



**Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor  
Hearing on “International Climate Challenges and Opportunities”  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis  
October 28, 2021**

*As prepared for delivery*

Over the past several decades, climate change has fueled increasingly destructive weather events around the globe. Last year, Australia faced its costliest disaster in history, as massive fires burned across their country. In Germany and Belgium, towns were recently hit with two months’ worth of rain in only two days, leading to deadly floods. In Central America, climate-fueled droughts and floods are killing crops, devastating economies, and driving migration. And in India and Pakistan, families are suffering through longer and hotter heat waves.

Climate change is a global crisis. According to a recent study, the climate crisis impacts more than 85% of the world’s population. Although each nation is impacted differently, it’s clear we must work together to solve it. We have to choose a path forward. One path is paved with inadequate action, which will lead to continued destruction, as we continue to kick the can down the road. But there is a brighter path. It is paved with generational investments in renewable energy and electric vehicles, in environmental justice and climate resilience. And it leads us to a net zero emissions world, one in which future generations can thrive.

The United States has the responsibility to lead the world down this path through our example. The upcoming COP26 will serve as a vital test. When global leaders meet in Glasgow next week, almost every nation around the world - including big polluters like China - will be challenged to increase their climate ambitions. President Biden has already signaled his willingness to lead in that regard. This year, the President pledged to slash America’s greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. And as COP26 starts next week, it’s up to us in Congress to help achieve that goal.

In this committee, we’ve focused on how solving the climate crisis will bring incredible benefits in America. We’ve talked about the opportunity to create millions of good-paying jobs; of the need to protect the health of our children and safeguard our economy; and of our imperative to ensure justice for communities of color and tribes. Today, we’re going to focus on the international benefits that come with solving the climate crisis. Because not only will reducing pollution make life better for families here; it will also strengthen our partnerships abroad, as we work with other nations to do the same.

But there are major challenges facing international cooperation on dealing with this crisis. The overarching one is straightforward: how do we keep global temperature from continuing to rise? We can start by making generational investments in clean energy, powering our homes with renewables, and expanding our use of zero emissions technologies. But we know we cannot do it alone.

The second big challenge is financial. Historically, some of the world's least developed countries have been the most affected by climate impacts, including sea level rise, floods, and droughts while being the least responsible for climate-fueling pollution. Solving the climate crisis will require us to use international climate financing to partner with countries to develop their economies in climate-smart ways. In fact, President Biden has already called on Congress to double our pledge for international climate financing by 2024. He understands that, by helping developing countries reduce their pollution and build resilience, the United States can help billions across the world not only survive, but thrive.

Finally, another major challenge is the need to invest in adaptation. While cutting carbon pollution is critical, we must also focus on helping communities adapt to climate impacts that are already here. Without expanded adaptation and resilience support, we'll continue to see suffering across the globe, especially in low- and moderate-income communities. That's why we must invest in measures that will help families prepare today, while also reducing the risk of broader instability.

Climate action gives us an opportunity to transform our world for the better. The upcoming climate conference reminds us that we're all fighting the same fight. By the power of our example, we will lead the world and rise to the challenge. We simply have no other choice.