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REMARKS

Secretary of State John Kerry On Climate Change at COP-20

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****UNEDITED/DRAFT****

SECRETARY KERRY: Todd, thank you very, very much. Thank you all for being here. Thank you very much, and it's a privilege for me to be able to share a few words here on what is, by necessity, a quick trip, and I apologize for that, and I am grateful for your steadfast efforts to get us over the finish line.

Todd and I have worked together for a long time now, going all the way back to my time in the Senate, and I appreciate, Todd, all the work that you and the entire delegation have been doing. I just had a chance to meet with them. And I thank you not just for your work here in Lima, but for your work all around the world.

I also want to thank a few other people who are here today, if I may – our terrific Ambassador in Peru, Brian Nichols; the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Christiana Figueres; Environment Minister of Peru, Manuel Pulgar-Vidal; and all of the other diplomats, scientists, experts, activists, all of you concerned citizens who are hard at work in order to make sure that we get this right.

I'm also delighted to say that because of all that hard work, I understand we now have enough pledges from the international community to meet and exceed the initial Climate Green Fund target of 10 billion. And the United States is very proud to be contributing 3 billion, and we are grateful for the announcement of countries like Australia, Belgium, Colombia, and Peru that they have made in recent days to help get us over the hurdle. All of this will help to ensure that this fund can succeed in helping the most overburdened nations of the world to do more to be able to respond to climate change. And finally, I want to thank Peru for hosting the COP-20, a critical stepping stone to the agreement that we must reach in Paris next year.

Now for Peru, climate change is personal. It will determine whether future generations will know Peru as we know it today, as we have known it, or whether today's treasures are confined to history. Think about it: Peru is home to 70 percent of the world's tropical glaciers, to nearly all of the world's major ecosystems, and to more fish species than any other country on earth. But already, almost half the volume of many glaciers has melted away just in the last 30 years or so. Ecosystems are visibly being destroyed before our eyes. And fisheries are threatened. So this is not just a fight by Peru; it is a fight for Peru.

And this is not just another policy issue. Measured against the array of global threats that we face today – and there are many – terrorism, extremism, epidemics, poverty, nuclear proliferation – all challenges that know no borders – climate change absolutely ranks up there equal with all of them. And I challenge anyone who has thought about the science or listened – actually listened carefully to national security experts tell us that these dangers are real – I challenge them to tell us otherwise and to show us otherwise. I might add that we have, as Todd mentioned, the distinguished former vice president of the United States and Nobel Prize winner who was the leader with all of us on this issue, but the first among equals, believe me, in his passion and commitment to this. And I've often heard him reciting the numbers of studies and the amazing amount of evidence that has been tallied up versus the paucity of a few usually industry-paid-for false analyses that try to suggest otherwise. And while no one here believes that a global climate agreement is going to be the silver bullet that eliminates this threat, I think everybody here can agree that we certainly won't eliminate it without an agreement.

Now I know that everybody in this room is committed, all of us, but I think when you're among the committed, you have a responsibility to be particularly candid. It seems that every time I speak at an event about climate change, someone introducing me, as Todd did today, said, "John Kerry's been to every major gathering since Rio," and it's true. But I'll tell you something, that's kind of troubling. Because it was in Rio, as far back as 1992, when I heard the secretary-general, as Al did when we were there, declare, "Every bit of evidence I've seen persuades me that we are on a course leading to tragedy."

That was 1992. This morning, I woke up in Washington to the television news of a super-storm rainfall in California and Washington State – torrential, record-breaking rain in record-breaking short time. It's become commonplace now to hear of record-breaking climate events. But this is 2014, 22 years later, and we're still on a course leading to tragedy. So this is an issue that's personal for me, just as it is for you, absolutely.

I did spend those years working on climate change during my time in the U.S. Senate, and I'm not surprised at all that Al Gore is still here, a veteran of Lima and a veteran of every other meeting, and a veteran of writing and speaking and leading on this in an effort to try to make a change. We were working on this since the 1980s, and both of us can remember 1988, the first hearing we held in the United States Senate on this issue, when Jim Hansen told us then that climate change was real, it is here, and it is happening now. That's 1988.

