a groundbreaking move, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is working to use the existing Clean Air Act to start regulating greenhouse gases and the administration has already unveiled stricter fuel-economy standards for vehicles.

Another area of this legislation that I am targeting for action is to improve the integrity of international offsets. Forestry carbon offsets are an important part of the climate change negotiations, but I'm concerned because if all goes as planned, we could see up to \$30 billion a year transferred to the owners of endangered forests. Now this money could be a great help to the people of these developing countries, but it could also be a devastating new source of corruption and organized crime.

I'm calling for transparency in offset programs because it is critical to achieving lasting reductions in deforestation, which can contribute directly to reducing global carbon emissions and curbing global warming. The lessons we have learned from the global movement for transparency in natural resources (such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) can be translated effectively to the offset programs and I am working hard to ensure that we have strong measures in place to prevent corruption and ensure the integrity of the offset system.

For anybody who says this should have been done earlier, I agree. All of us need to acknowledge the urgency of action now to reverse climate change. Let me be clear: I intend to press for the US to be a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to be a leader at Copenhagen for the strongest possible results. We need the broadest participation in Copenhagen for a successful outcome.

Yes, it is imperative that the United States take strong domestic measures to combat climate change, as soon as possible. But this is a global issue that we cannot solve alone, which is why I want to express my thanks to the Greek Parliament for hosting this conference, and to my colleagues for meeting here together to find a way forward.

We remain totally engaged on this issue internationally. In April, we convened the first of what have now been six meetings of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate. And the Obama Administration has put climate change at the top of the diplomatic agenda with all key partners – including China.

We recognize the U.S. and China account for almost 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. In July we reached an agreement on greater cooperation with China to invest in clean-energy technology. We are also negotiating an agreement to reduce emissions from automobiles. President Obama is scheduled to visit China in mid-November and I'm hopeful he can make further progress -- if not conclude a deal -- with the Chinese at that time.

A basic agreement with China is important. Also a basic agreement on limiting warming is important. In early July, G-8 leaders agreed that we should limit warming to no more than two degrees centigrade over preindustrial levels – a goal that 124 countries have agreed to, and which is endorsed in the House climate bill. If countries can negotiate an official two degrees centigrade commitment in Copenhagen, that would be significant.

But another measure of success will be the extent to which Copenhagen is able to produce an agreement on the architecture of a final climate regime. We need to agree on specific targets, both short-term and long-term, but we also need to agree on the process for getting to those targets.

I am urging our international negotiators to include in Copenhagen an enforcement mechanism that will make it clear that every state has a responsibility to take action to reduce greenhouse gases. My proposal would impose an assessment on imports from countries that don't meet their international goals. The assessment would equal the carbon cost of that product. Such a proposal would help encourage every state to take action, would deter states from taking unilateral action on tariffs that could challenge the WTO and would eliminate one of the major potential hurdles in a state taking action to reduce carbon emissions.

In the US, there is legitimate concern that if the US enacts strong carbon standards, carbon intense imports will have an unfair advantage in our market. The House of Representatives included a carbon border adjustment in its legislation. I would strongly prefer to have this issue resolved in Copenhagen rather than Geneva. A Copenhagen working committee on enforcement should immediately be tasked to review this issue.

The effects of climate change are an international issue with international responsibilities. And in case you need reminding what is at stake, the World Bank released a study this past week that estimates it will cost up to 100 billion U.S. dollars for developing countries to adapt to a two-degree warmer climate between now and 2050.

President Obama has said that we have a responsibility to provide the financial and technical assistance needed to help those nations adapt to the impacts of climate change and pursue low carbon development. The US will be working with the international community not only in terms of money, but also in working to find the best solutions. I am personally committed to make sure the final legislation passed by Congress includes reliable financial assistance to help the developing countries.

The poorest and most vulnerable nations among us simply don't have the financial strength to combat climate change, but they have the most immediate stake in a solution. These people are already witnessing the damage of a warming planet—famine and drought; disappearing coastal

villages and the conflict that arises from scarce resources. They don't have the luxury of time or resources, because time is running out and they are already living on the economic and environmental margins.

That task before us is immense. Our work toward a solution on climate change will also be a solution for our present challenges for jobs, the economy and national security. I believe the OSCE has a role to play in each of these areas, and that we as parliamentarians have a duty to help guide the work of the organization to take the difficult positions and to support the critical projects that will bring about the fundamental change we need.

And we must remember that even after Copenhagen, any deals we reach, any papers we sign, are but the beginning. The work must continue with earnest follow through, dedication to truly changing the way we work and live and move around this earth.

Thank you.