

**Statement of the Honorable John F. Kerry
Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
U.S. Department of State
Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee,
Subcommittee on Oversight & Accountability
July 13, 2023**

Thank you, Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Crow, and members of the Committee for inviting me here today to discuss the Biden-Harris Administration's Budget and commitment to lead the global effort to address the climate crisis.

I want to share with the Chairman and Ranking Member: I learned from my years on the Hill, and from colleagues who were also veterans, that our service in uniform helped all of us do our jobs and understand the challenges facing the country. This Committee in particular, with its focus on global threats and the great enterprise of building a safer world, benefits from your experience.

At home and around the world, one of the most existential and growing threats that impacts all of us is the climate crisis. This issue has been in front of the Congress for decades – and while significant progress was made in the 117th Congress, we still haven't done enough to address the threat.

You all see it and feel it – lives lost and communities upended by drought in Iowa, hurricanes in Florida, extreme flooding in California, New York, and Vermont, and record-breaking extreme temperatures across much of the United States.

The climate crisis is without a doubt a threat to our national security, and our military leaders have repeatedly termed it a “threat multiplier.” General Anthony Zinni, the former Commander-in-Chief of the United

States Central Command, once said that without leadership to reduce emissions, “we will pay the price later in military terms. And that will involve human lives. There will be a human toll.”

Climate disruptions exacerbate competition over resources, amplify drivers of displacement in vulnerable communities, and require our military to increasingly support humanitarian relief efforts in the wake of disasters, at home and abroad. The climate crisis also increasingly threatens the extinction of precious biodiversity and weakening of marine ecosystems, on which so many American livelihoods depend.

This is one of the reasons the President’s Budget includes more than \$3 billion to implement the President’s Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE). It aims to help more than half a billion people in developing countries adapt to and manage climate impacts, so they do not result in long-term instability. PREPARE does what America has always done best: it helps lift people around the world out of poverty through greater climate resilience so they can be fully participating members of the global community. These initiatives also reflect the fact that a dollar invested in adaptation can result in \$4-10 or more in economic benefits and in minimizing conflict.

We also know that most people will first experience impacts of the climate crisis through water, either too much or too little, and that we must work toward a water secure *and* climate-resilient world. The U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense, and U.S. Agency for International Development are advancing our global security by building on the White House Action Plan on Global Water Security released last year. Two billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, and four billion people experience water scarcity for at least one month of the year – issues that contribute to instability and are exacerbated by increasing floods, unpredictable rainfall, and droughts.

Here at home, governors, mayors, taxpayers, and insurance companies experience the climate crisis acutely in our economy and in our pocketbooks because every extreme weather event comes with a bill – adding up to more than a trillion dollars in the last decade. To that end, the Administration has begun the process of developing a National Climate Resilience Framework. This framework will present a cohesive vision of what it means to be a climate-resilient nation, helping align efforts to strengthen preparedness in communities across the country.

Let me also note that despite the devastation of this crisis there is also a unique opportunity. Just as the climate crisis is human-made, so too are many of its solutions. And the solutions to this challenge are a once-in-a-generation economic opportunity. Take the Inflation Reduction Act: in less than a year, it has created more than 100,000 clean energy jobs across the country.

The Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are also spurring multi-billion-dollar private sector investments that support our energy security in states like Georgia and Nevada, where new facilities will produce and recycle the batteries that will power the booming clean energy economy. These clean energy technologies represent a multi-trillion global future market opportunity – and the decisions and investments we make now will determine whether that future is led by American companies, American technologies, and American workers – or those of our competitors.

And around the world, we have the benefit of not just the power of our example, but the push of our diplomacy and investments. The President's 2024 Budget would fund agencies, like the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), that make strategic investments that open new markets for the private sector and support

U.S. policy objectives. As just one example, DFC is providing debt financing for an American company, First Solar, to manufacture “thin film” solar panels free of polysilicon in India – diversifying energy supply chains with a key partner in South Asia, as First Solar invests more than \$1 billion to expand its U.S. production.

These are critical investments, and one element of my job has been to pair them with diplomatic efforts – because we can’t solve the global climate crisis alone. President Biden initiated America’s return to a position of leadership to address this crisis beginning on Day One when he signed the instrument to rejoin the Paris Agreement and later when he announced a U.S. target of reducing our emissions by 50-52 percent from 2005 levels in 2030.

As a result of the United States contributing to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C, we’ve enhanced our ability to engage countries around the world, both bilaterally and multilaterally, including through the revived Major Economies Forum, to raise global climate ambition – and press for all major emitting countries to do their part. These efforts have borne fruit. Countries representing two-thirds of global GDP have stepped up with targets aligned with keeping 1.5 degrees C within reach.

We have tapped into the power of private capital through the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM4C) and the First Movers Coalition (FMC), which are both helping position American companies to lead on agricultural innovation and clean steel, cement, and more. Through the FMC, we’re galvanizing more than \$15 billion in purchasing commitments from 81 companies to scale innovation and investment in clean technologies.

We're also working with countries representing almost half of the world's forests, including through the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership, to mobilize large-scale investment from governments, philanthropies, and private institutions to halt and reverse deforestation, preserve critical habitat and biodiversity, and support livelihoods related to sustainable forestry, agriculture, and sustainable infrastructure in countries like Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

By partnering with Norway on the Green Shipping Challenge and engaging with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization, and elevating green maritime shipping through actions in the Administration's Ocean Climate Action Plan, we're accelerating decarbonization in two hard-to-abate sectors that are critical to global commerce and our way of life: shipping and aviation.

Additionally, the United States also launched the Ocean Conservation Pledge – an ambitious effort and critical step for conserving or protecting 30 percent of the global ocean by 2030 – with benefits for people, climate, and biodiversity.

The United States has also worked with the European Union (EU) to launch the Global Methane Pledge, with 150 countries now on board to slash methane emissions, which are 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the short term, by 30 percent by 2030. This is the fastest way to reduce near-term warming, and these activities also benefit food and energy security – including by capturing and putting to productive use up to 260 billion cubic meters of natural gas that is being wasted every year. That's enough to meet the EU's current gas imports from Russia three times over.

We are also building on the Abraham Accords by supporting projects that will underpin energy integration and resilience in the Middle East, including among Israel, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.

We have supported U.S. leadership on a new generation of nuclear energy in Europe and around the world – demonstrating how American companies can lead in the clean energy transition.

And finally, this weekend, I am traveling to The People's Republic of China (PRC) to engage with them on addressing the climate crisis, including with respect to increasing implementation and ambition and promoting a successful COP 28. The climate crisis is not a bilateral issue, but a global one. The fact is the PRC is the largest emitter in the world – and we must engage on enhancing climate action to help avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis. As a matter of global climate arithmetic, we cannot keep a safer 1.5C future within reach unless the PRC acts faster to cut all its greenhouse gas emissions.

Every step forward has been taken to protect our national security, position the U.S. to lead the booming clean energy economy, and leave behind a safer planet for our kids and grandkids.

And every step forward still depends not on one country acting alone, but on all of us acting together.

It also depends on all of you – not as a matter of politics, but in a mission of meeting the moment in the best traditions of our country and our Congress.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.