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Global 'Ecological Board of Directors' Envisioned by State Department's Climate Czar

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By Adam Brickley

(CNSNews.com) – Todd Stern, now the State Department's special envoy for climate change, once pushed for the creation of an annual "E8" summit to address environmental issues.

As the administration's point man climate issues, Stern represents the United States in international environmental negotiations. One of his biggest upcoming negotiations will be the annual United Nations Conference on Climate Change, which will take place in Copenhagen this December.

As CNSNews reported in [April](#), delegates to the Copenhagen conference will be negotiating a new global climate change treaty. Stern, a veteran of the Clinton administration, was also the U.S. negotiator at the conference in Kyoto, Japan in 1997 that generated the Kyoto Protocol, which first called for "stabilizing" greenhouse gas emissions.

Stern proposed the formation of the environment-focused E8 – modeled after the "Group of 8" (G8) group of major industrialized democracies – in January of 2007.

Then a senior fellow at a liberal think-tank – the Center for American Progress – Stern laid out his plan in a [letter](#) which he co-authored with William Antholis of the Brookings Institution.

The letter was addressed to "the 44th President of the United States" and sent to all of the candidates seeking the presidency in the 2008 election.

According to Stern, the new E8 would hold annual summits attended by the leaders of the member-states, just like those held by the G8. This would create, in Stern's words, "an ecological board of directors able to operate outside the bureaucracy and politics of large UN conventions."

The future climate czar also emphasized the need to put major environmental decisions in the hands of a small group of people rather than a gathering of all nations.

"Just as you can't run a company through plenary meetings of the shareholders," he wrote, "you can't manage crucial global issues that way either," he wrote.

However, Stern's proposed membership for the new E8 is quite different from that of the G8 – which is a partnership and gathering of the world's major industrialized democracies -- the United States, Britain, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, Japan and Russia. In addition to the eight member nations, the European Union is always included as a ninth participant.

In contrast to this framework, Stern's primary concern is that his proposed E8 "should consist of four developed

and four developing countries (or entities),” and he does not stipulate that it should consist of democracies.

Hence, he proposes that the E8 include only four of the current G8 nations: the United States, Japan, Russia, and the European Union. Stern fills the remaining four slots with the developing nations of China, India, Brazil and South Africa. He also states that, “There are other possible players, such as Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Mexico, but the objective of preserving a sense of intimacy and informality argues against a larger grouping.”

Patrick Michaels, a senior fellow in environmental studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, blasted the proposal in an interview with CNSNews.com.

“I find this a remarkably shallow document considering the prestigious position this person now holds,” Michaels said of Stern’s letter.

“These countries are not going to agree,” he noted, “and the people within at least one of these countries that I have some familiarity with – namely the United States – are clearly rejecting expensive cap-and-trade proposals.”

Michaels also attacked the views of certain states that would be included in the proposed E8.

“The Chinese and the Indians have made it quite clear that their view of global warming is that we pay them a portion of our GDP (gross domestic product) to develop,” he said, adding sarcastically: “I’m sure that’s going to sit very, very well with the American people.”

The idea also drew criticism from Terry Miller, director of the conservative Heritage Foundation Center for International Trade and Economics and a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

“By its very nature, an organization like the G8 -- or a new E8 -- is going to be an ad hoc (for a specific purpose) group,” Miller told CNSNews.com. “If it works like the G8, the (hosting duties) would pass from country to country each year, so you’d be creating new institutions inside individual governments on a yearly basis to handle the discussion. It’s hard to see how much value or much progress would come out of an organization like that.”

But Miller also questioned the wisdom of using the E8 to work quickly and bypass the cumbersome bureaucracy of the United Nations. “If you act too fast,” he said, “you’re likely to make mistakes.”

“This potentially has major consequences for the people of the world,” he cautioned. “It would be a terrible mistake to have a very small group of world leaders think that they can somehow come to an agreement on some sort of radical proposal and leave the rest of the world’s people out of it – or basically just impose something on the rest of the people of the world. That’s certainly not in the spirit of democracy or international cooperation.”

Cato’s Michaels summed up his opinion of the proposal by calling it “childish.”

“If you read the document,” he said, “the style is just highly speculative and starry-eyed – it’s just weird.”

Nether the Center for American Progress nor the State Department returned calls by press time.

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