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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE  
NINTH WORLD ENERGY CONFERENCE

COBO HALL

10:40 A.M. EDT

President Groza, Steve Bechtel, Walker Cisler, Governor Milliken, Senator Griffin, Mayor Young, Minister MacDonal, other distinguished guests from abroad and all participants in this special World Energy Conference:

On behalf of the American people, on behalf of my home State of Michigan, on behalf of the City of Detroit, it gives me a very great privilege and pleasure to welcome you to the city which some blame for the energy crisis.

But I hasten to add this, if I might: This is also a city which we, along with the world's other great industrial nations, look for significant solutions that I know are possible. This is a "can do," a problem-solving city and State.

It was here in Detroit that the internal combustion engine was transformed from the plaything of the rich into basic transportation on which people all over the world now depend.

The whole structure of our world society rests upon the expectation of abundant fuel at reasonable prices. I refer to cities and suburbs, farms and factories, shopping centers and office buildings, schools and churches and the roadways that connect them all.

The expectation of an assured supply of energy has now been challenged. The repercussions are being felt worldwide. There is widespread uncertainty and deep and serious apprehension. Today, at the opening of this conference, we are determined to provide guidance to a world in crisis.

Many people become aware that there was an energy problem for the first time last October when the oil embargo was imposed. But those who were well informed about the energy situation had known for some time that a crisis was coming.

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With burgeoning demands all over the world, they knew that we could not forever expect a steady supply of low-priced fuel. The embargo merely brought to a head what experts had known for many years, that energy sources must be expanded and wastefulness eliminated to keep pace with the needs of a growing and modernizing world.

Everyone can now see the pulverizing impact of energy price increases on every aspect of the world economy. The food problem, the inflation problem, the monetary problem and other major problems are directly linked to the all-pervasive energy problem.

The American response to the oil embargo and recent oil price increases, along with production decisions, has taken the form of a program for action under the general title Project Independence. This integrated domestic energy program will seek in many, many different ways to reduce American consumption and to increase production of energy.

Officials of my Administration will more fully ascribe to this conference our determination to achieve energy independence. We will take tough steps to obtain the degree of self-sufficiency which is necessary to avoid disruption of our economy.

We will make sure there is heat for our homes and power for the people who work in our plants. Realistically, this does not mean zero imports.

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As you know, a theme of the foreign policy of this Administration is international cooperation in an interdependent world, stressing interdependence. You may ask why is our domestic energy program called Project Independence? As I see it, especially with regard to energy, national sufficiency and international interdependence fit together and actually work together.

No nation can be part of the modern world and live unto itself. No nation has or can have within its borders everything necessary for a full and rich life for all its people. Independence cannot mean isolation.

The aim of Project Independence is not to set the United States apart from the rest of the world, it is to enable the United States to do its part more effectively in the world's effort to provide more energy.

Project Independence will seek new ways to reduce energy usage and to increase its production. To the extent that we succeed, the world will benefit. There will be much more energy available for others.

As America expands existing sources and develops new ones, other nations will also benefit. We especially want to share our experience and our technology with other countries in efforts to increase their own energy supplies. We are also aware that in some respects other countries are ahead of us and we will seek to learn from them.

Sovereign nations try to avoid dependence on other nations that exploit their own resources to the detriment of others. Sovereign nations cannot allow their policies to be dictated or their fate decided by artificial rigging and distortion of world commodity markets.

No one can foresee the extent of damage, nor the end of the disastrous consequences if nations refuse to share nature's gifts for the benefit of all mankind.

I told the United Nations assembly last Wednesday, and I quote, "The attempt by any country to use one commodity for political purposes will inevitably tempt other countries to use their commodities for their own purposes."

There are three ways; fortunately, that this danger can and must be avoided.

First, each nation must resolve not to misuse its resources.

Second, each nation must fully utilize its own energy resources.

And third, each nation must join with others in cooperative efforts to reduce its energy vulnerability.

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In doing so, we emphasize that our actions are not directed against any other nations, but are only taken to maintain the conditions of international order and well being.

The quest for energy need not promote division and discord. It can expand the horizons of the world's peoples. I envision a strong movement towards a unifying cooperation to ensure a decent life for all.

I welcome the development in Brussels last Friday of a new international energy program by the energy cooperating group of the Washington Energy Conference. We were pleased to participate in that meeting.

