

eco



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US Compass on Global Warming

ECO wonders why the US delegation is so cryptic about what scientific goal is guiding our efforts to tackle global warming pollution. How can the world steer the ship towards safe shores if we don't have a compass? If the US is serious about addressing this critical issue, as it frequently states at the highest level of government, then it should have no problem coming forward with a science-driven direction.

Science and pragmatism demand that we hold the increase in global temperature as far below 2°C as possible. To keep negotiations on track, the US should make this position clear before the G8 economic summit in Italy next month.

We all know that global warming will have severe (in many cases catastrophic) impacts on populations and countries throughout the world. The US government's own scientific analysis shows that the impacts on the US will be serious as well – heat waves, floods, hurricanes, wildfire, and drought. All

of these issues will be further aggravated as the temperature rises.

A growing number of US groups and elected officials have already put forward their visions for a world that keeps global temperature rise well below 2°C. Consider the:

- Waxman-Markey bill that passed out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee;
- Recommendations for the Obama administration's transition by the 29 largest environmental, conservation, and development groups in the US; and
- Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007, which then-Senator Obama co-sponsored.

ECO understands that the Obama administration is undertaking a science-driven process to steer its course to limit global warming. With top-notch scientists, including President Obama's own science advisor, ECO has to ask: what's taking so long?

Thanks for Nothing Japan

ECO wonders if Japan is serious about its commitment to foster strong ties and 'save' the Pacific from the impacts of climate change. Three weeks ago in Hokkaido, Japan, Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso adopted a declaration under the theme 'We are islanders – towards an eco-friendly and rich Pacific'.

The declaration specifically highlighted "the importance of cooperating in appropriate international fora, in particular the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, towards the establishment of a fair and effective framework beyond 2012 in which all major economies would participate in a responsible manner. Recognizing that *deep cuts* in global emissions will be required to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention..."

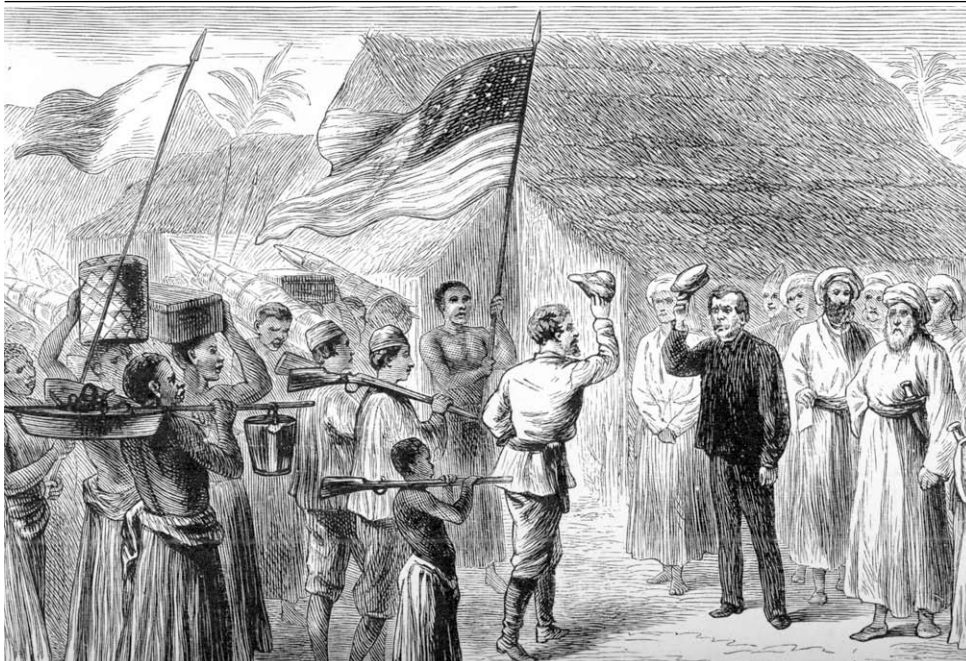
As a gesture of its supposedly genuine concern of the impact of climate change on the small island nations, Japan offered an aid package of 50bn yen, (\$510m USD), an increase of 5bn yen from the previous year.

However yesterday, less than three weeks later, Japan announced its emission reduction target of 8% – a mere 2% increase above its current Kyoto target. Perhaps the phrase, *deep cuts*, when translated into the Japanese vernacular, actually means the opposite. What the Japanese government is saying is clearly not consistent with what it is actually doing.

