



Climate Chronicle

from COP15

CRITICAL NEWS & CLIMATE JUSTICE PERSPECTIVES

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"The time to act is now" ... or later

*The rapid talking down of expectations for Copenhagen signals a lack of commitment on the part of industrialised countries, writes **Trusha Reddy**. In place of divide and rule tactics, a fundamental change of direction is needed to expand their targets and dump the market-based approach.*

It's official! The COP15 will to be the place to "seal the deal" for global action on climate change. No, actually it will be a "historic moment". No, perhaps it will be a "turning point". Or further, it will be one of a "few turning points". In less than two short months before the UN climate talks were due to kick off in Copenhagen, the official language changed subtly yet dramatically to convey the effective relegation of the summit, touted to be the biggest environmental gathering in history, to a talk shop.

This dynamic downgrading of the language echoes shifts in the negotiating process that came to the fore at talks in Bangkok last September. As Brian Tokar, Director of US-based Institute for Social Ecology, writes:

For the first time, European Union representatives echoed the US refusal to make any future commitments under the framework established by the Kyoto Protocol. While previous UN climate meetings have been aided by the Europeans' insistence on scientifically meaningful emission targets, this change in position - perhaps a result of (US President) Obama's "improved" diplomacy - significantly shifted the focus of the talks and raised the level of acrimony to new heights.

Tokar suggests that the cracks in the process had appeared far earlier than this, with industrialised countries pitted against each other in their attempt to shift responsibility for cutting emissions to the tune of 45 per cent or more of 1990 levels by 2020, as required by the science. With consensus on targets becoming a dimmer prospect, it could only be expected that

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industrialised countries would turn their focus to the Majority World countries they term "major emitters" - including India, China, Brazil and South Africa - to force them to commit to reductions, which are absent by design from the Kyoto Protocol



Gas flare in Ecuadorian Amazon.

(KP). Many Southern countries have since deplored the "divide and rule" tactics that they feel were aimed at a breakdown in talks so that the KP would be abandoned in favour of a new framework being brokered.

By the time the Barcelona talks rolled around in early November, African delegates were at a point where they halted the KP negotiations for a day and a half out of frustration over rich countries'

lack of progress or concern at the plight of those most affected by the ravages of climate change. Mutterings of a new "political framework" sub-agreement by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) President Yvo de Boer had slipped the attention of the Africans as they sought in good faith to consolidate a position in late October that would contribute to the conclusion of a fair and ambitious deal. The decisive blow was finally delivered in Singapore just two weeks before Copenhagen when Obama and Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen announced that a legally binding climate treaty would not be signed in December and would, in fact, take up to another year to negotiate.

But killing the KP - whose first commitment period expires in 2012 - is perhaps only a manufactured fault line in the grand scheme of things, Copenhagen-wise. Most outstanding is that, for all the rhetoric, the simple message is that a deal, or legally binding international agreement as was initially promised under the Bali Action Plan (BAP), will not be made at this meeting. On the eve of Copenhagen, De Boer laid down the ground rules in a press briefing comprising three layers of action: fast and effective implementation without delay; ambitious commitments to cut or limit emissions accompanied by adequate finance; and agreement on a shared long term vision. >> p.3

In Defence of Mother Earth

*If world leaders don't take real action in Copenhagen that leads to a mandate for a legally binding post-2012 agreement, there will be dire consequences for our planet, Mother Earth, writes **Tom Goldtooth**. These will affect not only Indigenous Peoples, but all of humanity and life.*

Indigenous Peoples from the Arctic region to the people of the Pacific Islands don't have time for obstructionist countries like the US and other industrialised countries to hold the world hostage and prevent an agreement. Climate chaos is escalating. At Copenhagen, we don't need political declarations, but rather real commitments leading to new obligations for industrialised countries on strong emissions reductions, and equitable and just solutions that help developing countries with financial and technological mechanisms for mitigation and adaptation. Within the discussion there must be

serious reflection and critique on whether carbon trading and offset regimes are actually real mitigation solutions that will get us to a 350 parts per million goal.

IEN has a 12-member delegation of Indigenous Peoples from North America at COP15 and we are promoting a rights-based campaign. We work in cooperation with the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, the formal Indigenous Peoples' caucus within the UN meeting. Any outcome must acknowledge international human rights standards that establish moral and legal obligations to

protect and promote the full enjoyment of Indigenous Peoples' collective rights in the context of climate change, including rights to their lands, territories and resources, traditional knowledge, and their free, prior and informed consent that is consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Any agreement must acknowledge the UNDRIP. We will accept nothing less.

Tom B.K. Goldtooth is Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, www.ienearth.org, and a member of the Durban Group for Climate Justice. www.durbanclimatejustice.org



Climate headed for crash landing

*Imagine sending your own daughter on a plane that has only 50 per cent chance of landing. You would never do it. Yet sadly as we gear up for the biggest climate meeting in Copenhagen, this is what many developed countries seem prepared to do with our planet, argues **Pablo Solón**.*

Much of the discussion in Copenhagen is focused on stabilising greenhouse gases at 450 parts per million (ppm) in order to limit global warming to an average of 2 degrees. Yet scientists say that at 450 ppm, there is only a 50 per cent chance of not exceeding 2 degrees. That is a huge risk to take. Most scientists say we must keep emissions limited to 300 to 350 ppm, which would limit global warming to about 1-1.5 degrees.

This lack of ambition is matched by an attempt by rich nations to kill the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol, for all its faults, was at least binding, and it also

recognised that developed countries had a different obligation from developing nations because their carbon emissions had caused global warming. Now the rich countries want to do away with the Kyoto Protocol and replace it with a new agreement that would dilute their historic responsibilities for the climate crisis. Because of this attempt to avoid decisive action, the rich nations are making it increasingly difficult to reach a concrete agreement in Copenhagen.

