

Capacity Building Sinking Without a Trace?

ECO laments the loss of NGO hopes for a radically upgraded and revitalised approach to capacity building (CB) in developing countries. At the mid-point of COP-17, this possibility is in danger of sinking without a trace.

ECO is also baffled. Baffled as to how this situation has come about. Perhaps it derives from some form of memory deficit. Just about a decade ago at COP-7, UNFCCC agreed the Marrakech Capacity Building Framework in 2/CP.7. This provided the skeleton key to unblock a rather nasty case of mistrust over financial support by developed countries for action by developing countries responding to climate change.

This is strikingly similar to the situation today in the LCA. COP 7 was examining how to best utilise the fact that the Bonn Agreements had secured some hastily cobbled-together financial pledges along with barely-defined new financial architecture (the Adaptation Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund and SCCF). Given the uncertainty involved in both the new financial architecture and the scale and reliability of its sources, COP 7 decided the smart move would be to concentrate on what matters: the front end of the delivery pipeline. That front end is capacity building.

Given the obvious comparability, it is completely baffling as to how the LCA ended up developing the CB text currently under consideration. A year ago at the mid-point of Cancun, the Group of 77 and China was arguing along very similar lines as civil society for a new UNFCCC structure for CB, tasked with the oversight, co-ordination, streamlining and optimisation of capacity building, using a newly-created body capable of interacting with the emergent new architectures for mitigation, adaptation, technology, finance and MRV.

Cancun deferred this issue to Durban. The mystery is how readily the G77 have already dropped their demand for a new CB structure under Cancun para 137 and agreed with the EU and Umbrella Group that life is far simpler if Durban just creates some sort of talking shop ("forum") to review CB under Cancun para 136, thus killing two birds with one stone.

On the other hand, ECO still prefers the

NGO BEACH PARTY

SATURDAY, December 3

19:00 – 06:00

at

New Beach

Lower Marine Parade - opposite Dr Pixley Kaseme St. circle

Food! Drinks! Local Bands and DJs!

Conference Badge Is Your Entrance Ticket



CB Co-ordinating Body (CBCB) mapped out over two years ago. The problem is that the broad coalition of LDCs, SIDS, AOSIS and African countries that co-operated so effectively in getting a new approach to CB agreed in Marrakech appears to have sunk without a trace.

ECO has certainly not given up on this. But we would respectfully request that developing country Parties dig out the text they were so forcefully promoting only a year ago, and also remind themselves of the success at Marrakech.

Transportation

Conference Shuttle Bus:
From COP17 Transportation Hub take SOUTH BEACH shuttle. Get off at STOP 6: SOUTH BEACH.

Taxi:

Ask to get off at ORtambo/Marine Parade near New Beach. Across from Tropicana Hotel.

People Mover:

Beach Line or City Line. Get off at Beach Terminal Stop.

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Launching the 'Ambition Work Programme'

We are hearing delegates are having sleepless nights because of the yawning gap between current mitigation pledges and what's needed for a credible 2° C pathway. Perhaps not all of them are genuinely worried because of the implications for humanity.

Some may just feel uncomfortable to be reminded that they have not done the homework they gave themselves back in Cancun. Developed countries promised to look at options and ways to increase levels of ambition, and then actually increase them. It really isn't a hard concept to grasp.

There may be some further relief in paras 36-38 and paras 48-51 of last night's new texts. Both texts include a key line: the recognition of the existence of the ambition gap. Parties that attempt to block this recognition into a COP decision can expect to be in a bright spotlight on this matter.

The next logical step is contained in the new text on developed country ambition: to launch work to address (as in "close") the gap.

The new UNEP report clearly identifies this possibility. But instead, we see some tendencies toward stalling rather than making progress towards the 2° C objective. Work needs to start now, as every year of further waffling and delaying tactics will make the task much harder.

Closing the ambition gap will require effort on all sides -- both developed and developing countries.

Developing countries have pledged more mitigation until 2020 than developed countries but can do more (and certainly must be provided sufficient and reliable support to do so). Not all developing countries have pledged their NAMAs yet, and some countries may well be able to increase ambition of already pledged NAMAs.

It would be really good for the work programme to have a deadline set for COP 18 in Qatar as well as a set of clearly articulated outcomes. Otherwise we could end up here forever (or at least until the world melts around us).

By COP18, Parties should have studied all possible options to close the ambition gap, and developed countries should have moved up their pledges in line with science, i.e. to more than 40% below 1990 levels by 2020.

As for inputs, why not ask parties to provide submissions on how to share out the 25-40% reductions, have the Secretariat compile a technical paper, and then negotiate the targets and how to square them with the existing pledges.

