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**OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE USA**

Dear President Obama

As the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America you have many formidable challenges to face. To repair the American and the global financial system. To improve the quality of life for ordinary Americans. But there can be no greater challenge for any political leader than rolling back the spectre of a warming planet. The commitment of your administration to this issue is a source of great encouragement.

The European Union has been a global leader in tackling climate change. In March 2007 twenty seven European leaders gave the commitment that by 2020 the EU will have reduced its own emissions to 20% below 1990 levels. Assuming leadership means that we will do this irrespective of the actions of other countries. If other major players follow this lead then we will cut our own emissions by a further 10%. The world is looking to America to show a similar level of ambition.

In December last year Europe agreed a package of policies that will deliver these objectives. We have put a price on carbon using an Emissions Trading System (an idea we borrowed from the US by the way). Our ETS is now fully operational and other countries have been looking to learn from our example. By using the power of the market we can provide industry with incentives to reduce emissions and also to drive forward innovation in low-carbon technologies.

In addition to the ETS, we have set a firm target for the uptake of renewable energies of 20% by 2020. We have set mandatory targets for greenhouse emissions from the European car fleet. We introduced legislation on emissions from aviation. We have adopted policies to identify and promote the most energy efficient products on the market. We are developing

policies to stop global deforestation which alone represents some 20% of global greenhouse emissions.

But Europe is only a small part of the problem and our emissions are some 14% of the global total. We will only be successful if others are encouraged to follow the low carbon route and it is clear that no global solution will be possible without the full and active support of the US.

This is not only because the US accounts for 22% of global emissions. But most importantly it is because many other countries, including countries like China, cannot see why they should decarbonise their own economies if the world's richest economy does not also make firm commitments. If Europe's efforts are to make a real difference then we need America to join us shoulder to shoulder in the battle against climate change.

There are many ways in which America's support will be an essential part of any successful global effort. Innovation and new technologies will certainly be a part of the solution and America has some of the best universities and best researchers in the world. I am convinced that many of the new ideas that will move us away from our carbon addiction will come from America. What is more, your country has the proven ability to translate research into results.

America also has the diplomatic and financial resources that, when added to the efforts of the EU, can help bring the rest of the world on board. To take one example, it has been estimated that halting global deforestation will cost €10 billion each year. This is a huge amount of money and the whole of the developed world, including Europe, should be expected to contribute. But to put this into perspective, the 2007 profits of Exxon Mobil were €41 billion.

There used to be a time when special interests argued that setting limits on carbon emissions would wreck the US economy. The experience from Europe is quite the opposite. Lower emissions means lower fuel consumption which means that our industries are developing more efficient production processes. Greater energy efficiency means greater energy security and less reliance on imports from politically unstable countries: a point which you made in your inauguration speech. And as you have pointed out on several occasions, working with international partners to forge a coalition against climate change will re-confirm America's position as a global leader that is prepared to address global problems.

There have been some voices in Europe saying that we should hold back our plans to tackle climate change until the financial crisis has passed. A clean environment is seen as some kind of luxury that can only be afforded in the good times. I am sure that the same voices will be heard in America – but this is a misleading argument. The best way to tackle the current crisis is through investing in green growth that will create green jobs.

If someone's basement floods and they lose their job on the same day it is certainly an unlucky day. But they would not wait until they found a new job before pumping the basement and fixing the leak. If they did, then not only would they be unemployed, but they would also have a house that is starting to fall apart. Common sense says that the longer you leave a problem unsolved the harder it becomes to find a solution. I am quite sure that even Joe the Plumber would agree with this. Climate change is similar. We know there is a problem and it would be short-sighted foolishness to not address it immediately.

Against the background of the Cold War, President John F. Kennedy announced a great change when he launched the Apollo Programme. He noted that "These are extraordinary times and we face an extraordinary challenge". He went on to conclude that "Now it is time for a great new American enterprise - time for this nation to take a clearly leading role [*in space achievement*], which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth... I believe we possess all the resources and talents necessary. But the facts of the matter are that we have never made the national decisions or marshalled the national resources required for such leadership."

President Kennedy's conclusions could be applied almost word for word to today's "extraordinary challenge" of the war against climate change. The biggest difference being that the future of our planet did not depend on man setting foot on the moon.

I wish America every success as it faces up to this challenge.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. Anderson', written in a cursive style.