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The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUSTRALIA

Media Release

Joint Statement

Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Environment and Heritage

11 August 2005

I am pleased to advise that on 28 July the Government - along with counterparts from the United States, Japan, China, India and South Korea - announced the formation of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. The Partnership brings together - for the first time - key developing and developed countries in the region to address the challenges of climate change, energy security and air pollution in a way that is designed to promote economic development and reduce poverty.

The Partnership represents a significant achievement for Australian diplomacy.

Australia played an instrumental role in attracting regional countries to the concept, and in drafting the Partnership Vision Statement.

The Partnership also represents a new way of approaching global environmental challenges. It is reflective of a mindset that appreciates that such issues cannot be looked at in isolation. It recognises that economic development and energy security are legitimate national goals, and that actions to address climate change should complement rather than frustrate the pursuit of these goals. It is an approach that values results and eschews ideology.

This is a regional grouping of great significance. The six founding partner countries taken together constitute 45% of the world's population. They account for 49% of world gross domestic product. They represent 48% of the world's energy consumption, and are responsible for 48% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Working together, this group can have a significant impact on global approaches towards climate change.

By every measure, this group is a larger and more significant collection of countries than those countries that have binding emissions targets under the Kyoto Protocol - the so-called Annex I countries. These Annex I countries together account for only 13% of the world's population, 36% of the world's energy consumption, and 32% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

But importantly, Mr Speaker, the Partnership is intended to complement - not replace - the Kyoto Protocol. All of the Partnership countries are signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Four of the Partnership countries - Japan, India, China and Korea - have also ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Japan has binding emissions targets under Kyoto.

Other Kyoto countries have welcomed our initiative. The UK Environment Minister Elliot Morley describes the Partnership as a "welcome step forward". The UK Chief Government Scientist Sir David King says "it is very much in line with what we have been trying to do". Canadian Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew says "this is progress". The head of the Swiss Environment Agency describes it as "a complement to Kyoto and perhaps a good preparation for the time after Kyoto". And the German Environment Minister states the Partnership will "support international cooperation on climate change".

The Labor Party is not so enthusiastic. The Leader of the Opposition, when asked by a journalist about the Partnership, said in response "It is nothing. It is

spin." The Opposition spokesman on Environment, the Member for Grayndler, put out two press releases in response - one titled "Secret Climate Pact More Spin than Substance", the other "Climate Pact Spin and Hypocrisy". His reaction to the announcement was to say the "regional climate change pact is little more than government spin".

We would disagree. As would the Governments of China, India, Japan, Korea and the United States. How could a regional climate change partnership that accounts for 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions, that has been welcomed by Kyoto signatories, and that is committed to finding growth-friendly solutions to climate change be dismissed as simply "spin"? I hope the Labor Party change their mind. I hope they do not let their ideological fixation with the Kyoto Protocol blind them to practical, cooperative initiatives designed to address climate change.

Mr Speaker, Australia - despite having decided against ratifying the Kyoto Protocol - is one of the few countries actually on track to meet its Kyoto emissions target. Our emissions in 2003 were only 1.1% higher than in 1990. Over the same period, the Australian economy has grown by 50%. Per dollar of real GDP, we've reduced emissions by 33.4%.

Although we are on track to meet our target - something that very few Kyoto Annex I countries can claim - we have never been afraid to state plainly that Kyoto does not - and will not - work. Even if emissions targets are met - and this looks unlikely on current projections - Kyoto will see global emissions in 2010 up by 40% from 1990, when without Kyoto they would have increased by 41%. Developing countries - those expected to account for over half of all greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 - have no Kyoto targets, and are - quite understandably - not willing to sacrifice economic growth to negotiate them. Kyoto is not driving the technology responses needed to properly address climate change. In fact, its existence encourages the relocation of emissions from one country to another with no overall greenhouse benefit.

The importance of developing country participation can be illustrated quite starkly. Australia accounts for only 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Even if Australia took the alarming step of closing every power station tonight, China's industrial growth is so rapid that the greenhouse gas savings made by this gesture would be replicated by China in just one year.

A long-term, effective response to climate change needs to be one that includes

all major emitters. It needs to recognise and acknowledge the fundamental importance of economic development for global security and stability. It needs to properly address the world's energy needs. It needs to recognise that a realistic climate change policy cannot be anti-growth. And it needs to have technological development, cooperation and deployment as its centrepiece.

Mr Speaker, the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate does all this. It is a technology-focussed, pro-growth approach to climate change. It is about substance rather than symbols; results rather than rhetoric.

Policy integration will lie at the heart of the Partnership. It will not seek to address issues in isolation from one another. Through the Partnership we will find ways to meet our energy, climate change and air pollution challenges in practical ways that promote economic development.

The Partnership takes account of differing national circumstances. Each country has national strategies and goals to address climate change, energy needs, air pollution and economic development. The Partnership provides a framework for international cooperation to support these goals for mutual benefit. We will not be seeking to impose arbitrary targets, mandatory policies or artificial timeframes.

The Partnership will sensibly put technology cooperation front and centre. International consensus appreciates the pivotal role of technology to any solution on climate change and energy security. The role of technology has been recognised at the recent UK Energy and Environment Ministerial Roundtable in March, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Seminar in May, at the International Energy Agency Ministerial in May, and at the recent G8 Leaders Summit in July.

Through the Partnership's Vision Statement, we have identified many areas for potential technology cooperation including on clean coal, agriculture, carbon capture and storage, renewables and civilian nuclear power. We will also use the Partnership as a forum for policy dialogue - canvassing policy issues such as best practice climate and energy policies, barriers to technology deployments, standards and performance measures. We will also discuss potential financing mechanisms.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that Australia will host the inaugural Ministerial meeting of the Partnership in November. Foreign, Environment and Energy Ministers from the founding partners will be invited to

build on the Vision Statement by articulating a charter and work programs.

The formation of the Partnership represents a new model for addressing climate change. The Ministerial Meeting will be a start. There will be no claims of a quick fix, no setting of arbitrary goals or timelines; no one with a serious understanding of climate change could honestly pretend there is any such thing. But we do anticipate that the Australian Meeting will begin a long-term, practical collaboration that will promote low-carbon technologies, reduce the greenhouse gas intensity of our economies, and put us on low-emissions growth trajectories.

I urge the House to support the Partnership.

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