

ECO



ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Organisations at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. This issue is published cooperatively by Climate Action Network (CAN) groups attending COP12 and COP/MOP2 in Nairobi in November 2006. ECO email: ecopaper@hotmail.com – ECO website: <http://www.climateactionnetwork.org/eco> – Editorial/Production: Nithiyananthan Nesadurai/ Sander Wijsman

Audible Action

The atmosphere during yesterday afternoon's high-level speeches was punctuated by some progressive and inspiring deliveries. The rest of the speeches though were mostly a degree of adequacy, while the usual suspects did not disappoint the cynics.

ECO employed its team of applause measurers to find out who was hot and who was not. From the tranquillity of polite clapping to the extended and enthusiastic ovations given to some, here are some highlights of words that mattered.

The afternoon began with South Africa (on behalf of the G77 and China) welcoming a 2007 operationalisation of the Adaptation Fund. There was no mistaking the importance to this group of "one country, one vote" for the governance of the adaptation.

Like many, China urged the need to integrate a clear framework of sustainable development into the package of future direction. China urged Annex I cuts' talks to be concluded by 2008 and not later than 2009. A declaration of reducing domestic per unit gross domestic product energy consumption by 20 per cent from 2005 to 2010 was well received.

Scoring top of the applause scale was Denmark, with a visionary speech that declared this set of talks must not be about "speeches like this", but about immediate action, now. A pointed statement to the big industrialised emitters who are not party to the Kyoto Protocol certainly gained a few more claps as well.

Norway reaffirmed its 50 per cent reductions by 2050 and spoke of a necessary major shift in consumption and production activities. The mixed-bag applause meter ranked Norway on firm middle ground.

The lull of the evening came in the form of an energetic defence of Canada's position. Unfortunately for Canada, neither did the energy translate into clapping nor did the defence have much basis – see table on next page.

Had it been show business, following Canada should have been a blessing, but even so, the European Community prompted a reasonable level of applause owing to a focus on rapidly operationalising the Adaptation Fund, enhancing technology transfer and small-scale sustainable energy projects. Combined with its statement "let's build the framework" reasonable clapping was achieved.

Another lull – only rivalled by Canada's – was generated by the difficult challenge of Saudi Arabia in proclaiming that some methods of disincentivising fossil fuels were "unacceptable". A second challenge that left some posturing – and therefore probably distracted from clapping – was the Saudi's neat connection drawn between carbon capture and storage, Clean Development Mechanism and sustainable development.

It was only fair that the evening needed bringing up again, and so France stepped up to deliver an impassioned speech including its determination to cut emissions by 75 per cent by 2050. France emphasised the urgent need for more ambitious targets after 2012. The final key for France's good applause was in isolating the position of "some" who have "refused to follow the path of collective action", who "maintain the illusion" and avoid disaster by "magic".

A retort may not have followed, but the US was steely and resolved in its "coalition" to

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Get a Sense of Urgency

It is inconceivable for Parties to leave Nairobi without concrete and progressive decisions on climate change, the Climate Action Network (CAN) said during an intervention at the plenary session yesterday.

It is even less acceptable to leave African soil without decisions which benefit Africa.

CAN, a coalition of environmental non-governmental organisations working on climate change, criticised Parties for their lack of urgency, stating: "Over the past few years we have become used to soft and endless dialogue completely disconnected from the reality experienced by people around the world, especially in developing countries.

"The Parties here are also taking their time to discuss urgent issues, even as hunger, drought and dreadful floods are occurring in Kenya and its neighbouring countries. These are likely to worsen as climate changes.

"At the very least, the COP/MOP should take note of the priorities of the most vulnerable countries."

Negotiations should get to the core of the issue – to achieve stabilisation of greenhouse gas (GHG) concentration in the atmosphere at the required time point, in order to be contained at a maximum of 2°C of warming by the end of this century. For this to happen:

- Industrialised countries must commit themselves to more sustainable greenhouse emissions reductions in the short, medium and long term.
- Emergent countries need to integrate GHG emissions reductions in their development frameworks.
- Capacity must be built, particularly in the

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US Political Climate Heats Up

Three powerful Senators poised to take over the helm of key Senate committees have united in an appeal to President Bush to heed the election results and join them in aggressively pushing measures to limit US global warming pollution.

