



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCEAN CHEMISTRY IS THE “SMOKING GUN” OF CLIMATE CHANGE

This headline is the attention-grabber written by The Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS) in a news release issued on December 4, 2009. The oceans surrounding Bermuda are arguably the most comprehensively studied marine sites in the world. Established more than 100 ago, BIOS has maintained the longest continuous record of ocean observations – beginning in 1954 – in the world, demonstrating an increase in acidity due to human-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. “The phenomenon known as ocean acidification is real, and we’ve got the data to support it. It is the smoking gun of climate change,” said Dr. Anthony H. Knap, Director of BIOS.

The increased CO₂ in the ocean, along with potential warming and sea level rise, demonstrate that human activity is having a major impact on the global environment.

“The approaching summit at Copenhagen has been held as perhaps our last chance to practically redress the situation our planet faces,” Dr. Knap asserted.

Dr. Ewart F. Brown, Premier of Bermuda, said that “It is critically important that Bermuda have a voice at the conference. As a small island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, a small rise in ocean level will have catastrophic effects on Bermuda. It is obviously crucial for the large nations to get their house in ecological order because of their impact on the world in general, and on small island countries in particular.”

In addition to major flooding that would occur in Bermuda, ocean acidification will have a major impact on the coral reefs that surround Bermuda. Such a disruption to the ecosystem will have significant consequences for all marine life. In addition, like many other island nations, a change in Bermuda’s magnificent reefs will negatively affect tourism, one of two pillars of Bermuda’s economy.

The two major strategies for dealing with climate change are mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation

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activities – such as reducing our carbon footprint – are necessary, of course. “But in relative terms, Bermuda’s contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is minuscule,” said Dr. Fred Ming, an environmental scientist in Bermuda’s Ministry of the Environment. “It is much more important for Bermuda – and other small island countries – to find ways to adapt to the effect of climate change.”

Climate change has other business effects. Bradley Kading is President of the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers (ABIR). Mr. Kading explained that “ABIR’s members are the world’s leading providers of weather-related reinsurance and have expertise in hazard mitigation techniques that can protect people and property. The Association just last week adopted a Policy Statement on Climate Change. Two principles contained in the statement are that ABIR will ‘support thoughtful, coordinated research on climate change, adaptation techniques and the implications for (re)insurance risk; and work with all stakeholders to build consensus on effective, scientifically supported adaptation and loss reduction measures.’

Bermuda’s reinsurers contributed US \$17 billion to rebuild the US Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina. Insurance is critical to support the global economy, and insurers can contribute their expertise on global risk diversification to policymakers seeking solutions to climate-related public policy challenges.

“Bermuda is just concluding a celebration of its 400th Anniversary of Settlement,” said Premier Brown. “It would be a shame if human activity prevented future generations from celebrating Bermuda’s 800th Anniversary. We must do whatever we can to reverse the human impact on the oceans and the climate.”

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