

15 January 2008
Paula Dobriansky Interview @ US Embassy Wellington

Dobriansky: Welcome I thought I'd begin with a brief opening statement just to tell you the purpose of the visit and cover a couple of areas and then open it up for questions. We just had a delegation that was in Antarctica and this was for the dedication of the Edmondson Scott South Pole Station. What I'd first like to mention to you is that when we were there at the South Pole, Dr. Arden Bemint, who is the head of the National Science Foundation, began the proceedings by making a tribute to Sir Edmond Hilary. I myself had a chance to speak to the importance of collaboration between the United States & New Zealand for 50 plus years in terms of Antarctic research and also took the time to pay tribute to Sir Edmond Hilary as an explorer, as a pioneer, as someone who truly broke ground not only in Antarctica but as we know in terms of both the North and the South Pole in terms of the extensive research and work that he had done. We were also joined by Congressman Frelinghuysen who too joined in that tribute. I'd also like to mention several other things about the Antarctica trip. It was very striking to us truly, the dedication of the participants, if you will and residents in the South Pole station. There is quite a mix in terms of expertise, background but there is some very significant research that is taking place there that we had the benefit of actually seeing first hand; research that has ramifications for many not only environmental issues but many different types of global issues in which the South Pole actually is one of the best places. We also visited Scott Base, there has been tremendous collaboration between our people at McMurdo Station and Scott Base and I have to say it really manifested itself in so many ways because of not only the work being done on science and research, the Andriil Project was one that was certainly featured and mentioned but there are many other areas that we are looking at in ways in which we could break new ground. So that's the first part.

Let me go to Bali if I can, step back in last year, I was the head of our delegation to the UN framework convention meeting in Bali, Indonesia. We saw the outcome of the meeting as being quite a success and the reason being is because the outcome of this meeting, it has launched formally a negotiation process. The United States will be part of this process. We are looking forward to the engagement with other countries in determining how we can put together a post-2012 framework or "new arrangement" as it's called. One of the other significant dimensions of Bali was the fact that 2009 was specifically picked as the date by which the negotiations are to conclude and by which the post-2012 arrangement will in fact be defined. I think it was also quite significant if you look at the Bali Declaration there were four areas that in fact were covered and to be formally addressed as part of post-2012 arrangement, and that's not only mitigation; adaptation was a very important area. There are many small island states that particularly have spoken of the need to have work done and help done in preventive action dealing with coastal management a wide range of issues which particularly affect many of the developing countries. Finance, technology those were other areas. I would also pick out the issue of deforestation. In the last UN framework convention meeting there was discussion on this, but significantly in Bali this has become not only a key part of the process that will be addressed; it will be addressed in the new framework, it will particularly address some 20% of greenhouse gas emissions which are derived from deforestation and land use management issues. Let me also say that very significantly out of the Bali meeting there was also I think a clear indication of the intent by developing countries to make a contribution and the term that has been used is "measurable, verifiable, reportable." This language was specifically in the Bali Declaration, and this was very important because one of the issues that had been out there is that particularly when you look at the developing world, you have some major economies like China, India, Brazil and South Africa as growing economies they have larger scale emissions to deal with and where do they fit in, in this overall arrangement? And then as distinguishing that from smaller island states? We the United States made the point that we support the issue of differentiation here, a common approach, but differentiated but significantly the outcome of Bali was that the major

emerging economies like China, like India, have indicated that they will make a contribution that is measurable, verifiable, reportable. I would also say that the United States made it very clear during the preceding that we see ourselves as integrally part of this; we want to see an effective arrangement, we want to see one in which all are participating and in which we will have real consequences.

Consequences in the sense of real impact in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Lastly let me just come to one last piece which relates to Bali and an initiative that we've put forward, President Bush put forward, which is the major emerging economies. In September of last year we held the first meeting of that in Washington, DC. It brings some 17 nations specifically together to address ways in which we can go forward and as major emitters, as major economies, and also as major energy consumers and producers how we can really collaborate in ways that will really make a difference. Here China, India, Brazil and South Africa they were all at the table. We've been looking at issues like setting up of a long term global goal. A number of the countries have put on the table, ideas about this we want to discuss this and we want to come out with support for a long term global goal. We have also talked about sectoral approaches, we've talked about financing strategies that could make a difference, how to deal with technologies, particularly energy efficiency.

Those are some of the elements. The major economies process in sum, it's meant to help the UN framework convention process. We stated that very clearly in Bali and we stated it before in fact in the pre-ministerial meeting. The ministers who assembled there including David Parker of New Zealand. I think the outcome was in the chairman's summary, that the United States would with the major economies give a read out in Poland later this year. Poland is the chair of the UN framework convention. Give a read out of the major economies meeting and how it is helping the UN process. In sum that piece is meant to be not a separate track, it's meant specifically to deal with the bigger countries the countries that have issues to deal with and how we can forge together and really help move the UN processes along. Let me stop there.

Dan Eaton ChCh Press: What made the US change its mind in Bali and go with the consensus? And what do you think of Greenpeace's claim that the US unscrupulously took a monkey wrench to the level of action on climate change that science demands?