I appreciate the remarkable leadership that Al has provided on this issue for all that time, but this year, I'm not at this meeting, nor is he, just because of our personal histories here with climate change. I can tell you I'm not here in that role. I'm privileged to be here as President Obama's lead international advocate that this issue should be personal for absolutely everybody – man, woman, child, businessperson, student, grandparent. Wherever we live, whatever our calling, whatever our personal background might be, this issue affects every human on the planet, and if any challenge requires global cooperation and effective diplomacy, this is it.

Now I know it's human nature at times to believe that mankind can somehow defy Mother Nature. But I think it is the plight of humanity that, in fact, we cannot. And whether we're able to promptly and effectively address climate change is as big a test of global leadership, of the

international order – such as we call it – it's the biggest test of that that you'll find. Every nation – and I repeat this as we hear the debates going back and forth here – every nation has a responsibility to do its part if we're going to pass this test. And only those nations who step up and respond to this threat can legitimately lay claim to any mantle of leadership and global responsibility. And yes, if you're a big, developed nation and you're not helping to lead, then you are part of the problem.

Rest assured, if we fail, future generations will not and should not forgive those who ignore this moment, no matter their reasoning. Future generations will judge our effort not just as a policy failure, but as a massive, collective moral failure of historic consequence, particularly if we're just bogged down in abstract debates. They will want to know how we together could possibly have been so blind, so ideological, so dysfunctional, and frankly, so stubborn that we failed to act on knowledge that was confirmed by so many scientists in so many studies over such a long period of time and documented by so much evidence.

The truth is we will have no excuse worth using. The science of climate change is science, and it is screaming at us, warning us, compelling us – hopefully – to act. Ninety-seven percent of peer-reviewed climate studies have confirmed that climate change is happening and that human activity is responsible. And I've been involved, as many of you have, in public policy debates for a long time. It's pretty rare to get a simple majority or a supermajority of studies to say the same thing, but 97 percent over 20-plus years – that is a dramatic statement of fact that no one of good conscience or good faith should be able to ignore.

Now you only have to look at the most recent reports to see in all too vivid detail the stark reality that we are faced with. Scientists agree that the emission of climate pollutants like carbon dioxide, methane, soot, hydrofluorocarbons all contribute to climate change. In fact, basic science tells us that life on earth wouldn't exist at the heretofore 57 degrees average temperature Fahrenheit which allows life to exist. Without a greenhouse effect, life wouldn't exist, and if the greenhouse effect is good enough to provide you with life itself, obviously, logic suggests that it's also going to act like a greenhouse if you add more gases and they're trapped and you heat up the earth. This is pretty logical stuff, and it's astounding to me that even in the United States Senate and elsewhere, we have people who doubt it.

People agree that energy sources that we've relied on for decades to fuel our cars and power our homes – things like oil and coal – are largely responsible for sending these warming gasses up into the atmosphere. And they agree that emissions coming from deforestation and from agriculture also send enormous quantities of carbon pollution into our atmosphere. And they agree that if we continue down the same path that we are on today, the world as we know it will change profoundly and it will change dramatically for the worse.

Now you don't need a PhD to see for yourself that the world is already changing. You just need to pay attention. Thirteen of the warmest years on record have occurred since 2000, with this year, again, on track to be the warmest of all. We're getting used to every next year being the warmest year of all. It seems almost every year that happens now.

In 2013, countries in Southern Africa experienced the worst droughts that they had seen in 30 years. In Brazil, they saw the first – worst drought in half a century. New Zealand really – recently experienced a drought so bad that farmers had to slaughter their dairy cattle and sheep because they didn't have enough food and water to keep the animals alive.

And the historic droughts in some parts of the world are matched only by historic floods in other parts. In June of last year, India was hit by the worst monsoon flooding in almost a century. Nearly 6,000 people lost their lives. What's really disturbing is that the science has been telling us loud and clear that this is coming at us, and if we continue down the current path, the impacts are expected to increase exponentially.

For example, scientists predict that by the end of the century, the sea could rise a full meter. Now, I've had people who say to me a meter doesn't sound like that much to some people, but let me tell you: when it comes to a rising sea, one meter would displace hundreds of millions of people worldwide, cost hundreds of billions of dollars in economic activity. It would put countless homes and schools and parks – entire cities and even countries – at risk.

