

**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Chairman John F. Kerry**  
**Opening Statement for U.S.-China Cooperation on Climate Change**  
**June 4, 2009**

**Chairman Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing On U.S.-China Cooperation On Climate Change**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) released the following opening remarks at the hearing titled, “Challenges and Opportunities for U.S.-China Cooperation on Climate Change”.

*Full text as prepared is below:*

It is appropriate on this, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary marking the violent crackdown against democracy advocates in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and in dozens of other cities all over China, that we begin today’s hearing by first remembering the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in pursuit of greater freedom in China.

While much remains to be done, China is today beginning to fulfill its role as a responsible member of the international community.

But for China to reach its full potential, both abroad and at home, its leaders need to unleash the great dynamism of the Chinese people through further political liberalization, strengthening the rule of law, and making government more accountable to the people. As long as China’s government continues to restrict basic freedoms such as freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of religious practice, and freedom of information, China will fail to live up to the full promise of the past 30 years of miraculous economic development.

China’s success is profoundly in the interest of the United States. My visit to Beijing last week confirmed for me China’s indispensable role in tackling a host of international problems, from the global financial crisis to the subject of today’s hearing, global climate change.

Delegates from 192 nations will spend the rest of this year doing the vital work of crafting a global climate change treaty to be negotiated in Copenhagen this December. But make no mistake: They will be taking their cues from just two nations.

The reality is, a robust American partnership with China will do more than anything else to ensure a successful global response to the urgent threat of climate change.

America is the world’s largest historical emitter of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change, and China recently passed us to become the world’s number one current emitter. Together, we are responsible for nearly half of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

But the full extent of our responsibility goes far beyond the numbers. Our words and our actions will set the tone. Washington and Beijing will inevitably lead by example: Either we will create the necessary momentum to finally galvanize a global response, or else we risk a global catastrophe.

Last week, I visited China to assess where the country currently stands on climate and energy issues, and to explore opportunities for cooperation going forward. I met with top Chinese political leaders, energy executives, scientists, students, and environmentalists.

What I heard and saw was enormously encouraging. Chinese decision-makers insisted to me repeatedly that China now grasps the urgency of this problem. People who, a few short years ago, weren’t even willing to entertain this discussion, are now unequivocal: China is eager to embrace low-carbon development pathways and is ready to be a “positive, constructive” player in negotiations going forward.

My message to the Chinese was simple: America understands that we have an obligation to lead. But you need to understand that, politically speaking, America will not enter into a global treaty without a meaningful commitment from China to be part of the solution.

As the Chinese are beginning to realize, addressing climate change and pursuing sustainable energy policies is very much in their own national interest. China's ballooning growth has resulted in a resource dependency that comes with real strategic costs.

Of course, the costs of environmental devastation are being felt in more than strategic terms: Air pollution causes the premature deaths of 750,000 Chinese people every year. Farmers are experiencing declining crop yields. And scientists are now warning that the Himalayan glaciers, which supply water to almost a billion people, could disappear completely by 2035.

Everyone I spoke to recognized these risks.

It's time to retire, once and for all, the old, outdated myth that China doesn't care and won't act. They do care, and they are acting.

And they're moving fast. While in China, I rode the 200-mile-an-hour bullet train from Beijing to Tianjin. The old train took eight hours and ran on diesel, the new one takes twenty-nine minutes. And in the next 4 years, China will extend its high-speed rail system by 38%.

Earlier this year, while America spent \$80 billion on green stimulus measures—the largest such investment in our history—China invested \$200 billion. In the past few years, China has tripled its wind energy usage targets and quintupled its solar energy usage targets for 2020.

China has actually begun dynamiting some of its small, dirty coal plants because they are so inefficient. But, as China builds an industrial base, we can't expect them to keep dynamiting dirty sources of energy—we need to ensure that China starts building clean.

Both countries have a great deal to gain from bilateral cooperation to develop and deploy clean energy sources. We have the chance to commercialize some of the most promising technologies—clean energy advances that can be truly transformational.

I raised these issues with Chinese Vice Premier Li Keqiang and he was enthusiastic, and asked us to draw up a list of specific suggestions for energy cooperation.

The opportunity is immense. We should collaborate on multiple demonstration projects of near-to-market clean energy technology, from solar thermal to carbon capture and storage. We should combine forces in driving toward next-generation battery and electric vehicle technology. We should recognize our common interest in an efficient and smart electric grid in both our countries. Most importantly, we must inspire the 1.6 billion Americans and Chinese to take ownership of this challenge, and to prove to the world that we can rise to meet it together.

Make no mistake: bilateral cooperation with China is not an alternative to a global treaty process. On the contrary, it is an essential component of that larger effort. Our two countries, America and China, have stood aside for too long. Now it falls to us to take the helm and lead the world to a global solution.

We are fortunate to have with us today a respected panel of experts. Ken Lieberthal served as Senior Director for Asia on the National Security Council under President Clinton and is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution. Elizabeth Economy is a senior fellow and director for Asia studies at the Council of Foreign Relations. And Bill Chandler is director of the energy and climate program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

We are eager to hear their testimony and look forward to their ideas about how America can partner with China to usher in a new era of global climate responsibility.

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