Dobriansky: On the first, what happened in the exchange there was, first there was an amendment that had been proposed in the proceedings by India and we specifically posed a question, a reservation. We wanted to know what that meant as relevant to major economies having responsibility. As a result of the reservation that we made, while we were sitting there, countries like Brazil, South Africa and India, they all spoke up and they actually right there during the preceding said, "Let us clarify with this amendment what our position is, we as developing countries, we will have responsibility, we will take action." So upon hearing that, in my own statement, my second statement, we commended that, we said that we the United States will take action, we must take action, as a major economy, as a major emitter, as a major energy producer/ consumer; and we welcome what we've heard here today in the Bali meeting of other major emerging economies willing to take action. That is what specifically happened on the ground. On the second part of your question in terms of Greenpeace...

Dan Eaton ChCh Press: They claimed afterwards that the United States had basically taken a monkey wrench to the level of action on climate change that science demanded and I think they were referring to maybe the removal of some targets to the foot notes?

Dobriansky: I have to say that this meeting was very important in several ways, the United States went into this meeting with the primary goal and objective of getting negotiations launched; and secondly, we would like very much to see as part of that process to have approaches that are going to make a difference on the ground and by the way those approaches include a wide range of mandatory

measures with targets and goals as well as voluntary measures, as well as tax incentives. So this particular meeting, it's primary purpose was to launch a very specific well-defined process, which right now we have more information about the science. We also took the time I think all of us to refer to and draw from the IPCC report. The IPCC report does have a wide range of targets and models. We are going to go through those in the months ahead. We are open to looking at all of the options here.

Tom Fitzsimons Dom Post: Why did the US oppose the binding targets proposed by the European Union?

Dobriansky: Specifically, this meeting was about a launching and negotiating process. There were a wide range of countries that had not had the opportunity to try to determine and look at what kinds of approaches, what types of targets could really be the ones that would be effective and in which there can be consensus on. So in sum, we basically felt that it's important to have this discussion as I've just indicated these options are on the table here and this is the discussion that we need to have. Our own approach in the United States is one in which we do look at mandatory measures, we look at voluntary measures, we look at also as is mentioned, tax incentives. One of the types of areas that we'd like to really like to see work done & have us come to agreement on is the establishment of a long-term global goal. You may know there are suggestions the EU has put forward, it suggestions, Canada and Japan, that's where the major economies process comes in. We'd like to see a tangible outcome out of that definition. In fact President Bush has formally indicated that he will convene a summit of leaders of the major economies and would like to have the establishment of a long-term global goal. So specifically we want this discussion, but the venue there was to get the negotiations launched. That was the purpose, to get the negotiations launched to determine what we're going to negotiate about. What are the areas, and as I've defined for you there are some really new things. Adaptation has not been on the level of mitigation. Mitigation is an important area, it's always been an important area but the developing world said, "Please, we need more effective strategies in the area of adaptation". I'll give you an example in this, the United States puts a lot of resources into what's called the "Global Earth Observation System(s)" This helps small island states and developing countries forecast floods, droughts and tsunamis. There needs to be sharing of information and data that's provided. This has not been the case and that kind of information is needed so that then you can provide assistance as to how to prepare for say floods, how to deal with coastal management, how to target assistance in a way that's going to have an impact. That was very significant coming out of this meeting for example, financing strategies; let me mention one more if I can. This was the first time, Indonesia hosted not only the meeting of the environment ministers but you had a meeting of the finance ministers that took place and a meeting of trade ministers. Why? They had the meeting of finance ministers for the purpose of looking at the most creative financing strategies, it's not only one piece, you've got to look at holistically, you want to set up benchmarks, targets. But you also want to be able to fund these strategies; you want to have the support of your finance ministries. Trade, why does this matter? That matters in terms of trade barriers, many of the developing countries would say, we need assistance in getting trade and getting access to technology. So that was a very unique dimension of the whole Bali meeting. Three ministerials that took place back to back.

Peter Wilson: NZPA: I'd like to ask you about the new base in Antarctica which you've been to & which Ambassador McCormick remarks in his media statement, where he says "it were obviously already expensive scientific collaboration between NZ & US." Could you talk a little about how that will be enhanced by the new base?

Dobriansky: I will do my best, I listened to the briefings and I have to tell you the scale & the scope of the briefings were rather phenomenal. For example there is work being done on & through a

telescope in which the telescope is used for wide range of purposes. But specifically relevant to NZ, we have an exchange in the collaboration with many of your scientists. It's very clear to us that not only at the South Pole Station but also in Antarctica at large with McMurdo & Scott there is collaborative work that is being done in the dry valleys, for example. We visited a number of areas & New Zealanders in fact. Your facilities were always easily identifiable because of the green; you have the green markers and you've posted out different areas. We have our scientists working together for example looking at in the dry valley the kind of bacteria that is growing in there what it can tell us about various health & environmental issues. There is quite a scale & scope of the kind of research that is being done, I'm only scratching the surface, but it entails sharing info & working on joint projects together, the Andril project is one of the most well-known & significant. What's also very striking is even when we went over to Scott Base, just the kind of integration, there were many Americans there and there are many New Zealanders at McMurdo.

