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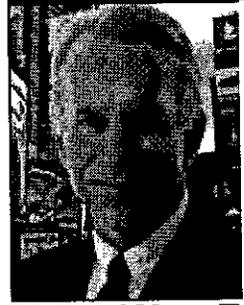
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Hosted by James K. Glassman



Way, Way Beyond Kyoto

By James K. Glassman, Host, TCS
 In a surprise move that caught Europe's smug moralists and the environmental movement's noisy extremists flatfooted, the United States announced in Vientiane, Laos, last week that it was joining five other nations - China, India, Japan, South Korea and Australia -- in a new pact that offers a refreshing and effective alternative route to tackling the problem of climate change.

While given short shrift by the puzzled media, this is a big deal, in many ways.

First, it breaks the climate-change deadlock. This is the agreement that responsible scientists and public officials have been seeking since the failure of the Kyoto Protocol became evident at the global warming conclave in Delhi two years ago. Call it "Beyond Kyoto" - Way Beyond Kyoto.

Second, the new deal was negotiated and settled without the involvement of the United Nations or the European Union - a clear message from the United States that multilateralism does not have a single definition. In fact, according to *The Guardian* newspaper, the agreement - called the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate -- was kept secret by President Bush from British Prime Minister Tony Blair, an uncompromising champion of Kyoto, during last month's G8 meeting" in Scotland.

Third, the agreement comprises countries that account for 45% of the world's population and about half the world's economic output and greenhouse gas emissions, mainly carbon dioxide, implicated in raising surface temperatures. More Asian countries may soon join the pact.

Fourth and most important, it takes a pro-growth approach to combating the possibility of global warming in the century ahead. The new Beyond Kyoto agreement focuses on innovative technology as the antidote, not only to carbon-dioxide emissions but also to dirty air and economic deprivation. The very first statement in the pact is: "Development and poverty eradication are urgent and overriding goals internationally."

That's a stark contrast with Kyoto's preference for hard CO₂ targets, met through government directives, to reduce energy use. Development is an afterthought.

Even its staunchest supporters now recognize that Kyoto, signed in 1997 and officially ratified last year, has no future.

Many of the world's most prolific emitters of greenhouse gases, including China, India and South Korea, were exempt from the requirements of the protocol. The US and Australia have rejected it. And even noisy advocates, like France, Italy and Canada, are nowhere close to meeting the treaty's targets. The EU's emissions rose 3.6% between 2001 and 2004 (those in the US fell).

To reach Kyoto's drastic goal of cutting emissions by 2012 to levels 5% below those of 1990, developed nations have no choice but to slash energy use. That means slower growth, even widespread recession, with especially dire consequences not just for rich nations, but, worse, for poor nations that rely on demand from the developed world for their goods and services.

The Beyond Kyoto pact, by contrast, seeks to "address energy, climate change and air pollution issues within a paradigm of economic development." Specifically, the deal will concentrate on the technology that will help China and India, especially, to increase the efficiency of their energy use. Currently, these countries produce twice as many emissions as the US for each unit of GDP.

A major focus will be clean-coal technology. The US is the Saudi Arabia of coal, with the world's largest supply, and China and Australia are also large producers and users. The deal also seeks more alternatives to fossil fuels with both low emissions and high efficiency - not just nuclear, wind, even biotechnology and nanotechnology.

Many professional environmentalists, for whom Kyoto is a matter of religious fervor, are disarmed and dismayed. "There's really nothing new here," said Jeff Fielder, an analyst at the Natural Resources Defense Council in New York.

Fielder is right in one respect. The Bush administration has been quietly signing bilateral agreements for technology sharing for years now. But Vientiane is, absolutely, a new comprehensive approach to climate, and the Greens don't want to acknowledge its clear validity. "I think this is aimed at

complicating the Montreal talks," Fielder added, referring to the 11th annual conference on global warming four months from now.

I've been to four of these extravaganzas - huge wastes of money and time. I am looking forward to Montreal, though. With the future-fearing Europeans bypassed by growth-loving Americans, Australians and Asians, there's a whole new world opening Beyond Kyoto.