

August 2, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.
Via fax

Dear President Bush,

We write to thank you and express our support for the positions you have taken on the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. We applaud your decision not to attend the summit in person. Although so-called environmental groups may in the next few weeks pressure you to attend, we believe there are good reasons not to give in to this pressure. Even more than the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the Johannesburg Summit will provide a global media stage for many of the most irresponsible and destructive elements involved in critical international economic and environmental issues. Your presence would only help to publicize and make more credible their various anti-freedom, anti-people, anti-globalization, and anti-Western agendas.

We support your insistence, conveyed in the preparatory discussions leading up to the summit by Undersecretary Dobriansky, that one of the key conditions for sustainable development is good national governance. The sad fact is that many of the poorest “developing” nations are not developing at all. Their people are mired in poverty and environmental degradation largely because of oppressive and incompetent government. The World Summit may be considered successful if it follows your lead and proposes ways to encourage building government institutions based on the rule of law and that respect people’s civil rights, including the right to property. In this regard, your proposal to base new foreign aid on the recipient nation’s progress in improving its own governance is most welcome, and we hope it will be adopted by other donor nations. Most foreign aid over the past five decades has been wasted by incompetent and corrupt governments, and much of it has been counter-productive because it has been used to prop up brutal, rapacious regimes.

We also strongly support your opposition to signing new international environmental treaties or creating new international environmental organizations at the Johannesburg Summit. In our view, the worst possible outcome at Johannesburg would be taking any steps towards creating a World Environmental Organization, as the European Union has suggested. As Undersecretary Dobriansky and Assistant Secretary Turner have argued, signing more treaties and creating more international bureaucracies does not address the shortcomings of existing treaties and organizations.

World Bank studies have concluded that there is a direct correlation between national prosperity and environmental quality and that environmental conditions improve rapidly as poor nations become wealthier. What will therefore create the conditions

necessary for sustainable development is implementing policies that lead to economic growth. This is not what entrenched international environmental interests want to hear, and so we congratulate you for your courage in making the case for global economic growth.

Of the specific environmental issues on the Johannesburg agenda, you have correctly identified the lack of clean drinking water as the greatest environmental obstacle for hundreds of millions of people around the world to achieving sustainable development. Any progress that can be made on addressing this critical issue at the summit will be most welcome. Conversely, the least important global environmental issue is potential global warming, and we hope that your negotiators at Johannesburg can keep it off the table and out of the spotlight.

We understand that there will be determined opposition at Johannesburg from the international status quo to adopting the enlightened and progressive policies you have proposed. We want you to know that you can count on our support for the determined efforts you and your administration are making to change direction on these critical global issues.

Sincerely,

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and Myron Ebell
Competitive Enterprise Institute

Paul M. Weyrich
Coalitions for America

Grover Norquist
Americans for Tax Reform

David A. Keene
American Conservative Union

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National Taxpayers Union

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