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Statement of Jonathan Lash, President, WRI
on the
Report of the Climate Dialogue at Pocantico

Climate change is the most pressing environmental problem humankind has ever faced. Its impacts, including increasingly severe storms and droughts, the spread of diseases and huge losses in ecosystems, will be global. The consequences of warming will be most damaging to those least able to withstand its effects – the poorest people and the least developed countries of the world.

The international community has to date taken few actions to achieve the goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations at safe levels that all agreed to more than a decade ago in the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement negotiated with enormous effort (including by the United States, which later rejected it) while setting laudable goals and establishing a new market in greenhouse gas emissions, will not substantially alter global trends. In fact, since 1997, when the agreement was adopted, global emissions have risen 7% instead of declining, and R&D investment in the energy technologies that will be needed to address the problem has fallen in almost all countries.

It is in this context of both urgent need and inadequate effort that the Pew Center launched its Climate Dialogue at Pocantico – and to which its conclusions offer hope for moving forward. WRI is proud to have contributed to the effort, providing technical inputs and advice to an impressive group of dialogue participants.

While some of the conclusions affirm that the international community is moving in the right direction (markets should continue to be a core element in any future agreement, and issues of adaptation must be more extensively examined), others represent new thinking. Among these are ideas about how to better integrate climate change and development (critical if we are ever to fully engage India, China and other developing nations); a new emphasis on sectoral approaches (a pragmatic recommendation reflecting the reality of differences in national circumstances and the potential for engaging the private sector in contributing to solutions), and process recommendations that take advantage of the diversity of approaches instead of requiring a one-size-fits-all solution to what is certainly the most complex problem we have ever tried to solve.

The international community would do well to build on the ideas in this report as it convenes to reinvigorate international climate change mitigation efforts. Perhaps the best message in the report is that a well-intentioned, committed group *can* reach agreement on next steps. It is now up to us, collectively and individually, to take this work forward.