

# United States Senate

November 4, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As the United States prepares to attend the upcoming 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), we encourage you to strengthen the U.S. position as a global leader in combatting climate change. With enactment of the historic *Inflation Reduction Act*, the United States is better positioned than ever to serve as a world leader in the fight to protect our planet and ensure that vulnerable developing nations receive sufficient funding and support to address losses and damages caused by climate change. We urge the United States to champion this cause, strengthen its existing climate and finance commitments, and lead other countries at COP27 in pledging to do the same.

As a result of human activities and fossil fuel combustion, atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are higher now than they have been at any point in the last 2 million years.<sup>1</sup> In 2022, climate change has resulted in unprecedented climate extremes across the globe—contributing to flooding in Pakistan that displaced more than 30 million people, fueling heat waves that killed tens of thousands of people in Europe, and supercharging rains in Nigeria that forced more than a million people from their homes and destroyed 266,000 acres of farmland.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup> The least developed, landlocked, and small island countries are most at risk, but the United States has not been immune. Just this year, Hurricane Ian was the deadliest

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2021 The Physical Science Basis*, (Oct. 2021), [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_SPM\\_final.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM_final.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Hersher, *Climate change likely helped cause deadly Pakistan floods, scientists find*, NPR (Sept. 19, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/19/1123798981/climate-change-likely-helped-cause-deadly-pakistan-floods-scientists-find>.

<sup>3</sup> Ivana Saric, Andrew Freedman & Jacob Knutson, *Heat wave kills more than 2,000 people in Spain and Portugal*, Axios (July 21, 2022), <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/18/heat-wave-europe-death-toll>.

<sup>4</sup> *EU saw 53,000 excess deaths in July amid record heatwave: report*, Global News (Sept. 16, 2022), <https://globalnews.ca/news/9134651/european-union-excess-deaths-july/>.

<sup>5</sup> *Nigeria's worst floods in a decade have displaced over a million people*, World Economic Forum (Oct. 20, 2022), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/10/nigeria-flood-rain-climate>.

hurricane since Katrina, Hurricane Fiona left all of Puerto Rico without power, and extreme heat put 100 million Americans under heat warnings and advisories.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

No one is exempt from the effects of the climate crisis, but the most vulnerable nations at the frontline of the climate crisis have endured and are enduring disproportionate suffering, while contributing the least to global carbon emissions. The United States, by contrast, is responsible for around one-quarter of historic carbon emissions, more than any other nation or the European Union.<sup>9</sup>

Under the Paris Agreement—which we commend you for rejoining—more than 190 countries have committed to tackle the climate crisis and work together to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.<sup>10</sup> In order to meet this target, the United States and other countries must reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors. Last year, preliminary greenhouse gas emissions rose by 6.2 percent in the United States, compared to 2020.<sup>11</sup> Over the same time period, global carbon emissions increased by 6 percent.<sup>12</sup> While this increase is partly due to global economic recovery after shutdowns and upheaval caused by COVID-19, carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are still expected to rise through the end of 2022.<sup>13</sup> Rising emissions are unacceptable at a time of climate emergency, especially as the International Energy Agency has found that a net-zero global energy pathway by 2050 requires no new fossil fuel supply projects as of 2021 and existing pledges to reduce emissions around the world are insufficient to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.<sup>14</sup> Business as usual has created a new normal of climate extremes, which are destroying homes and ways of life across the planet.

U.S. climate leadership—both at home and within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—has never been more important or more feasible than it is today. The *Inflation Reduction Act* is projected to set the United States on track to reduce emissions by 40 percent from 2005 levels in 2030.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Umair Irfan, *Hurricane Ian's exceptional death toll, explained*, Vox (Oct. 7, 2022), <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/23389508/hurricane-ian-death-toll-storm-florida-landfall-climate>.

<sup>7</sup> Julianne McShane and Dennis Romero, *All of Puerto Rico without power after Hurricane Fiona makes landfall*, NBC News (Sept. 19, 2022), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/tropical-storm-fiona-upgraded-hurricane-puerto-rico-braces-arrival-rcna48232>.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Freedman, *More than 100 million under heat warnings in U.S. as country swelters*, Axios (Jul. 20, 2022), <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/20/heat-wave-america-excessive-heat>.