Bolivia believes that we need to place a concept of climate debt at the heart of the talks as this climate crisis will

only be averted if it is accompanied by justice. Climate debt tackles the profound social injustice at the heart of climate change – that those least responsible for causing climate change are those that will most suffer its effects. Historically, the developed nations, with less than 20 per cent of the world's population, are responsible for more than three quarters of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They have pushed the earth beyond its capacity to absorb these gases.

This has created two forms of debt. The “emissions debt” deprives developing countries of the same right to share the atmosphere equally and develop in the future that were enjoyed by the developed countries. The “adaptation debt” is incurred because we now face the impacts of climate change in our countries, with deteriorating environmental conditions that will have a huge impact on our quality of life. This climate debt will need to be paid by the world's economically rich nations through substantial commitments to reduce and absorb greenhouse gases and

with compensation, including transfers of technology to help build low carbon economies worldwide.

As the talks progress, we can be sure that many of the most powerful nations will use a whole range of tactics to avoid making the necessary commitments to reduce emissions. There will be continuing attempts to divide developing countries. I also won't be surprised if the developed countries get the chair of the UNFCCC or one of the Ad Hoc Working Groups to introduce a last minute paper, saying this is the last chance - and pressure everyone to sign it. Then they will rely on the tactics of blame, saying to developing countries that we are responsible for the failure of the talks if we don't sign it.

That is why all those people of good conscience who believe in creating a safe future for our children must join together and demand a binding, just solution to the gravest crisis humanity and Mother Earth has faced.

Pablo Solón is Bolivia's ambassador to the UN and part of Bolivia's delegation at COP15.

INTERVIEW



Who's in the Climate Caravan?

Sixty activists from the global South are currently touring Europe on their way to Copenhagen. Starting out at Seventh Sessions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Geneva from 30 November to 2 December, the tour passes through Italy, Germany, France and Belgium before arriving in Copenhagen on 9 December.

*Cecilia Olivet and Mary-Lou Malig spoke to **Amparo Miciano**, an activist travelling in the van who works mainly on women's rights in rural areas.*

Why are you in the Caravan and what do you hope to achieve in Copenhagen?

I am in the Caravan to speak out about the situation of women in rural areas and women in general. Women in both the rich and poor countries have common experiences and this is because the capitalist system is patriarchal and marginalises women. And they are the most affected by the climate crisis. In Copenhagen, I will join the voices of people all over the world to demand that developed countries live up to their historical responsibility of paying, and making real reductions in their emissions.

What solutions do you propose to solve the climate crisis?

We need a change of mindset and increased awareness of women's rights so as to empower them to act on these issues and engage with local and national government to demand action to support sustainable agriculture. Traditional agriculture can ensure food security and prevent further destruction of the environment.

How are women, especially in rural areas, affected by the climate crisis?

Women in rural areas play a huge role in securing food for their families and communities, including household work and caring for the children. In securing the food, women in rural areas often borrow money from informal lenders so as to be able to have the capital needed for planting. But after the two super typhoons of Ondoy and Pepeng which wiped out crops, women were faced with no harvest

and therefore no money to pay back the lenders. They then borrow from other lenders to pay the old debt and end up in a vicious cycle of debt.

How did you get involved in the struggles for social justice?

I started as a student activist at the University of the Philippines. I was part of the demonstrations against the Marcos dictatorship. This was the time I first tasted tear gas, learned how to run fast and blend into the crowd to avoid arrest. After the dictatorship, when Cory Aquino was in power, I moved from fighting underground to struggling above ground. I had a family, I had a child and I needed to earn a little bit to support my family but I wanted to stay in the movement and so I worked in the agricultural sector and organised cooperatives.

What organisation are you representing now and what are your main campaigns?

I am part of the World March of Women and the National Rural Women Coalition (PKKK), both in the Philippines. We advocate for the access and control by women of their land, coastal areas and ancestral domain and also for access to services such as health, education, water and freedom from violence against women and children. We are fighting for their right to sustainable agriculture, agri-fisheries and for women to have a role in decision-making on all these aspects. Finally, we are struggling for rights of women to be able to fight climate change and for peace in Mindanao.

FEATURE

The spectre of “overpopulation”

Whenever global environmental crises, poverty or world hunger are at issue, the overpopulation argument is raised. It is now occurring in debates on the worsening climate situation, warns Sarah Sexton.

Over 200 years ago, free market economist Thomas Malthus rejected the idea that everyone should have shared rights to subsistence, in favour of a distinction between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor. The poor were poor because they lacked restraint and discipline, not because of the privatisation of land. This is the essence of the overpopulation argument – that it is the increasing number of people that causes resources to become scarce.

Today, the same argument is increasingly being used in climate debates to justify the colonisation of the future for particular interests and to privatise commonly-held goods. The talk is sometimes of teeming populations causing whole cities to be lost to flooding through their excessive contribution to greenhouse gas emissions – unless polluting companies are granted property rights of the atmosphere through carbon-trading schemes such as offset credits.

Malthus was compelled to admit that his mathematical and geometric series of increases in food and humans were not observable in any society. For over 200 years, his theory and arguments have been refuted endlessly by demonstrations that any problem attributed to human numbers

can more convincingly be explained by social inequality, or that the statistical correlation is ambiguous.

If over one billion people do not have access to safe drinking water, it is because water, like food, is usually controlled and flows to those with the most bargaining power: industry and bigger farmers first, richer consumers second. The poor whose water is polluted by industrial effluent, exported in foodstuffs or poured down the drain through others’ wasteful consumption are the last to be considered.

Studies have highlighted the contradictions in trying to correlate population growth with carbon emissions, both historical and predicted. They describe how industrialised countries, with only 20 per cent of the world’s population, are responsible for 80 per cent of the accumulated carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Countries with the highest greenhouse gas emissions are those with slow or declining population growth. The few countries in the world where women’s fertility rates remain high have the lowest per capita carbon emissions.

