

ECO



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Engage in Honest Dialogue

As ministers arrive in Milan, ECO is happy to provide perspective on the issues to be addressed in this week's premier events – the three “high-level” Roundtable segments. Given the stakes, we will be blunt, foregoing the usual diplomatic niceties.

Roundtable 1: This roundtable needs to give concrete expression to the principle of sustainable development.

The recently released Third Assessment Report by the IPCC confirms the potentially devastating impacts of climate change. If we are to limit human-induced changes to the global climate system, we need to limit the rise in temperature to less than 2°C.

No amount of adaptation will reduce the need to mitigate now. Conversely, mitigation activities can reduce, but never eliminate the need to adapt. Adaptation and mitigation activities must proceed hand-in-hand on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Thus, adequate and predictable funding sources, such as the Least Developed Countries Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund, and the Adaptation Fund of the Kyoto Protocol, need to be operationalised as a matter of urgency.

Roundtable 2: This roundtable must recognise that the transfer of climate-friendly technologies promised (but not delivered) to non-Annex I (NAI) countries in the Framework Convention may become even more illusory if the US has its way at this COP. All the research being proposed on new technologies is just another cop-out for not sharing existing best available GHG abatement technologies (at affordable prices) with NAI countries.

All Annex I (AI) countries (yes US, this includes you) must meet their obligations to facilitate technology transfer and not hide behind intellectual property rights and private sector ownership of such technologies. At the same time, the G77 & China must be ready to utilise technologies made available.

It is amazing that nearly ten years after the Framework Convention entered into force, there is still no publicly available comprehensive inventory of climate-friendly technologies that have moved from AI to NAI countries. Such an inventory would document how paltry such transfers have been, and would be more useful than the never-ending workshops that continue to be organised or proposed on this topic.

Roundtable 3: In this roundtable, Parties will be asked to defend their progress to date. For most, this will not be an easy task. The reports fall into three main areas.

First, the science. The IPCC's Third Assessment Report outlines the consensus of the world's climate scientists that action to reduce emissions is more urgent than ever. The bald-faced efforts of some Parties – foremost among them the US – to censor, ignore and deny the science cannot hide this basic fact.

Second, to paraphrase the last US president, “it's the emissions, stupid!” The EU, Canada and Japan have made far less progress towards meeting their reduction targets than they should have at this stage. While the EU in particular is implementing a range of interesting policies, these have been half-hearted. All Parties need to strengthen their efforts. However they are being made to look good by contrast with the US, whose transparently absurd climate policy

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No pay, no play

It seems incomprehensible that anyone could imagine the Secretariat provides poor value for money. Therefore, it is important to provide a “real-world” perspective to some components of the row over the biennium budget.

Firstly, Parties' objection to the overall size of the proposed budget of US\$36 million: While this looks like a nine per cent increase over the 2002 to 2003 period, depreciation of the dollar since then means it barely covers the increase in Secretariat costs. Japan in particular should be ashamed for refusing a minimal increase in its own share of the budget.

Secondly, the US's irresponsible and unprincipled request to be spared the cost of contributing to the Kyoto Protocol on the grounds it is not a Party to it: The Protocol is a protocol to its parent treaty, UNFCCC, which is an international law already in force, including in the US. Article 3.1 of the UNFCCC applies equally to the US as it does to any other country.

Thirdly, the issue of the interim allocation for the Protocol. This would ensure the Kyoto mechanisms can be operationalised. Unless this fund is secured – and soon – the prompt start of the CDM will be seriously under threat.

When compared to the war in Iraq – already costing the US \$80 billion – the fight over the budget, valued at \$36 million, is petty.

The problem (apparently) is that the Bush administration's budget for the “American Century” does not foresee any money for the fight against climate change. As the US continues to search for weapons of mass destruction, it should also consider climate change.

To reiterate – the US must pay its dues to continue to participate in the Kyoto process.

US climate policy – Lost in translation

The Bush administration will be busy promoting its science and technology initiatives in Milan this week. This is a distraction from the important work of advancing the Kyoto Protocol.

It is absurd for the US to state long-term technology “is the only acceptable, cost-effective option” and is in “stark contrast” to the Kyoto Protocol. While long-term technology research is essential, it will not produce new technologies for at least 10 years. In fact, it is more likely to take 20 years or more. Meanwhile, the Bush administration ignores the many emission reduction technologies available today, and the key role of binding emissions’ limits in bringing new climate-friendly technologies into the market.

