

Fossil of the Day
Monday 2 November



1st Place
USA

Today's award was given to the USA for their speculation that an international, legally binding climate agreement could be further delayed until well after the Copenhagen conference.

US Special Envoy on Climate Change Todd Stern said in a statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on November 4 that an agreement could be reached "perhaps next year or as soon as possible".

Stern was appointed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in January as the Administration's chief climate negotiator, to take the lead on crafting the US position within the UN climate negotiations.

In 2007, all UN nations agreed that a deal to address climate change, including all nations, should be negotiated and concluded at the Copenhagen climate summit this December.

"The US has been delaying for more than a decade," said Damon Moglen from Greenpeace, "and now they're trying to delay even further. Our climate isn't going to wait for the US make up it's mind. Icecaps won't put their melting on hold. Sea levels won't quit rising. This further delay is truly deserving of today's first-place Fossil."

Stern also said, in reference to the Copenhagen talks: "We should make progress towards a political agreement that hits each of the main elements."

A 'political agreement' in Copenhagen – in contrast to a legally binding and enforceable agreement - has been pushed by some nations as a possible outcome of the Copenhagen Summit.

With these two statements, Stern continued the lowering of expectations for the Copenhagen negotiations.

"We want the US to abandon its proposal for a non-binding 'pledge and review' type system, and instead make it clear to the world that the US will commit to a legally binding Copenhagen agreement," said Moglen.

What price lives?

Thursday marked another unedifying exchange in the KP "numbers group." Annex I parties were questioning their abilities to increase their targets. Also on the table were two very important architectural elements: the 1990 base year and the system of 5-year commitment periods.

Despite arguing rightly in the past that the cost of inaction is far higher than the cost of action, the EU's first consideration in possibly moving beyond its strikingly inadequate -30% conditional target is the economy!

Rather than embracing rapid reductions as a means of avoiding climate impacts and its heavy economic consequences, the EU whinged that -30% was about all it could do, despite the reduction of emissions during the current recession easing the task. The cost of achieving the -30% target is now estimated to be €203 billion cheaper than the original 20% reduction was expected to be when first adopted, according to a Sandbag analysis, and there's every reason to believe other countries can similarly increase the scale of effort.

Further, New Zealand feels that spending 0.6% of their GDP would be a high price for contributing to saving the world's life support systems. Iceland appeared willing to countenance a higher target, but only if it has access to LULUCF and offsets. Japan felt its newly-enhanced target is enough and rejected outright the need for a science-based top-down target. Other developed countries remained noticeably silent.

It gets worse. Countries that have done least to reduce their emissions were keenest to hide their failures using more recent base years. Canada admitted that 1990 "was important" but bleated that the US had chosen a 2005 base year for its domestic target discussion, and in any case, new countries (so-called "major emitters") joining Annex B

might find 1990 a barrier for so doing.

So Canada not only wants to hide its own inaction, but simultaneously points its finger at developing countries to pick up the pieces. Japan, also a major underachiever and finger-pointer, wanted to see the developed countries targets "from different angles."

But Micronesia provided new analysis that the targets on the table range from -10% to 17% by 2020 relative to 1990 levels ex-LULUCF. (Note to Japan: whichever way you look at it, the targets on the table are somewhere between a quarter and a third of what is needed, as a minimum.)

On the length of the second commitment period, several countries held out for periods longer than the 5-year cycle established in Kyoto. One has to suspect the motives of those that would seek to decouple the negotiations from political cycles in many countries, and disallow frequent and regular review of commitments based on the most recent science, particularly that of the IPCC. Those culpable in this regard included Japan (again!) and Australia (although they did say they were open to 5 years).

The EU joined the fray in favour of 8-year periods, but later expressed an intention to review its targets in light of the next IPCC Assessment Report (so why not internationally in a 5-year commitment period?). Avoiding lock-in has to be an essential element of the architecture of the Copenhagen agreement.

