

ECO



Staying Committed to the Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol process is very much alive and the vast majority of countries – especially the 120 that have ratified it – are determined to make progress here at COP9.

Meanwhile, many countries are making headway at home. For example, the European Union has already issued an emissions trading directive and its members are taking action on implementing their

Kyoto Protocol-related targets.

Developing countries are also implementing the Protocol programme although not legally required to do so. And as more climate change impacts are experienced around the world, it adds urgency to our work here.

While Russia is not helpful by using its pivotal position in these negotiations to maximum advantage, President Putin has a

standing commitment to ratification (see article on Russia).

However the US is not taking serious steps to reduce emissions, and is talking about science and technology research to obscure their opposition to international or domestic emission targets (see article on the US). This strategy undermines the aim of the COP and should be rejected by all Parties.

US global warming policy is CRAP

The Bush Administration is known for blunt, undiplomatic statements. In response, Parties here in Milan should begin speaking bluntly to the US about its unacceptable global warming policy. It is nothing more than Continued Research And Procrastination: CRAP. We all know it is true, so why not speak frankly about it.

The US delegation will spend the next two weeks promoting its science and technology research plans. While it is important to improve climate science and develop new technologies, it is no excuse for delaying emission cuts. The international scientific community has long since shown that the science justifies taking precautionary action now. Good science does not necessarily mean good policy, and technologies do not deploy themselves. If the US truly takes global warming seriously, it must have a real plan to reduce emissions starting now.

The simple fact, however, is that the Bush Administration is strongly opposed to concrete action. Everyone knows the Bush Administration has rejected the Kyoto

Protocol and its approach of binding international agreements. Parties may be less familiar with the Administration's opposition to mandatory policies in the US. Just one month ago the US Senate voted for the first time on a domestic GHG emissions cap (McCain-Lieberman bill: 2000 emissions levels by 2012). In its own words, the Administration "strongly opposes" this modest proposal because it is "inconsistent with the President's comprehensive, long-term strategy." (Statement of Administration Policy, October 29, 2003.) An emissions cap is inconsistent with the President's voluntary goal, which at best will barely make a dent in projected US emissions growth. This example is just the tip of the iceberg of the Administration's hostility to act against global warming.

COP9 is about developing concrete policies to address this urgent problem. The US mission to talk about scientific and technology cooperation here is a waste of valuable time.

If Parties sweet-talk with the US here at COP9, it will only delay the US from becoming a constructive partner in dealing with global

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Russian ratification – Just a matter of time

Articles in numerous newspapers have lately been declaring the Kyoto Protocol dead. Although this must sound like music to the ears of George Bush's Administration, nothing could be further from the truth.

Those articles are essentially based on President Putin's alleged remarks in Moscow during the World Climate Change Conference at end-September this year. For those of us who were there, the reality is actually quite different from what the enemies of Kyoto would like to believe. Although President Putin did delay the ratification decision, he did reaffirm Russia's intention to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

If that was not clear enough, he reaffirmed it again during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting last October during a one-on-one meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, as well as at the last EU-Russia summit in Rome during his meeting with President Berlusconi.

All this being said, until Russia does ratify, the world is being held hostage to President Putin's domestic agenda. And this is unacceptable.

Checklist for the final rules on CDM sinks

After a marathon of negotiations, the rules on CDM afforestation and reforestation projects are expected to be finalised here. Delegates are urged to protect the credibility of the Kyoto Protocol and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

The challenge is to develop a final set of CDM sinks rules that deliver on the spirit and intent of Article 12 and the principles agreed in Marrakech. It has already been agreed that any land use projects “contribute to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of natural resources”. This principle must be put into practice, namely by adopting Appendix E and ruling out alien invasive species as well as GMOs.

The issue is not whether rules allow some projects with biodiversity benefits. The urgent necessity is to reach agreement on rules that ensure *all* projects deliver biodiversity benefits and promote the sustainable use of natural resources.

