

# eco



*ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. ECO is produced co-operatively by the Climate Action Network at the UNFCCC meetings in Cancun in November-December 2010. ECO email: [eco@sunlightdata.com](mailto:eco@sunlightdata.com) – ECO website: <http://climatenetwork.org/eco-newsletters> – Editorial/Production: Fred Heutte*

## The US Has Issues . . .

ECO has grown increasingly frustrated with the US negotiating stance over the past week. It is difficult to understand the inflexibility on a broad range of issues including mitigation, technology transfer and adaptation.

It is clear that the US is unwilling to let any area advance as long as there remain challenges in any other. This high-risk strategy seriously threatens progress here in Cancun and in the UNFCCC going forward.

First, the US talks a lot about transparency for others, but what it really needs is a mirror. The US refusal to agree to increased transparency in long-term finance through a common reporting format, along with its objection to negotiating any guidelines for Annex I accounting in the LCA, is diminishing trust.

The intransigence is all the more troubling as the US seems opposed to 5 simple words that should be noncontroversial for a country advocating transparency: comparable, consistent, complete, transparent and accurate.

With this kind of stalling, other countries will remain suspicious of Washington, especially after the climate bill died in the Senate. Don't worry, America, we're not asking you to go metric. But there is no 'balance' (another favorite US word) without comparability.

At the same time, the US is delaying progress on technology transfer, a core commitment since the beginning of the Convention and an issue on which we've already spent too much time. It leaves ECO incredulous – a workable proposal is finally on the table, but the US says parties should only 'consider' establishing a technology transfer mechanism here in Cancun.

We've 'considered' long enough. Even the Copenhagen Accord clearly states that leaders

agreed to 'establish a Technology Mechanism . . . operational immediately'.

The US championed the need for a technology centre and network and is even developing some regional centre pilots. So why the heartburn over the proposal on the table?

Concerns by US clean tech companies about a burdensome and bureaucratic UN body are misinformed. Our warming world needs precisely what a multilateral mechanism can deliver: coordinated planning and implementation to expedite and scale up what poor countries and communities need to transition quickly to a low-emissions future.

As if these positions weren't obstructive enough, the US is also delaying agreement on the establishment of an Adaptation Committee. The move to deal with it under SBSTA is an approach the US rejected years ago.

The process requires a dedicated institutional arrangement on adaptation that can initiate further action and is not limited to technical advice. This cannot be done by existing institutions outside the Convention.

The US isn't opposed to assisting poor people who are vulnerable to climate change. So where are all these roadblocks to forward movement in the adaptation negotiations coming from?

Again, the US focuses on 'consideration' of a planning process for least developed countries. The time for 'consideration' is over. It's time to 'establish', because developing countries need action now.

The world simply does not have time for these dangerous strategies. US Special Envoy Todd Stern said it best: "Let's not do nothing . . . Let's not be hung up for year after year after year."

## Final Details for the Adaptation Committee

Parties are still working hard to agree the functions of the Adaptation Committee. Here are some suggestions to assist progress on this key element of the Adaptation text.

The main functions of the Adaptation Committee should be oversight and coordination of the various fragmented and quite inadequate strands of support currently available for adaptation – whether technical, scientific or financial. ECO sees the Committee as primarily a body of experts rather than a political body, though appointments should be made by Parties and be equitably representational.

Some Parties want to limit the role of the Committee to simply providing scientific advice and technical support to facilitate country level adaptation activities. The role of the Committee itself should not be to provide advice, but to ensure that Parties have access to advice – coordination of available information, highlighting gaps, building synergies and reporting on those gaps to the SBI.

Most Parties want the Nairobi Work Programme to be extended, and the Committee could work with the NWP on filling the gaps in support. The NWP has been an imperfect vehicle for providing scientific and technical support to Parties, in part because it has had a very small budget in relation to its tasks. So there is room for expanding its capacity.

A considerable amount of knowledge and information relevant to adaptation is held in a wide variety of institutions and networks at the national, regional and international levels. The Adaptation Committee can syn-

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thesize and enhance information from all sources, including communities, practitioners, regional centres, NGOs, universities and UN bodies, facilitating access to the body of knowledge crucial for adaptation.

The Adaptation Committee should not be directly linked to the financial mechanism. But it should have a role in pointing Parties towards the most relevant fund for their needs and highlighting the priority areas for funding. It is important for the Adaptation Committee to have an oversight role to assess the impact of adaptation work, review support to parties, identify the gap areas and make recommendations for further action to the SBI and SBSTA.