Aggregate per capita emissions figures, however, still tend to obscure just who is producing greenhouse gases and how they

are doing this, by statistically levelling out emissions amongst everyone. One estimate is that it is the world’s richest half-billion people, some 7 per cent of the global population, who are responsible for half the world’s carbon dioxide emissions, while conversely the poorest 50 per cent are responsible for 7 per cent of emissions.

Population numbers, in sum, offer no useful pointers toward policies that should be adopted to tackle climate change. Massive fossil fuel use in industrialised societies cannot be countered by handing out condoms. Nor will reducing the number of births dent the massive annual subsidies, estimated at \$200 billion, that energy companies receive in tax breaks for fossil fuels, giving them an unfair advantage over low-carbon alternatives.

But it may be argued that facts, figures and alternative explanations, while necessary, have never had much effect on population debates or disagreements over policies. This is because, deep down, these are political and cultural disagreements, not mathematical ones. Overpopulation arguments and the policies based on them persist not because of intrinsic merit, but because of the ideological advantages they offer to powerful political and economic interests to minimise redistribution, to restrict social rights, and to advance and legitimise their goals. In

fact, the “too many” are hardly ever the voices you hear on this issue.

This partially explains why those considered to be surplus are not those who profit from continued fossil fuel extraction but those most harmed by it and by climate change. From Malthus’s time onwards, the implied “over” in “overpopulation” has invariably been poorer people or darker skinned ones or people from the colonies and countries of the South – or a combination of all three. Other categories are increasingly added to the list of overpopulation “targets”: the elderly, the disabled, immigrants, and those needing welfare.

Ultimately, if the human population was halved, quartered, decimated even, so long as one person has the power to demand from or deny food, water, shelter, land, livelihood, energy and life to another, even two people may be judged “too many”.

The Corner House, www.thecornerhouse.org.uk



“The time to act is now” ... or later (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

He also appeared to concede to the developing countries’ insistence that the KP be continued beyond 2012 to ensure that signatories would be held accountable to commitments made.

But the devil is, as always, in the details of these assertions. While some laud the political agreement as a more considered, incremental approach to tackling climate change, the defining issue of our time, others may see it as a blatant ploy to lower international aspirations. Martin Khor of the South Centre labels it a “climb down” to a “collection of national efforts and peer review by parties to the UNFCCC of the national performances in the new agreement. This low-grade framework is widely termed ‘pledge and review.’” Despite this, Khor considers that a political declaration in the form of a decision of the Conference of Parties (COP) has “legal status and effect, and locks in the framework and parameters of the future negotiations”. In effect, he states that Copenhagen must point in the direction of a deal, even if it is not actually made here.

The costs of foregoing the Kyoto Protocol in favour of developing a new climate treaty from scratch may prove unfeasible, especially if the worst features of Kyoto – namely the carbon trading system – will in any case be retained.

But this may be easier said than done. An African civil society member tracking the negotiations recently argued that there are no guarantees that these pledges can be easily translated into a legally-binding agreement. After all, the BAP had a clear mandate that was violated and assurances for a successful outcome with this process are likely to be even weaker. Furthermore, the failure of industrialised countries to meet their KP commitments or be given sanctions for non-compliance presents an even bigger quandary besetting this new arrangement.

These undercurrents could play a significant role in ensuring that any pre-agreement made in Copenhagen remains weak. The US is still waiting for its domestic legislation to be passed. The Waxman-Markey and Kerry-Boxer bills have carbon trading at their centre, which would help the US avoid taking real domestic action, while the linking up of such schemes internationally is likely to feature strongly in any future global agreement. Historically, the US has heavily influenced the international climate agenda – it was fundamental in pushing carbon trading in the KP before backing out of signing it. The emission cuts it proposes of 17 per cent below 2005 levels, which translates to 4 per cent of 1990 levels, also do not bode well for committing the country to ambitious emissions reduction targets. This is likely to detract from – yet again – the emergence of consensus positions.

Lim Li Lin of the Third World Network suggests that the costs of foregoing the KP in favour of developing a new climate treaty from scratch may prove unfeasible,

especially if the worst features of Kyoto – namely the carbon trading system – will in any case be retained. But clearly, one of the most vital points of contention will be that real action as needed will be delayed by intractable politicking, resulting in a bad deal, at a time when the Earth and its most vulnerable peoples and ecosystems can least afford it. Timelines for tipping points are looming and entire island cultures face extinction.

The “chance to seize the political terrain back from business-friendly half measures, such as carbon offsets and emissions trading, and introduce some effective, common-sense proposals – ideas that have less to do with creating complex new markets for pollution and more to do with keeping coal and oil in the ground”, as author and activist Naomi Klein argues Copenhagen should be about – looks unlikely to be seized. What looks more likely is a political declaration that James Hansen, who heads the Nasa Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has aptly described as “so fundamentally wrong” that it would be better to start again from scratch.

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COMING SOON: Q&A with the EU

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The stated aim of the UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen (United Nations Climate Change Conference 15th Conference of Parties) is to achieve a global agreement that would avert dangerous climate change – setting legally binding greenhouse gas reductions for industrialised countries, and establishing financial and technological measures to help the Majority World achieve more sustainable development. However, there is no chance of these aims being met within the current framework for an agreement.

This is partly because industrialised countries are promising far fewer reductions and far less money than is required. But the problem runs deeper than this. The Copenhagen negotiating texts include proposals to expand carbon markets which would delay such actions and encourage the outsourcing of pollution from North to South. Carbon markets redefine the problem of climate change to fit the business-as-usual assumptions of neoliberal economics.

KYOTO IS DEAD, LONG LIVE KYOTO

Climate change was primarily caused by the industrialised countries, which grew wealthy by exploiting natural resources including fossil fuels at the expense of the Majority World. The UNFCCC goes some way to acknowledge this in its reference to countries' "common but differentiated responsibilities" in tackling climate change. It suggests that industrialised countries should take a lead in tackling climate change at home, while transferring money and technology to help Southern countries along cleaner development paths.