Once a 5-year second commitment period is properly in place for 2013-2017, ECO recommends the following timetable for the 2018-2022 commitment period: Negotiations should begin no later than 2013, conclude no later than 2015 and be directed by a scientific review done in 2014 based on the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC (AR5).



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Healthier Climate Change Talks

Two organizations highlighted at a mid-week press conference that focusing on the health effects of climate change puts a human face on the negotiations.

Josh Karliner (Health Care Without Harm) and Genon Jensen (Health and Environment Alliance) presented Dr. Roberto Bertollini of the World Health Organization with a larger than life "Prescription for a Healthy Planet" endorsed by dozens of major international health organizations. Among those supporting the diagnosis of a planet increasingly presenting the symptoms of a sick climate are the International Council of Nurses, representing nursing associations in 128 countries, the World Federation of Public Health Associations, and the Standing Committee of European Doctors, which brings together 27 national medical associations in countries. When filled, the prescription will help negotiators strike a deal for a strong and legally binding agreement in Copenhagen.

Public health professionals are focusing on how extreme weather events such as heat

waves and floods affect their patients and their work in poor and rich countries alike. Earlier this year, the Global Humanitarian Forum noted that increasingly severe heat waves, floods, storms and forest fires could push the annual death toll to 500,000 by 2030. Research in Europe shows that heat waves increase death rates, especially among older people and those with breathing problems.

In contrast, reducing carbon emissions will bring positive health returns. For example, said Dr. Bertollini, "choosing policies that reduce carbon emissions bring positive returns for public health. For example, developing sustainable public transport policies which encourage walking and cycling, and eating less red meat, can help mitigate climate change and also improve health."

The European Commission has estimated that a 20% reduction in carbon emissions from 1990 levels by 2020 could lead to savings on national health bills of up to €51 billion in the EU alone. Research supported by CAN-Europe, the Health and Environment Alliance and WWF shows that savings would be increased to €76 billion with a 30% reduction. The Prescription for a Healthy Planet diagnoses the planet's problem as overconsumption of fossil fuels leading to global climate destabilization. It calls on global leaders to protect public health, move to clean energy, reduce emissions and provide finance for global action.

In Europe, HEAL and HCWH are calling for a 40% reduction target and for the EU to contribute at least €35 billion per year to fund global action on climate change, which a proportion should be allocated to the health sector. These groups have urged negotiators to strengthen the health dimension in the current text. They will also lead a health delegation to Copenhagen where leading doctors, nurses, public health experts and a group of trainee doctors will be spreading the word in the halls and on the streets.

A Convenient Truth

Never waste a good crisis, runs the adage. On Wednesday, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) presented a new report outlining Annex I mitigation costs and potentials based on the effects of the economic crisis. The report uses post-crisis GDP projections based on the IEA's 2009 world energy outlook.

Here are the headlines:

- In 2020 Annex I emissions are 6% below 1990 levels in the reference scenario.
- The cost of implementing the most ambitious Annex 1 pledges would be -0.03% to 0.01% of GDP.
- The carbon price settles at €3 per tonne.
- An extra 10% reduction could be achieved at the same equilibrium carbon price (-27% instead of -17% from 1990).
- Some country targets are well above their emissions in the reference scenario, which could create a new surplus of emissions rights.

In other words, it is now much easier to achieve the emission targets we need. The world demands investments in the infrastructure of the 21st century – renewable energy, smart grids and mass transport. The economic transformation we need could become a job-generator for economies blacking out with systemic unemployment. And we can save our climate, which is set on a course to disaster. So the economic crisis also turns out to be an opportunity, but this means making a choice.

For the benefit of parties, as an example here is a table of new economic models on the costs of the EU's 30% reduction pledge, in the light of the crisis.

And what is true for the EU is true for Annex I as a whole: emissions caps developed for a pre-crisis world can easily be tightened again in a post-crisis world, to benefit both the climate and the economy.

