

ecoco



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 Poznań, December 2008.

Risky Business

Risk management in the context of climate change is a much broader issue than financial insurance schemes. It encompasses risk reduction activities such as cyclone resilient housing, flood defences, water resource management, early warning and education- all of which must all be integrated into sustainable development planning. The Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by 168 nations in 2005 already enshrines these issues under one framework and aims to protect the most vulnerable people and significantly reduce the losses from disasters including extreme weather events.

Parties need to draw on the practical tools and methodologies developed by the disaster risk reduction community as part of implementing adaptation. Attempts to re-invent the wheel must be avoided, and instead energies should focus on strengthening the methodologies which already exist. CAN hopes that today's workshop on risk management and insurance will focus not just on insurance, but on activities which seek to reduce rather than compensate. These include improving community-based risk and vulnerability assessments; resilient infrastructure; natural resource management and improved climate forecasting; and dissemination of user friendly data for smallholder farmers and those who are most exposed to extreme weather e.g. coastal and mountain communities and the urban poor. It is imperative that the most

vulnerable people, who have contributed least to climate change but are most affected by it, are at the heart of decision-making about adaptation and risk management. We hope the workshop will take the first step in acknowledging these links and present some ideas on how this can be achieved.

In this regard the discussions should focus on:

- Developing adaptation and risk management solutions which ensure the most vulnerable directly benefit
- Strengthening local capacity to assess climate risk and implement context specific solutions
- Establishing fair and participatory financing for adaptation to cover all risk management activities such as risk reduction, preparedness and response

Insurance could play an important role after a disaster has occurred but schemes must be designed to:

- Incorporate multiple hazards, specific to the context
- Benefit and assist the most vulnerable people without burdening them financially
- Be transparent and accountability and prioritise affordable protection over profit for the insurer

If disaster risk reduction is not incorporated into climate change adaptation, resources will be wasted through parallel structures, single hazard schemes and assistance not reaching the most vulnerable communities.



Excessive risk is inadvisable

Time for the EU to Step Up

Previous negotiations at Bonn and Accra have seen the EU express regret for its failure in coming up with something concrete on its technology position. EU negotiators have promised progress, and it is essential that the EU unveils a position at Poznan.

Developing countries have made it clear they expect technology development and transfer to be at the heart of the Copenhagen Agreement and with the Annex I Bali commitment, it was reasonable to assume there would be something firm from the EU by now.

However, a read through the EU's submissions on technology (Nov 14) reveals there is still nothing concrete planned for the negotiating table. Granted, it refers to voluntary technology agreements but this is hardly a level of ambition that we had expected and falls way short of its commitments.

Surely, the EU has more to offer. If it is to emerge as the credible leader it aspires to be, then it must produce a clear and constructive solution which includes:

- Support for an overall Technology Development Objective with a goal of achieving true global cooperation on technology and a focus on increasing overall levels of innovation and access, not just narrow technology transfer;
- Support for a strategic focus on technology and innovation which could be guided by a series of Technology Action Programmes for critical technologies, including for both mitigation and adaptation;
- A clear statement showing that the EU is taking the G77/China calls for a new Multilateral Climate Technology Fund (MCTF) seriously and that this will be an important basis for future discussions;
- An emphasis on the need to provide financial and technical support to developing countries in order to build their own inno-

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Carbon-free and Undeniable!

Even here in Poznan, many of us still haven't really grasped our global climate predicament. Even senior experts, scientists, NGOs and political leaders fail to appreciate that the most recent evidence on climate change reveals a situation more urgent than had been expected- even by those who have been following it closely for decades. For instance, the IPCC had concluded that a global average temperature increase of 2°C over several centuries¹ could lead to major melting of the Greenland ice sheet, that holds water enough to produce about 7m of sea level rise. But now, new evidence, such as that quoted in the "Climatesafety.org" report, shows that sea level rise in the order of metres could occur during this century².

The inescapable conclusion from this new science, at first astonishing, is that we must reduce fossil fuel emissions to zero as quickly as is humanly possible. This is essential if we are to avert catastrophic runaway feedbacks and enable the earth's natural sinks to return the global atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to at most 350 ppm. In doing this, Annex I countries must lead by example.