The target flies in the face of the statement by Kiminori Iwama, Director of the Oceania Division, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who said, "Pacific Island countries are facing many problems. From our perspective, one of the most acute problems is the environment and climate change issue, so we put an emphasis on tackling this issue as a top priority."

Even the slightly-increased 50bn yen aid package is minuscule compared to the damage that will be wrought by climate change in the Pacific, especially with such pathetic targets.

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The US finally discovers science

Creative Forest Accounting

You could swing a stick in a room full of LULUCF options and not hit one that is designed to actually account for emissions.

What about old forests and the 'age class' legacy?

Countries like Japan, New Zealand, and several EU members, which have highly managed forests, don't want to account for logging them. In fact, they want to factor out the extra emissions that occur when forests become mature, i.e. ripe for the chainsaw. The reasoning goes like this: since the forest will regrow, these emissions should cancel themselves out in the long run.

ECO points out that 'the long run' for forests can mean hundreds of years. However, emissions of greenhouse gases need to peak and decline in the next 5-10 years in order to avoid dangerous climate change.

ECO also notes that the age class structure of managed forests is anthropogenic. So if the legacy of 'age class' means that half the country's forests will be logged in a commitment period, are Parties seriously saying there should be no debits on the country's accounts?

Certainly, it seems that the suggestion of excluding logging emissions due to age classes is a perfect match to Canada's suggestion that only unplanned anthropogenic emissions from forests should get debited.

In any other sector, the idea that planned emissions don't count would be summarily dismissed. Of course countries should fess up and take responsibility. Covering these emis-

sions using accounting magic is perverse.

ECO doesn't think that countries should be punished for keeping old forests, just as they shouldn't get windfall gains due to regrowth following overlogging. But timber extraction is not a punishment – you earn money from selling wood as you do from other products. On the other hand, countries could do good by protecting their old forests, which ECO suggests could be reported as a complementary emissions reduction measure.

Loopholes abound in the woody wilderness of LULUCF and in a related issue, a number of EU countries currently not accounting forest management have been savoring an EU regulation which treats wood energy as carbon neutral!

Chucking forests into boilers is being served up as a mitigation strategy, garnished by a large investment in bioenergy.

This has presented a powerful driver to overcut the current mature forests and create a younger forest base, bringing increased emissions and a smaller sink.

If forest management accounting becomes mandatory, these invisible emissions suddenly appear. Hence, the suggestion being seriously discussed that countries should generate credits as long as their forests are a net sink, whether or not emissions actually increase.

If these perversities are allowed then the overall target setting becomes all about optics rather than making real reduction commitments.

Taking a New Look

In the rush and hubbub of these negotiations, there is perhaps insufficient appreciation of the effort that is required from developing countries, which in turn takes resources away from dealing with climate change impacts and the struggle to achieve sustainable development.

In this process, developing countries are required to complete their national communications, including greenhouse gas inventories, NAPAs, the longer-term National Action Plans for Adaptation, and now possibly also NAMAs. All these exercises demand time and money, but offer little direct benefit to the country's population. However, for a whole range of problems – oil crises, climate crises or any other crises – developing countries are constantly engaged in real-world adaptation anyway, as they are forced to make changes to their production and consumption patterns.

So, might it be more useful – and less costly – to take a hard look at the negotiation processes that generate these onerous requirements?

Perhaps we could come up with an integrated approach. Surely NAMAs, NAPAs and the rest should be part of a coherent strategy for medium- and long-term development, including concrete action to help the most vulnerable populations to improve their conditions and way of life.

If we don't embark on such a course, we face a future where the negotiation process provides plenty of paper, but little real benefit to real people.

In response to some comments, ECO would like to state that, with regard to yesterday's short piece referring to a minute's silence for victims of climate change, in no way was any disrespect intended towards the recently deceased.

–Thanks for Nothing, from front page

However – in a familiar pattern with Japanese aid – this does seem to have achieved its aim: island leaders have kept conspicuously quiet on the subject. These inadequate actions are an insult to the Pacific islanders' right to exist and to equitably share the resources of the one planet we inhabit. Thanks for nothing Japan!!

LUDWIG

Ludwig was amused to observe the looming security presence in front of the most distinguished representative of Japan as he introduced his country's 'target' yesterday. He obviously realised that the announcement would generate anger, and expected it to be expressed immediately. Don't worry Japan, Ludwig knows where you live – a little east of China...



Now we know who's getting the Japanese aid