

## Bush Unlikely to Offer Alternative to Pact of 178 Nations This Year, Whitman Says

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Friday, July 27, 2001; Page A15

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman said yesterday that the Bush administration has little interest in attempting to reopen international global warming talks any time soon and instead will focus on hemispheric and domestic measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

In the wake of an agreement by leading U.S. allies in Bonn this week on the details of a global warming treaty that the United States declined to support, Whitman said President Bush is unlikely to offer a substantive alternative when negotiators meet again late this year in Morocco.

Instead, she said, the administration will offer a detailed proposal later this year for reducing emissions other than carbon dioxide from U.S. power plants and factories, and will explore hemispheric plans with Canada and Mexico for reducing the levels of greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say contribute to the Earth's rising temperature.

"Basically, we're going to continue to do our own thing here," Whitman said during a meeting with Washington Post editors and reporters. Her comments contrasted with those of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, who said last week during a Group of Eight foreign ministers meeting in Rome that "we are looking toward [the Morocco meeting] for the tabling of specific proposals that could be seen as an alternative."

Whitman, a member of the president's advisory team on energy and climate change issues, added that she is skeptical that the Bonn agreement would be effective. The agreement reached by 178 countries calls for industrial nations to reduce their emissions, on average, to 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. Whitman said Bush will continue to pursue an alternative approach that stresses research, market-based solutions and technology transfers to developing countries with serious pollution problems.

During the interview, Whitman reiterated the administration's commitment to toughen the government standard for arsenic in drinking water -- while acknowledging that it still may be weaker than the one proposed by the

Whitman, 54, assumed the EPA post this year with a mixed record on environmental issues. As governor of New Jersey, she ordered deep cuts in the state's environmental protection department and favored voluntary industry compliance over tough government enforcement of environmental regulations, but she also cleaned up the beaches and significantly expanded the state's holdings of open spaces.

She got off to a rocky start in Washington when she declared that the new administration was committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and combating global warming. She was undercut when Bush reneged on a campaign pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and then disavowed the global warming treaty that the

Whitman responded by saying repeatedly that the president was entitled to accept or ignore the advice of his Cabinet, just as she had been when she was governor.

Yesterday, she said that she is "primarily, mostly" in agreement with the administration on environmental and energy policy, adding, however, that "there are some issues I would do things a little differently." She added: "It's more style than substance."

Whitman said Bush was probably too abrupt in announcing in March that he was disavowing the Kyoto accord,

without first conferring with European allies -- a view that has been expressed by other high-level administration officials.

Asked about speculation that she might not complete her term as EPA administrator, Whitman replied: "Oh, I have no plans. If he [Bush] wants me out, I've always told him he has my [letter of] resignation. Whenever he needs it, he just has to tell me. But, right now, I plan to stay here for a while."

Earlier yesterday, Whitman testified before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on proposals for reducing power plant emissions, a major cause of global warming and health problems.

Whitman said the administration will introduce legislation for reducing three major power plant pollutants -- nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide and mercury. Sen. James M. Jeffords (I-Vt.), chairman of the committee, is promoting an alternative bill that includes reductions in carbon dioxide emissions -- an approach opposed by the administration, the coal and utility industries and many lawmakers from the Midwest.

Whitman said she doesn't think it is politically practical to impose restrictions on carbon dioxide and that if Congress and the administration can agree to limit the other three gases, "we will have done some extraordinary things."

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