Senator Barbara Boxer (incoming Chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee), Senator Jeff Bingaman (incoming Chair of the Energy and Natural Resource Committee) and Senator Joseph Lieberman (incoming Chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee) wrote to President Bush seeking his “commitment to work with the new Congress to pass meaningful climate change legislation in 2007.

The US must move quickly to adopt economy-wide constraints on domestic greenhouse gas emissions and then work with the international community to forge an effective and equitable global agreement.” Fortunately, the Senators are not going to wait for permission from the White House to get

started. “When the 110th Congress begins in January,” they wrote, “we pledge to work to pass an effective system of mandatory limits on greenhouse gases.”

Citing a bipartisan 53-44 Senate vote in 2005 supporting mandatory US limits on greenhouse gases, the Senators observed that the ranks of supporters for action had grown in the recent election. Four Senators who voted against mandatory limits lost their seats earlier this month.

Meanwhile, the US delegation, apparently misplacing their speeches for yesterday’s ministerial meetings and press briefings, fortunately uncovered a copy of the speeches they gave at Montreal last year. Since the US has taken no new action in the past year, and the Bush Administration has apparently turned a deaf ear to the mid-term election results and the progress being made by other nations, the oversight was easily masked. Few could tell the difference.

Oh Canada...

At the ministerial high-level plenary yesterday afternoon, Canadian Environment Minister Rona Ambrose delivered a strong speech. Unfortunately a few key points were missing:

What She Said	The Way It Is
Canada will reduce emissions 65 per cent by 2050	The 65 per cent cited is below 2003 levels, not the agreed upon 1990 baseline levels. (There is a 27 per cent difference.)
Canada is having trouble meeting its targets for technical reasons.	The new government has cut 80 per cent of climate funding, including programmes for energy efficient homes.
The former government did not have a plan.	The new government cut the former government’s “Green Plan”, which was already on its third version.
Praise for the Clean Air Act “legislation”.	The Clean Air Act is not yet legislation, and is not needed because it presents no new regulation beyond current legislation.
Canada’s emissions are 35 per cent above its Kyoto target.	Canada’s emissions are 35 per cent above its Kyoto target.

– Audible Action, from front page – combat climate change. The audible lack of applause may once more have been confused and unappreciative of US efforts for fighting climate change, including investment in nuclear fission. The US urged a global effort and the need to find different approaches. It seemed the mood had come down once more.

But it was not long before Germany came to the podium and spurred on some more of the good applause needed. A key challenge extended to the EU was Germany’s commitment to a 40 per cent cut by 2020 if the EU goes for 30 per cent for 2020. The applause was additionally loud owing to a call for “an

ambitious and robust post-2012 regime”, which, according to the Minister, required negotiations from 2007 onwards to finish in 2009.

Riding on the wave came the UK, which managed a decent applause despite a thinning crowd. A firm commitment to a “no gap” global agreement was welcomed, as was the reemphasis on the urgency of Adaptation funding. The UK also capitalised on the Stern report demonstrating the urgent economic case for action on tackling climate change.

As people continued to leave, an eerie sense of isolation overcame the room. It was Australia’s turn.

– Get a Sense of Urgency, from front page – poorest countries, to implement innovative development patterns compatible with sustainable development.

On the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), CAN said: “Developing countries expect improvements in the CDM to be of greater benefit to their populations and local development in host countries. Further, CDM should benefit the countries that need it most; the poorest of the developing countries.”

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THANKS

The Climate Action Network expresses its appreciation to the following organisations for their generous contributions towards the publication of ECO at this conference: WWF International, Greenpeace International, FOE International, David Suzuki Foundation, RAC France, Helio International, Équiterre, Natural Resources Defense Council, NET, Practical Action, CAN-Europe, USCAN, Union of Concerned Scientists, Environmental Defense, Acid Rain Secretariat 2006, World Resources Institute, National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Protection Society Malaysia, Kiko Network, The Nature Conservancy, CASA, WWF UK, Tearfund, Pelangi, United Nations Office Nairobi.