

FOSSIL OF THE DAY AWARD

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Russia and New Zealand Take First, Saudi Arabia Receives Second, U.S.A. Third

Durban, South Africa – The second week of the United Nations climate change negotiations began with a heavy dose of Fossils. New Zealand and Russia shared a rare joint Fossil in First Place for wanting to benefit from a continuation of the Kyoto Protocol without being bound by it. Saudi Arabia earned Second for putting payments to its oil habit over mitigation to stop climate change. The United States won 3rd for not doing much of anything, as usual. The Fossil as presented read:

“The United States of America earns the 3rd place Fossil. The United States is trying to stop progress in Durban and is succeeding in catalyzing a movement against them as they delay, obstruct, and sabotage good faith efforts toward a deal.

While some of President Obama's policies on climate change are better than his predecessor, George Bush, US engagement in the talks remains nonconstructive.

In 2008 then candidate Obama said: 'We know what needs to be done. We know that our planet's future depends on a global commitment to permanently reduce greenhouse gas pollution.' Bold words, but bold action has not followed at the global level.

- Now in Durban the US is proposing an alarming proposal to lock in a ten-year timeout with no new targets to lower emissions until 2020.

- Using transparency as a stick to beat other countries with. They insist that transparency is a top-line requirement even while ducking questions about their own transparency measures. When asked today what analysis the US had done about its own reporting that was agreed to in Cancun, Todd Stern said awkwardly 'we're working on it'.

- They say they have no problem with a legally binding agreement, but then go on to list condition after condition -- many of which fly in the face of the original UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

— IPCC scientist turned US negotiator, Jonathan Pershing, assures us that there are an 'infinite number of pathways' to stay below 2 degrees of warming that require only current agreements – we kindly invite him to name one and enlighten us all.

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Now is the time for President Obama to remember his words from before he occupied the Oval Office: 'The threat from climate change is serious, it is urgent, and it is growing. Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it – boldly, swiftly, and together – we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe..... the time we have to reverse this tide is running out.'

We call on Todd Stern and the US Delegation to follow through on these words, to act boldly, swiftly, and together -- something they have failed to do over the past week."

"Saudi Arabia earns the second place Fossil of the Day.

'Maybe we don't need the mitigation measures.' - This was the statement by the Saudi Arabian negotiator this morning in the LCA stock-taking plenary.

Saudi Arabia continues to insist that work on its particular pet issue of response measures (code for compensation to be paid to oil-producers) is just as important as a full global response to fighting climate change with mitigation measures."

"New Zealand and Russia share the 1st place Fossil.

Russia earns the Fossil for opposing the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and for trying to carryover the hot air emissions credits into the same second commitment period, both at the same time, although it is hard to explain logically.

Meanwhile, New Zealand has been acting inconsistently in the KP negotiations. It has insisted that it could not constitutionally agree to provisional implementation of a second commitment period despite its internal policy stating that it can.

Further, the Government formally announced on 30 November that interim Environment Minister Hon. Nick Smith would be attending COP-17, only to change its mind on 1 December. New Zealand has also blocked discussions on carry over, wanting enough carry over to fully cover five years' worth of LULUCF emissions.

Ultimately, this series of events has led to other negotiators describing New Zealand as 'deliberately inconsistent' and 'problematic for a thousand reasons', with its 'extreme positions on a number of issues [making] it difficult to reach consensus on anything'."

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About CAN: *The Climate Action Network is a worldwide network of roughly 500 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. www.climatenetwork.org*

About the fossils: *The Fossil of the Day awards were first presented at the climate talks in 1999 in Bonn, initiated by the German NGO Forum. During United Nations climate change negotiations (www.unfccc.int), members of the Climate Action Network (CAN), vote for countries judged to have done their 'best' to block progress in the negotiations in the last days of talks.*

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