In turn, developing countries can register NAMAs that will result in emissions reductions well below business as usual (with sufficient support).

Much work remains to operationalise the NAMA Registry, to establish guidelines for NAMAs, and to register both NAMAs and support. Once these not insignificant tasks are completed (with substantial progress when we meet in Bonn in May 2012), the Secretariat will need to assess whether there is a shortfall in support, and how much this amounts to.

One element of the ambition work programme that Parties should launch here in Durban includes those low carbon strategies that developed countries should launch and implement to achieve near-zero decarbonisation by 2050.

And developing countries need to be encouraged (whilst receiving the support they need) to develop their own strategies. SBSTA should turn toward working out the guidelines for those strategies. All this would provide a significant first step in a more productive direction.

Words to the Wise

At one point in her Thursday briefing for NGOs updating the 50+ issues under negotiation, the Executive Secretary spoke of how various texts were "maturing" since Panama.

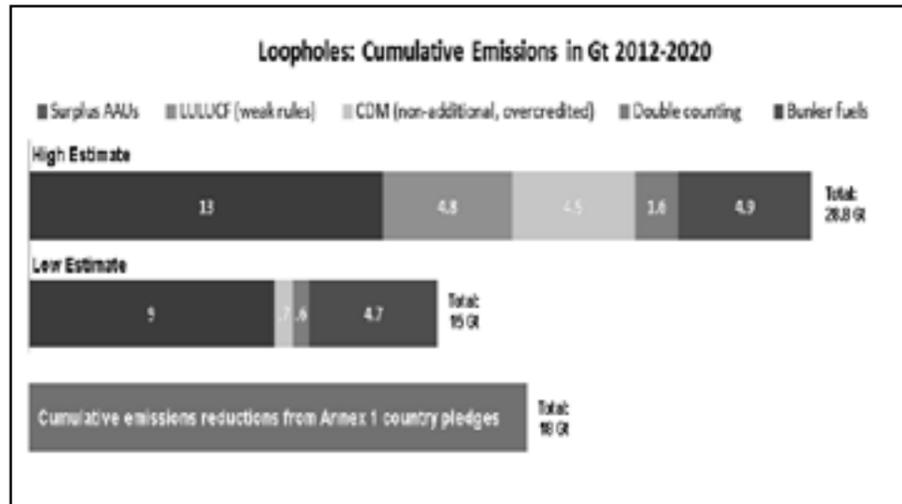
What an interesting choice of words! As we prepare to head into the second week, ECO hopes that attitudes mature along with the texts. Maturity implies a certain wisdom and yet at times this week there has been a distinct lack of such in these talks.



For example, it is unwise to continue to stall on ambition while the evidence for dangerous climate change mounts, the vulnerability of communities around the globe increases, and the time to protect ecosystems and the people who depend on them drains away.

It is unwise to stall on a second commitment period for Kyoto, putting that instrument at risk and undermining political will throughout the negotiations.

It is unwise to block a mandate towards a comprehensive legally binding agreement, sending signals beyond the ICC that the international community is less than fully committed to solving the climate crisis. And finally it is unwise to backtrack from implementing Cancun when the hard-won gains on finance, MRV and the Review are so vital to the future of the climate response regime.



Time to Get Serious About Loopholes

Here's a quick reminder: According to the latest UNEP report, the weak pledges from Annex I countries get us only about a third of the estimated emissions reductions that are needed if we want to have a two-in-three chance of avoiding more than 2° C warming. Unfortunately we have even more bad news: loopholes!

Loopholes are weak rules that undermine reduction targets, usually resulting from political bargaining. The largest loopholes are:

- * The carry-over of 'hot air' due to the over-allocation of AAUs during the first commitment period.

- * 'Creative' accounting rules for forestry and land-use emissions (LULUCF) for Annex I countries.

- * CDM credits from projects that are either over-credited or not additional (would have been built anyway).

- * Double counting – attributing emission reductions to both developed and developing countries.

- * Emissions from aviation and shipping ("bunkers") currently not accounted for under the Kyoto Protocol.

We took a closer look at the loopholes and compared their total size to the cumulative

emission reductions that could be achieved with the current Annex I pledges. We found that the current 'loopholes' in the system could negate their pledges.

In the worst case, they could leave Annex I countries with sufficient allowances and credits to revert to a BAU trajectory, and could even enable the carry-over of surplus allowances beyond 2020.

As you can see, a graph says more than 1,000 words. Our findings match those of the UNEP Report, the Stockholm Environment Institute and others.

The size of these current loopholes is staggering. Strong action is required now to effectively and efficiently close these loopholes if we want to preserve the possibility of staying below 2° C warming.

