



THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING

“Extreme Weather in a Warming World”

A briefing of the Select Committee on Energy Independence and
Global Warming

September 23, 2010
Chairman Edward J. Markey
Opening Statement

Let me begin by welcoming Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States, Husain Haqqani to the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador for taking time from your urgent duties to come speak with us.

We are honored by your presence and we look forward to hearing your remarks.

This summer, severe flooding ravaged Pakistan. Twenty percent of the country was under water. More than 1,700 people have lost their lives. A staggering 20 million people have been directly affected. Roads and bridges were swept away. Crops were lost. The full consequences to human health and global security are not yet known. The citizens of Pakistan are in need. We must support them with both our thoughts and prayers and our aid and assistance.

While Pakistan has been one of the hardest hit this year, they are not alone. From Moscow to Music City USA, 2010 has seen a surge of weather extremes.

Russia experienced both the worst heat wave AND one of the worst droughts on record. In China, torrential rains and flooding have claimed more than 2,000 lives this year. In India, blistering heat killed dozens of people and just this week 2 million were left homeless from flooding. Here at home, record-breaking temperatures scorched the East and disastrous flooding inundated Tennessee, Iowa, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. In my home state of Massachusetts, we had two “50-year” storms in two weeks.

This all comes in a year that so far is tied for the hottest on record and comes on the heels of the hottest decade on record. Meanwhile, concentrations of heat-trapping pollution continue to rise in our atmosphere, committing us to further warming in the decades ahead.

Just as smoking increases your chance of lung cancer, heat-trapping pollution in the atmosphere increases the odds of weather disasters like we've experienced this year. The more heat-trapping pollution, the higher the risk for extreme weather. In the United States we are already breaking high temperature records TWICE as often as low temperature records and the amount of rain falling in heavy downpours has increased substantially in recent decades.

Last year the House came together, building a plan to address the climate crisis and end our dependence on foreign oil. The Waxman-Markey bill would create millions of new domestic jobs and make the United States the leader in addressing the international impacts of climate change.

The flooding disaster in Pakistan is a painful warning that we must act with urgency. Today, our distinguished guests will help us understand the devastating impacts of extreme weather, the influence of climate change and the increased risks we will all face as we continue to alter our atmosphere.