

The speech by Matthew Palmer, US deputy chief of mission at Embassy London from Green Alliance's Summer Reception, 13 July 2023.



Thank you, Laura, and congratulations on the start of your tenure as the Chair of the Green Alliance. Before I begin, I want to express Ambassador Hartley's regrets that she could not be here today. She asked that I pass on to everyone here that she feels a profound sense of gratitude for what the Green Alliance is doing in the United Kingdom. And it is very much her desire to find new ways to work with you. Because to the Ambassador, to me, to everyone at the U.S. Embassy in London and the Biden Administration: building a global movement to fight climate change is at the very top of our priority list.

Climate change threatens our planet in too many ways to mention. It causes extreme heat and extreme cold, the swelling of our oceans and the scarcity of our drinking water, droughts and floods, wildfires and hurricanes, the loss of biodiversity and the collapse of ecosystems. Last Monday was Earth's hottest day in at least 125,000 years. Last Tuesday was hotter.

I know there are different reactions to the scale of this threat. Even in this room of well-seasoned climate activists, no doubt you have all had moments of worry, anger, or despair, but also moments of hope, energy, and enthusiasm when progress is made.

There's an old joke about the optimist and the pessimist that should resonate with anyone passionate about the climate. The pessimist says, "everything is terrible, it couldn't possibly get any worse." The optimist replies, "Oh, yes it can!"

But whether you are naturally a climate optimist or a climate pessimist, whether you believe the glass is half full or half empty, I think we can all agree that the glass isn't full yet.

We are facing a very difficult reality. But we are mobilizing our publics, marshalling the resources of our governments and our private sectors, and building coalitions with allies and adversaries alike to confront this challenge. Because we know we have more to do. The glass isn't full yet. But we can get there.

And today, I want to tell you how the United States is working across all levels to move the ball forward. Domestically. Bilaterally, in partnership with the United Kingdom. And globally.

Over the last few years, the United States has taken the most important actions in its history to combat climate change and protect the environment. That's no exaggeration. The Biden Administration and Congress have passed serious measures to reduce methane emissions, one of the most powerful greenhouse gases. The United States has expanded wind and solar power and embarked on the most ambitious land and water conservation agenda in recent memory. And to cap it all off, the cleverly named Inflation Reduction Act, passed last year, devotes nearly \$370 billion to the fight against climate change. That makes it, by far, the largest climate bill in our history, and likely in world history.

It is designed to stimulate the invention, production, and implementation of green energy in the United States. It will speed the development and improvement of hydrogen technologies and battery storage, electric vehicles and the electric grid, and renewable energy of all kinds. Our government estimates that this one law will remove about 1 billion metric tons of carbon by 2030. That's the equivalent of taking the fifth-largest carbon emitting country today...to zero.

The International Energy Agency believes the world will add as much renewable power in the coming five years as it did in the past twenty. The United States means to help lead that transition with our allies such as the United Kingdom. We are accelerating a massive transformation in the way we produce and use power. That has been our focus domestically, but it will have global implications. Even though the Inflation Reduction Act is focused on reducing *our* carbon footprint, the investments will not only benefit the United States. They will benefit our partners and allies by contributing to the advancement of clean energy technologies everywhere.

Which brings me to how we're working with our friends in the United Kingdom. When Prime Minister Sunak visited President Biden a few weeks ago in Washington, they spoke about how to expand our work together fighting climate change. The resulting update to the Atlantic Declaration will promote our cooperation on nuclear issues and it started negotiations about how the UK could potentially benefit more fully from some of the incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act.

And to follow it up, President Biden came to London this week to meet with King Charles, and once again, climate was at the top of the agenda. Knowing that government resources alone will not be enough to tackle the crisis, our two heads of state met with philanthropists and financiers to encourage more private investment. The forum helped facilitate \$2 billion in new climate finance commitments from private sector organizations and philanthropies.

The hope is that it will catalyse even more investment in clean energy and other climate solutions.

And certainly, alongside the United Kingdom, the United States is working on a global scale to reduce emissions: whether that's joining the Global Methane Pledge, our commitments at COP, or negotiations with difficult partners like China. Because we understand that even if we don't agree on a whole lot with Beijing, we need to make all the progress we can on climate.



This global problem demands a global solution. It's the only way. And the United Kingdom remains one of our closest partners in pushing the world towards more ambitious climate goals and more effective climate actions.

As you can tell, I hope to leave you today with a bit of hope. History reminds us that when our two countries are facing an enormous challenge, we have the capacity to unleash enormous ingenuity to overcome it. In the Second World War, as we were struggling to get supplies over to Europe, how to cross the channel to break Germany's hold on the continent, how to re-organize our entire economy to produce the material we needed...we set goals, changed laws, and mobilized a mighty national movement to get it done. Together we figured out floating tanks and amphibious landing craft, and by the end of the war, in America, we were turning out one B-24 bomber from a former automobile plant in Michigan every hour.

That's what we did in order to make the world safe for democracy. That's what we need to do again -- to organize ourselves and deploy our investments and innovations faster -- to make the planet safe for our children and grandchildren. The task now is to get everyone moving in the same direction, with the same sense of urgency and the same sense of purpose. And call me an optimist if you want, but I believe that we can.

I want to thank Green Alliance Executive Director Shaun Spiers, Chris Venables and Siri McDonnell for inviting me here and putting this event together. Thank you.