

Todd Stern

Climate Change Envoy

By DEEPANJALI KAKATI

The January/February 2007 issue of *American Interest* magazine featured a memorandum to the yet-unelected 44th president of the United States. Addressed from the “United States Department of Brainstorms,” it was written by Todd Stern and William Antholis, members of two Washington, D.C. think tanks. The memo called for the creation of an E-8, a forum of developed and developing countries, including India, which would meet annually to focus on ecological and resource challenges, and was distributed to all presidential aspirants.

Two years later, one of the writers finds himself appointed to a unique position in the Barack Obama administration. As the first U.S. special envoy for climate change, Stern will be the administration’s chief climate negotiator and a principal adviser on international climate policy. He will also lead U.S. efforts in U.N. negotiations and be a lead participant in developing climate and clean energy policy.

“With the appointment today of a special envoy,” U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at the announcement in January, “we are sending an unequivocal message that the United States will be energetic, focused, strategic and serious about addressing global climate change

and the corollary issue of clean energy.”

“This is no time for negotiators to cling to tired orthodoxies. Nor is it time for the kind of recriminations that have marred too many efforts in the past,” said Stern, who in the 1990s coordinated the Bill Clinton administration’s climate change efforts and was senior White House representative at U.N. climate negotiations in Kyoto, Japan, and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

“Containing climate change will require nothing less than transforming the global economy from a high-carbon to a low-carbon energy base,” he added. High-carbon resources include coal and petroleum. Corn oil is low-carbon.

From 1999 to 2001, Stern advised the U.S. Treasury secretary on economic and financial issues and supervised the department’s anti-money laundering strategy. Most recently he was a partner in WilmerHale, a Washington law firm, and a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress think tank.

Stern’s appointment has created a buzz. “Today marks a new chapter in U.S. climate diplomacy. The appointment of a special climate envoy underscores the high priority President Obama and Secretary Clinton give this issue. Todd Stern is first-rate, brilliant, with long experience and deep expertise on climate change,” David Sandalow, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of *Freedom from Oil* told *The Washington Post*.

It has been a hectic start for the climate czar. In February, Stern accompanied Clinton on her first foreign trip, to Asia, where climate change featured prominently in discussions. At the Taiyang Gong power plant in China, Stern said, “...Building a clean energy economy is not only something we can do consistent with economic growth, it is exactly what we need to do right now to build an economy that can compete, not only today, but tomorrow.”

At the U.S. Climate Action Symposium in March he set out the principles that would under-



MICHAEL GROSS/US, Department of State

Hillary Clinton and Todd Stern.

pin the U.S. approach to the December U.N. convention on climate change in Denmark, and beyond.

“...The seriousness of the climate problem becomes more stark and disturbing with each passing year,” he said. “We need a little less preaching about who is to blame and a little more of that old comic book sensibility of uniting in the face of a common danger threatening the Earth. Because that’s what we have here.”

For more information:

Todd Stern’s keynote remarks at the U.S. Climate Action Symposium

<http://www.state.gov/g/oes/rls/remarks/2009/119983.htm>

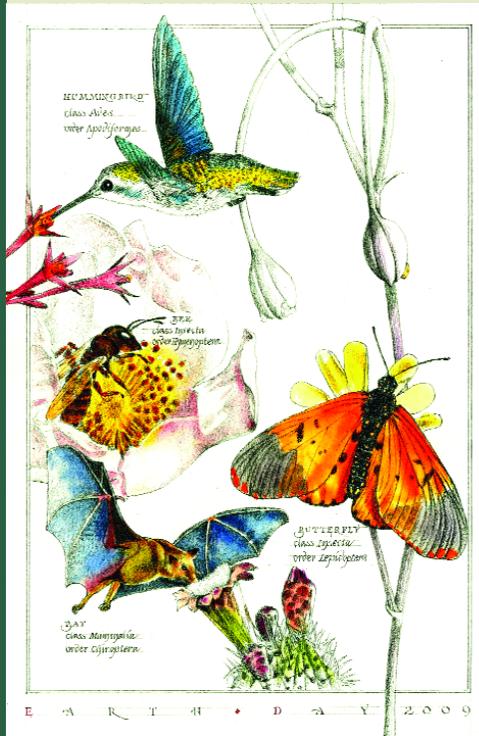
New Energy for America

The New Energy for America plan aims to:

- Help create 5 million new jobs by strategically investing \$150 billion over the next 10 years to catalyze private efforts to build a clean energy future.
- Within 10 years save more oil than the United States currently imports from the Middle East and Venezuela.
- Put a million plug-in hybrid cars—which can get up to 65.1 kilometers per liter—on the road by 2015 and work to make sure that these are built in America.
- Ensure 10 percent of America’s electricity comes from renewable sources by 2012, and 25 percent by 2025.
- Implement a cap-and-trade program for all American industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.

http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/factsheet_energy_speech_080308.pdf

Source: www.whitehouse.gov



The Earth Day 2009 poster produced by the U.S. Department of State was designed by Diane Woolvorton and illustrated by Dugald Stermer.