Scientists also predict that climate change could mean even longer, more unpredictable monsoon sealings – seasons and more extreme weather events. And while we can't tell whether one particular storm is specifically caused by climate change, scientists absolutely do predict many more of these disastrous storms are likely to occur unless we stop and reverse course.

Last year I visited Tacloban. I went to the Philippines to visit the site, the wake of the Typhoon Haiyan and I will tell you it is incomprehensible that that kind of storm – or worse – becomes the norm. Yet just this past weekend, that same region of the Philippines got slammed by yet another typhoon, with winds over 100 miles per hour and torrential downpours.

And what is particularly frustrating about the real-life damage that's being done – and the threat of more to come – is that it doesn't have to be inevitable. Nothing suggested this is inevitable. Human cost. There's nothing preordained about the course we are on, except habits – bad habits. The challenge that we face may be immense, but I can't underscore enough: This is not insurmountable.

Mankind is creating the problem, and mankind can solve the problem. And unlike some problems that we face, this one already has a ready-made solution provided by mankind that is staring us in the face: The solution to climate change is energy policy.

And there is still time for us to come together as a global community and make the right energy choices. We can significantly cut emissions and prevent the worst consequences of climate change from happening. And anyone who tells you otherwise is just plain wrong, period. The science shows that at this moment there still is a window. It's shutting. It's smaller. It's not as big an opening. And indeed, mitigation is here with us as a result, but there is time for us to change course and avoid the worst consequences – but the window is closing quickly.

So we have to approach this global threat with the urgency that it warrants. Leaders need to lead. Countries need to step up. And that means we have to come together around an ambitious climate

agreement between now and the end of next year. Let me be clear: We're not going to solve everything at this meeting or even in Paris – I understand that. But we must take giant, measurable, clear steps forward that will set us on a new path. And that means concrete actions and ambitious commitments.

Now, as I mentioned – as Todd mentioned, too – I have been coming to these conferences for a long time. And I know the discussions can be tense and the decisions are difficult. And I know how angry some people are about the predicament they've been put in by big nations that have benefitted from industrialization for a long period of time. I know the debates over who should do what and how hard fought and how complex. And if it weren't hard, this would have been solved a while ago.

But the fact is we simply don't have time to sit around going back and forth about whose responsibility it is to act. Pretty simple, folks: It's everyone's responsibility, because it's the net amount of carbon that matters, not each country's share.

Now certainly, the biggest emitters, including the United States – and I'm proud that President Obama has accepted that responsibility – have to contribute more to the solution. But ultimately, every nation on Earth has to apply current science and make state-of-the-art energy choices if we're going to have any hope of leaving our future to the next generation to the safe and healthy planet that they deserve.

Now I want to be very clear: President Obama and I understand the way countries feel, particularly about the major emitters. We get it. The United States and other industrial nations have contributed significantly to this problem – before, I might add, we fully understood the consequences. And we recognize the responsibility we have now to lead the global response.

But that is exactly what the United States is doing. It's a challenge that President Obama has taken on. And today, thanks to the President's Climate Action Plan, the United States is well on its way to meeting our international commitments to seriously cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. And that's because we're going straight to the largest source of pollution. We're targeting emissions from transportation and power sources, which account for roughly 60 percent of the dangerous greenhouse gases that we release. And we're also taking – tackling smaller opportunities in every sector of the economy in order to address every greenhouse gas.

The President has put in place standards to double the fuel efficiency of cars and trucks in the American roads. We've also proposed regulations that will curb carbon pollution coming from new power plants, and similar regulations to limit the carbon pollution coming from power plants that are already up and running, and we're going to take a bunch of them out of commission.

At the same time, since President Obama took office, the United States has upped our wind energy production more than threefold, and we've upped our solar energy production more than tenfold. We've also become smarter about the way we use energy in our homes and businesses. And as a result, we're emitting less overall than we have at any time in the last 20 years.

This is by far the most ambitious set of climate change actions that the United States has ever undertaken. And it's the reason we were able to recently announce our post-2020 goal of reducing emissions from 26 to 28 percent, from 2005 levels, by 2025. That will put us squarely on the road to a more sustainable and prosperous economy. And the upper end of this target would also enable us to cut our emissions by 83 percent by 2050 – which is what science says we need to do to meet the goal of preventing over 2 degrees of Celsius warming.

