

People's Republic of China

You are a high-ranking diplomat representing the Chinese government. Your country has the largest population in the world, 1.3 billion people. China's economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world, but most Chinese people are still very poor, earning less than \$2.00 a day.

Your government is controlled by the Communist Party, which came to power at the end of a long civil war in 1948. The Communist Party leadership sets the country's goals and policies. The Prime Minister and the State Council lead the ministries and local governments. The government also controls many economic activities, including land use and energy use.

The Party's leaders want China to become a richer and more powerful country. Since the late 1970s, the government has encouraged private investment and private profit, and the country has experienced an economic boom. Many farmers have migrated to China's coastal cities, where there is a growing middle class but a shortage of jobs. To combat the poverty that remains, the Party and the government plan to continue developing China's natural resources to promote manufacturing and international trade, and to increase the number of available jobs.

Your goals

Climate change is a very important issue for China. As China's representative to the meeting with the U.S., and business and environmental representatives, your goals are to:

1. Get a U.S. commitment to reduce its own greenhouse-gas emissions to no more than 1.4 billion tons/year by 2015.
2. Get the other representatives to help China become more energy-efficient in transportation, industry, and home heating. Also get their help to begin reducing China's dependence on coal by investing in natural gas, nuclear power, and hydropower.
3. Only agree to slow down the growth of China's carbon emissions if the U.S. political, business, and environmental representatives agree to help China become more energy-efficient and reduce its use of coal. Even with that help, **China cannot agree to an emissions target any lower than 1.6 billion tons/year by 2015.**

The role of China in global climate change

China produces and uses more coal for electric power and for home and factory boilers than any other country. Coal accounts for roughly two-thirds of your country's fossil-fuel consumption, and air pollution from burning coal has become a big problem. Coal burning is also the biggest source of China's carbon emissions.

Because coal is such a significant source of carbon, China is the world's second-largest carbon emitter (China emitted roughly 760 million tons of carbon in 2000). But when you divide up China's emissions among the country's population of nearly 1.3 billion people, each person in China was responsible for only 0.6 metric tons of emissions.

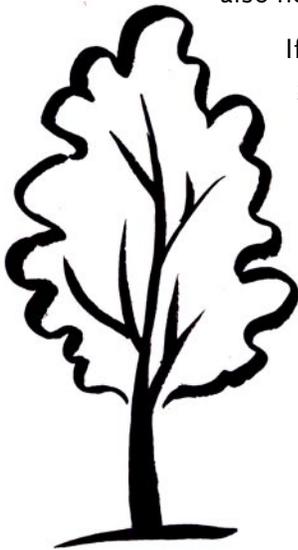
In contrast, the U.S., the biggest emitter, is putting more than 1.5 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere each year. That's more than double China's emissions. And because the population of the U.S. is so much smaller than the population of China, and Americans are so much richer than the Chinese, each person in the U.S. was responsible for 5.7 tons of emissions—**nearly ten times the number for each Chinese person.**



What China is doing about climate change

You need to explain to the other representatives that China is already making great progress in reducing the amount of energy used to produce goods and services. Over the past 15 years, the amount of energy needed to produce one dollar of goods and services in China has dropped by over 50 percent.

- China is making major investments in energy-efficient power plants and industrial and home boilers.
- China is also increasing the amount of energy it produces from natural gas and nuclear, hydroelectric, and wind power sources. Natural gas produces much less carbon than coal to produce the same amount of energy. Nuclear, hydroelectric, and wind power produce no carbon at all.
- China is planting millions of trees and plants that absorb carbon dioxide and also help improve China's environment.



If China tries to do much more than it is already doing to limit the growth of its greenhouse-gas emissions, it will deprive hundreds of millions of poor people the opportunity to improve their lives. Electric power and adequate transportation are basic necessities for any industrial society. China's families need more energy to light their homes and to power their refrigerators, telephones, and computers. They need cars and other forms of transportation to free them to take jobs in areas farther from their homes and to travel for personal needs. Today, China's families use very little electricity and have very little access to home communications or automobiles compared to people in many other countries.

Taking these measures into account, experts expect China's carbon emissions to grow from 760 million tons/year in 2000 to 1.8 billion tons/year in 2015. China can only commit to keeping its emissions below 1.8 billion tons/year in 2015 if it receives financial help from the U.S. and other rich countries, plus investments and new technologies from businesses. **If you get financial help from the U.S., investments in your energy and transportation sectors from business, and help in public education from the environmental movement, you can agree to limit China's emissions to 1.6 billion tons/year in 2015.** Limiting China's emissions any more than that would require too much sacrifice from China's people.



Why the U.S. needs to do more

You need to be clear with the U.S. and the other representatives on these points:

- The U.S. emits far more carbon and other greenhouse gases than any other country.
- It is the wealthiest country in the world.
- Its people use more energy per person than almost any other country.
- The U.S., like all the other developed countries, signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992. That international agreement commits the developed countries to “take the lead in combating climate change.” It also says that the developed countries should try to reduce their emissions as soon as possible so that they are emitting no more than they were in 1990.
- **The U.S. has fallen far short of that commitment. In 2000, its emissions, 1.53 billion tons of carbon, were more than 15 percent higher than they were in 1990.**
- Other developed countries (Germany, France, Britain, and Japan) have agreed to make significant reductions in their greenhouse-gas emissions.



What is at stake here is a basic issue of fairness. The U.S. is responsible for more of the greenhouse-gas problem than anyone else. It has more money to deal with the problem than anyone else. It has signed an international agreement committing it to take action. The U.S. simply has no excuse not to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by a substantial amount.

As China's representative, **you want the U.S. to agree to bring its emissions down to 1.4 billion tons in 2015.** This would be a reduction of 9 percent from the 2000 emissions of 1.53 billion tons. The U.S. can easily achieve this goal by:

- increasing automobile fuel efficiency,
- replacing some of its coal-fired power plants with natural gas and nuclear, hydroelectric, and wind power, and
- requiring manufacturers to produce more energy-efficient refrigerators, dishwashers, clothes washers and driers, and other appliances.

Strategy for achieving your goals

As noted above, you want the U.S. to bring its emissions down to 1.4 billion tons of carbon in 2015; you want no restrictions on China's emissions unless the U.S., business, and the environmental movement give you help; and the lowest limit you can agree to on China's emissions in 2015 is 1.6 billion tons of carbon.

To achieve these goals, you should:

- emphasize fairness: the U.S. has an obligation to lead the world and take responsibility for its actions;
- remind everyone of China's poverty and the work China is already doing to increase its energy efficiency and reduce its dependence on coal;
- offer to work cooperatively with business and environmental groups to continue improving China's energy efficiency and reducing coal use; and
- offer to limit China's emissions in 2015 to 1.6 billion tons in exchange for an agreement by the U.S. to reduce its emissions to 1.4 billion tons.

Good luck!