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NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on the President's Council on Sustainable Development

June 14, 1993

Thank you. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. It has been a year since the Earth summit in Rio. I think you might be interested to know that a year ago at the Earth summit in Rio I placed a call to Senator Al Gore of Tennessee to get a report on the goings-on there from him and from Senator Wirth of Colorado and to begin the process by which we came together as a team. Not very long after that I asked Al Gore to join the Democratic ticket, and the rest was history.

I don't want to make any bones about it. When we had our first very long meeting, one thing that then-Senator Gore said was that he wanted to be part of a ticket that, if elected, could put the environment back on the front burner in American public life and do it in a way that would be good for the economy, not bad for the economy, do it in a way that would bring the American people together, not divide them. All the policy positions that the Vice President just announced that we have taken to change the direction of the previous administrations and, more importantly, to go beyond politics to embrace a new philosophy of uniting our goals of preserving the environment and promoting economic growth would have been very difficult to achieve had it not been for his leadership and constant involvement and faithfulness to this cause. And the American people owe him a great debt of gratitude.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of one other person in this audience who has not been introduced and is not up here, but it will become obvious when I say what I want to say. The Deputy Secretary of Education, Madeleine Kunin is here. She is formerly the Governor of Vermont. And as far as I know, she was the only Governor in the country that actually had a sustainable development commission actively operating on the problems of the people of Vermont when she was the Governor. And she in many ways blazed a trail for what we are attempting to do today. And I thank you for that.

A year ago the United States was in Rio fighting the Global Warming Treaty and the Biodiversity Treaty. Our leading economic competitors were at the Earth summit signing off on the Global Warming Treaty, signing off on the Biodiversity Treaty. And while the United States was fighting to water it down, change it, or thwart it, they spent all their time selling environmental technology to other nations in the world, making money while we made hot air.

What a difference a year can make. This morning the Vice President made us all proud in his opening address before the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. America is now doing what we ought to do. We're leading again, leading the nations of the world in the pursuit of a great purpose.

This afternoon I am announcing the creation of the President's Council on Sustainable Development to help set policies to grow the economy and preserve the environment for our children and our children's children, bringing together some of the most innovative people from business, from government, from the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, and the labor movement, people who bring a wealth of experience and accomplishment to this mission, people who have developed environmentally sound products, found ways to protect our air and water, and defended communities all across the country against pollution and health hazards.

In the past, many might not have ever had the chance to sit down at the table and work together. But now they are working together. These men and women have real experience in the real world, and I am counting on them to achieve real results. I am asking them to find new ways to combine economic growth and environmental protection, to promote our best interests in the world community, to bring our people together to meet the needs of the present without jeopardizing the future. I am asking the Council to be guided by three principles that form our environmental policies.

First, we believe a healthy economy and a healthy environment go hand-in-hand. Environmental problems result not from robust growth but from reckless growth. And we can grow the economy by making our people healthier, our communities more attractive, and our products and our services more environmentally conscious.

Second, America must lead the way in promoting economic growth and environmental preservation at home and abroad. We live in an era of global economics, global environmentalism, global epidemics. Our lives and our livelihoods depend upon people throughout the world being healthy and prosperous and respectful of the planet we all share. What is good for the world in this sense is very good for America.

And third, we must move beyond the false choices and unnecessary antagonisms of the past. From American business and American labor to the world's wealthiest nations and the world's poorest, we all share a common interest in economic growth that preserves rather than pollutes our environment. America can set an example by achieving economic growth that can continue through the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren because it respects the resources that make that growth possible.

That is what we mean by sustainable development. That is why I'm asking this Council to promote healthy communities and environmentally sound products and services that will do the best in the world to make our marketplace the best in the world now and well into the 21st century.

When we talk about environmental justice, we mean calling a halt to the poisoning and the pollution of our poorest communities, from our rural areas to our inner cities. We don't have a person to waste, and pollution clearly wastes human lives and natural resources. When our children's lives are no longer cut short by toxic dumps, when their minds are no longer damaged by lead paint poisoning, we will stop wasting the energy and the intelligence that could build a stronger and a more prosperous America.

When we talk about environmentally sound products and services, we mean light bulbs and computers and refrigerators that use less energy and automobiles that produce less pollution. People all across the world want to buy these goods and services, and when we make them in America, that means better paying and more secure jobs and higher living standards for all of our people.

Americans take pride in our know-how, our can-do spirit, and our love of this remarkable land that God has given us. With leaders like the men and women here today, we can put what is best about America to work building a stronger economy and preserving this planet for our children and all generations to come.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters in the Rose Garden

June 14, 1993

Senator Arlen Specter

The President. [*Inaudible*]—and obviously I was very concerned—need for the operation, but our prayers are with him. And we're pulling for him.

Q. Have you spoken to his family at all today?

The President. No, I wanted to wait until, frankly, until I had all this out of the way and until there was time to, you know, get through the operation. Then I thought I'd call them—later. We have a time scheduled to call, but I haven't talked to them yet.

Q. Were you shocked and surprised?

The President. Yes. He was just here last week, and he was—you know, he brought in the family from the Make a Wish Foundation. We've had a great visit, and we were talking about a number of different things.

Q. Are you hopeful he'll come back?

The President. Oh, absolutely. And I think he will. We're certainly hopeful.

Supreme Court Nomination

Q. Mr. President, on your nomination, was it tough for you to pass over Judge Breyer and Secretary Babbitt? Was it a hard decision?