Such a rapid de-carbonisation is of course new ground, both for global society and for democracy. But the good news is that zero carbon scenarios compiled by the INFORSE Network, the Centre for Alternative Technology, and several others, reveals that the transition is still possible, even without new coal or nuclear power, and that it can be done in a few decades.

These scenarios build on the detailed knowledge and expertise gained over the past 30 years: linking innovations in transport, food, energy, industry, economics, buildings and a great many other areas into a common,

coherent vision which can be clearly and effectively articulated to inform policy makers in local, national and international governments.

By re-thinking our attitudes to energy, and using existing energy efficiency solutions, we can deliver wellbeing with around 50% of the energy we use today, or less. The energy used per capita in most of the industrialised countries has more than doubled since the 1960s, but human happiness has flat lined. Beyond the critical minimum, ever increasing energy does not increase wellbeing, but quite the reverse, with obesity, debt, traffic fumes, commuting times, breakdown in social cohesion and isolation taking their toll.

Zero carbon scenarios show that we can extract the energy we do need from a raft of renewable energy sources, strategically distributed by technology and by region to help smooth out seasonal supply.

Let's be honest, the zero carbon transition will be the biggest environmental action the human race has ever done collectively. But the new scenarios also highlight that it can also form the foundation for our long-term economic recovery.

¹Current models suggest that ice mass losses increase with temperature more rapidly than gains due to precipitation and that the surface mass balance becomes negative at a global average warming (relative to pre-industrial values) in excess of 1.9°C to 4.6°C. (IPCC SAR, WG1, Summary for Policy-makers)

²Predictions by Stefan Rahmstorf, using an analysis based on palaeoclimatic data a team of researchers led by NASA scientist James Hansen has argued that non-linear increases in melting of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets could lead to sea level rise of between 0.5–0.6m on 1990 levels by 2050 and "in the order of metres"⁵⁹ toward the end of the present century. (www.climatesafety.org)

A greater risk of sea level rise

The latest science suggests that the IPCC's AR4 predictions of potential sea-level rise – 0.18–0.59m by 2100 – may be much too low. In a side-event on Tuesday evening, Prof. Stefan Rahmstorf, of the Potsdam Institute, presented evidence showing that, owing to new understanding of the process governing the melting of glaciers, the figures are likely to be more than twice previous estimates – with a risk of seas rising well over a metre. These results are supported by a separate study from the Delta Commission in the Netherlands, tasked with presenting figures required for planning the building of dikes.

This means that coastal areas of the world, inhabited by many millions of people, are far more vulnerable than previously thought. For example, a one metre sea level rise would:-

- completely submerge the Maldives and many other small island states.
- flood 17% of Bangladesh, displacing tens of millions of people, and reducing farmland by 50%.
- and it would affect more than nine million people in Vietnam.

It is even more important therefore, that delegates to the COP find ways for effective mitigation, to keep warming below two degrees.

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vative and absorptive capacity to successfully use and adapt new technologies, not a narrow focus on enabling environments;

- A recognition that where intellectual property rights issues are a barrier to technology access there should be a clear framework for action to balance the need to give incentives to innovators, with the imperative to share technology fairly in order to solve the climate problem.

Taking on these points would be a good basis for an urgently needed comprehensive EU proposal in March.

We know that many EU negotiators welcome the various constructive G77/China proposals, but that finance ministers are not as keen. However, with delays in tackling climate change costing far more to the economy, it is essential that they look beyond the balance sheets and become part of the solution towards an economically sustainable future for all.

We are at a crucial point in the international negotiations and the EU must show its credibility as a leader by delivering on what was expected from Bali and putting forward technology transfer proposals.



How many delegates even noticed this homeless polar bear outside the COP yesterday?

Mieszko

Today, Mieszko has been forced to contemplate the fleeting nature of power and glory. What once struck fear into its enemies in time becomes a mere husk of its former self. Thus, the outgoing US administration's delegation is reduced, in an ironic twist, to citing its own demise, i.e. the forthcoming regime change, as a reason to take no action now.

And Russia, once the other great power, now tells the AWG that thanks to its cold climate, and vast distances between cities, it is the most miserable country in the world.

Sic transit gloria mundi.