Danya Leavy (phonetic) Radio NZ: Can I ask you about nuclear power. Britain's just ok'd the way for Nuclear power stations. I'm wonder if this is something US would welcome whether you're going to be using more nuclear power in the future & whether you would encourage other countries to follow suit?

Dobriansky: First let me say this, we think that each country should determine for itself what are the best mix, and every country is different in terms of what are the components of dealing with climate change issues and energy efficiency issues. The US as part of our approach, we look at a wide range including nuclear. In fact President Bush has spoken to it. But you know, that's not the only; we look at energy efficiency, renewables in fact one of our colleagues is here traveling with us from the Dept of Energy, we put in significant resources into the development of solar, wind power especially; we also have been making a lot of significant advancements in terms of use of hydrogen. I've had the benefit of driving hydrogen-powered cars. It's interesting to me across the US now, we have a lot of hydrogen-powered stations and cars that are being test-driven in this area. Bio-fuels, we are especially targeting the transportation sector a substantial portion of our greenhouse gas emissions are derived from transportation sector and so we look at, how do you alleviate, how do you target that? Carbon sequestration is another area, there are a number of countries that have done some significant work already, Norway, Canada, in terms of carbon sequestration, the capturing of the carbon & storing it whether in the sea bed or in a land-based area. This is another area that we have had significant investment in. Methane, looking at how Methane could be used as an energy source & how particularly in these areas where methane has produced a lot of safety problems, particularly in mining areas. How we can alleviate that situation. I'm just trying to give you the breadth of all he areas; nuclear is one component. Coming back to it very country is different. There are some countries I could think that have looked at and have moved more towards nuclear, In Europe, Finland also France derives a lot of its energy source. Then there are other countries that do not see that as part of their mix at all and feel that there are other ways forward. Our view is one size does not fit all here. You need to look for the most effective strategies and the most cost-effective ways also of bringing those costs down so that when ground is broken in areas like carbon- sequestration or like in hydrogen that more will have access to it.

Peter Wilson: Will you be meeting any NZ government representatives while you are here?

Dobriansky: Yes in fact yesterday we met w/ Caroline Forsyth and Simon Murdock and had a really wonderful roundtable discussion for a number of hours and a full range of issues. We addressed a panoply of environmental issues including Bali. We also discussed a range of issues dealing with Democracy, Human Rights, and regional matters. Today we will be going up to Auckland; I will have

a meeting with the Prime Minister. In fact I have had the good fortune of meeting the Prime Minister on several of her visits to the US. In fact, this may date us both, she made a visit when Sec Powell was Sec of State and that was my first opportunity to meet her & she was also in Washington not too long ago last year & there was the launch of the US-NZ dialogue, and I have to say we've had a very strong partnership & we're looking at ways of expanding that relationship, and clearly the issues we are talking about today are ones in which we've had a very solid foundation and in which we're really building and strengthening that relationship.

John NZ Herald: You mentioned regional matters; will you be discussing Fiji w/ the Prime Minister?

Dobriansky: We did talk about Fiji yesterday and I think there will be a number of issues like that; Fiji, Burma, for example.

Dan Eaton ChCh Press: In the promotion of Democracy it often seems to parts of the rest of the world that the US is trying to deliver that at the barrel of a gun & that there are certain inconsistencies in dealing with countries like North Korea and Iran and then Pakistan and other which certainly aren't democracies. How is Pres Bush's mission of democracy going?

Dobriansky: Trying to assist in the promotion of Democracy is not a linear process. It's challenging because each and every situation is different and the variables are different and the circumstances are different. I'd start with the fact that we look at the situation on the ground, that it's not about taking the model of the US & transplanting it on the soil of another country. You can't do that. You have to work with groups, people on the ground. When I say groups meaning NGOs, we work with regional, international organizations. Those individuals on the ground who have thoughts about what are the most sustainable ways of developing and furthering democracy. One of the areas that I think we have seen also in recent time, women are playing very pivotal roles in many parts of the world in leadership roles in the advancement of democracy. In the formation of organizations and the active participation in parliaments; but I think here it's not a linear process. There are challenges definitely, but I think the most effective ways and the ways in which we've tried to advance democracy is to do it in collaborative way. To work with countries that may have more of a connection to a particular region or country or linguistic tie or cultural historical tie. Those are ways of being more effective and then secondly especially to work with those on the ground and to be guided by them in terms of the pace of a reform. The kinds of strategies that can be the most effective and the ones that can be most sustainable. It's challenging and it's not something that happens overnight. I will say that we have had a very good collaboration with NZ. I could pick out in the area of the community of Democracies there was a number of years ago actually an initiative in this area. East Timor had asked for a multi-national delegation to come and to talk about the holding of elections to talk about what it means to have law enforcement, to set up a police apparatus. New Zealand joined in with us along with a wide variety of other countries including Cape Verde, and there were about 15 participants of mayors, police officials, others who went and talked about these basic types of institution building processes and as you know there are challenges to all of these processes, it doesn't happen over night, but we are very committed to it.

Dobriansky: Thank you!