Annex I countries should support creating the Adaptation Committee in Cancun. Going forward it can play a pivotal role in building the resilience of poor and vulnerable communities and countries.

## HFC-23 in the CDM

As if the very hardworking President of this COP didn't have enough on her plate at the moment, an old CDM monster that should have been killed off years ago is again rearing its ugly head – our old adversary, the super greenhouse gas HFC-23.

A couple weeks ago, the CDM Executive Board (EB) recognized that HFC-23 abatement projects under the CDM do very little to stop global warming – in fact, they actually increase emissions. And the EB took the commendable decision to suspend and revise the crediting methodology.

Now here's the confusing part. Despite the evidence that HFC-23 plant operators have been merrily gaming the CDM for years, the EB decided to issue almost 20 million HFC-23 credits that had been on ice since last summer. Maybe the Caribbean heat had something to do with it. Corporate investors, who have been lobbying like fury against proposals to amend the HFC-23 methodology and shore up the environmental integrity of the CDM, couldn't believe their good luck.

To cut a long story short, a coalition of concerned CDM observers have written to the COP President asking to correct the EB's momentary lapse of judgment. Acknowledging a climate scandal and then allowing those involved to continue cashing in on their investments does not look good and undermines faith in the UNFCCC process.

So, Madame President, show industry who's really in charge here and put the HFC-23 lobbyists back in their box!

## The Tangled Web of Waste

Once again, the United Nations Environment Programme has done its homework in Cancun. The newly published study *Waste and Climate Change: Global Trends and Strategy Framework* presents a comprehensive approach to waste reduction and recycling that takes into account the environmental and social impacts of landfill gas systems (LFG) and waste incineration.

But at the same time, the new report raises concern. There is an apparent double standard between what the report says and what the UNEP's Risoe Centre of Analysis is actually supporting. Unfortunately, the Centre's head insisted on promoting waste-to-energy technologies in the CDM pipeline at a press conference to launch the report held earlier this week.

The good news is that the UNEP report draws attention to waste management, as landfills are an important source of methane, definitely a key target for climate action. This is important because rapid urbanisation in

developing countries, where waste management systems remain largely unregulated, has led to an increase in landfilling.

The UNEP report does a good job when it emphasizes that waste reduction is by far the best approach to waste management, and recycling is indisputably the next best. And it wisely focuses on a number of environmental problems related to waste incineration and LFG, including soil contamination and toxic emissions.

The report also acknowledges the risk and damage that these end-of-pipe technologies have on the informal recycling sector. There are 15 million people worldwide who earn their livelihood through recycling, and their health and lives are threatened when otherwise recyclable materials are destroyed in incinerators and landfills.

Given all that, why did the press conference panel say that they support expansion of LFG in Africa through the CDM? The panelists said that carbon markets can develop waste-to-energy projects as the way to deal with methane emissions.

Hang on a minute! Did they actually read the report that they were launching? And is the UNEP going to act on its own report, or will its implementation programme be driven by politics and the commercial interests of the privatized waste sector?

ECO would like the Risoe Centre to recall that the methodologies for solid waste management projects were called into revision by the CDM's Methodology Panel last week in Cancun. We expect this will highlight that these end-of-pipe technologies are far from being science-based safe solutions.

So we had good news in the beginning and huge questions in the end. Perhaps the written words of the report will remain, while the spoken words will be gone with the wind.

## Emitters Anonymous

The first step towards recovery is to admit you have a problem. The second is recognizing that you're not alone, and those with the same problem can help each other and share a vision for a better future.

Let's face it, a lot of countries have a pretty serious Gigatonne Gap problem (we're looking at you, Brollies!). So at your next Emitters Anonymous plenary, try this out as the first step toward a shared vision: '*Deeply concerned* that the aggregate level of ambition of the targets and actions from Parties [reference to CMP and COP anchoring] is not sufficient to meet the long-term global goal as defined in paragraph [x]'.

For a second step, make sure that the 1(b)(i) text acknowledges the insufficiency of the Annex 1 pledges and establishes a process, with a deadline at COP 17, to upgrade targets. And for your third step, acknowledge under 1(b)(ii) that developing countries could do more, in the context of equity and sufficient support from developed countries.

Now, doesn't that feel good, lifting the Gigatonne weight from your shoulders?

## Fossil of the Day

### #1 – Japan

*For refusing to change its inflexible rejection of a second Kyoto commitment period.*

### #2 – US

*For delaying establishment of an Adaptation Committee.*

### #3 – US

*For saying Parties should only 'consider' establishing the new Technology Mechanism.*