Now, we're proud of this target, and we're grateful that with the targets that China and the EU have also announced, we now have strong commitments from the three largest emitters in the world. Is it enough? No. But it's the beginning, which begins to move the economy and begins to move businesses and move decisions in the direction we need to go. And we're seeing encouraging signs already that others are prepared to follow. For example, last month Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam all announced at the ASEAN Summit that they would come forward with their post-2020 emission reduction contributions well in advance of Paris, the end, perhaps – possibly by the end of March next year.

Now, I emphasize again: No single country, not even the United States, can solve this problem or foot this bill alone. That's not rhetoric. It is literally impossible.

Just think of it this way: If every single American biked to work or carpooled to school, and used only solar panels to power their homes – if we each in America planted a dozen trees – if we somehow eliminated all of our domestic greenhouse gas emissions – guess what? That still wouldn't be enough to offset the carbon pollution coming from the rest of the world and providing the same level of damage at a different point in time than we face today. The same would be true if China or India came down to zero emissions, if either was the only country to act. It's just not enough for one country or even a few countries to reduce emissions when other countries continue to fill the atmosphere with carbon pollution as they see fit. If even one or two major economies fail to respond to this threat, it will counteract much of the good work that the rest of the world does. And when I say we need a global solution, I mean it. And there's simply no excuse for anything else.

Now, of course industrialized countries have to play a major role in reducing emissions, but that doesn't mean that other nations are just free to go off and repeat the mistakes of the past and that they somehow have a free pass to go to the levels that we've been at where we understand the danger.

Now, I know this is difficult for developing nations. We understand that. But we have to remember that today more than half of global emissions – more than half – are coming from developing nations. So it is imperative that they act, too.

And at the end of the day, if nations do choose the energy sources of the past over the energy sources of the future, they'll actually be missing out on the opportunity to build the kind of economy that will be the economy of the future and that will thrive and be sustainable.

Coal and oil may be cheap ways to power an economy today in the near term, but I urge nations around the world – the vast majority of whom are represented here, at this conference – look further down the road. I urge you to consider the real, actual, far-reaching costs that come along with what some think is the cheaper alternative. It's not cheaper.

I urge you to think about the economic impacts related to agriculture and food security – and how scientists estimate that the changing climate is going to yield – is going to reduce the capacity of crops to produce the yields they do today in rice or maize or wheat, and they could fall by 2 percent every single decade. Think about what that means for millions of farmers around the world and the impact it will have on food prices on almost every corner of the world, and particularly as each decade we see the world's population rise towards that 9 billion mark. Then factor in how that would also exacerbate the human challenges like hunger and malnutrition.

Add to that the other long-term-related problems that come from relying on 20th century energy sources and the fact that air pollution caused by the use of fossil fuel contributes to the deaths of at least 4.5 million people every year and all the attendant healthcare costs that go with it.

And for everyone thinking that you can't afford this transition or invest in alternative or renewable energy, do the real math on the costs. Consider the sizable costs associated with rebuilding in the wake of every devastating weather event. In 2012 alone, extreme weather events cost the United States $110 billion. When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines last year, the cost of responding to the damage exceeded $10 billion. Even smaller-scale disasters bear a hefty price tag, and the overall cost to businesses from the severe floods that hit parts of the United Kingdom earlier this year was an estimated 1.3 billion. You start adding up these 100 billions and 10 billions here in country after country, and think if that money had been put to helping to subsidize the transition to a better fuel, to an alternative or renewable, to cleaner, to emissions-free, to clean emissions capacity. Those are just the costs of damages. Think of the costs for healthcare due to pollution. Largest single cause of young children in America being hospitalized during our summers is environmentally air-induced asthma that those kids suffer. The agricultural and environmental degradation is palpable. So my friends, it's time for countries to do some real cost accounting.

The bottom line is that we can't only factor in the cost of immediate energy need or energy transition. We have to factor in the long-term cost of carbon pollution. And we have to factor in the cost of survival itself. And if we do, we will find that the cost of pursuing clean energy now is far cheaper than paying for the consequences of climate change later. Nicolas Stern showed us that in a study any number of years ago. And we still need to get all of our countries more serious about doing that accounting.

