

## Global Environment: Considering U.S. Policy Policy Options

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A bustling steel mill in China... farmland newly cleared from the jungle in Brazil... a fishing boat unloading in Norway. Together, these images paint a picture of economic development and technological progress. But look again. The advances that have brought new prosperity to much of the globe have come at a price. The smokestacks of the steel mill emit pollutants that spread to other countries. The farm has been carved out of a rainforest that had served as a home for thousands of plants and animals. The boat and others like it threaten fish populations in the Atlantic.

In making use of the earth's resources, humanity has assumed a greater and greater role in shaping the planet's environment. We have also come to recognize that the continued expansion of human activity has spawned a new set of problems that extends beyond national borders. Along with refugee crises, nuclear proliferation, AIDS, drug trafficking, and terrorism, global environmental problems have redefined the agenda of the international community in recent decades and focused

renewed attention on issues of state sovereignty and the role of the United Nations. At the same time, the dangers of climate change, ozone depletion, and other environmental problems are often seen as limits to economic growth, raising debate about a range of economic and development issues.

What follows are four policy "options" that frame the current debate on environmental policy. They are designed to help you think about a range of possible choices and the consequences of each. Each alternative includes a set of policies we should pursue, a summary of its effect on us, some arguments in support of the position, and some criticisms of it. After you have considered each of the options presented, think about your concerns and values and deliberate with your peers on the strengths and challenges of each of the options presented. Then you are encouraged to develop your own Option 5, an option that reflects your own views and concerns. You may want to borrow heavily from one of the options presented, combine ideas from several, or take a new approach altogether.

### As you frame your Option 5, think about the following questions:

- How important are environmental problems compared to other problems facing us today?
- Which parts of the world pose the greatest threats to the global environment? Why?
- What responsibility does the developed world have to protect the global environment? What responsibility does the developing world have?
- What is the likelihood of global consensus on environment issues?
- What should our long-term goals be?
- What values are important to you?
- What are the pros and cons of this option?

Finally, you are encouraged to participate in an online ballot activity focused on the overarching question of the role of the United States in the world. The ballot is available at [www.choices.edu/usroleballot](http://www.choices.edu/usroleballot). A report on student views will be developed and disseminated to the White House, members of Congress, and the press in January 2005.