

ECO

THE "IT'S THE SCIENCE, STUPID" ISSUE

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Editorial: Andres Fuentes

ScienceBack

With apologies to Justin Timberlake:

I'm bringin' science back (yeah)

Some of the boys don't know how to act (yeah)

I think it's special, the IPCC and facts (yeah)

So workshops ho! the report we'll unpack (yeah)

Last week, science got a rough ride in the SBSTA item on the IPCC SR1.5, with the Saudi assault on attempts to fulfill the COP instructions to engage with the content of the IPCC report.

This week, science has its mojo back, and defenders of science's role in continuously informing policymaking appear to be on track to get substantive conclusions from this session and find a way to do justice to this momentous and ground-breaking report.

Most parties are now supporting a substantial package of draft conclusions to forward to the plenary, as well as additional time in the informal consultations to consider them.

Yesterday AOSIS, LDCs and AILAC presented a proposal to

organize 4 workshops – 2 at SB51 and 2 at SB52, with a synthesis report for consideration at a high-level event at COP26. This process of unpacking the IPCC report can help inform the process of parties revising NDCs over the next year or so, and the synthesis report can inform the Second Periodic Review, which will likely start in 2020.

ECO supports inclusion of pathways to meet the Paris long-term goals, in particular pathways to limiting warming to 1.5°C, in the scope of the Second Periodic Review.

Science has been behind every major development in the creation of the climate regime, dating back to the IPCC's First Assessment Report (FAR) that set the stage for the negotiation of the UNFCCC itself and enabled its signing in Rio in 1992. In other words, science drives policymaking. As Vanuatu reminded us in Katowice, you can't negotiate away the science.

The UNSG Summit and the snowballing national efforts to revise NDCs by 2020 should bring us closer to the necessary pathways that climate science demands. Concurrent investigation of the implications of the IPCC report, including for mitigation,

adaptation, loss and damage and financial and other support can only strengthen this effort.

Attempts to downplay, discredit and suppress science are not new in this process. But the "ungentlemanly" behavior from the Saudi negotiator last week was a new low for UNFCCC negotiations.

The Saudi game plan is clear: run down the clock on consideration of conclusions till the end of the session, and make it as difficult as possible to get a substantive outcome that does justice to the IPCC report.

The basis for the ill-considered "gentlemen's agreement" – good faith attempts on all sides to get an acceptable outcome – has clearly not been met. So that agreement, and any other arrangements that seem to harken back to old-boy's clubs and outdated traditions, should be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Science, equity and solidarity with the victims of past mistakes and outdated development pathways must be the basis for a just transition away from our fossil fuel driven economy and towards the clean and renewable zero-carbon climate-resilient economy of the future.

We've Got More Questions

ECO is excited to see so many Annex I Parties participating in the multilateral assessment for their biennial reports. ECO congratulates Parties for participating and thinks the multilateral assessment can be a great place to share experiences and lessons learned with other Parties in a constructive environment. We look forward to hearing your presentations and Q&A sessions throughout the day.

Since ECO can't ask questions during these workshops, we figured we'd share our questions with you here:

To all Parties:

Can you provide an update regarding any action taken to strengthen policy-making processes — in particular public access to information and public participation — so as to improve climate responses and promote policy coherence in the context of progress made towards meeting your commitments under the UNFCCC?

To Norway:

Norway has a national goal to cut emissions 30% by 2020, and two thirds of these cuts should be done domestically. But in 2017, according to the Government's Prop 1.S 2018-19, Norwegian emissions had risen 2.4% since 1990. What is Norway's strategy to deal with this?

To the Russian Federation:

According to its own last national inventory report in 2017, Russian GHG emissions were 68% of 1990 level without accounting for LULUCF, and 51% with the given accounting. These levels were stable in the last 10 years (with minor annual variations). Then why does Russia have an INDC with almost 1.5 times that growth of emissions in the next 10 years (incl. LULUCF, from 51% in 2017 to 70-75% of 1990 by 2030)? Russia has quite ambitious plans to modernize 41GW of power plants by 2031, to decrease energy intensity of GDP by about 50% by 2030, to do tree planting on all new clear-cut timber harvesting lots. How can a country with such plans 'ensure' fast GHG net-emissions growth by 50%?

