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Must-do's for Ministers in Milano

Dear Ministers: Welcome to Milano and a negotiating process in limbo.

Most of the major Kyoto implementation issues have been resolved prior to your arrival, and await only ratification by Russia to be adopted at COP10. Meanwhile, formal negotiations over what comes after the first Kyoto budget period will not begin until 2005, even though informal discussions have run rampant in these halls this past week. There are no declarations to be issued at this COP and no new mandates to be negotiated.

What is needed – desperately – is leadership. You must use these next few days to set a clear path forward.

You should start by recalling why we are here. The earth is warming and the impacts are starting to appear. Natural ecosystems are at risk, as are cultures. For many like the Inuit, it is not a matter of adaptation but of preservation of their entire way of life. Adaptation assistance is essential, and must be better funded and implemented. But no amount of adaptation assistance will suffice if heat-trapping emissions long continue to rise. Aggressive mitigation measures are an essential precondition to any effective long-term adaptation strategy.

You must also acknowledge the urgency of

–continued second page, column 1

Agreement on sinks

Parties reached agreement yesterday on the use of sinks in the CDM after two years of negotiations. This is an encouraging step forward for the Kyoto Protocol and demonstrates the success of the multilateral process.

Climate Action Network (CAN) notes the agreement reached today has some positive elements – including the fact that an agreement was reached. CAN is relieved Parties have finally agreed sinks projects are fundamentally different to energy projects. Sinks entail significant risks of socio-economic and environmental impacts, and therefore warrant extended information requirements. While relatively weak in the current agreement – it is a step forward from the lack of will to even recognise social and environmental values by some in Marrakech. In addition, the provisions for the treatment of non-permanence require at least ongoing monitoring and liability. Canada finally saw the light on this issue.

In last night's SBSTA plenary intervention, Canada seemed to have also woken up to the fact that biodiversity and local communities are important in sinks projects and need to be considered. It is a shame they did not realise this last week and play a more constructive role in this debate.

However, the sinks agreement clearly fails in three key areas:

- No exclusion of monoculture plantations. In trying to protect the world's ecosystems from climate change, the Kyoto Protocol, paradoxically, could allow the creation of vast biological deserts in the form of monoculture plantations. These projects will

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The wake up call on climate change required for some members of the US Congress

Threat to North's cultural survival

The North-South tension that pulls at the fabric from which the Kyoto Protocol is woven is profound and sometimes even productive. The "shared but differentiated responsibility" principle is evidence of this.

As Ministers gather to speak at Roundtable One on climate change, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development, let us hope Northern countries listen closely to the gravity of impacts in the South. Moreover, let us hope they are cognisant of voices not represented in this process but calling for action from their own backyards. The "Voice from the North," according to Inuit Circumpolar Conference Chair, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, "reveals a human face to global climate change."

Watt-Cloutier, who will speak at a side event today at 18.00 in the Lecce Room on Arctic climate impacts and human rights, will testify to climate change's displacement of communities, the loss of human life from exceptional ecosystem changes, and the

potential extinction of species on which her people depend for their existence. At stake is the cultural survival of Inuit as a people.

In an exclusive interview with ECO, she said: "Time is running out for the Arctic. We need far-reaching, long-term global commitments to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases if the Arctic is to be protected and if our human rights, particularly our human rights to subsistence, are to be respected."

Watt-Cloutier blurs the traditional North-South divide. At the same time, as Arctic ice melts' threaten the existence of Northern people, the way of life of people in small island states is threatened by rising sea levels.

Watt-Cloutier calls on "all states, particularly the US to significantly reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change." Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the US – account for 40 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

Paula distorts reality

US Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, Ms Paula Dobriansky's sudden interest in British history impresses UK-based environmental NGOs. In a recent speech, being circulated at COP9, she recounts the story of London's air quality problems back to the time of King Edward I. Ms Dobriansky concludes the solution to "pea-soupers" (air quality so bad visibility resembled murky pea soup) came from technology not regulation.

This puzzles the NGOs, which have always credited the Clean Air Acts of 1956 and 1968 for cleaning up London's air. The legislation banned smoky fuels and forced industry to build taller chimneys. And they also thought it was the EU vehicle emissions rules, with their mandatory emission standards, which had curbed the smog that plagued London more recently.

The NGOs would like to talk to Ms Dobriansky about this and other thorny problems of recent history, such as the cause of the alarming, unexpected increase in the use of the Thames River barrier, which is London's defence against coastal flooding.

– *Must-do's for Ministers, from front page action.* The world's biggest polluter claims that long-term research on breakthrough technologies is a preferable alternative to near-term action to reduce emissions.