The Bush administration’s climate “policy” represents a false “alternative” to the Kyoto Protocol. Its voluntary domestic goal to reduce “emissions *intensity*” by 18 percent will let actual US emissions surge by 14 percent over the next ten years to 32 percent above 1990 levels by 2012. It is stunningly arrogant for the

world’s largest global warming polluter to say this is credible climate policy.

For good measure, the Bush administration has systematically tried to undermine the science. The head of the US delegation, Ms Paula Dobriansky, stated recently that “the extent to which the human-made portion of greenhouse gases is causing temperatures to rise is still unknown.” This is an extreme exaggeration of the uncertainties, given that the most recent IPCC report finds “there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities,” a finding confirmed by top US government researchers writing in Science just last week.

US CAN groups will discuss the Bush administration’s campaign to block domestic emission reductions and to confuse climate science at a side event at 18.00 today. Let us jointly make sure the truth behind the Bush administration’s climate policy does not get lost in translation by the US delegation here at COP9.

SCCF: Let’s get cracking

Getting the SCCF up and running could be the best thing coming out of this COP. ECO is happy Switzerland, the EU and other climate friendly Parties responded to Eco’s call to put money down on the table. Other Parties – especially those most responsible for climate change – must now do the same.

SCCF financing should be new, additional, adequate and predictable. While national communications and other relevant information could be the basis for funding eligibility, the specific context of individual countries must also be taken into account.

– *Honest dialogue, from front page* is not defensible on any level. The policy actually aims for continued increases, rather than reductions, in GHG emissions. And as the coal and oil-centered energy legislation now before the Congress makes clear, US politicians are more than willing to weaken environmental standards and hand over billions of dollars of additional tax subsidies to polluting industry along the way. The US delegation is attempting to defend this approach with a stomach-turning mix of scientific distortion and barefaced deceit.

Finally, the financial commitments made time and again by the North to the South seem

Mainstreaming climate change into national development policies and referring to the Millennium Development Goals are welcome additions. However these should not become a stumbling block to additional funding the SCCF requires to address adaptation, which should be its highest priority.

Parties should develop clear and simple guidelines to operationalise the SCCF soon. ECO regards G77 & China’s proposal of expedited procedures for small-scale adaptation as a positive step forward. Finally, OPEC must stop stalling the process.

as far from coming to fruition as ever. These are commitments under a Convention that entered into force nearly a decade ago. But still far too little money is being made available for adaptation, technology transfer or assistance for Least Developed Countries.

Any honest accounting of “progress” must show an embarrassingly long list of things still to do.

In all of these roundtables, ministers must avoid the twin temptations of papering over differences or engaging in stale finger-pointing in a futile attempt to shift the blame. It is time for honest dialogue leading to real progress. Nothing less is acceptable.

“Fossil of the Day” Award

We would like to correct and clarify the rationale for last Friday’s awards. “Norway and New Zealand were joint winners – both due to their performance on the GMO issue. New Zealand clearly deserved this award for opposing the explicit exclusion of invasive alien species and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The paragraph for the explicit exclusion was initially tabled by Norway, which is still – together with Switzerland – at the forefront against turning the Kyoto Protocol into a subsidy mechanism for invasive alien species and GMOs. Despite being a ‘best ally’, Norway was nominated and elected for the fossil of the day award because of its bad tactical move in last Wednesday’s contact group on sinks. Norway was perceived by most parties to withdraw its clear language by tabling its ‘Norwegian proposal for alternative text to paragraph 16(e)’. In the following two days, this (temporary) retreat by Norway unfolded to be a major hurdle to a successful negotiation on this pivotal issue. This – in our assessment – clearly warranted a ‘friendly fire’ fossil award.”

LUIGI

Last week the Prince of Monaco announced his country will ratify the Kyoto Protocol! Yes, it is a small boost towards entry into force, but do not underestimate the magnitude of the challenge they face – after all, their emissions are up 48 per cent over the past ten years. Fortunately, his most serene highness prepared a list of measures for cutbacks: a) No more champagne served at the roulette tables; b) FC Monaco to plant two blades of grass for every one it tramples during matches; c) Next year’s Formula One Grand Prix to be raced with VW Lupos; d) CERs from monoculture sinks’ plantations.

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