To the United Kingdom:

What is the status of the UK's consideration of whether to count 'surplus' carbon emissions towards future targets? We understand that 88Mt CO₂e might be counted towards the UK's 2018-2022 carbon budget, against the advice of the independent advisory Climate Change Committee, which warned that it would "undermine the integrity of the framework for emissions reductions". This rollover of Kyoto credits would actually allow UK emissions to INCREASE during this current carbon budget.

Climate Heroes: Not Rich but Committed

ECO is very pleased to have witnessed 26 countries publicly committing to "step up" and enhance their NDC by 2020 at the CAN booth here in Bonn:

Belize, Benin, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, DRC, Ghana, Grenada, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lebanon, Micronesia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania, The Gambia, Tonga, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

However, ECO realises that these nations are all developing countries. Many are least developed countries (LDCs), the poorest. There has been a noticeable absence of all the richer OECD and Annex I nations, as well as highly emitting countries in the G77 and China Group.

ECO did some number crunching on most of these countries with regard to their present contribution to the climate emergency we are facing as well as their capability to address enhanced NDCs at home.

These countries emitted about 820Mt CO₂ from fossil fuels in 2016. This is 2.5% of all global CO₂ fossil fuel emissions and 7% of the OECD total.

These countries register an annual average of 0.9tCO₂ per capita emissions. This is about 80% below the world average and over 90% below the OECD average.

Total GDP of these countries in USD was about 2.3% of global GDP and 3.5% of OECD GDP. While these countries represent 12% of the global and 72% of the OECD population, their annual per capita GDP is about USD 1,930, only 19% of the global average, and 5% of the OECD's.

ECO can only conclude:

These countries are small emitters – and small contributors to the climate crisis.

These countries are poor countries – and have a much lower capacity to act.

But they are doing much more than the wealthy countries of this world. They are the moral compass of the entire climate negotiations. They are true leaders. Shame on those rich nations, with the notable exception of Finland, Denmark, and a few others, who are not getting their act together.

The Right(s) Path for Article 6

A day without an ECO article about Article 6 would be devastating for all, ECO is sure of it. But an Article 6 without human rights and proper safeguards would be even more devastating - in this case for people and the planet.

ECO has heard a lot of discussion about the negative impacts of Article 6. And we agree. The Article 6 activities can lead to negative impacts, often on those who are denied access and control over their land. That's why ECO has been highlighting the importance of having human rights-based social and environmental safeguards and an independent grievance redress mechanism.

Let's unpack this a bit. What do we mean by social and environmental safeguards? ECO is here to help. Don't be afraid, you all have human rights obligations. And you don't have to reinvent the wheel, these policies exist, including in the UNFCCC's own financial mechanisms. Social and environmental safeguards cover a wide range of issues including human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, gender equality, and the right to participation and access to information, just to name a few. All of these are critical and will help achieve the sustainable development Article 6 wants.

Including rights-based safeguards in Article 6 is the way to help ensure that the activities start

from a premise of doing no harm and ensuring sustainable development and environmental integrity. And having meaningful stakeholder consultation with local communities - and others who often don't have a voice - early in project development will create a better project that is more sustainable and has a social license to operate.

But we also know that even with safeguards things can go wrong. History has proven just that (remember Barro Blanco?). That's where grievance redress comes in. There should be an independent grievance mechanism that is accessible to communities so that if harm occurs, they can seek remedy. This is a huge gap in the current Kyoto Protocol mechanisms and the Article 6 mechanism need not repeat it. Learn the lessons. Make sure there is a grievance mechanism and make sure it is independent from the proposed Supervisory Body. Independence is key to legitimacy and having something that can serve its function to actually address grievances.

ECO was pleased to hear several Parties speak positively about including human rights in Article 6. We are hoping more will join. Show that you've learned from the past and are committed to these mechanisms promoting sustainable development. It's what people and the planet deserve.

Leading by Example Not Words

ECO always highlights the importance of information access, public participation and justice. Years of ECO issues are the living proof of that.