This is a false choice, and a transparent attempt by the Bush administration to deflect mounting anger at home and abroad about its "know nothing, do nothing" approach to global warming. The American public is catching on to this charade, and a growing number of states, cities and businesses are taking actions that expose the fallacy of the Bush administration's claim that cutting emissions is bad for the US economy.

You can best contribute to this pressure for change in the US by demonstrating your resolve to move ahead with meaningful actions at home, and by forcefully rejecting the utterly irresponsible Bush position at every opportunity.

You should also strive to reduce the North-South tensions that have all too often been present in these discussions.

These tensions have been stoked by cynical fossil fuel interests that run advertising campaigns in the North claiming Kyoto is flawed because it does not require major developing countries to take on binding emissions limits, while telling those same developing countries that taking on such limits will hurt their economies. These polluters hope

that North-South polarisation will stalemate climate negotiations, blocking actions that will reduce emissions, and with them their profits.

Do not fall into this trap. What is needed is partnership, not polarisation.

The way forward is clear. The North must fulfil its obligations to take the lead on emissions limits, technology transfer and financial assistance.

The South must seek to pursue economic development in ways that minimise increases in GHG emissions, as global emissions need to peak and then start to decline in the not-too-

To TAR or not to TAR?

After four rounds of submissions by Parties, four sessions and "at least 60 hours of meeting" according to a delegate, Parties finally agreed last night to a text on the Third Assessment Report (TAR) of the IPCC that falls short of addressing the issues of mitigation and adaptation.

We were hoping for something more; something that would eventually provide guidance to the global community to keep the temperature of the planet below 2°C. After all, preventing dangerous climate is the reason we are here.

Somehow, yet another workshop to look at "sustainable development, opportunities and solutions, and vulnerability and risk" just does not cut it.

Let us hope Parties realise, sooner rather than later, that tackling the issue of climate change is in everyone's best interest, and must involve adaptation and mitigation. Those that fail to realise this necessity should be TARred and feathered.

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Such "decarbonisation" strategies must be advanced simultaneously with negotiation of deeper emissions' cuts for Annex I countries for the second commitment period and beyond. The details can be negotiated down the road. What you must do here in Milano is frame the issues and set a constructive tone. Most of all, you must make clear to the people of the world that you will take real action to protect their future.

US's terrible trio of climate

The three US senators who have just arrived in Milan to attend the climate change (CC) negotiations as part of the US delegation are among the most hostile members of the US Congress to the issue of global warming. Far from representing the American public or the US Congress on the issue of global warming, this terrible trio of CC sceptics are here to highlight and support the Bush administration's continued intransigence on the topic by questioning the science of global warming, and trying to draw doubts about whether there is any human influence to the phenomenon.

Each of the three has received vast sums in campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry, companies that formerly belonged to the now-defunct Global Climate Coalition (GCC) – an anti-Kyoto Protocol industry association – and the mining, automotive, timber, chemical and related manufacturing companies. Together, Senators Inhofe, Craig, and Thomas accepted nearly \$1 million between 1995 and 2000.

Senator Inhofe typifies the position the “Three Blind Mice”. “The whole idea of global warming is something that has been brought up by certain groups that have a lot to benefit from it and has nothing to do with real science,” he said in July 2003 on the floor of

the US Senate.

He added: “Anyone who pays even cursory attention to the issue understands that scientists vigorously disagree over whether human activities are responsible for global warming, or whether those activities will precipitate natural disasters...Without proper knowledge and understanding, alarmists will scare the country into enacting its ultimate goal: Making energy suppression, in the form of harmful mandatory restrictions on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse emissions, the official policy of the United States.”

Senator Larry Craig was quoted in the US Congressional Record on April 20, 1998, saying: “In fact, as more and more American scientists review the available data on global warming, it is becoming increasingly clear that the vast majority believe the commitments for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions made by the administration in the Kyoto Protocol is an unnecessary response to an exaggerated threat that the vice president himself is caught up in making.”

And finally, Senator Craig Thomas, as quoted in the Associated Press on July 31, 2003, in reference to the McCain-Lieberman global warming bill, said: “It will put us out of the fossil fuel business.”

– *Agreement on sinks, from front page* in all likelihood be opposed by stakeholders. CAN encourages investors to refrain from these types of sink projects to avoid sunken investments.

