

# ECO



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## The Vital Role of Full Public Participation

The irony is rich: interventions by two non-governmental organizations were mysteriously overlooked in the SBI yesterday. The topic? Public participation in the climate negotiations.

Civil society participation plays a critical role in this process. We can't say it better than the Secretariat itself in its guidelines. Vibrant public participation "allows vital experience, expertise, information and perspectives from civil society to be brought into the process to generate new insights and approaches [and] promotes transparency." Importantly, effective public participation also helps ensure the legitimacy and public acceptance of negotiation outcomes.

To be sure, the experience in Copenhagen – where the public was more engaged than ever before – has caused some Parties to forget that they agreed in the Convention to "encourage the widest participation in this process, including that of non-governmental organizations." Instead, civil society is being pushed to the margins, with opportunities to contribute increasingly limited to chance hallway encounters and loading up the tables near side events with food and drinks to entice elusive negotiators. Civil society is happy to promote conviviality and informal contact, but the negotiations require substantive and formal involvement as well.

ECO suggests the UNFCCC and its parties embrace the growing popularity of the sessions and seek to use that as an opportunity to improve performance rather than shy away. And now is the time to start. A

contact group is meeting today to discuss process issues related to intergovernmental meetings. This group must take up the question of public participation to ensure meaningful participation throughout these processes. It should start by permitting designated NGO representatives to actively engage on the issue of participation in today's contact group, as well as in future formal and informal sessions on this issue.

As the SBI and the Secretariat consider these issues, ECO urges them to ensure a few basic principles. Measures should always be aimed at ensuring the broadest participation possible in the given circumstance. At a minimum, this means preserving and enhancing opportunities for routine civil society input through official interventions, submissions and consultations.

Relevant rules must be transparent and provide for independent review of particular decisions limiting participation. Access to information is the lifeblood of meaningful participation; all key documents should be posted on the Secretariat's website as soon as they are finalized.

Indeed, the Secretariat should take the lead in ensuring meaningful public participation and must have sufficient and increased resources to do so effectively. Additionally, each host country government bears great responsibility as well. Host country agreements should be made public and incorporate an obligation to facilitate participation.

As host of COP 16, Mexico must take active steps to guarantee effective civil society participation in Cancún. Ambas-

sador de Alba's proven record as a strong defender of human rights gives ECO hope in this regard. It must be noted, though, that Cancún's geography creates some concern.

Direct access to negotiators is essential. Civil society should have broad access to the venues where formal negotiations are taking place except in extreme conditions. In addition, Mexico must guarantee that space for side events and other civil society activities is easily and quickly accessible to all participants.

Civil society also serves as an extremely valuable technical and political resource for Parties, especially in developing countries. Parties should always be enabled and encouraged to take advantage of these

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### **Time to close the finance gap!**

ECO is excited about the buzz that's been created around closing the gigatonne gap over the last few days. Delegates are waking up to the need to raise ambition, close loopholes and seek new and innovative solutions to cutting emissions.

But ECO would like to remind developed country delegates that it's not just a mitigation gap – it's a finance gap too. In line with the mandate to implement all elements of the Bali Action Plan, billions in new, additional, public finance are needed to support nationally appropriate mitigation actions in developing countries. Failure to do so would leave the gigatonne gap wide open.

– *Participation, from page 1* –

resources however they choose, including by inviting them onto their delegations where appropriate.

Finally, the SBI and the Secretariat should take advantage of an expert resource: the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention has offered its assistance in resolving UNFCCC public participation concerns. Aarhus input would be valuable.

Civil society is not here just to vent our frustration or make the negotiations more difficult. We have a right to participate and much to contribute. It is time for the Parties and the Secretariat to take heed, and then take action.

## The Spirit of Bali Returns

There was a nice surprise in the opening LCA plenary – a spirit of cooperation evident in interventions from every corner of the globe. We have come to expect at least a day of discussions on how to sequence topics and the amount of time to devote to them. But yesterday that did not happen. Instead, parties expressed an earnest desire to get down to work in light of the urgent realities of climate change. They set forth their differences with the text, but they also highlighted the need to get down to business.

Guatemala spoke heartbreakingly about the tragic loss of life from recent tropical storms, mudslides and floods. Mountain nations highlighted how they are banding together to address their common interests and problems – their glaciers are melting and sensitive ecosystems are beginning to vanish. Island nations reminded their colleagues that failure to succeed here adds to the already growing threat to the very survival of their people and their nations.

There is no doubt that the Chair's text will go through many changes. Controversies and difficulties will certainly arise over the course of the discussions. Clearly many parties want to see the text be more reflective of the Bali Action Plan. Many parties want to see REDD progress. Many are troubled by the absence of their submissions in the text, as well as other concerns. But overall, we are off to a positive start. ECO hears a willingness to consider new approaches to negotiation and work toward a constructive outcome in Cancún. It was a refreshing way to open the LCA and the first ray of sunshine in this cloudy Bonn spring.



*Oxfam (with the help of friends from TckTckTck) welcomed delegates to Day 1 of the June Bonn Climate Change Talks by fending off offers of sharky loans for adaptation funding. "At a time of economic emergency, when several poor countries are slashing critical health and education budgets to avoid a debt crisis, rich countries are considering saddling them with climate debt for a situation they did not cause and are worst affected by," said Oxfam Senior Policy Advisor Antonio Hill. "It's like crashing your neighbors car, and then offering a loan to cover the damages."*

– Photo: Paul Horsman, GCCA

## How to Avoid a 'COP-Flop' in Cancún

ECO salutes Tuvalu for exposing the weak ambition of the Umbrella Group in the LCA on Tuesday, warning that there was a risk of Cancún turning into another 'COP flop'.

This was a timely reminder that developed countries need to step up and show leadership by taking on strong commitments.

The Umbrella Group need to do much better than merely offering a list of areas for progress at Cancún that somehow leaves aside developed country targets. Even if they get their 'comprehensive deal' and remove all conditions, the targets offered at the present time, other than Norway and Ja-

pan, are woefully lacking in ambition.

As is so often the case, ECO wonders whether the Umbrella Group is at a different negotiation than the rest of us. At the KP they announced they were pleased with progress. Does this mean they're now on the verge of signing up for all those very overdue KP second commitment period obligations?

Finally, before the EU gets too self-assured, ECO would like to remind their negotiators that with the recession, the cost of achieving a 30% target is about the same as previously expected for a 20% target. In fact, the EU has already achieved emissions in 2009 that were 14% less than 1990 levels. It would be a great signal of EU leadership to adopt a unilateral 30% target as a bridge-building initiative.