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Sidetracking Policies and Measures?

Remember Policies and Measures (PAM's)? Despite the fact they are the key to countries meeting their commitments under both the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, some Parties would like to sidetrack any meaningful discussion of PAMs. This was in evidence yet again at Monday's informal meeting on "good practices", where Saudi Arabia asserted there "wouldn't be time" at this COP for a full discussion of PAMs, and the United States said development of a clear analytical framework for evaluating the effectiveness of PAMs would "raise concerns." (See box story on page 2)

Denmark, on behalf of the European

Union, triggered another interesting exchange when it suggested that the Secretariat organise regular workshops, which could include "interested parties outside Annex 1" (language borrowed from the relevant COP7 decision). China, followed by India, Saudi Arabia and Iran, said developing country participation in these workshops would be of no benefit to future work in this area. The Indian delegate went so far as to call the EU's proposals "very threatening", and claimed that there was "no recognition" of PAMs in any COP decisions. (This of course, conveniently overlooks the Convention's Article 4.1 requirement that all Parties formulate and implement "measures to mitigate climate change.") Should the EU persist, he said, he would have no choice but to "open the Pandora's box of consumption patterns."

When the Saudi delegate said he could not envision developing countries ever "calling themselves interested parties" on PAMs, the session's chair, Halldor Thorgeirsson of Iceland, wryly observed that "we're all in this together, you know. There's only one planet, so far."

As a French delegate said later, how could Northern Parties be involved in the CDM without being curious about how PAMs in developing countries were faring? Also, are multinationals not present everywhere? And would not future equipment be supplied from China or India, with standards – the essence of PAM – shared with Annex 1 countries?

There are many examples of policies and measures originating in developing countries

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Lending carbon with a human face

After a day-long "consultation" with managers of the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF), the newly launched Community Development Carbon Fund (CDCF) and the BioCarbon Fund (BioCF), it did not seem that the funds had "carbon with a human face", as one of their publicity leaflets claims.

Neither was it clear how the funds would "combat rural poverty and stabilise rural economy," as another leaflet states. In fact, the link between NGOs and the Bank's fund managers (i.e. the consultation process) has delivered precious few changes in the Bank's decision making process. This poor performance however is in sharp contrast to the great job the Bank has been doing at marketing carbon using launching ceremonies, vivid brochures and numerous "consultations." Its mandate appears impressive, and so does its analysis and procedures. Unfortunately, they have missed a vital objective – that the carbon trading system enables the host country to address sustainable development.

The responsibility to ensure the vision and mandate for these funds are not frustrated, rests with the host country's government, the Bank, the fund sponsors, businesses, NGOs and involved communities. There is far more at stake here than just putting a human face on carbon.

It still remains to be seen how the Bank creates opportunities for genuine consultation among all stakeholders to ensure and demonstrate meaningful, practical and sustainable projects at the community level. And what efforts it makes to remove obstacles to such a process.

As a start, the Bank could approach NGO

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Attitude of some Parties at COP8

– *Sidetracking PAMs?*, from front page that are now being used in the North, from the Indian biogas technology developed not far from here to the bus stop efficiency innovations of Curitiba, Brazil now being applied in New York City. Delegates wishing further illumination might refer to the excellent works of Professor Jose Goldemberg of Brazil (on the web at www.wri.org), or the interesting report released last year on Southeast Asia by the World Energy Conference which included good practices in China.

Incomparable United States

At the meeting on Monday, the US asserted that in evaluating PAMs, each country must use its own criteria and that comparisons were not possible. And of course, only “self-evaluation” was acceptable; no pesky independent reviews, if you please. The US written submission asserts that “enormous differences in national circumstances preclude the development of effective common indicators or identification of ‘best practices’.”

Funny that the US does not complain when the IMF and other US-led institutions rely on standard economic indicators when imposing quite severe “structural adjustment” policies on developing countries. Imagine if Argentina or Brazil were to tell the IMF and other international lenders that “national circumstances” made such policies irrelevant – the US would insist on an immediate cut-off of lending.