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol was an exercise in avoiding these responsibilities. It saw the industrialised countries agree to the first legally binding "emissions reduction" targets, but at the same time - at the instigation of the USA - it introduced carbon markets that allowed them to outsource these reductions to countries in the Global South. Since then, greenhouse gas emissions in industrialised countries (excluding the former Soviet bloc) have risen by almost 13 per cent. The world economy has become more carbon intensive.

Current debates focus on whether or not to abandon the Kyoto Protocol – which remains in force after its first commitment period ends in 2012. The main proposals for Copenhagen attempt to strip away the concept that industrialised countries are responsible, while expanding the market mechanisms that are the hallmark of Kyoto. The legal form of proposals to defend Kyoto is ultimately less important than the underlying political demand that industrialised (Annex 1) countries take responsibility by committing to strong, legally binding targets - which should also mean questioning the carbon markets that undermine them.

FROM BALI TO COPENHAGEN

There are currently two main tracks within the climate negotiations. An "Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex 1 Countries under the Kyoto Protocol" (AWG-KP) was established in December 2005. This was later joined by a parallel negotiations track, the "Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action" (AWG-LCA), which takes the Bali Action Plan (BAP) of December 2007 as its starting point.

The AWG-LCA set a deadline of December 2009 to reach agreement on five key areas:

Shared vision: a broad statement of overall aims, including a long-term goal for emissions reductions that is consistent with the latest scientific assessments;

Mitigation: legally binding "commitments" from industrialised nations, and nationally appropriate mitigation "actions" (NAMAs) from developing nations. This includes discussions on how to prevent further deforestation;

Adaptation: cooperative measures to help countries that are exposed to greater risks of drought, desertification, floods, water shortages, disease and other negative impacts of climate change;

Technology transfer: cooperative measures to help the development and spread of affordable, environmentally sound technologies;

Finance and investment: agree a means to pay for all of the above.

SHARED VISION: THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

What would it take to tackle climate change? The UN climate talks aim to agree to a "shared vision" on when global greenhouse gas emissions should peak, how high their levels should be allowed to rise and, most contentiously, who should make what cuts and when they should make them by.

There is no clear scientific consensus on what these targets should be, although it is often claimed that stabilising the climate at 2°C above pre-industrial levels is a realistic goal. It is then suggested that this would require Annex 1 countries to cut their emissions by 25-40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 and around 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050.

These numbers need to be treated with considerable caution. Read the small print, and it becomes clearer that a 25-50 per cent cut would give only a 50 per cent chance of meeting the 2°C target, and this number holds only if emissions were to peak in 2015. There is significant recent evidence that the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on which these figures are based understated the extent of "slow feedback" mechanisms and other complex, non-linear impacts.

In an alternative formulation, it has been argued that 1.5°C is a safer goal – a target supported by the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). This gets translated as a target for returning the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million (ppm) - down from a current level of 387 ppm.

But assumptions about "stabilisation" have been questioned by more recent scientific studies, which instead calculate in relation to actual volumes of pollution. Scientist James Hansen estimates that 750 million tonnes of CO₂ could be emitted between 2000 and 2050 to limit warming to 1.5°C. Between 2000 and 2009, however, there were around 330 million tonnes of CO₂.

One thing remains uncontested, though: the pledges made by Annex 1 countries to date fall a long way short of any of these targets.

However, the scientific basis for such numbers take us only so far. The key questions at stake in Copenhagen are political and economic concerns about who should take responsibility for tackling the climate problem and how that will be done. As Third World Network points out, "with less than 20 per cent of the population, developed countries have produced more than 70 per cent of historical emissions since 1850."



MITIGATION: THE NUMBERS GAME

Annex 1 countries were supposed to present legally binding emissions reduction commitments by June 2009. Offers are now on the table after much delay, but these tend to leave many questions unanswered: Does the target represent an internationally binding commitment? Will the reductions be made domestically at source or does the figure include offsets? Is the target date set so far in the future that no one will be held accountable? And, most typically, have baselines or forestry figures been manipulated to present a more ambitious sounding commitment than is actually on offer?

The EU presents a typical example. It proposes a 20 per cent cut in emissions by 2020, rising to 30 per cent in the context of a global agreement. Yet this also includes a significant quantity of “offsets” - 50 per cent, officially, but the unofficial numbers are far higher once provisions to “bank” surplus permits from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) are taken into account. The 30 per cent figure is also evasive – with an extra 5 per cent achieved as offsets, and up to 3 per cent achieved by shifting the goal posts to include and use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) in the statistics. More generally, the EU figures are flattered by a 1990 baseline, because emissions reduced vastly in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

The US will come to Copenhagen with a provisional target of a 17 per cent reduction in emissions below 2005 levels by 2020. This represents just a four per cent reduction on 1990 levels. It is further based on a domestic “cap and trade” carbon market which would allow 100 per cent of these “reductions” to be achieved overseas through project-based offsets. There is also significant doubt about its legal status, with the US promoting a “pledge and review” system that would leave it without obligations under international law.

Canada suggests that it will cut 20 per cent of its emissions compared to 2006 levels by 2020 – although its emissions have actually risen by 26 per cent compared to 1990 levels. Australia pledges a 25 per cent cut by 2020, but its emissions (excluding deforestation) rose by 30 per cent between 1990 and 2007. New Zealand also uses a loophole on forestry and agriculture to mask the fact that its greenhouse gas emissions have risen by 22 per cent between 1990 and 2007. It now claims it will be “carbon neutral” by 2050, although it is actually only promising a 50 per cent reduction in emissions between now and then.

As with all Annex 1 commitments – no real account is taken of “outsourced emissions”. The globalisation of trade has resulted in massive increases in international aviation and shipping, which are excluded from these figures. Another major gap involves “outsourced emissions” - greenhouse gases resulting from industrial production for export. These are estimated to account for up to a quarter of emissions from China, for example, or up to 50 per cent of the increase in its emissions from 2002 to 2005.