The 12 nations reached an ad referendum agreement on a far-reaching cooperative plan to deal with such emergencies as embargoes by sharing available oil and by cutting consumption and using stocks on an equitable basis.

While seeking conservation, we and the other nations will work for expanded production of both conventional and nonconventional fuels. The cooperative countries are also creating an international agency to carry out this program.

The United States welcomes this demonstration of international action rather than words. Just as Americans are challenged by Project Independence, the world faces a related challenge that requires a Project Interdependence.

No single country can solve the energy problem by itself. As President, I offer America's partnership to every other nation willing to join in a common effort to expand the spirit flowing from the Washington Energy Conference.

A start has been made in Brussels. The momentum must be continued if true interdependence is to be achieved.

The economy of the world is facing unprecedented challenges. Old remedies are inadequate for new problems. New and appropriate solutions must be found without delay, and I am absolutely convinced that they will be found.

I firmly believe that the unselfishness of all nations is in the self-interest of each nation. We all depend on each other in so many ways that there is no way in today's world for any nation to benefit at the expense of others, except for the very short-term and at a very great risk.

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Without having planned it, we find ourselves in the strange situation in which the most selfish individual can figure out that it is profitable to live by what we call the golden rule.

We can help ourselves only if we are considerate and helpful to others.

The energy crisis is the clearest example of the world's interdependence. The industrialized nations need the oil produced by a few developing nations. And all developing nations need the technology, the services and the products of industrialized nations.

The opportunity for a great advance for the whole world is tantalizingly apparent, but so is the danger that we will throw away this very, very rare opportunity to realize mankind's hopes. Let us build and implement a global strategy for energy.

If I may, I call on this World Energy Conference and other international organizations to accept the challenge of formulating Project Interdependence, a comprehensive energy program for the world to develop our resources not just for the benefit of a few, but for all mankind.

This task is surely monumental. But the United States believes that it is possible, that it is essential to help you in the beginning to take the first steps.

Let me propose some principles that could guide a global approach.

First, all nations must seek to increase production, each according to its resources and its level of technology. Some can develop known and available resources. Others can try to improve methods of extraction or intensifying exploration, and others are capable of developing new sources of energy appropriate to their own circumstances.

But all nations can and should play a part in enlarging and diversifying the sources of usable energy. Diversification can help to turn nations from resorting to monopolistic prices or practices.

Next, the rate of increase in consumption of energy must be reduced and waste eliminated. Americans will do their part in this necessary effort.

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But all nations can contribute to discovering new ways to reduce the energy we consume, partly through common sense, partly through self-discipline and partly through new technological improvements.

Whatever energy-saving methods are developed anywhere must be communicated quickly to all concerned. Energy-saving possibilities are promising, especially for the short-term as production increases.

Third, a cooperative spirit, a cooperative conduct are essential to success in a global energy program. Nothing, in my judgment, could be more harmful than policies directed against other nations. If we lapse into confrontation of exporters on the one hand, and consumers on the other, or an unseemly scramble of consumers being played off one against another, all hopes for a global solution will be destroyed.

Fourth, we must be especially attentive to the situation of the poorest nations which will suffer drastically if the energy problem does not come under control. Actually, they are the chief victims, even now, of the uncontrolled inflation driving world prices up, far beyond their reach for all the gas and all the services they must import to survive.

Finally, a global strategy must seek to achieve fuel prices which provide a strong incentive to producers but which do not seriously disrupt the economies of the consumer. We recognize the desires of the producers to earn a fair share or a fair price for their oil as a means of helping to develop their own economies. But exorbitant prices can only distort the world economy, run the risk of a worldwide depression and threaten the breakdown of world order and world safety.

It is difficult to discuss the energy problem without lapsing unfortunately into doomsday language. The danger is clear. It is very severe. Nevertheless, I am very optimistic. The advantages of cooperation are as visible as the dangers of confrontation and that gives me hope as well as optimism. But good intentions will not be enough. Able people, like all of you at this important conference, are needed to give understanding, analysis, technical competence and solutions for the people and the leaders to consider.

I call on all of you to respond to the challenge and to propose to the world your recommendations for a global energy strategy. Whether you call it Project Interdependence, or some other name, is not the essential point. What is essential is the challenge be accepted and the job be done quickly and well.

Ladies and gentlemen, I now declare the Ninth World Energy Conference officially open, and thank you very, very much.

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(AT 11:06 A.M. EDT)