None of the technical issues around the loopholes are insurmountable. If developed countries are serious about fulfilling their responsibility to lead the fight against climate change, they need to put ambitious targets on the table that are in line with the science and do away with all these rotten loopholes.

There is no plan(et) B. Every passing day of inaction closes the door that much further on preventing catastrophic climate change.



2020 and the Climate: Milestone for Success or Epitaph for Failure

We cannot afford to wait any longer to begin serious mitigation efforts. The emissions reductions pledged in the Cancun Agreement currently set the world on a trajectory for a 4.3° C temperature increase by 2100. According to the new UNEP "Bridging the Gap" report, an additional 6 to 11 GtCO₂e in emissions reductions are needed in order to reach a 2° C goal. The good news is, UNEP shows how to reach the goal with economically and technologically feasible solutions, though the timeframe for success is narrow. If rigorous action is postponed until 2020, success will drift beyond our reach.

Without political incentives to invest in alternative energy, governments will continue to rely on fossil fuels to meet growing energy demands, locking in carbon intensive technologies over the next eight years. According to the International Energy Agency, for every \$1.00 avoided in the power sector before 2020, an additional \$4.30 would need to be spent after 2020 in order to compensate for the increased emissions. Of course, any shortfall in mitigation will drive up adaptation costs and real impacts on lives to a much greater degree.

We need to give our world time for the transition to a low carbon economy. Emissions must peak by 2015 and sharply decline thereafter. The task is formidable. According to UNEP, "the highest average rate of emission reductions over the next four to five decades found in the [integrated assessment model] literature is around 3.5% per year." But based on the C-ROADS model, emissions reductions would need to decline even more, at a rate of at least 4% per year between 2020 and 2050 to reach the 2° C target – a ramp-down rate well beyond historical experience.

Time is of the essence. Clifford Mahlung, a delegate from Jamaica, said, "We've already waited too long. I know countries need a little more time to get over their economic woes -- but eight years?" And we need to agree strong package here in Durban to launch that effort now, as the climate clock is running faster and faster.

CCS in the CDM: The Struggle for Climate Finance

In Cancun, Parties decided that CCS is eligible in the CDM – provided that certain issues such as leakage and liability are resolved. As delegates are negotiating the details of modalities and procedures for this very questionable project type, it looks like Big Fossil is winning once again. This despite the fact that the viability of CCS as a mitigation technology has yet to be proven.

Here in Durban, only a small number of developing countries have raised concerns about the potential long term impacts of CCS. All others have remained suspiciously silent (hello small islands of the world – where are you?) or are eagerly approving paragraph after paragraph. Somehow it doesn't seem likely that they really wanted to negotiate night and day to ensure that the fossil fuel industry gets yet another cash cow to milk!

The current text does not exclude "enhanced oil recovery" – EOR. This is a meth-

od to increase the amount of oil that can be recovered from an underground oil reservoir. By pumping CO₂ underground, previously unrecoverable oil can be pumped up. This can increase the recoverable oil by 30 to 60%. Once all of the oil has been pumped, the depleted reservoir is used a storage site for the CO₂.

On top of the huge profits from the sale of oil and the large fossil fuel subsidies, oil producers could make millions by selling CDM credits for the CO₂ they store. Dear delegates, please get your priorities right! CCS in the CDM is unproven at commercial scale with plenty of scientific uncertainties. More work needs to be done for these lingering issues to be resolved. We do not need yet another loophole for generating carbon credits. Before rushing into setting up a new source for millions of carbon offsets, you might want to get yourselves some QEROs first!

Oxfam's stunt shows women farmers alongside the politicians and negotiators who hold the power in their hands.



Ainhua Goma/Oxfam



You asked for it — Sierra Club shows how countries have their "heads in the sand" when it comes to replacing dirty, climate-damaging fossil fuels with clean energy.

Poetry Corner

Excuse me Australia,
I know it's a closed session, but I would like to ask a question...on rights
Something like...

Who's got the right to light-up a furnace
And just watch it burn through the blackest, darkest

Light of a blind man's midnight – and while its fire still flickers,
Whittle their will
down to a fine-toothed comb
That splits my skin
and crinkles my curls
as I work it through my head.

'Cos I learned, only yesterday
That the Australian delegation
Want to relegate human rights appeals
From their current place in the
Nose-bleed seats of the CDM stadium;
to an empty beat
in what once was bracketed text
that gave businUSs and us
a one sentenced, equal bet, at the
right to appeal.

But maybe I should have guessed
That when you're sitting at a desk,
It's not so easy to remember
what it feels like to set your
filing cabinet on fire,
and find yourself without your suit and tie,
but as a real-life person that
hurts sometimes,
and would really appreciate one night
to appeal their day-to-day, CDM-struggle
through life.

– Chris Wright



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