

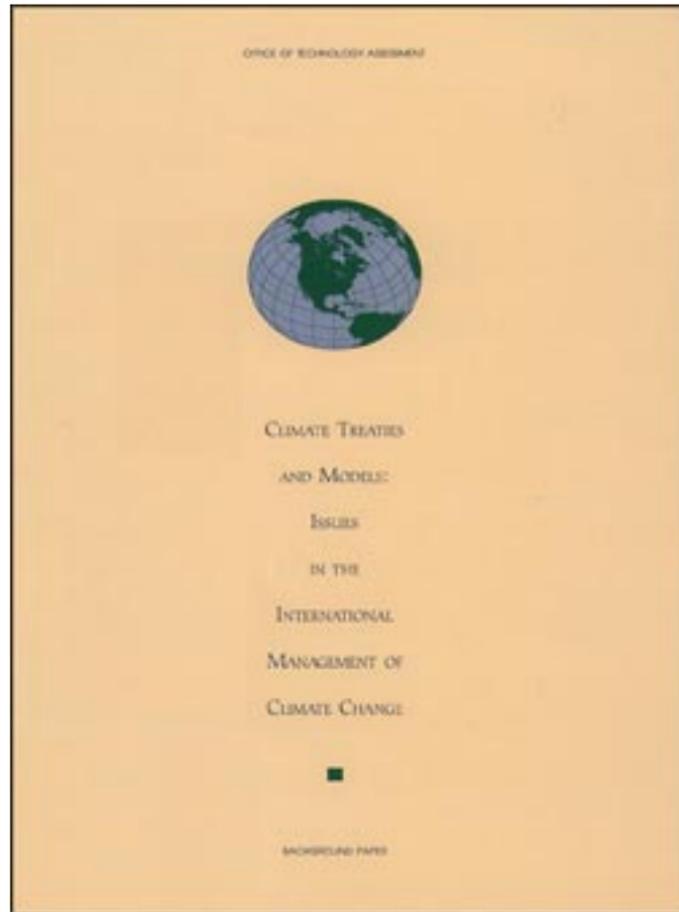
*Climate Treaties and Models: Issues in the
International Management of Climate
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Foreword

The Office of Technology Assessment has produced two major assessments related to climate change over the past three years. *Changing by Degrees: Steps to Reduce Greenhouse Gases*, which focused on ways to reduce U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases, was published in 1991. *Preparing for an Uncertain Climate*, which addressed the impact of climate change on natural resources, was published in 1993. OTA prepared this background paper as a technical addendum to those earlier assessments. The earlier assessments focused on national policies and concerns. This background paper seeks to place the issue of climate change within an international context. Specifically, it addresses the feasibility of forging treaty agreements among countries to achieve significant worldwide reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases.

Concerns about climate change have led over 160 countries, including the United States, to sign a United Nations-sponsored world climate treaty, agreeing to take steps toward stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, the treaty itself offers no clearly defined targets or timetables. The potential difficulties in achieving agreements on worldwide reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases are striking. These difficulties are perhaps most clearly illustrated by recent evidence of rapid increases in CO₂ emissions from several of the larger developing countries as they pursue the goal of economic growth. Even within industrialized countries, there continues to be concern over possible economic costs of any limit on emissions. Yet, without wide participation in a stronger climate treaty, the steps the United States has proposed to take under its Climate Action Plan could prove fruitless. Congress will face these issues as it oversees the Climate Action Plan and considers future climate treaties.

This paper was prepared for OTA by Edward Parson of the Kennedy School of Government. It summarizes discussions from an OTA workshop on climate treaties and draws upon an earlier report prepared for OTA by Jae Edmonds of the Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory.



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