

Pelosi appeals for China's help on climate change

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U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi listens to questions from a student after delivering her speech at the Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, Thursday, May 28, 2009. Pelosi urged Beijing to cooperate on climate change, calling a safe environment a basic human right. (AP Photo/Andy Wong, Pool)

(AP) -- U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urged Beijing on Thursday to cooperate on climate change, calling a safe environment a basic human right.

Speaking at Beijing's elite Tsinghua University, Pelosi continued the theme of her five-day [China](#) trip - that combating global warming represented a new challenge that both governments must tackle jointly.

"We are all in this together," Pelosi told an audience of about 200 students and faculty who applauded enthusiastically throughout the 45-minute session. "The impact of [climate change](#) is a tremendous risk to the security and well-being of our countries."

Pelosi's trip has been notable for skirting [human rights](#) and the fierce public criticisms she has frequently leveled at the authoritarian government.

The trip comes as President Barack Obama's administration has emphasized climate change as a new area where the two governments can broaden already wide-ranging engagement. The two countries are the biggest emitters of the carbon gases that are causing warming temperatures. Both governments are staking out positions ahead of a meeting late this year in Copenhagen that will try to forge agreement on targets and steps to reduce carbon emissions.

In a meeting Wednesday, the head of China's national legislature, Wu Bangguo, told Pelosi that climate change was a common challenge and that Beijing stood ready to work with Washington.

Turning around her usual criticisms about human rights, Pelosi linked global warming to environmental justice, saying the right to a clean environment is also a human right.

"I do see this opportunity for climate change to be ... a game-changer," she said at Tsinghua. "It's a place where human rights - looking out for the needs of the poor in terms of climate change and healthy environment - are a human right."

To achieve this, Pelosi said governments would have to make decisions and choices based on science.

"They also have to do it with openness, transparency and accountability to the people," she said. "Everyone has to have their situation improved by it."

In answering a question from a student about how Pelosi was going to get Americans to cut back on their [carbon emissions](#), the leading Democratic lawmaker said it was important to educate children on how to conserve energy and for citizens to build more environmentally friendly homes.

"We have so much room for improvement," she said. "Every aspect of our lives must be subjected to an inventory ... of how we are taking responsibility."

Pelosi, who arrived Sunday, brought with her five members of a House committee on energy policy and global warming. A bill that would impose the first U.S. limits on greenhouse gas emissions was approved by a House committee last week, a step being considered by the full House later this year.

Pelosi's visit is part of a flurry of contacts between Washington and Beijing that highlight their wide-ranging cooperation on issues including North Korea's nuclear program and combatting the global economic slump.

Next week, U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner travels to Beijing.

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