In economic terms – bottom line, in economic terms, this is not a choice between bad and worse, not at all. This is a choice between growing or shrinking your economy. And what we don't hear enough of is the most important news of all, that climate change presents one of the greatest economic opportunities of all time on earth.

I said earlier that the solution to climate change is as clear as the problem. It's here. The solution is energy policy. Well, let's take a look at that.

The global energy market of the future is poised to be the largest market the world has ever known. The market which grew the United States of America during the 1990s, when we had unprecedented wealth creation – more wealth creation in America in the 1990s than in the 1920s, when we had no income tax and you've heard of the names of the Rockefeller and Carnegie and Mellon and so forth – more was created in the 1990s. Every quintile of our income earners went up in their income. Guess what? It was a $1 trillion market with one billion users. It was the computer, high-tech mobile device.

The energy market today is a $6 trillion dollar market with 4 to 5 billion users today, and it's going to go up to that 9 billion users. By comparison, if you looked at the differential, this is an opportunity to put millions of people to work building the infrastructure, doing the transition, and pulling us back from this brink.

Between now and 2035, investment in the energy sector is expected to reach nearly $17 trillion. And that's without us giving some of the price signals that we ought to be giving to the marketplace to make this transition. That's more than the entire GDP of China and India combined. Imagine the opportunities for clean energy innovation. Imagine the businesses that could be launched, the jobs that'd be created, in every corner of the globe.

The only question is are we going to do it fast enough to make the difference. The technology is out there. Make no mistake, it's out there now. None of this is beyond our capacity. And the question – and it really is still open to question; it's why we're here and it's why we're going to Paris – is whether or not it's beyond our collective resolve.

Ask yourself, if Al Gore and Dr. Pachauri and Jim Hansen and the people who've been putting the science out there for years are wrong about this and we make these choices to do the things I'm talking about, what's the worst thing that can happen to us for making these choices? Create a whole lot of new jobs. Kick our economies into gear. Have healthier people, reduce the cost of healthcare. Live up to our environmental responsibilities. Have a world that's more secure because we have energy that isn't dependent on one part of the world or another. That's the worst that can happen to us.

But what happens if the climate skeptics are wrong? Catastrophe. And we have a responsibility to put in place the precautionary principle when you're given certain evidence and you're a public official.

So today I call on all of you here in Lima – negotiators, diplomats, scientists, economists, and concerned citizens in Peru and around the world – to demand resolve from your leaders. Speak out. Make climate change an issue that no public official can ignore for even one more day, let alone for one more election. Make a transition towards clean energy the only policy that you'll accept. And make it clear that an ambitious agreement in Paris is not an option, it's an urgent necessity.

We can get there. How do I know that? And I do; I believe we can get there. Because, at the end of the day, we have no choice. And because we're starting to see signs that, thankfully, more and more of the world is coming to that same conclusion.

You only have to look at the United States and China to understand what I'm talking about. Our two nations are the world's largest consumers of energy, and we are the world's largest emitters of global greenhouse gases. Together, we account for roughly 40 percent of the world's emissions. And it's no secret that we've had very different views when it comes to climate change.

I can remember discussions with Chinese 15, 10 years ago that went nowhere. But in Beijing last month I had the privilege of joining President Obama as he stood next to President Xi to jointly, side by side, announce our respective ambitious post-2020 mitigation commitments and to call on other countries to come forward with their own ambitious targets as quickly as possible, so we can conclude a strong agreement next year. The United States and China – two countries long regarded as the leaders of opposing camps in these negotiations – have now found common ground on this issue. That is a historic milestone, and it should send a clear message to all of us that the roadblocks we've hit for decades can be removed from our path.

I'm not suggesting it's going to happen in one fell swoop or that it's easy – there isn't a person in this room who probably isn't pretty tuned in to how hard it is – but I am confident we can rise above the debates that have dragged us down. We can find a way to summon the shared resolve that we need to tackle this shared threat. And if we do that, then we will reach an agreement and we will meet this challenge. That is our charge, and for the sake of our children, our grandchildren, and our responsibility as human beings on this earth, this is a charge we must keep. Thank you very much.

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