Weak sinks rules will allow low-quality projects to swamp the CDM market. It is of highest priority to ensure the Kyoto Protocol does not become a subsidy system for vast monocultures of non-native species, possibly on land already inhabited by local people. Weak rules for sinks in the CDM can erode public support for this critical international treaty.

The warm-up exercise for this round of negotiations started last week. Those who were not present missed some memorable moments. Canada was isolated and grilled over its latest attempt to table another outrageous version of its “insurance” proposal. Canada disregarded once more a) the non-permanent nature of sinks, b) the mandate of the group – by claiming there is no need for liability for re-emissions after 50 years, and c) legitimate questions raised from other parties challenging the Canadian proposal for more than a year.

The good news, nevertheless, is that Canada has conceived a way for all delegates over 50 years of age to look forward to a permanent, everlasting life.

In a presentation to the World Bank, Canada outlined its “Elements of a successful sinks strategy.” The objectives included: “secure high quality carbon credits”, “improved sustainability of ecosystems” and

Do CDM sink rules...

...include “Appendix E”?

Host countries, credit buyers, stakeholders and the public need sufficient information from the project design document to assess a project’s social and environmental impacts. The weak Appendix E-Option 1 is the absolute minimum information necessary, and avoids imposing specific standards on host countries.

...reject Canada’s “insurance approach” on the permanence issue?

The iCER approach undermines environmental integrity by allowing these provisions to expire. Choosing both “temporary credits” and the “insurance approach” is a false compromise. Furthermore, include incentives for long-term project design, such as a minimum project lifetime.

...include a meaningful additionality test that excludes projects that would have happened anyway?

...rule out invasive alien species and GMOs and stop large commercial plantations from swamping the CDM? An environmental treaty that subsidises invasive alien species and GMOs threatens to erode public support and causes environmental harm.

Furthermore, do the critical details ensure that ...

... “positive” leakage is excluded? Contain 100% default leakage assumption?

Assume 100 per cent leakage in the absence of adequate analysis. Exclude “positive” leakage because nobody is liable for re-emissions under that scenario. Leakage must include “shifted activities”.

...maintain the 1990 base year for reforestation projects?

...require that all GHGs are accounted for, not just CO₂?

“contribution to local economic development.” If this is truly Canada’s strategy, surely they should enthusiastically embrace effective rules for socio-economic and environmental criteria.

The checklist above highlights the most important priorities for a successful outcome at COP9.

...require geo-referenced location of projects?

...require early stakeholder participation and 60 days commenting period?

...reject fast-tracking of sinks? (Anything > 100 ha is not “small”!)

...require truthful baselines?

Prospective land use and other key factors should be taken into account for the baselines. Natural regeneration has to be part of the baseline.

Source: Environment Canada, Darren Goetze “Carbon Sinks in the CDM: Policy, Opportunity and Challenges” available at www.worldbank.org/wbi/B-SPAN/docs/policy_nexus_goetze.pdf

— *American CRAP, from front page warming.* So, instead of sitting quietly, diplomatically and listening to the US talk around this problem of global warming, speak bluntly against its CRAP. Speak American!

Uncle Sam Watch: A periodic update on the truth behind US global warming policy.

The language used by US delegates may seem foreign to many delegates. This is a guide to many of the phrases you might hear over the next two weeks:

US: We are seriously concerned about global warming.

Translation: People will believe anything if we say it often enough.

LUIGI

Faced with a transport strike welcoming delegates to the climate conference, Luigi took the opportunity to stroll through Milan’s concrete Eden to the Fiera Internazionale. An informal poll among delegates shows that they’ve been creative in their efforts to begin their labours – the EU apparently brought the bikes they secured to navigate Lyon; and the Chinese hired cars meeting their new low-emissions standard. Descending from his Hummer, US head of delegation Harlan Watson was asked how they put their 100-strong delegation in place during the public transport crisis. With his typical grasp of the issue, he replied “public what?”