MITIGATION: CARBON MARKETS AS AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY

There are numerous proposals on the table in Copenhagen concerning how to “scale up” carbon offsets. These include the revision and expansion of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), possible new offsets arising from measures aimed at Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) as well as new forms of “sectoral crediting.”

Sectoral credits would introduce new offsets as part of what are called Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in the climate policy jargon. Sectoral crediting refers to selling emissions reductions credits from an entire sector, for example cement, within a country. This represents a potentially large new source of offsets. For example, OECD/IEA estimates suggest that sectoral crediting in the electricity sector in China could produce over three times the offsets currently generated by Chinese CDM projects involving power generation.

Many variants are currently under discussion, all of which are “baseline and credit” schemes (like CDM). A future scenario is imagined for a whole industry – for example, an increase in emissions of 50 per cent. It is then controversially assumed that Southern countries would make some efficiency savings without incurring a cost. Any deviations from the baseline over and above these “free” savings are called “emissions reductions” and would be awarded credits. This repeats many of the same problems as the CDM, only on a larger scale – selling impossible-to-verify stories about the future of whole economic sectors.

Some variations of the baseline involve “intensity” targets. If a country can claim to produce every tonne of steel in a slightly less dirty way, credits can be generated – even if it is producing far more steel, and so actually increasing its emissions. Mixing absolute and “intensity” targets allows increases to be counted as reductions.

FINANCE: PLAYING POKER WITH THE CLIMATE

Although debates on finance are a key part of the Copenhagen discussion, money on the table is proving elusive.

The EU hit the headlines, for example, by projecting that global climate finance for mitigation and adaptation should reach €100 billion per year – a coup for the spin doctors, since the EU had actually failed to announce any firm commitments. In fact, the EU estimates its own share of this finance as between €2 and €15 billion per year – most of which is likely to come from carbon market auction revenues. The other Annex 1 countries, from the USA to Canada and Australia, are similarly evasive.

The money question is not simply about numbers, but concerns a broader attempt to redefine the financial obligations implied in the UNFCCC.

The EU’s proposal, however, hacks away at this “obligation” by assuming that some of it will, in fact, be unnecessary – with private companies in the South expected to foot a share of the bill. A second slice is assumed to come from carbon trading, with offsets (and sectoral crediting) now counted not only as equivalent to domestic emissions reductions, but also treated as meeting the financial burden. In other words, they have been *counted twice*. Only after these sources are taken into account is public finance even considered.

The nature of that potential spending is also questionable. One example is the USA and Japan leading a charge to channel a significant proportion of this money through the World Bank’s Clean Investment Funds (CIF). This is an exercise in giving with one hand to take with the other: the USA and Japan are the Bank’s largest shareholders, and can exert considerable influence as a result. The CIFs disperse a large proportion of this money in the form of conditional loans, and this continues the Bank’s practice of lending significant sums to fossil fuel projects.

ADAPTATION

“Adaptation” refers to the fact that, irrespective of any action taken now, human-induced climate change will already have severe impacts, from rising sea levels to melting glaciers and desertification.

The key debates on adaptation in Copenhagen concern finance and technology. On finance, there is a significant risk that pledged money will simply recycle other Official Development Assistance (ODA). In fact, the EU has sought the removal of negotiating text that would require such funds to be “additional to” and “separate from” ODA targets.

Delivery of this money may also be a problem, with a recent study finding that less than \$0.9 billion of the \$18 billion pledged to existing adaptation funds by industrialised countries had actually been delivered.

Here again, though, what is at stake is not simply how much money is pledged, but how it is spent and who is “managing” the funds. For example, adaptation could yet become a byword for the spread of genetically engineered crops, while funding to redress the spread of disease as a result of climate change thus putting the power and money in the hands of pharmaceutical corporations.

TECHNOLOGY

More remains at stake in the technology discussion. In particular, proposals for the creation of a “Global Technology Pool for Climate Change” would seek to ensure that green technology could be shared without private patent protections. Such proposals are supported by Brazil, India, China and other G77 countries – while being opposed most vehemently by corporate lobbyists, arguing to protect the restrictive system of Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) currently policed, globally, by the World Trade Organisation.



Change Trade, Not Our Climate!

*Global trade rules are stacked in favour of a poor deal for the climate, argues **Ronnie Hall**.*

Government negotiators have jetted in to Copenhagen primed for fractious, coffee-fuelled all-night negotiations, as each country battles to reach some kind of face-saving deal that sounds far-reaching and progressive, but won't damage its own economy. All involved claim to be worried about the possibility that talks might collapse: but would a deal, *any* deal, be better than nothing?

The answer is a resounding "No!". Because while the world watches and waits, praying that governments can conjure up a last minute reprieve from the impending threat of climate change, officials from the very same governments prioritise short term trade concerns in the international arena, stacking the rules in favour of trade and against climate.

International trade and investment agreements already drive the overall growth of energy-intensive industrial sectors, the continued extraction and processing of fossil fuels, and the expansion of intensive agriculture. Yet World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules prohibit any differentiation between climate-friendly and climate-threatening sectors if it's based on production and processing methods.

The same rules also place severe constraints on what governments can actually do to promote low-carbon alternatives or help people adapt to climate change. Rules on intellectual property rights, for example, push up the cost of climate-friendly technologies, making it that much harder for developing countries to switch to sustainable low-carbon technologies and climate-resilient development. Rules on the patenting of life forms could also prevent farmers adapting food production to climate change, with severe implications for food security. There are even rules on subsidies that could stop governments providing financial support for the development of climate-friendly fuels or technologies. A "Doha" deal could even lead to the removal of national energy efficiency laws already in place.

