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News Release

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HOW MUCH CLIMATE CHANGE CAN WE TAKE? – DEFRA LAUNCHES NEW BOOK

Over the last year we have seen growing evidence of climate change. Indeed, statistics suggest that 2005 is the second warmest year on record. The Arctic sea ice shrank to its lowest extent last summer and devastating hurricanes show how sensitive even developed societies are to extreme weather.

Temperatures are expected to continue to rise and extreme events are likely to become more frequent with climate change. But how much climate change can we take? How can we avoid levels which can be considered dangerous?

The “Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change” book, which is being launched today by Defra, explores these questions.

The book gives an account of the most recent developments on the science of climate change, explores how much climate change is too much and how can we avoid it. It examines the consequences of different levels of climate change in terms of impacts for different sectors and regions, as well as the world as a whole. And it considers technological options that can be deployed to achieve different levels of climate change as the world moves to a lower carbon economy.

The book builds on the scientific findings presented at the “Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change” conference, which took place at the Met Office, Exeter in February 2005 at the start of the UK’s G8 Presidency.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said the Exeter conference provided a scientific backdrop to the whole of the UK’s G8 Presidency and the Summit at Gleneagles.

Writing in the foreword of the book, Mr Blair said: “At the Gleneagles meeting the leaders of the G8 were able to agree on the importance of climate change, that human activity does contribute to it and that greenhouse gas emissions need to slow, peak and reverse. All G8 countries agreed on the need to make substantial cuts in emissions and to act with resolve and urgency now.

“This book will serve as more than a record of another conference or event. It will provide an invaluable resource for all people wishing to enhance global understanding of the science of climate change and the need for humanity to act to tackle the problem.”

Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett said: “I am very pleased that the book has been prepared in such a short time following the ground-breaking conference on Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change.

“The conference provided an important scientific context for our G8 sessions last year and illustrates very clearly the urgency with which the world has to tackle climate change.”

Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, chief editor of the book, said: “We hope that this book will make a significant contribution to the scientific and policy debate on what constitutes dangerous climate change.”

Notes to Editors:

1 The book, “Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change” has been prepared by an editorial board, led by Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, and is published by Cambridge University Press, price £70. More details are available at <http://www.cambridge.org/0521864712>
A pdf of the book will be available later today on the Defra website.

2 A document to go with the “Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change Book” has today been released by Defra. It contains a foreword by Dennis Tirpak, chair of the conference international scientific steering committee and an executive summary of book. It can be found on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/publications/pubcat/env.htm#climate>

3 The book is being launched tonight at a reception at the Royal Society, where speakers will include David Vaughan, British Antarctica Survey; Carol Turley, Plymouth Marine Laboratory; Rachel Warren, University of East Anglia and Terry Barker, University of Cambridge.

4 The International Symposium on Stabilisation of Greenhouse Gas Concentrations – Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change – took place at the invitation of the British Prime Minister

Tony Blair under the sponsorship of Defra at the Met Office, Exeter on February 1-3, 2005. Information on the conference is available at www.stabilisation2005.com

5 Follow-up events to the Conference were held at the meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in June and at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Montreal in December.

6 The book will provide input into the UNFCCC's Fourth Assessment Report, which will be launched in 2008.

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