

eco



Eco has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. This issue is produced co-operatively by CAN groups attending the climate negotiations in Bonn, August 2009.



The New Zealand cabinet awards itself a prize for climate innovation.

Leading from Below

As we now know, New Zealand's CC Issues Minister has put forward an unacceptably weak target (10–20% on 1990 levels, hedged with conditions). To add insult to injury, as Ludwig noted yesterday, he has had the gall to challenge Pacific Island countries to show themselves willing to reduce their own emissions – which amount to around 0.03% of the global total. New Zealand's stand at 0.21% (even without allowing for the sheep).

Fortunately the Pacific Islands have done more than show themselves willing, they are already taking action.

Here are a few examples, an incomplete list, that the "Hon." Nick Smith might like to consider:

- The Fiji Electricity Authority aims to generate at least 90% of its energy needs from renewables by 2011.
- In July 2008, the Tongan government announced a major renewables campaign

with a target of having 50% of its electricity from renewables within three years.

- Samoa's adopted national energy policy has a goal of increasing the contribution of RE for energy services and supply by 20% by year 2030, using sources including wind and hydro.
- The Power Utility at Vanuatu (UNELCO) has set itself a goal of generating 33% of its electricity from renewables by 2013. As of April 2008, UNELCO was using coco-fuel for power generation at 25% mix for 200 liters per hour. UNELCO is also installing wind power capacity of 2.75 MW that would in 2010 contribute to 6% of the total electricity generation.
- Nauru has set itself a target of 50% renewable energy by 2015 as part of a national strategic plan on energy
- Tuvalu aims to be a 100% renewables

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You Can't be Half Pregnant...

Yesterday's target announcement from New Zealand's had one – and only one – positive aspect. It surpassed the 'extremely low' expectations that ECO announced yesterday, by a whole 5%. Now it's just 'really really low' instead. And still below the Bali range.

Think of it this way: imagine that you have a giant chasm to cross. Call it a 'grand climate canyon', if you will. Your entire population lives on one side of the canyon, but scientists warn you that floods, famines and food shortages will cause unimaginable suffering, unless you can find a way to cross to the other side. Your best scientists, lawyers and engineers conference together, do the measurements, and determine that you need to build a bridge exactly 1,000 metres long, to enable your fellow citizens to cross safely to the other side.

But for some unknown reason, your social and government leaders decide to build a bridge that only goes 500m. (And even this might be too high a figure, considering current progress in the LCA.)

Citizens see the government making 'progress', they celebrate, and they are lulled into the false sense of security that they will be safe. Their leaders happily shepherd them onto the bridge, and they happily march forward, towards their impending doom. And that's not hyperbole.

In the same way that you can't be half pregnant, you can't reduce emissions by only 20% by 2020 and miraculously expect the climate to stabilise below 2 degrees C. You need to go all the way.

It is well known, from various analyses by the UNFCCC and others, that the targets put forward by Annex 1 nations, in sum, amount to only a 10-16% reduction below 1990 levels by 2020. No wonder the IPCC scientists – and some here at CAN – are being driven to drink these days. On the

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Technology – Show and Tell!

Yesterday afternoon's plenary sought convergence on what to do with the wildly unwieldy LCA text on technology transfer. Some Parties rehashed fifteen year-old debates while others struggled to suggest useful ideas, such as moving from the already agreed "what" must be done – capacity building, R&D cooperation, technology action plans, etc. – to the more controversial "how" to do it. The Facilitator, when asked how to move the discussion forward, hinted he might have a plan in his back pocket, though he wasn't sure if it was on the right side or left.

When talks reconvene this morning, a smaller group will deepen the dialogue on the technology text. Our planet's future depends on an agreed set of proposals creating an institutional platform to support developing country efforts to transition to greenhouse gas-free sustainable development.

We would agree with Uganda's assessment that some Parties have been sitting on their back pockets for much too long, and the time to pull out proposals is way overdue. Indeed, the G77 + China tabled its proposal for a multilateral mechanism more than one year ago. Meanwhile, the US and EU have yet to take a position other than defend their intellectual property, leaving many developing countries wondering if the climate is truly a planetary emergency.

What's ECO's back pocket plan?

- Technology Needs Assessments by developing countries must be matched by

"Technology Capabilities Assessments" by developed countries. Otherwise, how will we know what kind of support is available for technology transfer? Annex I countries could commit to immediately undertaking national inventories of all their collective capacities to support Non-Annex I countries. For example, the US currently has countless programs providing select countries with capacity-building for demand-side management, creating regulatory frameworks for clean energy sectors, and joint academic and business exchanges to share best practices and new ideas. Such activities should be put on the table as possible actions to be considered for support and scaling up under an institutional platform for technology transfer.

- The MEF text from L'Aquila last month pledged more money for clean energy research, development, and demonstration "with a view to doubling such investments by 2015." But will it be spent on RD&D domestically or in developing countries? And will it be binding? ECO has yet to hear developing countries call for concrete, calendared commitments to scale up spending on RD&D. Doing so could be a first step toward a model of technology transfer that departs from traditional dependencies and instead turns to enabling all countries to – on their own terms – adapt, innovate, and adjust to today's new reality of resource restraints in atmospheric space and energy supplies.

- The recent US-China agreement on R&D cooperation for energy will share ownership over any inventions. Their trial could provide a useful model for all Annex 1 Parties to apply to the public finances they plow into a Copenhagen climate deal, since public money should serve the planetary interest. Both countries also agreed in their recent MOU to prioritize conservation and efficiency before expanding renewables, a core principle of sustainability that other countries should adopt. As another possibility, the US could expand to the international arena the flexibility allowed domestically to comply with the Clean Air Act. Trust remains the biggest barrier to narrowing down the text before Bangkok, and few other steps could be taken today to turn the mood toward a genuine cooperative spirit.

Too late for such proposals? True, it's time to delete text, not add new language. But basic ideas for implementing essential elements of the Convention – like delivering on commitments made fifteen years ago to provide finance and technology – have yet to be tabled.

So, delegates should pull all their ideas from their back pockets. ECO will welcome even the old napkins with scribbled pearls of wisdom, since the clock is ticking. Convergence was made easier when the Facilitator reminded Parties that, "the text remains open until the last moment in Copenhagen when the hammer comes down."

Doors Wide Shut

If it depends on the will of the AWG-LCA and KP Chairs, the doors to the negotiating sessions this week will remain wide open – not shut.

Observers are an integral and critical part of the negotiations. NGOs are the eyes and ears of millions of citizens around the world. They listen to the people they represent and advocate for an agreement that will avoid catastrophic climate change and put us on the path towards a sustainable future.

But, the door hinges on a broader issue which emanates from the Rio Declaration and the Agenda 21 themselves. The very best environmental decisions are the result of public

and civil society participation in the process, not just because they are there, but because NGOs make a difference. They make quality contributions and are taken very seriously by many delegations.

ECO remembers when wide doors were tightly closed, an urge that sometimes appears when the stakes begin to rise.

Transparency is the key to a successful outcome.

ECO sincerely hopes that the understanding demonstrated by the Chairs continues through the following Sessions as the stakes rise and we get closer to Copenhagen.

–Half Pregnant, from front page outside, even the youth climate campaigners look hopeful, but under their youthful, happy veneer, even they are getting desperate. The New Zealand target completes a rather dismal Annex I picture.

The same 'threshold problem' applies not only to carbon reduction targets, but also to climate finance, technology transfer, adaptation, and REDD/LULUCF. To be safe, you can't just build half a sea wall. You can't half-train a renewable energy engineer. You can't

plant half a tree. You can't give someone half a course of anti-HIV medicines. You can't use half a condom. You can't fly half a plane. You can't use half a parachute. And you can't reduce carbon emissions by half the amount that science demands. That's why they call it 'runaway' climate change.

So, here at ECO, our message is this: we fully expect that, by Copenhagen, the idiotic targets put forward thus far by Annex 1 nations will be more than doubled. More than 40%, or bust.

–Leading from Below, from front page

country by 2020.

These countries have low responsibility and limited capability, but are doing all they can to secure their survival. Developed countries might follow their example, and consider targets that correspond with their responsibility and capacity – more than 40% by 2020 would be in line with the science.

LUDWIG

Ludwig has received some urgent medical advice, of particular relevance to these proceedings. At each meeting, friends, acquaintances and deadly enemies habitually greet one another by shaking hands or kissing (usually on the cheek or in the air). Apparently, these are the most risky methods of passing on the H1N1 (sadly misnamed Mexican flu) virus, and, in spite of his predilection for a kiss, Ludwig would therefore suggest that all such activity cease immediately.

He understands that the only safe greeting is a hug, and expects to see all his distinguished colleagues in deep embraces from now on.