This simmering tension between the worlds of trade and climate change also creates a "chilling effect" on the development of new climate change policy measures: governments become reluctant to introduce any national measures that might be challenged through the trade system. Many multilateral environmental agreements even have built-in "trade loopholes": the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, for example, have wording explicitly advising against measures or "disguised restrictions" on international trade.

Energy security concerns are clearly at the heart of many current trade negotiations too. The EU, the US and others are trying to use the WTO to remove international trade restrictions on energy service companies. Japan is seeking to include "energy security" clauses in a potential bilateral agreement with Australia, meanwhile, in order to maintain access to Australia's coal resources.

Above and beyond trade rules, governments' fixation with maintaining economies' and industries' competitiveness in an increasingly tough globalised economy also presents a major hurdle to implementing climate change mitigation policies. As countries have progressively engaged in international trade, they have also become more dependent upon it. As a result, governments are ever more reluctant to introduce costly climate-friendly policies, such as carbon taxes, on the basis that these could place their domestic industries at a disadvantage (by increasing their operating costs compared to those of their foreign competitors). But this argument doesn't hold much water: G20 countries are currently spending something in the order of US\$200 billion *every year* subsidising the use of fossil fuels.

The current free trade stranglehold over economic policy means that governments have also chosen to prioritise business-friendly solutions to climate change,

rather than opting for more effective and predictable regulatory options. This means we are already banking heavily on the success of a number of highly uncertain "false solutions" that minimise inconvenience to, or even benefit, industry. These include voluntary certification and labelling systems, which are favoured precisely because they have minimal impacts on trade, are not designed to address excessive consumption, and can lend a very pleasant shade of green to company profiles.

Governments urgently need to refocus trade and investment to actively promote the use of sustainable energy, by stopping trade and investment negotiations and agreements that promote energy-intensive industries. They need to redirect their efforts - and the very substantial public subsidies currently allocated to the fossil fuel and agrofuel sectors - into developing and implementing sustainable clean, renewable, locally-controlled and low-impact energy resources and technologies, based on the principle of energy sovereignty. It's also critical that we stop overproduction and overconsumption.

If we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need to move away from neoliberal economics. We need a coherent, practical, and fair rights-based framework that prioritises long-term climate change concerns over short-term trade interests, and puts the long-term health of the planet and the well-being of all its people first. If we don't change the rules of the global economy, it's most unlikely we will stop runaway climate change.

This article is based on Ronnie Hall's *Change trade, not our climate!*, a new publication from the Our World Is Not For Sale network, www.ourworldisnotforsale.org.

The carbon lobby

The International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) is a lobbying powerhouse at the UN climate change talks. The organisers of the Angry Mermaid Award explain why IETA was nominated for the award.

"The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is currently buckling under the weight of its own success" according to the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), which has suggested that the Copenhagen conference act to expand the scope of a market mechanism that many claim has failed.

This stance has earned IETA a nomination for the Angry Mermaid Award, which seeks to "recognise the perverse role of corporate lobbyists, and highlight those business groups and companies that have made the greatest effort to sabotage the climate talks."

IETA was founded 10 years ago and now represents 170 companies, ranging from carbon finance specialists to transnational oil firms. It regularly boasts the largest non-governmental delegation at the UNFCCC, dwarfing the presence of established NGOs such as Greenpeace. At COP 13 in Bali, it accredited some 336 representatives, or 7.5 per cent of all non-governmental participants. The sheer size of IETA's presence worried environmental and development groups at the conference. Peter Hardstaff, from the World Development Movement commented, "The fact that IETA is the biggest NGO in Bali is indicative of the influence it will extend over the outcome of the talks."

At COP14 in Poznan, IETA once again had the biggest NGO presence with over 250 lobbyists. The lobby group had hired a whole building where it held up to 12 events per day, described by one delegate as a "real parallel conference". IETA has geared up well for a large lobbying presence in Copenhagen, with some 66 scheduled events.

Promoting offsets

IETA uses the COP to promote the idea of a globally linked carbon market, with offsets being a key component of this.

Although the CDM has failed to reduce global emissions, IETA claims it has been a success. Its lobbying documents argue that the CDM "has demonstrated that market-based mechanisms spark new, keen interest in clean development activities in countries whose emissions must be addressed if the international community is to meet its climate change objectives. The invaluable momentum that the CDM has created must be preserved and built upon."

IETA goes further and argues that what is needed now is "a new CDM with more flexible mechanisms", including an expansion and broader standards for project approval, including sector-specific standards, allowing different rules



for polluting industries – creating the potential for those industries to escape tough standards.

High-level access

IETA secures valuable access to decision-makers through its staff and members. Its President is Henry Derwent, a former Director for International Climate Change in the UK government. It also secures access through its members, such as Ecoscurities, a leading emissions trading company recently taken over by JP Morgan. Ecoscurities develops

CDM projects, sells carbon credits and provides consultancy services to business as well as the European Commission and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In response to being told IETA had been nominated, Henry Derwent said: "We will be honoured to accept this recognition of the work we have been doing over more than 10 years. During that time we have been delighted to see that the principle of emissions trading has been more and more widely accepted across the world."

IETA is one of eight candidates nominated for the Angry Mermaid Award. Online voting is open until Sunday, 13 December at www.angrymermaid.org

Climate activism heats up in South Africa

*South African civil society fired up in 2009 to respond to its government's destructive industrial strategy, writes **Tristen Taylor**.*

South Africa is on the cusp of what can aptly be described as a carbon amplification scenario. The state-owned electricity utility, Eskom, is seeking to build up to six more coal-fired power stations; already Eskom produces half of South Africa's annual 440 megatonnes (mt) of carbon emissions. In addition, with government financial support, the petrochemical corporate giant Sasol is aiming to construct another coal-to-liquids plant, which would add another 30 mt to its existing greenhouse gas emissions of 72 mt per year. Despite already being the world's most carbon-intensive economy, the South African government is participating in Copenhagen with the

primary objective of getting a deal that doesn't require it to reduce its emissions.

