

## Despite the prevalent misconception that the U.S. is not addressing climate change or engaging internationally, we are doing a great deal.

One may take issue with the elements of the program or aspects of the U.S. position, but the reality is that the U.S. has a robust program and is actively engaged internationally. One component of the U.S. strategy is working with nations to advance shared climate change objectives multilaterally and bilaterally. For example, the U.S. has established bilateral climate partnerships with 14 countries and regional organizations that, together with the United States, account for almost 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

As a AAAS Diplomacy Fellow for the U.S. Department of State in the Office of Global Change, I had a prime opportunity to exercise my technical background and my policy experience. My tasks ran the gamut from representing the U.S. in multilateral negotiations to the not so glamorous conversion of electronic file formats for my boss.

One of my tasks in the Office of Global Change was to serve as staff coordinator for three of the bilateral partnerships, including the U.S.-China partnership. I coordinated a trip to Xi'an, China by our senior climate negotiator and an interagency U.S. delegation to meet with Chinese counterparts. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ongoing and future collaborative projects in the areas of climate change science and technology and to share information on the status of each country's climate change initiatives. My work included negotiating the agenda, updating summaries of joint projects, negotiating the joint statement from the meeting, and facilitating a smooth process. To my surprise, the tone of the meeting with our Chinese colleagues was congenial and often informal, even while the relationship between the countries has been strained on other issues. I felt lucky to be able to see China in its current state of development, certainly very different from how it was 15 years ago and how it will be 15 years from now.

On another occasion I helped set up the Asia Region Climate and Energy Workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, co-sponsored by the Governments of Japan and the U.S. in coopera-

tion with the Government of Malaysia. The event brought together senior energy and climate sector representatives from government, private sector, and non-government organizations representing 22 key countries including 17 Asian nations. The intent was to establish an interactive dialogue among climate and energy decision makers from the Asian-Pacific region to promote a greater understanding of the critical role of tech-

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nology and flexible policy approaches to addressing climate change, promoting economic growth, and advancing energy security. It was fascinating to hear an open dialogue on countries' energy priorities and plans and the opportunities and challenges posed by various technologies. Imagine in the same room an Indian government official talking about efforts to grow their domestic wind power sector, a Nepalese representative discussing the importance of hydropower to meet their growing demand, and a Bangladeshi official relating his country's difficulties in delivery of and access to electricity. It became apparent that some of these government folks had never had this dialogue before within their country or across nations.

More recently I found myself in a multilateral negotiation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). There I was sitting in the U.S. chair behind the microphone between a skeptical representative from a small island developing state and a surprisingly friendly delegate from Mali. It was just like the Model UN in high school, except it really was the UN! The meeting was a contact group on issues of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Aside from informal graduate school training on negotiation and my common sense I was not formally prepared for how to convince other countries to accept a U.S. view, particularly when some perceive us as dodging responsibility by rejecting the Kyoto Protocol. My trial-by-fire mission was to convince the group to accept

by consensus our draft text. After much debate and lobbying (and minor acceptable concessions), I was able to win over a sufficient group of countries that were previously objecting, including those LDCs that initially felt threatened by our proposal.

These projects are a sampling of the work in which I was involved. Besides the exciting travel, another highlight of the assignment was the excellent group of people with whom I worked both domestically and internationally. It was fascinating to be part of the international climate change policy process — both the domestic interagency process and the bilateral and multilateral international processes. Though I differ in opinion with some aspects of the U.S. climate change policy, I was truly motivated and fulfilled by the work and was proud to serve duty as a public servant.

— By Pablo Valdez

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## Director's Corner

Setting policy and science in an international context is increasingly important in our globalized world. Assignments across the ten AAAS Fellowship Programs provide the opportunity for Fellows to connect their scientific and technical expertise to critical issues affecting the nation and the planet. Fellows are in unique situations to apply their science in a policy context. They are also able to mobilize quickly when there is need. A number of AAAS Fellows, both current and former, are now involved in relief efforts in countries impacted by the Asian tsunami. Check out our website to learn more about Fellows' activities and assignments as well as other initiatives at the State Department to engage science in diplomacy efforts: [www.fellowships.aaas.org](http://www.fellowships.aaas.org).

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