The US delegate also raised strong objections to the EU proposal for the development of an “analytical framework” for comparing policies. Perhaps, as in many other areas, the US would prefer a framework grounded in ideology, rather than analysis.

– *Lending carbon*, from front page consultations more proactively. NGOs and others should also have access to information on the funds progress on a real-time basis rather than only being informed after the fact. This would help ensure that project selection and the use of funds benefit in terms of carbon reduction as well as having social accountability and acceptance.

The Bank is urged to emphasise developing robust participation with NGOs rather than confining them to consultation processes. There is so much to be learnt through sharing of experiences. Doing things right from the start would certainly lend these funds and the Bank the credibility that it seeks.

Preparing for Adaptation

Growing interest in the challenge of adaptation to climate change impacts motivated more than 120 to attend the Inter-regional Conference on Adaptation to Climate Change in New Delhi from October 18 to 20.

Organised by Development Alternatives, the conference was attended by government, multilateral agencies, academia, NGOs and networks from around the world.

The conference highlighted the fact that current mitigation efforts were insufficient to avoid climate change, and that immediate and long term attention had to be given to adaptation.

It also emphasised that the type, scale and magnitude of the adaptation problem varied according to its socio-economic, political and environmental contexts, and that industrialised countries were better placed to adapt, due to availability of technology, finance, infrastructure and institutions.

In contrast, developing country communities were, and would remain, vulnerable. Extreme poverty and lack of resources made adaptation difficult and were already causing considerable hardships for households, communities and nation states

throughout the developing world.

Following discussion on a range of issues related to adaptation approaches, strategies and programmes, the conference recommended the following:

1. Integrate adaptation policies and measures with sustainable development.
2. Sensitise national level policy makers and other stakeholders.
3. Mainstream adaptation into national, local and sectoral plans.
4. Strengthen adaptation in addition to strengthening mitigation efforts.
5. Assess and utilise existing knowledge and experience on sustainable development and poverty reduction for adaptation. (This includes local and indigenous knowledge.)
6. Raise public awareness at all levels.
7. Support adaptation at the local level with national and international policies and measures.
8. Institutionalise responsibility at all levels and explore innovative ways to gain resources.
9. Incorporate local adaptation needs in financing systems.

“Fossil of the Day” Award

The US (here we go again) won top billing yesterday at the inaugural Fossil of the Day awards ceremony, for its delegation’s presentation on its energy policy. When chief negotiator Harlan Watson was asked why the US did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, he blamed the US Senate rather than take the heat for the Bush administration’s rejection of the Protocol. The Senate at least is considering measures to cut CO₂ emissions.

Second place went to Canada for its dogged pursuit in yesterday’s opening plenary, of its no-hope “cleaner energy” plan of trying to build another loophole for its Kyoto compliance without reducing one kg of CO₂.

Third position was awarded jointly to Saudi Arabia and Iran for stating during the Policies and Measures (PAMs) workshop last Monday that there was no “interested party” in Southern countries for PAMs. This position contradicts Article 4.1 of the Convention which states the opposite – that all countries in the world formulate, implement, publish and update such mitigation Policies and Measures.

Rajiv

Well, Rajiv knows he is back at a Climate COP. While preparing for the CAN press briefing on the top floor of the main building of the conference centre this morning, looking for a quiet place to work, who should pass by but the inimitable Don Pearlman. Was he out for an exploratory stroll of the far corners of the conference centre? Definitely not. He was soon surreptitiously joined by a senior White House aide. And with guilty looks in our direction they slunk off into a corner to plot and scheme. It is nice to know some things never change.

NGO Party

Get ready to put on your dancing shoes. The Climate Action Network-hosted NGO Party, a popular event at every COP, will be held on the night of Saturday, October 26. Join us to make the party a memorable event yet again. All are welcome and entrance will be free. Watch this space for additional details.