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Inuit to take on the US?

In the face of ongoing climate change that is threatening the survival of Inuit communities, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) is exploring legal options to protect their culture, livelihood and lives, and the US could be its first target.

By announcing it is considering filing a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a body of the Organization of American States, the Inuit is also injecting the element of human rights into global climate change relations.

Speaking for the 155,000 Inuit living in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia, ICC Chair, Ms Sheila Watt-Cloutier, said at a side-event yesterday: "ICC will defend the human rights of Inuit. We are exploring how best to do this, likely through the Inter-American system invoking the 1948 Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man."

The petition would likely be against the US, being the world's biggest polluter. While the IACHR does not have the power to force

the US to reduce its emissions or to award compensation for the damage it is causing the Inuit, it could issue an authoritative statement of Inuit human rights, and the violation of those rights.

Global warming is undermining the livelihood of the Inuit. Ms Watt-Cloutier said: "Inuit hunters understand nature's rhythms and cycles. Their environmental knowledge is detailed and accurate, and is passed down from generation to generation. But many Inuit hunters now find the weather unpredictable, and travelling over the sea-ice is dangerous. Hunters are being lost in the sea-ice in areas that, traditionally, have been safe."

Further, findings of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, an extensive study to be released next September by the eight-nation Arctic Council, suggest that unchecked global warming would so fundamentally alter Arctic habitat that polar bears, walrus and ringed seals would disappear.

"Where will we then go for food?" Ms Watt-Cloutier asked. "What will become of the Inuit?"

She urged Parties, particularly the US, to reduce their GHG emissions. "Time is running out. We need far-reaching, long-term global commitments to reduce GHG emissions if the Arctic is to be protected and our human rights are to be respected," Ms Watt-Cloutier said.

Agree on SCCF at COP9

ECO was very disappointed late last night to hear that Parties could not reach an agreement on the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) after several days of tedious negotiations.

Instead, the SBI chair suggested that the SCCF draft paper with several brackets be forwarded to the President of the COP.

This was clearly the low point of COP9 and developing countries such as Nigeria (on behalf of G77), Argentina and China, expressed their discontent with the handling of this matter.

"With this, donor countries would pay for the economic diversification of rich OPEC members..."

Annex I countries will find it extremely difficult to provide funds for the SCCF if the suggested paragraph 4bis is accepted.

With this, donor countries would pay for the economic diversification of rich OPEC members at the expense of countries most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

We suggest the "real" G77 countries not let themselves be taken hostage by OPEC nations any longer if they want funding for adaptation and technology transfer to go ahead.

COP9 must operationalise the SCCF as a matter of urgency. ECO expects the COP President to put all his efforts into reaching an agreement to give us a reason to celebrate the sixth birthday of the Kyoto Protocol which falls today.



COP9 delegates got a taste of climate-inspired fashion on Wednesday

Wasted opportunity with 5/CP.7

There has been little progress on implementing decision 5/CP.7 due to the negative efforts of Saudi Arabia. As a result, identification of gaps and actions to deal with the adverse effects of climate change has been postponed to the next SBI meeting.

This is unfortunate as AOSIS had raised some good proposals on insurance and risk transfer mechanisms for vulnerable countries,

which were backed by a substantial number of Annex I countries. Unfortunately, the Saudis would have none of this.

The delay is a disservice to communities most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Work on insurance, risk assessment, risk management and risk reduction for them needs to start quickly.

The Gold Standard – Sustainable energy first

By Liam Salter and Mark Kenber

After two years of consultation amongst environmental, business and governmental organisations, the final criteria for the Gold Standard for CDM and JI were launched yesterday. The Gold Standard is a voluntary high quality CDM/JI methodology that ensures CDM and JI energy projects contribute to both long-term climate protection and sustainable development in host countries.

Based on three screens – project eligibility (focusing on renewables and end-use energy efficiency), additionality and sustainability – the Gold Standard gives project developers, carbon buyers and host countries certainty that their projects are additional to business as usual investment, do not generate inflated credits and deliver on sustainable development goals.

Consistency with the CDM Executive Board's Project Design Document keeps transaction costs low. The voluntary nature of the scheme means that issues of sovereignty and choice are left unimpeded. As a result the

Gold Standard is supported by representatives of host and buyer countries, the private sector and the environmental NGO community worldwide.

Many Annex 1 governments have declared their support for sustainable energy, particularly at WSSD and through the creation of a number of initiatives such as the REEEP, JREC and the Bonn 2004 Renewables Conference.

The Gold Standard strengthens the link between the carbon market and sustainable energy. It provides one way for Annex I governments and companies to move from words to action.

By committing to purchasing Gold Standard carbon credits, they can show that they support the CDM and JI as tools for promoting sustainable energy projects with clear benefits to host countries, rather than solely as cheap escape routes from their Kyoto commitments.

“Fossil of the Day” Award

The USA garnered yet another first place in yesterday's Fossil of the Day awards for two separate incidents. The first was for the US head of delegation, Ms Paula Dobrianski, for stating at a press conference that President Bush had personally noted in public that warming and increased temperatures had been observed, and that they were “cyclical changes.” The second was for the US comment in the plenary about the inclusion of GMOs in sinks. The US was concerned that a Kyoto Protocol decision could allow GMOs to be excluded from the CDM, but that it “could allow a decision to go forward”.

Saudi Arabia and China won joint second place for leading all the more than 140

countries of the G77 to oppose text in the SCCF proposed by the EU, despite it being beneficial to the majority of them. Despite the “operationalisation” of the SCCF being a G77 priority for COP9, the Saudis, keenly supported by the Chinese, led the reluctant G77 pack to the EU meeting room to lobby for economic diversification text. Saudi Arabia was also nominated for its obstructing strategy regarding the IPCC TAR. The Saudis, who did not attend the workshop organised by the Secretariat just before the COP, asked for another series of workshops to be organised.

Third place went to Canada for being a poor sport in the final sinks-CDM contact group.

Kyoto is six today: Join us for a party

Today, December 11, is the sixth anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol – the common factor which unites all of us present here in Milan.

Many of us were present and will vividly remember the day in 1997 when the Protocol was born at COP3.

To commemorate this great occasion, CAN is throwing a party. It will begin at 18.00 and be held at the Climate Change kiosk on level one. All delegates are invited to join us.

Activities that will take place include a speech by UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Ms Joke Waller Hunter. Coffee and cake will be served.

LUIGI

Luigi recently stumbled upon an intriguing document giving advice for new Saudi negotiators. Apparently all the following are to be considered essential techniques for constructive engagement at the COPs.

- If possible, be the G77 & China Chair for any issue more important than photocopying. Become curiously deaf when other members attempt to present their positions.
- Intervene immediately after any G77 & China Chair and twist whatever they have said back to a Saudi-only position.
- Sit as close as possible to any G77 & China Chair and attempt to put words into their mouth. If possible learn ventriloquism – insert hand if necessary.
- Crack knuckles loudly when an AOSIS delegate refers to the needs of the most vulnerable countries.
- Avoid sunlight, garlic and mirrors.
- For free legal and procedural advice please email opecsupport@exxonmobil.com.

Intriguing stuff – Luigi will be on the lookout for any tell-tale behaviour...

THANKS

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