During the national Climate Change conference in March of this year, aimed at preparing for the COP15, communities most impacted by regressive post-Apartheid policies were excluded and partnerships in solving climate change with Sasol and Eskom were lauded. A peoples' summit was held just outside the official venue and activists from Johannesburg's poorest urban suburbs besieged the gates to the swanky conference venue demanding to be heard. A moratorium was delivered to the lead department on climate change calling for

urgent emissions reductions, investment in renewable energy, and Free Basic Electricity - although the response later came that the demands were "outside of the Department's remit." Subsequently, a video of the protest was pulled off the government website, while Sasol's ravings on the then theoretical carbon capture and storage programme remained.

Citizen activism on climate change increased throughout the year, despite the focus of the people on deep issues of endemic unemployment (40 per cent), the world's worst HIV/AIDS epidemic, and an economic depression that has leached the country of a million workers.

This activism has involved repeated protests outside of Sasol's global headquarters, including hosting climate change mock trials exposing the corporation's climate sins, and repeated policy and legislative submissions including those against electricity tariff hikes which would affect the poor most dramatically. Climate hearings were hosted in various parts of the country drawing attention to the problems faced in those

regions, including oil company Engen's toxic connection to the community of South Durban and issues of water scarcity in the Western Cape. In November, the South African Parliament held hearings on gender and climate change. A group of poor women from Johannesburg made the 1300 km journey to take part. Parliament responded by refusing the women their constitutional right to speak in their home languages and forcing them to speak in English, which is often a fourth or fifth language.

A victory was finally registered in getting transnational corporation Rio Tinto to abandon a proposed aluminium smelter in South Africa. The Department of Energy has put plans for one of the new coal-fired power stations on ice, as well as freezing further plans for developing nuclear power stations. The launch of Climate Justice Now! South Africa, after months of consultations with community organisations, also heralds an era of forging new solidarities between social and environmental justice concerns.

www.earthlife.org.za



Edging out fossil fuels and false solutions in the UK

*The Climate Camp movement in the UK diversified its actions this year, taking on carbon trading whilst continuing to target carbon-intensive infrastructure, writes **Kevin Smith**.*

The first action directed at Copenhagen talks in the United Kingdom took place this April. Frustrated by carbon markets being used to justify new fossil-fuel intensive infrastructure, climate activists started to turn their sights to the market itself. On 1 April, as G20 leaders started rolling into London in their limousines, the Camp for Climate Action swooped on the European Climate Exchange, the biggest hub of Europe's carbon market. Camped under the banner "Nature doesn't do bailouts", thousands of activists blocked one of the main roads in the

financial district of London until they were violently evicted by police in the early hours of the morning. The Climate Camp legal team have recently secured the right to challenge the legality of the police tactics used on the day in High Court.

The focus on carbon trading has continued right up to the climate summit. For the big NGO-organised march that took place in London last Saturday, 5 December, 50 people dressed up as free-market profiteers and formed the spoof World Association of Carbon Traders (WACT). Later that

day, the Climate Camp swooped again, occupying Trafalgar Square, in the centre of town, to highlight the ineffectiveness and unjustness of any deal so heavily based on carbon trading.

The focus on carbon trading by activists has not detracted from other actions against carbon-intensive infrastructure, though. Direct action campaigns against new coal-fired plants, runway expansions at Heathrow airport and opencast coal mining during the course of 2009 have included mass trespass, lock-ons, fence cutting, office occupations, blockades, runway invasions, an armada of homemade rafts laying siege to a power station and many, many people super-gluing themselves to pretty much anything and everything within reach.

Encouragingly, these campaigns started to bear real results as the Copenhagen meeting approached. Energy giant E.ON quietly shelved its plans to build the first new coal-fired power station in the UK for over 30 years, while Heathrow's proposed

third runway is looking increasingly unlikely to go ahead. Both of these projects were turned into political hot potatoes after a campaign of sustained direct action.

The climate movement in the UK has tread a fine line between edginess and accessibility, attempting, as someone put it, to show that its "not just about eating hummus and gluing your dreads to the motorway." It is still predominantly white and middle class, but some interesting links were forged between climate and labour activists during the worker occupation of a Vestas wind turbine factory in the Isle of Wight when it was threatened with closure in August.

Further solidarities will surely be forged as the next aviation struggle shapes up: the expansion of City Airport, which threatens communities in a predominantly non-white, working class area of London.

www.climatecamp.org.uk

What the Clouds Say

On the tenth anniversary of the WTO protests in Seattle, activists across the USA protested for climate justice. Rachel Smolker tells her story.

On 30 November, I spent part of my day lying on the ground in the middle of a busy intersection in the heart of Chicago's financial district with my arms locked into big plastic tubes that connected me to 11 other people. We formed a big circle of bodies and tubes around the outside of a banner reading "The air is not for sale!".

We chose that particular spot, under the shadow of the Chicago Climate Exchange's offices, and caddy corner to the Chicago Board of Trade, to denounce the marketing of carbon as a fraud, an ineffective and unjust response to the crisis of climate change. Our act of nonviolent civil disobedience resulted in closing down the flow of traffic through the financial district for close to two hours. The police sirens wailed, while activists chanted "Carbon Trade is a Big Charade" and "Keep the Cap and Ditch the Trade".

Our mission? The Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) is the nation's first and largest carbon trading platform. This is where industries and individuals go to engage in the charade of trade if they want to pretend to be addressing global warming. The Exchange is a voluntary one: participants are not required by any law or governmental mandate to reduce their emissions. For some, like American Electric Power, DuPont and Ford Motor, most likely the motivation is to learn how to navigate these markets in preparation for what is seen by many as an inevitable future mandate. Other participants want to benefit from the greenwash that can be gained by claiming participation. A company that boldly claims to offset its emissions can project a green image, appealing to many potential clients who have at least a budding consciousness about environmental concerns. In short, greenwash is profitable.

So, while I was lying on the pavement, looking up at the sky, I contemplated the big picture of carbon trading, recalling some lines from the seminal Durban Declaration for Climate Justice (www.durbanclimatejustice.org): "History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labor, forests, water, genes and ideas. Carbon trade follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the earth's carbon cycling capacity into property to be bought and sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity, carbon, the earth's ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate."

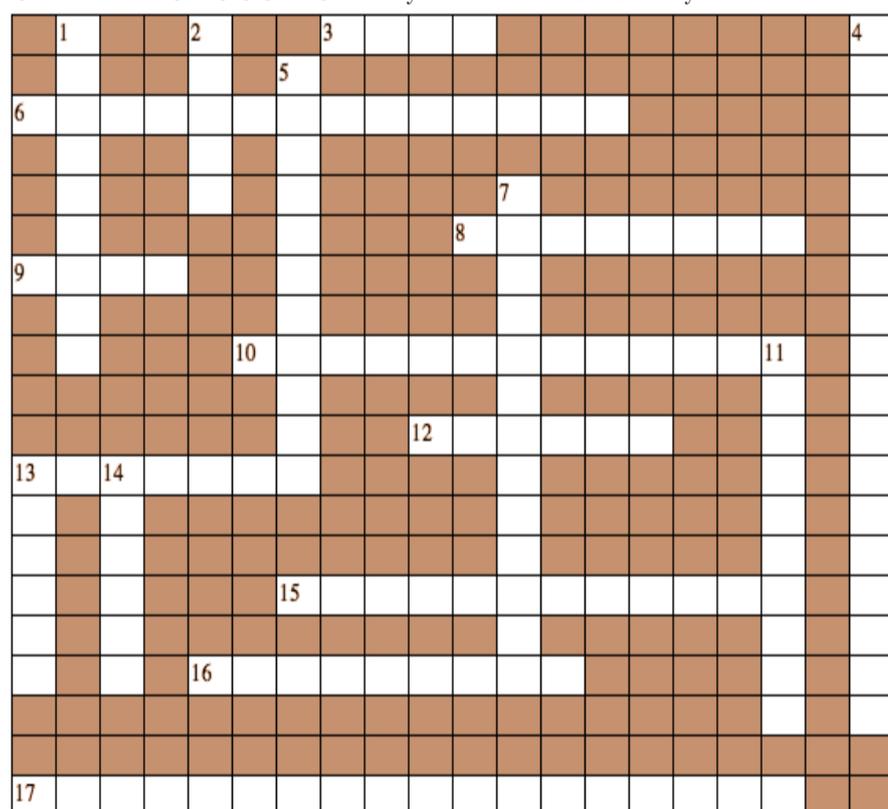
It seems, the charade has robbed us of our own will and integrity, leaving us feeling entirely impotent, because, we are told,

it is not our own personal force, our own strength, wisdom and common sense that will lead us forward, but rather, the blind, entirely amoral "market forces" we are to put our faith in. Surely the earth and her people will rebel! Surely we will not allow this to happen! Surely we will all stand up and declare that the air is not for sale, the earth is not for sale, the forests are not for sale, our farms are not for sale, nor our soils. Our forests and biodiversity are not for sale, not the polar bears, the ice caps, the orangutans - not even the spiders or fleas or even the mosquitoes. Our children's futures are not for sale. It is time for a new relationship with the earth and with each other, and the time to make it happen is now.

That is what the clouds told us while we were lying on the cold pavement with our arms locked in tubes, in the middle of LaSalle and Adams.

Rachel Smolker is a researcher and campaigner with the Global Justice Ecology Project, www.globaljusticeecology.org. A longer version of this article can be found at commondreams.org

CLIMATE CROSSWORD by Tamra Gilbertson and Marley Kirton



ACROSS

3. Any process, activity or mechanism that removes a greenhouse gas, aerosol or precursor of a greenhouse gas or aerosol from the atmosphere.
6. Area of a glacier where loss of ice from melting, evaporation, and sublimation exceeds annual new snowcover.
8. The estimate of emissions that would occur without policy intervention, that are needed to determine the effectiveness of emissions mitigation strategies.
9. Proposal with an acronym that should be corrected to Rotten Endorsement for Deforestation and Disaster.
10. Any gas that absorbs infrared radiation in the atmosphere.
12. Official UN treaty that recognises the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
13. High ranking greenhouse gas produced by decomposing organisms or the lower body.
15. What people are planning to do on December 16th.
16. The current Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC.
17. The current Prime Minister of Denmark.

DOWN

1. The part of the Earth system comprising all ecosystems and living organisms in the atmosphere, on land or in the oceans, including organic matter.
2. Triatomic form of oxygen.
4. A very powerful greenhouse gas used primarily in electrical transmission and distribution systems. A colorless gas soluble in alcohol and ether.
5. A hot air circulation scheme formulated in Kyoto. Abort Dancer.
7. A greenhouse gas necessary for plants to produce their food.
11. A major component of the terrestrial biosphere pool in the carbon cycle, which is a function of historical vegetative cover and productivity. Carob Lions.
13. Something that some witches practice. Also a climate model that calculates average atmospheric temperatures and sea levels that is used by the IPCC for the construction of SRES scenarios.
14. A country gravely affected by rising sea levels whose capital is Funafuti.

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CARBON
TRADE
WATCH



Carbon Trade Watch promotes a critical analysis of the use of market-based mechanisms as a means of dealing with climate change. It is a project of the Transnational Institute.



The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) is a pan African policy-oriented research organisation that focuses on human security issues in Africa. The ISS Corruption and Governance Programme runs a project that focuses on the governance of climate change.



Earthlife Africa is a non-profit organisation in South Africa that seeks a better life for all people without exploiting other people or degrading their environment. Earthlife Africa seeks a just transition to renewable energy and a low-carbon economy.

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