SOURCE	TARGET	COMMENT
New Energy Finance	-30%	€203 billion lower than reported in February 2008
Cambridge (for The Climate Group)	-30%	+1.3 percent of GDP (i.e. beneficial impact on the economy due to increased clean investment and efficiency savings)
IIASA 2009, based on IEA 2009	-30%	-0.03 to 0.01% of GDP (i.e. negative costs)

Saudi Arabia – you've got mail!

ECO learned of a new type of urgent mail delivery system in the UNFCCC today. The recipient? A negotiator who, while not expecting a visit from the post office certainly should have anticipated some kind of message as a result of his country's positions. And where was this message service we are speaking of? It was easy to identify thanks to a walking banner at the entrance of the FIRA centre.

This specialty message delivery was inaugurated Thursday with the first lucky recipient being the Saudi head of delegation. The authors of the inaugural message were many: NGOs from 18 different developing

countries, as well as the international youth present in Barcelona.

The youth delivered their letter along with pictures of their co-authors in the 18 developing countries gathering in front of Saudi embassies yesterday. These peaceful protests urged Saudi Arabia to stop playing an obstructionist role in the current climate negotiations, and to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

ECO notifies heads of delegations that "banner mail" might welcome them on their way into the UNFCCC venue. Keep your eyes open, and your positions ambitious, or else you will be the next lucky winner!



Youth delivering urgent mail to Saudi head of delegation in Barcelona yesterday morning.

A Letter to Santa

The Christmas season has come early for developed countries who have been invited to present their Christmas wish lists for forest management at Copenhagen. It has been two years since LULUCF negotiators started debating how to account for forest management in the next commitment period, in particular what baseline to use.

The result is a total failure of leadership from developed countries. They will be coming to Copenhagen with a baseline of their choosing using their favorite loopholes to make absolutely sure that the forest management sector is subject to no pressure to reduce emissions.

This is terrible news for the climate. For example, Parties can set their baseline to include increased emissions from this sector, or they could disappear into a Bermuda Triangle for emissions called the "band to zero." Under

this approach countries can earn credits but would only earn debits after their entire forest sink was reduced to zero. This would not at all reflect what the atmosphere sees and could allow countries to degrade their natural forests without incurring any penalty.

This alarming failure of Annex I country leadership threatens to undermine the integrity of the climate deal. If it remains unchanged, the only hope for environmental integrity in the LULUCF rules will rest with the scrutiny of non-Annex I parties and observers in Copenhagen. But effective scrutiny will be difficult given the complexity of data and modeling involved for every country's baseline.

ECO notes that naughty children are usually denied their wishes for Christmas and sees no reason why this year should be any different. These LULUCF loopholes should be taken off the table as soon as possible.

– REDD Haunted by LULUCF?

must be accounted for, just as degradation of forests must be defined and accounted for.

Relying on carbon accounting alone to prevent conversion is not enough, warn the ghosts of LULUCF, who whisper that accounting for degradation never became mandatory. In the real world of tropical forests, proxies may be used to estimate carbon stocks, and if forest cover is one of them, then distinguishing plantations from forests becomes crucial. In addition, defining natural forests and plantations will help clarify what REDD is all about, and ensure confidence in its effectiveness to protect the climate.

ECO knows Parties are hesitant to enter a process of developing definitions akin to a recurring ghost story of the Marrakesh Accords. However, negotiators must use several potions to banish the phantoms of LULUCF loopholes. One of them is carbon accounting strong enough to ensure that emissions caused by conversion are seen by all and not just the atmosphere. Another is definitions. Employing the forest categories suggested by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) of the Convention on Biological Diversity would help protect REDD from the grinning spectre of unaccounted-for emissions lurking in the newly converted forests of Annex I.

Final Destination

Commenting on the shared vision the other day, a negotiator who also happens to be a university professor noted that he tells his students to not write their conclusions before finishing the content of their papers.

While that approach might apply to term papers, it has less relevance to climate negotiations. One cannot create activities under a project without identifying the end goal, or set out on a journey without first identifying the final destination. The shared vision is the framework that states the shared ultimate goal of countries – a global goal that ensures the right of survival for all nations is not compromised.

