

# Scientists Urge Rapid Action on Global Warming

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LONDON, May 25 — A panel of scientists warned today that unless emissions of carbon dioxide and other harmful gases were immediately cut by more than 60 percent, global temperatures would rise sharply over the next century, with unforeseeable consequences for humanity.

While much of the substance of the report has already been disclosed, the report had immediate political consequences. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, breaking with the Bush Administration's skepticism over the need for immediate action, said today that if other countries did their part, Britain would reduce the projected growth of its carbon dioxide emissions enough to stabilize them at 1990 levels by the year 2005.

West Germany's Environment Minister, Klaus Töpfer, has proposed that Europe should go further and cut present emissions by 25 percent by that time, but the United States has said until now that the scientific case for global warming — the so-called greenhouse effect — has not been made and that no action needs to be taken.

Mrs. Thatcher's action is a blow to the Bush Administration, which was counting on her as its major ally in slowing any international action to reduce the industrial pollution that

## Britain and the U.S. may break ranks on the pollution threat.

causes global warming.

The report by a working group of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was approved by all but a handful of the 90 delegates from 39 countries, said Dr. John T. Houghton, chairman. The report said that if nothing at all was done, the global mean temperature could rise 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the 21st century.

It said that in that case, ocean water would expand and ice stored at the poles could melt, raising the level of the sea by 25.6 inches. That would be enough to submerge the Maldives and inundate the coastal plains of Bangladesh and the Netherlands, oceanographers say.

Mr. Houghton, Britain's chief meteorologist, said that only a handful of the scientists in the panel disagreed with the findings, which he said were dramatic confirmation of how rapidly the carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons and other gases released into the air by industrial processes, the burning of tropical forests and other factors had been changing the earth's atmosphere since the end of the 18th century. A draft of the report was previously disclosed.

### Britain and U.S. Percentages

Britain, with 1 percent of the world's population, is responsible for about 3 percent of its carbon dioxide emissions, Mrs. Thatcher said. The United States, with 5 percent of the population, is responsible for about 25 percent of the emissions, American scientists say.

Prof. Bert Bolin, the chairman of the intergovernmental panel, described Mrs. Thatcher's action as "very useful" but said, "It is not enough in the long term." If all countries did as Britain suggested, Dr. Houghton said, it would still not be enough to stop the enhanced greenhouse effect. "If you want to stop it, you have to cut by 60 percent immediately," he said at a news conference in Englefield Green, where the working group discussed its findings this week.

"She has taken a kind of halfway position between the aggressive moves being considered by the West Germans and the 'What, me worry?' position of the United States," said Michael Oppenheimer, an atmospheric physicist

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Dr. John T. Houghton, who was chairman of international panel on global warming.

of the Environmental Defense Fund of New York City, who was in a group of scientists Mrs. Thatcher invited a year ago to advise her on global warming.

### Called Too Little Too Late

British environmental groups denounced Mrs. Thatcher's proposal as too little, too late. "It does not even go as far as the very modest first step that the European Community proposed back in March of stabilizing emissions at the present level by the year 2000," said Andrew Dilworth, a spokesman for Friends of the Earth.

Mrs. Thatcher, in her speech at the opening of a center for climate prediction and research in Bracknell, said, "It is no good setting political targets for action which are just not realistic in practice." Mrs. Thatcher, who had been briefed on the working group's findings earlier this week, said today that reducing projected increases in British carbon dioxide emissions by 30 percent in 15 years would mean "significant adjustments to our economies — more efficient power stations, cars which use less fuel, better insulated houses and better management of energy in general."

The working group's report is one of three that were commissioned in November 1988 by the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization for a global climate conference in Geneva in November. Another working group headed by the Soviet Union is considering the impact of climate changes on agriculture, forests, fisheries, water resources, and sea barriers, and the third, headed by the United States, is considering strategies for responding to climate change. Professor Bolin said today that he would not discuss the draft reports of either of them.

### Cut of 60% Recommended

The United Nations group's report today said that just to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and chlorofluorocarbons at today's levels, there would have to be immediate cuts of more than 60 percent in their output. Depending on how much was actually done to cut emissions, it said, global mean temperature would still keep rising between 0.1 degrees centigrade (0.18 degrees Fahrenheit) and 0.2 degrees centigrade (0.36 degrees Fahrenheit) per decade.

Global mean surface air temperature has already increased by 0.3 degrees centigrade (0.54 Fahrenheit) to 0.6 degrees centigrade (1.08 degrees Fahrenheit) over the last 100 years, it said, with the five average warmest years all occurring in the 1980's.

Scientists who study global climate trends concede, however, that the computer models on which they base their predictions are flawed. While the researchers can measure gases in the atmosphere with precision, they have not perfected methods of predicting their effects on particular regions on earth.

So far, there has been only one major step to control greenhouse gases — the major industrialized countries' pledge last year to ban production of chlorofluorocarbons, used as refrigerants and propellants, by the end of this century because they rise to the upper atmosphere and destroy the ozone molecules that block most of the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation.