

CEO & Chairman of the Board; The Hain Celestial Group, Inc.), Esteve Torrens (President & CEO; Stonyfield Farm, Inc.), Kevin Cleary (CEO; Clif Bar).

TO US AND GLOBAL LEADERS

As the world gathers in Paris this week for the 2015 United Nations Conference of the Parties, we come together, as some of the largest, best known global apparel companies, to acknowledge that climate change is harming the world in which we operate.

From the farmers in cotton fields to the workers in garment factories, we know that people in some of the least climate-resilient regions are being negatively impacted by a warming world. Drought, changing temperatures and extreme weather will make the production of apparel more difficult and costly.

We recognize that human-produced greenhouse gas emissions are a key contributor to climate change. Climate change mitigation and technological innovation are vital to the health and well being of those who make and use our products, as well as to the future supply of materials needed to make those products.

Therefore . . .

We call upon you to reach a global agreement that provides the certainty businesses need and the ambition that climate science demands.

We support a strong global deal that will accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy and that includes:

A global goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions well before the end of the century.

National carbon emission mitigation commitments that are strengthened every five years starting in 2020 with a clear timetable for new commitments in 5-year blocks from 2030 onwards.

Adaptation funding to build climate-resilient economies and communities.

Today we pledge to:

I. Continue to reduce our emissions while increasing the purchase of renewable energy and pursuing energy efficiency in our operations.

II. Advocate for climate and energy policies that meaningfully address climate change at the global, national and state/regional levels.

III. Engage our respective trade associations in thoughtful discussions on meaningful climate and energy policy and advocacy that promotes the long-term growth and prosperity of our sector and the health of the global economy.

We are prepared to be held accountable to our pledge.

We are ready to meet the climate challenges that face our businesses. Please join us in meeting the climate challenges that face our world.

Eric Wiseman (Chairman & CEO; VF Corporation), Herbert Hainer (CEO; Adidas Group), Jake Burton Carpenter & Donna Carpenter (Founders; Burton Snowboards), Eileen Fisher (Founder & Chairwoman; Eileen Fisher), Chip Bergh (President & CEO; Levi Strauss & Co.), Art Peck (Chief Executive Officer; Gap Inc.), Karl-Johan Persson (CEO; H&M).

[lowcarbonusa.org]

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BUSINESS BACKS LOW-CARBON USA

We are some of the businesses that will help create the future economy of the United States.

We want this economy to be energy efficient and low carbon. We believe there are cost-effective and innovative solutions that can help us achieve that objective. Failure to

tackle climate change could put America's economic prosperity at risk. But the right action now would create jobs and boost competitiveness.

We encourage our government to

1. seek a strong and fair global climate deal in Paris that provides long-term direction and periodic strengthening to keep global temperature rise below 2°C

2. support action to reduce U.S. emissions that achieves or exceeds national commitments and increases ambition in the future

3. support investment in a low-carbon economy at home and abroad, giving industry clarity and boosting the confidence of investors

We pledge to continue efforts to ensure a just transition to a low-carbon, energy efficient U.S. economy and look forward to enabling strong ambition in the U.S. and at the Paris climate change conference.

Autodesk, Inc.; The Coca-Cola Company; Unilever; Adidas Group; Johnson Controls, Inc.; Clif Bar & Company; Intel; Kingspan Insulated Panels; Microsoft; Qualcomm; Sprint; Colgate-Palmolive Company; Smartwool; The Hartford; Volvo, Volvo Group North America; Burton; Snowbird; eBay; Seventh Generation; Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies; Vail Resorts; Levi Strauss & Co.; EMC; New Belgium Brewing Company; Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows; Annie's; Alta; General Mills; Dignity Health; BNY Mellon; Jupiter Oxygen Corporation; Hewlett Packard Enterprise; Outdoor Industry Association; Procter & Gamble; Ben & Jerry's; Schneider Electric; Xanterra; Nike; The North Face; Symantec; JLL; Powdr Corporation; Gap Inc.; Owens Corning; EnerNOC; Hilton Worldwide; VF Corporation; Guggenheim; Timberland; L'Oreal; IKEA; Aspen Snowmass, Aspen Skiing Company; Vulcan; Eileen Fisher; DuPont; CA Technologies; Nestle; Pacific Gas and Electric Company; Catalyst; Sealed Air; National Grid; Saunders Hotel Group; Hewlett Packard; Kellogg's; Teton Gravity Research; Dell; Mars, Incorporated; NRG; Ingersoll Rand.

IN SUPPORT OF PROSPERITY AND GROWTH: FINANCIAL SECTOR STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Scientific research finds that an increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere is warming the planet, posing significant risks to the prosperity and growth of the global economy. As major financial institutions, working with clients and customers around the globe, we have the business opportunity to build a more sustainable, low-carbon economy and the ability to help manage and mitigate these climate-related risks.

Our institutions are committing significant resources toward financing climate solutions. These actions alone, however, are not sufficient to meet global climate challenges. Expanded deployment of capital is critical, and clear, stable and long-term policy frameworks are needed to accelerate and further scale investments.

We call for leadership and cooperation among governments for commitments leading to a strong global climate agreement. Policy frameworks that recognize the costs of carbon are among many important instruments needed to provide greater market certainty, accelerate investment, drive innovation in low carbon energy, and create jobs. Over the next 15 years, an estimated \$90 trillion will need to be invested in urban infrastructure and energy. The right policy frameworks can help unlock the incremental public and private capital needed to ensure this infrastructure is sustainable and resilient.

While we may compete in the marketplace, we are aligned on the importance of policies

to address the climate challenge. In partnership with our clients and customers, we will provide the financing required for value creation and the vision necessary for a strong and prosperous economy for generations to come.

Bank of America; Citi; Goldman Sachs; JPMorgan Chase; Morgan Stanley; Wells Fargo.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMBAT ISIS AND PROTECT AND SECURE THE UNITED STATES ACT OF 2015

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Senate Democrats are proposing important legislation to help combat the threat of ISIS and to keep Americans safe. It would strengthen the security of the Visa Waiver Program and close the terrorist gun loophole. I am a cosponsor of these efforts. We need to respond to the threat of ISIS—wherever it exists—and we need to work with our international partners to combat this barbaric terrorist group.

The President has adopted a limited and necessary military response. We stand here, elected by our constituents to give weight to their voices in our democracy. I hear from Vermonters every week concerned about the threat of ISIS. I also hear their concerns about further expanding what has been an unending war.

It is time for Congress to weigh in with more than just talking points and heated rhetoric. Congress has a duty to debate what further military role the United States should take in combating ISIS. Before we send our men and women into harm's way, Congress should vote on a new, limited authorization for the use of military force. We should sunset any new authorization of military force and require Congress to renew and reauthorize its authority.

The ill-fated war in Iraq cost thousands of lives and trillions of dollars and has left the region no more safe and secure than when it started more than a decade ago. Congress can't make that mistake again. I support strategic, authorized military efforts to dismantle ISIS, but just as I opposed the war in Iraq, I will not support a blank check that perpetuates unending war.

TRIBUTE TO SPECIALIST SKYLAR ANDERSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week, a distinct honor was bestowed upon Vermont Army National Guard

Specialist Skylar Anderson and, by extension, the Vermont National Guard. I want to recognize this milestone.

After graduating from a rigorous program at the 164th Regimental Training Institute in North Dakota, Specialist Anderson became the first female soldier in the country to be awarded a military occupation specialty as a combat engineer. In this position, she will enrich the capabilities of our Guard, bringing new skills and expertise to her work. While this is an impressive honor on its own, she did this while managing a full workload. While serving in the Vermont National Guard, she is a student at the University of Vermont. Specialist Anderson has clearly earned this recognition through her hard work and dedication.

Opportunities to serve in our military, whether soldier or sailor, airman, or marine, should be available to the best and brightest, regardless of gender, and Specialist Anderson has shown young women around the country that gender integration in the military is very real. Just last week, the Secretary of Defense declared all positions in the U.S. armed services open to females, removing artificial restrictions so that the United States can have the very best serving, like Specialist Anderson.

As a Vermonter, I am especially proud of her achievements, and I am also appreciative of the members of the Vermont National Guard who supported her throughout the process.

I ask unanimous consent that an article about Specialist Skylar Anderson published by National Guard Online be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the National Guard Online, Nov. 27, 2015]

VERMONT GUARD MEMBER BECOMES USA'S FIRST FEMALE COMBAT ENGINEER

COLCHESTER, VT.—Spc. Skylar Anderson, a member of the Vermont Army National Guard, became the first female Soldier in the nation to be awarded the 12B Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) code as a combat engineer.

Anderson was previously a Multiple Launch Rocket System Operations/Fire Direction Specialist (13P) prior to re-classing to a combat engineer.

She graduated Aug. 31 from the 164th Regimental Training Institute (RTI) in Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Goarmy.com says that combat engineers primarily supervise, serve or assist as a member of a team when they are tackling rough terrain in combat situations. They provide their expertise in areas such as mobility, counter-mobility, survivability and general engineering. They construct fighting positions, fixed/floating bridges, obstacles and defensive positions, place and detonate explosives, conduct operations that include route clearance of obstacles and rivers, prepare and install firing systems for demolition and explosives, and detect mines visually or with mine detectors.

"I knew that I would be one of the first females to go, but not the first to graduate," Anderson said. "I knew that the MOS had just opened up a few months ago and having

previously been field artillery, I wanted to do it."

Originally enlisting in the New Hampshire National Guard, Anderson interstate transferred to the Vermont Army National Guard (VTARNG) in February of 2014, while pursuing a degree at the University of Vermont. Currently a junior, she is studying Animal Science, Equine Studies, in the pre-Veterinary program.

"I was floating around for a bit in Vermont," Anderson said in reference to how she became interested in becoming a 12B. Since the VTARNG didn't have 13Ps, Anderson briefly thought about joining the military police or working in supply. It wasn't until annual training this summer that she found out that the 12B MOS had opened up to women and decided that's what she wanted to do.

"Vermont is incredibly proud of Spc. Anderson and her accomplishments and achievements," said Maj. Gen. Steven A. Cray, the adjutant general, Vermont National Guard. "This is an important milestone not only for Spc. Anderson, but for all women in the integration of females into combat roles."

According to the 164th Regiment RTIs website, the 12B10 Combat Engineer MOS-T course provides reclassification training for military personnel with prior military experience, so that they may obtain the skills necessary to perform as a Combat Engineer.

There, Soldiers are provided technical training in basic demolitions, wire obstacles, explosive hazards, fixed bridging and urban operations.

"Spc. Anderson displayed tremendous personal courage in seeking out MOS reclassification to a specialty previously closed to women," said Capt. Eugene Enriquez, Commander, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 86th Brigade Special Troop Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain).

"The training at the school was awesome," Anderson said. "By the third day we were out in the field and at the range, using TNT, dynamite and det cord, blowing stuff up! This class was really hands on and that's what I loved about it."

ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I want to express my outrage and horror at the out-of-control electoral situation in Venezuela—at the intimidation, violence, manipulation, and corruption by the Maduro government to manipulate election results in their favor.

For weeks, President Maduro has said that his party will do whatever it takes to stay in power, and I have no doubt that he will do everything he can to stay in power. In recent days, Maduro said: "If on December 6th the political-right wins, prepare to see a country in chaos, in violence. I will not turn over nor will I betray the revolution"—a clear statement of what's to come, but the world is watching.

In October, he gave a public speech in which he said that if the opposition wins, the country would enter into one of its "most turbulent periods" because he will not turn over the revolution, and if necessary, he would rule through what he called "a civic military union." Maduro's cronies have also made alarming, ominous statements in recent weeks warning the public that the ruling party will not lose control.

The government has already denied international election observers, so, clearly, we know what is about to happen.

Maduro's term is not yet up, but it is only a matter of time, and this election will be a demonstration of his complete failure. The fact is numbers don't lie, and the crushing poll numbers coming out are further proof the country is ready for fundamental change from a failed economic model that has run its course and needs to be done away with. All of this against a backdrop of continued deceit, repression, and violence.

Last week, in broad daylight, armed supporters of the government assassinated Luiz Manuel Diaz, the state-level head of the Acción Democrática, or Democratic Action Party, at an open-air rally in the state of Guarico—clearly a politically targeted assassination designed to terrorize opposition parties and their supporters. Luiz Manuel Diaz was standing 6 feet away from Lilian Tintori, whom I have met several times, the wife of the high-profile political prisoner, Leopoldo Lopez.

This level of unacceptable, blatant violence is appalling and has been condemned by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, and by countless human rights organizations. Again, the world is clearly watching and demanding that the rule of law in Venezuela be reestablished.

The fact is the government is engaged in clear election manipulation. The government-controlled National Electoral Council has disqualified seven leading opposition figures from participating in the elections—disqualifications without justification and without a process to appeal. The disqualifications have targeted only members of the opposition: Maria Corina Machado, the diputada—assembly member—that received the single highest number of votes in the 2010 elections; Manuel Rosales, the former governor of Zulia state and a former Presidential candidate for the opposition; Leopoldo Lopez, currently being held in a military prison, the most high-profile political prisoner in the Americas.

The government has also fabricated a border crisis with neighboring Colombia as a pretext to declare a state of emergency, in 23 municipalities in 3 states along the Colombian-Venezuelan border. This allows the government to arbitrarily suspend the fundamental rights of citizens in these municipalities to a right to assembly, right to peaceful demonstrations—and, guess what, it just so happens that these municipalities are either swing districts or ones where the opposition won handily in the 2010 legislative elections. In these same three states, the opposition won 18 of the 27 seats contested. The government is even resorting to political tricks.

In one district, in the city of Maracay, the leading opposition candidate is named Ismael Garcia, a lifelong political veteran. The government