

**Statement of Ross C. “Rocky” Anderson
Executive Director, High Road for Human Rights**

**Press Conference
Healthy Planet Mobilization Committee
February 12, 2010
Orson Spencer Hall Auditorium
University of Utah**

As moral actors, we each have the responsibility to become informed about the issues that have the greatest impact on those who inhabit our world, now and in the future – always with an eye toward what each of us can do to help achieve solutions.

Today we face the greatest threat ever in human history to the inhabitants of Earth. The spread of misinformation, the refusal to act in the face of overwhelming proof of a climate crisis, and the profiteering in the short-term at the expense of global catastrophe during the lives of our children and grandchildren, equates to an historic moral abdication leading to human tragedies and species extinctions of unprecedented scope.

Never has there been a more crucial time for people of good will, compassion, and care for our children and later generations to come together and demand of our elected officials to take effective action to prevent irreversible, catastrophic climate disruption – or demand that they get out of the way so someone else can take informed, responsible action. Those who fail to take action – both in elective office and at the grassroots level – are creating a far more dangerous planet for our children and grandchildren. We

must fight back in every way possible. Too much is at stake for us to stand by any longer.

For those who have been confused by the intensive campaign of misinformation, please consider that leading international scientific bodies, national science academies worldwide, and Utah's top scientists are *all* in agreement: We are facing a climate crisis caused by the burning of coal, oil, and gas – and if we continue along this path, tragedy and untold misery will result to billions of people, including, very likely, our own descendants.

The state of the science is astoundingly consistent:

- The largest scientific collaboration in history, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has been unequivocal in its findings that the mean temperature of Earth has increased substantially due to human actions, specifically the burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – and that a failure to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions will result in immense, catastrophic consequences for our Earth and its inhabitants.
- The US National Academy of Sciences has stated:
“Temperatures have already risen 1.4° F since the start of the 20th century—with much of this warming occurring in just the last 30 years – and temperatures will likely rise at least another 2°, and possibly more than 11°, over the next 100 years. This warming will cause significant changes in sea level, ecosystems, and ice cover, among other impacts. In the Arctic, where temperatures have increased almost twice as much as the

global average, the landscape and ecosystems are already changing rapidly. Most scientists agree that the warming in recent decades has been caused primarily by human activities that have increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. . . . Human actions over the next few decades will have a major influence on the magnitude and rate of future warming. Large, disruptive changes are much more likely if greenhouse gases are allowed to continue building up in the atmosphere at their present rate. However, reducing greenhouse gas emissions will require strong national and international commitments, technological innovation, and human willpower.”

- Dozens of other nations’ science academies are in agreement. For instance, in a recent statement on ocean acidification, 70 science academies, including the US National Academy of Sciences, expressed their alarm that at current CO₂ emission rates, all coral reefs and polar ecosystems will be severely affected by 2050 or earlier, with significant reductions in marine food supplies, and that such acidification is irreversible on timescales of at least tens of thousands of years. According to those 70 science academies, “large and rapid reductions of global CO₂ emissions are needed globally by at least 50% by 2050.”
- Scientists in Utah are also in agreement. Eighteen BYU scientists recently joined in a letter expressing agreement with the consensus view – “that climate is changing and is significantly influenced by human activity.” As part of Governor Huntsman’s efforts to determine the facts about climate change, some of the state’s top

scientists joined in a 2007 report they entitled “The Scientific Consensus,” emphasizing as follows:

“There is no longer any scientific doubt that the Earth’s average surface temperature is increasing and that changes in ocean temperature, ice and snow cover, and sea level are consistent with this global warming. . . . Based on extensive scientific research, there is very high confidence that human-generated increases in greenhouse gas concentrations are responsible for most of the global warming observed during the past 50 years.”

When international scientific panels, the science academies of almost every nation, and Utah’s top scientists all agree about the nature, cause, and tragic scope of the climate crisis, we need leadership at every level to achieve massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The lives of billions of people are at risk; our nation’s security is at risk; the continued existence of thousands of species is at risk; and the inhabitability of our planet is at risk.

The good news is that we *can* make a difference if we act decisively. And it can pay off economically. While some Utah legislators are seeking to renege on Utah’s commitments to the Western Climate Initiative, it was just reported that Massachusetts earned \$50 million from its participation in the cap and trade program under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Yesterday, an op-ed piece by Michael Northrop in *The Miami Herald* describes how far-sighted, knowledgeable leaders in other nations have cashed in on an enormous clean-energy market – a market that multinational

bank HSBC projects will be worth \$2 trillion in ten years. Northrop writes: “The United States, with no national goal or policy framework for clean energy, simply hasn’t found a way to create a stable marketplace where large, renewable energy companies can thrive. For a nation that consumes 25 percent of the world’s energy, our failure to compete is ominous, and all the more troubling because a veritable ‘clean energy gold rush’ has begun.”

Utah could use leadership like that enjoyed in Vermont or Gainesville, Florida, which have legislated guaranteed clean energy purchase contracts. According to Northrop, “Gainesville’s mayor reports the transformation in her city’s energy market has been swift, with jobs and companies now flocking to take advantage of the guaranteed market. By itself, with just 115,000 inhabitants, Gainesville will triple Florida’s installed solar energy generating capacity in the first year of its program.”

Instead of that sort of informed, innovative leadership, many of Utah’s legislators deny the obvious and refuse to be part of the solution to our climate crisis. Have they bothered to read the detailed study commissioned by the Park City Foundation, entitled “Climate Change in Park City: An Assessment of Climate, Snowpack, and Economic Impacts?” If they did, here is what they would find:

The ski tourism industry in Utah is an important part of the regional economy, generating an estimated 19,323 jobs and \$416,936,054 in total earnings of Utah’s workers in the 2005-06 ski season. . . . [C]limate change impacts to snowpack at Utah ski resorts can have a significant impact on the regional economy in the future. . . . Park City’s climate will change substantially as a result of increased

atmospheric GHG concentrations. Temperatures are predicted to rise and precipitation amount, timing, intensity are predicted to change. As a result, total snowpack and snow coverage will be reduced, the ski season will be shorter, and less of Park City Mountain Resort will be skiable. . . . [P]rojected decreases in snowpack will have severe economic consequences for the region. By 2030, the estimated decrease in snowpack is estimated to result in \$120 million in lost output. . . . By 2050, the potential impacts range from \$160.4 million in lost output, \$27.2 million in lost earnings, and 1,520 lost jobs (low emissions scenario) to \$392.3 million in lost output, \$66.6 million in lost earnings, and 3,717 lost jobs (high emissions scenario).

Those who fail to act, in Utah and elsewhere throughout our nation, *are* harming our children and later generations, as well as undermining our nation's security, as described in a Pentagon-commissioned study, which concluded that climate change poses a greater threat to our national security than terrorism.

This is a call for each of us to demand informed, responsible action at every level of government, in the business community, and in each of our individual lives – and for each of us to act consistently with our deepest moral obligations to avoid preventable suffering for others, including later generations.

There is no greater moral imperative at this time in human history than to do all we can to reduce the accumulating carbon blanket in our

atmosphere. Let us each do all we can – and no longer allow those who hold elective office to betray our sacred roles as stewards for the future.

Let us hearken to the words of Alfred Russel Wallace in 1903:

It has been the consideration of our wonderful atmosphere in its various relations to human life, and to all life, which has compelled me to this cry for the children and for outraged humanity . . . Let everything give way to this. . . Vote for no one who says ‘it can’t be done’. Vote only for those who declare ‘It shall be done’. Alfred Russel Wallace, *Man’s Place in the Universe*, 1903.