- No exclusion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). An environmental treaty such as the Kyoto Protocol seriously endangers its public support by keeping the door open for GMOs. Trying to solve the climate change problem by using inherently risky GMOs is like trying to put out a fire with gasoline. CAN is deeply concerned about the use of GMOs in sinks and calls on all parties to adopt a “hands off” approach to GMO-CERs. Furthermore, we are concerned by the “invasive” interventions of the US and Australia in the SBSTA plenary. The last time we checked they were “alien species” in Kyoto Protocol negotiations.

• The links between the sinks rules and other multilateral environmental agreements such as Convention on Biological Diversity are not strong enough. The final sinks text does not ensure projects of poor environmental standing are excluded from

the Clean Development Mechanism. CAN will continue to work with CDM Watch, Sinks Watch, local communities and governments to identify and stop poorly designed sinks projects.

CAN wishes to add its thanks to the Co-Chairs for their perseverance in concluding a text with so much complexity and which involved so many Parties with so many agendas.

Gender should be integrated further into considerations of policy and action as the climate process moves towards implementation. It has largely been overlooked as an issue at COP negotiations so far.

Development research and experience show women in developing countries are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. The natural and human capital that many of the poor rely on for surviving climatic shocks and stresses are accessed mainly by women. In addition, the burden of limited access to energy falls more heavily on women in developing countries.

Boost for renewables

Issues relating to renewables will gain a major boost next year when “Renewables 2004” is held from June 1 to 4 in Bonn. The conference will provide an opportunity for countries serious about such issues to meet and agree on common action.

Renewables 2004 is driven by two developments. One is the “Renewable energies – the way forward” declaration signed by more than 80 governments at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last year, stating their willingness to work together to put forward renewable energies. The other is the creation of the network CURES (Citizens United for Renewable Energies and Sustainability) at an international meeting in October.

The CURES Declaration “The future is renewable” has been widely distributed at COP9. Signed by more than 150 NGOs worldwide, it calls on like-minded countries to lead the way, and for those participating in the Johannesburg Renewable Energy Coalition (JREC) to come forth with their national targets and fulfil the promises they made in Johannesburg.

Renewables 2004 should send a clear signal many countries are serious about meeting the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate poverty and reduce dangerous climate change through clean and affordable energy. It is hoped many countries there will agree to new and ambitious commitments.

The conference, it is also hoped, will also launch a long-term process of multilateral cooperation for renewables. This should give the necessary impulses to help overcome the many pitfalls of the “tyranny of the slowest” that now hold so many UN processes hostage.

The climate a-gender

Adaptation funding should therefore also be shaped by gender considerations, and CDM projects should integrate gender perspectives into project design. As climate instruments on the table at present are not gender neutral, an engendered approach is crucial if they are to deliver on sustainable development.

It is vitally important that women's perspectives from around the world are included in the climate negotiations. They must also be taken back and worked into national processes on climate change. To reinforce these messages, a Gender Day side event will be organised at COP10.

“Fossil of the Day” Award

Saudi Arabia won first prize yesterday for insisting at the contact group on the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) that like AOSIS and LDCs, Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries be compensated for the lost income from the export of fossil fuels (the main source of human-induced climate change).

They also receive the award for insisting at the contact group on 5/CP7 that OPEC countries be treated like AOSIS in terms of adaptation, and for blocking the negotiations by arguing that if they agree on one item, negotiations will go further.

Canada, New Zealand and China were

jointly awarded second place for not supporting the clear exclusion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Canada and New Zealand were recipients of a fossil on this issue last week so it is a double hit for both countries, which are rapidly engineering a bad reputation for themselves. China joins the hall of infamy this week for also not opposing the specific exclusion of GMOs, paving the way for genetically modified trees in sinks projects all around the world.

GMOs have been altered at a fundamental genetic level in ways that could never occur naturally. Further, there have been no long-term studies on their ecological impacts and risks.

LUIGI

A brief power outage in the Fiera yesterday gave delegates a taste of daily life for billions of people around the world who do not have access to electricity, broadband or hotmail. Shortly after screens went blank around the computer room, desperation set in and there were cries for more research into fusion. When the lights flickered into action just moments later, a collective sigh of relief welcomed the return to normalcy. Abandoning rash investment into hopeless energy technologies, cooler heads now decided the best policy was to look for some free food. A glass of champagne and several side event sandwiches later, the struggle to save the world from itself continued.

It is not every day that Luigi gets to ogle scantily clad fashion models in the interest of saving the world, but yesterday's launch of the climate symbol provided the occasion. That the clothing line did not seem to extend to accessories like undergarments may have limited its broad appeal, but the warm reception from those attending shows the concept clearly has legs.

THANKS

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Milan's residents and COP9 participants rallied for the climate and peace last Saturday