The Escazu Agreement is the latest agreement that works specifically on these issues in the Latin American and Caribbean region. And it is the first multilateral binding agreement that includes provisions related to the protection of defenders of human rights in environmental issues. After a successful adoption in 2018, 16 countries have signed, 1 has ratified and another one is in the process of depositing the ratification. Congratulations Guyana and Bolivia.

It came as a shock that one of the most active countries in the process, who will soon lead the climate negotiations, did not even sign, thereby somewhat undermining its credibility as a reliable international actor.

Therefore, ECO would like to take the opportunity to welcome to Bonn Ms Carolina Schmidt, the incoming president of COP25, and to invite her to ensure that Chile signs and ratifies the Escazu Agreement by submitting it as soon as possible to the National Congress as a matter of urgency — showing Chile's real climate and human rights ambition.

In doing so, Chile would join the club of those countries committed to providing information, ensuring participation and defending human rights of the people who protect and sometimes even give their lives to defend the environment. Especially as Latin America is one of the most dangerous regions for environmental activists. ECO is concerned that there is no other reason other than a lack of political will that is holding back any step forward on this matter.

It's All About Balance, Baby

How do you achieve inner peace? It is all about the yin and the yang. What's the point of professional success if you cannot share it with friends and family. Right? But this is not a kitchen lifestyle philosophy piece that takes your mind off the complicated issues negotiated here. ECO is talking about the balance of mitigation and adaptation finance, or more precisely: the imbalance. It is clear that mitigation finance is crucial. However, people need to prepare for climate change today – by this we don't mean you taking off your jackets on the way to the World Conference Centre Bonn during Germany's highest June temperatures ever recorded. We refer to the people and communities most vulnerable to climate change.

But, of course, you know all of that. That is why some of you came up with the 'silver bullet' that will also be the focus of the TEM-A: private adaptation finance. For years now, some of you have been trying to find out how it could be the key to restoring the balance. The only problem is: so far it has not delivered so far. The fact is, there is a very limited scope that private finance can achieve!

Don't get us wrong, we appreciate you taking the topic of private adaptation finance further. But it is only one bullet, and it is certainly not silver. If there is a lack of public finance and private finance won't close the gap, what can you do? ECO has an odd idea (drum roll please)..... More and better public funding, including from new and additional sources of funding?! Crazy, right?

Now you've learned that balance is the ultimate goal. But wait, we are at the climate negotiations, it cannot be that simple. ECO's second

lesson for today is: sometimes you need to overcome imbalance and sometimes you need to leave false equivalency behind.

The imbalance of instruments: If the business case for adaptation is hard to make, loans might not be the right instruments - so what's wrong with grants? If you want to use one more than the other, let it be grants!

The imbalance of adaptation measures: Hard adaptation measures are nice. You can see them. You can touch them. Why bother yourself with those messy "soft adaptation" projects. But what is lacking the most is capacity. There are indeed some new fancy abbreviations around and ECO knows how much you love them. So try to add EbA to CBA! If you follow this advice, you will achieve inner peace.

The imbalance of investments: Merely "climate-proofing" won't let you achieve adaption Zen. What we really need are investments that contribute to a transformation to a resilient society!

The imbalance of addresses: Do not only address the well-heeled corporate world but those who really need support in their adaptation efforts: MSMEs and small-holder farmers, who regularly have a lower adaptive capacity than bigger enterprises. Focusing on them will make you feel more relaxed than performing Surya Namaskar in the morning.

The imbalance of focus: Mobilising private sector money requires investments in public regulatory infrastructure (with public money). A revelation better than every yoga class.

So join us on this journey of finding the inner balance - and the yin and yang of adaptation financing.

LUDWIG

As Ludwig sat in the Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) held yesterday afternoon, he reflected on the fine difference between "public access to information" - one of the core elements of Article 12 of the Paris Agreement - and information overload as an uninterrupted series of sixteen speakers delivered their presentations. With no opportunity to raise questions or intervene in the plenary sessions of the "Dialogue" - Ludwig wondered whether the principle of public participation - also itself a pillar of ACE - could not have been somewhat reflected in the format of the event. He left nonetheless reassured to learn that multiple breakout groups had discussed the importance of a human rights approach to implementing ACE and hopeful Parties will remember this aspect when they renew the ACE Work Programme next year.