

EDITORIAL

In his inauguration speech, US President Obama noted a number of important environmental objectives, stating that “We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories,” and that “we cannot consume the world’s resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed and we must change with it”.

Perhaps most important, unlike his predecessor, he noted that “transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstone of this presidency”.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the newly inaugurated president, especially for his explicit commitment to facing specific global challenges including “climate change...and the multiple crises of food, energy, and human development”.

We add our congratulations, and our gratitude for his reversal of the former Administration’s decisions to grant 77 leases for oil wells in ecologically important lands in the western states.

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As of the end of 2008, the total world population was 6.75 billion people representing an estimated single-year increase of 82 million over the same figure for 2007.

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The UN Secretary-General recently expressed concern about the Parties’ dedication to earlier climate change agreements, stating that “there must be no backsliding on previous commitments”.

In this connection, we note that China’s President has recently reaffirmed that his country will not commit to mandatory emission reduction targets before the world’s wealthy countries take the lead in addressing climate change.

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Finally, we note that conservation sometimes entails sacrifice. Ongoing construction of additional offices for the Climate Change Secretariat to address problems of insufficient space will require cutting down 34 oak, chestnut and maple trees. Twenty-one replacements will be planted.

11 February 2009

- Wolfgang R. Steyer -