What we have seen too much of, though, are negotiations that have wasted precious time and devoted effort instead to downplaying the Copenhagen outcome. This is heading toward the wrong destination entirely, an end point that compromises the survival of nations.

The real destination we want, of course, is laid out in the Convention: a future where climate risk is under control and development is sustained. A deal that is not equitable is not a deal. ECO hears echoes in the hallways that many changes are being made to the shared vision text and would like to remind delegates that positive elements such as human rights and gender issues, stakeholder participation, and a just transition to a carbon free economy are essential inclusions in the shared vision.



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 Barcelona, November 2009.

To be or not to be (binding)

So let us make sure we understand this correctly: the African Group, AOSIS, the G77, the EU, the UN and even the Umbrella Group want a legally binding instrument. So where's the problem? It's true the acoustics are bad in the FIRA conference center, but ECO is quite sure it heard everybody saying that they want a legally binding instrument to be adopted in Copenhagen. And yet, most of them are saying it can't be done because "there isn't enough time."

Whatever happened to "where there's a will, there a way"?

It is true that the delay in the US Senate provides the perfect excuse for those who say they want a deal but are really only stalling for more time. But more time do to what exactly? More time to allow emissions in both Annex I and non-Annex I to

grow even higher; more time to continue building inefficient cars and buildings; more coal plants; more deforestation.

So many climate disruptive activities, so little time (or is it too much time)... one has to admit this "time factor" has gotten us all confused.

Some delegates have even expressed disappointment at the lack of ambition by a certain chair who, not so long ago, was proudly displaying a "Mind the Gap" t-shirt.

Could it be, then, that Parties are having a hard time figuring out what it is they want to be legally binding. In the course of the past few days, we've heard everything from a "politically binding agreement" (now there an oxymoron if we're ever heard one), a "legally binding treaty," and a "legally

binding approach" to a "comprehensive universal agreement" (a real favourite) which would include, as ECO heard in one corridor conversation, future human colonies to be established on the Moon and Mars.

But in the interest of time (back again to haunt us), we should use what precious time we have left to do what is needed for the atmosphere, to sustain our respective national interests and, not least, to protect those who are and will be suffering the most from climate impacts.

In a recent response to a particularly short-sighted editorial in the Canadian Globe and Mail entitled "Targets set without a plan, and costs that are perilous", the British High Commissioner to Canada, Anthony Cary, replied that "We can't talk to the atmosphere." Need we say more?

REDD haunted by LULUCF?

A spooky story for the last day of negotiations: Once upon a time, ECO recalls, a list of LULUCF principles was determined and included the following: "That the implementation of land use, land-use change and forestry activities contributes to the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources."

Yet today, under the rules for forests in developed countries, conversion of natural forests to plantations is not accounted. Indeed, native forests and plantations are not even distinguished, making it impossible to directly track this important indicator of the impacts of LULUCF on biodiversity. The LULUCF principles have become wispy spirits haunting the forests of the North.

Today, forest conversion has become a bone of contention in the REDD discussions. ECO is glad to see that the safeguard against conversion of natural forests is back

in the REDD text, although it is bracketed and vague. Inclusion of an improved version of this provision in the final Copenhagen agreement will be an important step towards banishing LULUCF spectres from REDD.

In addition, however, principles alone cannot ensure that REDD lives up to its promises. How will Parties ensure that conversion of natural forests to plantations does not occur under REDD as long as the definition of "forest" encompasses everything from tropical jungle to oil palm plantations?

Conversion of forests to plantations not only has dire consequences for biodiversity, it also increases emissions. And so ECO asks, what about the 'E' in REDD? If you look closely, the definitional gap that exists in LULUCF as an important lesson for REDD. Natural forests and plantations must be defined separately and emissions from conversion

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"For every species that we drive to extinction, as we penetrate the rainforests, we discover five new ones, so on balance we're good."