



Mark Helm, Press Office
202.783.7400 x121 / mwhelm@foe.org

Colleen Freeman, International Programs
202.783.7400 x121 / cfreeman@foe.org

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Another Foreign Policy Blunder: Bush Snubs Earth Summit, Other World Leaders

Over 100 heads of state including UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will be in attendance at next week's Earth Summit in Johannesburg. President Bush, however, has decided to snub the event and other world leaders.

“Bush's absence sends a clear message to the global community that he places the interests of his corporate friends above working with other world leaders on critical global issues like corporate accountability, climate change and poverty,” said Dr. Brent Blackwelder, President of Friends of the Earth.

According to a Bush official, the President - who is spending August at his Texas ranch - is “not going partly because he was planning a major trip to Africa early next year”^{*} This flimsy excuse was offered despite a plea last week from 42 members of Congress urging the President to take the Earth Summit seriously.

Far right-wing organizations including Competitive Enterprise Institute and Americans for Tax Reform have been lobbying the President to ignore the Earth Summit. Today, Competitive Enterprise Institute's President Fred Smith applauded the President's decision, saying, “The Bush administration has heeded the advice of CEL.”

The Right-Wing Lobbyist letter, Congressional letter and CEI press release can be found at:
<http://www.foe.org/international>.

Friends of the Earth is hosting a phone-in press conference with major environmental, development and human rights organizations including Amnesty International USA, Oxfam America and Sierra Club with a live update from Johannesburg. FoE is also launching a website on corporate accountability and the Earth Summit the same day. Go to: <http://www.foe.org/earthsummit>

Phone-In Press Conference - Thursday, August 22, 2002 at 11:30 a.m. (EDT)
Please contact Colleen Freeman at cfreeman@foe.org for phone in details

With over 100 people in Johannesburg, Friends of the Earth International will have one of the largest environmental delegations campaigning on corporate accountability, climate change, trade, biodiversity, water, environmental justice, extractive industries and others. Arrangements can be made to interview FoE campaigners in South Africa by contacting one of the above media contacts.

* World Environment News. “Bush to Skip Earth Summit, Powell to Lead US Team.” August 19, 2002.
<http://www.planetark.com/avantgo/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=17349>