<sup>9</sup> Nadja Popovich and Brad Plumer, *Who Has the Most Historical Responsibility for Climate Change?*, New York Times (Nov. 12, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/12/climate/cop26-emissions-compensation.html>

<sup>10</sup> The Paris Agreement, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement> (last visited Oct. 24, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Rhodium Group, *Preliminary US Greenhouse Gas Emissions Estimates for 2021* (Jan. 10, 2022), <https://rhg.com/research/preliminary-us-emissions-2021/>.

<sup>12</sup> International Energy Agency (IEA), *Global CO2 emissions rebounded to their highest level in history in 2021* (Mar. 8, 2021), <https://www.iea.org/news/global-co2-emissions-rebounded-to-their-highest-level-in-history-in-2021>.

<sup>13</sup> Associated Press, *Energy Agency: CO2 Emissions Rise in 2022, but More Slowly*, US News (Oct. 19, 2022), <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-10-19/energy-agency-co2-emissions-rise-in-2022-but-more-slowly>.

<sup>14</sup> *Pathway to critical and formidable goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 is narrow but brings huge benefits, according to IEA special report*, IEA (May 18, 2021), <https://www.iea.org/news/pathway-to-critical-and-formidable-goal-of-net-zero-emissions-by-2050-is-narrow-but-brings-huge-benefits>.

<sup>15</sup> P.L. 117-169; *The Inflation Reduction Act Drives Significant Emissions Reductions and Positions America to Reach Our Climate Goals*, [https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/8.18%20InflationReductionAct\\_Factsheet\\_Final.pdf](https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/8.18%20InflationReductionAct_Factsheet_Final.pdf) (last visited Oct. 25, 2022).

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This brings the United States significantly closer to meeting its Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris climate agreement, which consists of a target to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 percent in 2030, compared to a 2005 baseline.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the historic investments from the *Inflation Reduction Act* will spark a clean energy revolution, create millions of good-paying union jobs, and provide \$60 billion in funding for environmental justice communities.

As your Administration implements this long-overdue investment in domestic climate action, for the sake of the most vulnerable, we ask you to work at COP27 to meaningfully strengthen and fulfill our global commitments. This must include supporting concrete actions to ensure developing nations receive sufficient funding, including grants, to adapt to and respond to losses and damages caused by climate change. It means fulfilling commitments to end international public financing of fossil fuel energy and shift this financing into clean energy and the doubling of collective adaptation funding by 2025, in addition to our general climate finance pledge.<sup>17</sup> It requires the United States to increase our climate finance pledges to reflect historical responsibility for climate change. And it means integrating climate justice and Tribal sovereignty into all international climate programs and frameworks, so we can protect our climate, our frontline communities, and our role as a global economic and environmental leader.

We also urge your Administration to use all available tools to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to achieve not only the 40-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions anticipated from existing state and federal law, including the *Inflation Reduction Act*, but also to fulfill our entire Nationally Determined Contribution. These tools include executive action, strong federal clean purchasing standards, rules to protect our financial sector and military from climate risks, regulatory action to cut greenhouse gas emissions from the power and transportation sector, and the effective implementation and deployment of funding included in the *Inflation Reduction Act*.

We thank you in advance for your commitment to combatting climate change. We look forward to working with you to so that the United States can champion this cause at COP27.

Sincerely,



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

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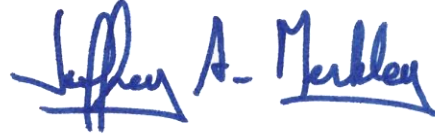
<sup>16</sup> Press Release, The White House, FACT SHEET: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies (Apr. 22, 2021).

<sup>17</sup> COP26 Presidency, *Statement on International Public Support for the Clean Energy Transition* (Nov. 11, 2021), <https://ukcop26.org/statement-on-international-public-support-for-the-clean-energy-transition/>.



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator