

eco



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

Stern Words Promise US Action

We at Eco would like to take this opportunity to officially welcome Special Climate Envoy, Todd Stern and the rest of the new United States team to the UN Climate Talks. Although the fossil of the day nominating committee will certainly miss some of the past US characters, we're quite happy to have a new and reengaged US negotiating team here in Bonn. Even before he was officially sworn in, President Obama pledged to reengage in the international climate negotiation process and help the United States become a global leader in the fight against climate change. One of his first steps in the reengagement process was appointing Todd Stern as his Special Climate Envoy. Yesterday, Stern gave a wide-ranging speech at the opening session of the LCA plenary in which he talked about mak-

ing up for lost time, seizing the opportunity at hand, taking responsibility for historical emissions and accepting the prognosis of the latest science. Stern's speech was quite a breath of fresh air considering one of the last times the United States addressed a plenary session – in Bali – they were booed. With only nine months left until Copenhagen, the clock is ticking fast. Although we applauded Stern yesterday, like Tuvalu and many other parties, we base our support on the principles laid out in his speech becoming reality; bearing in mind also that in some respects more aggressive commitments will be required. Over the coming weeks and months, we look forward to working with the new US delegation, ultimately leading the way to a strong deal in Copenhagen.

Show's Over

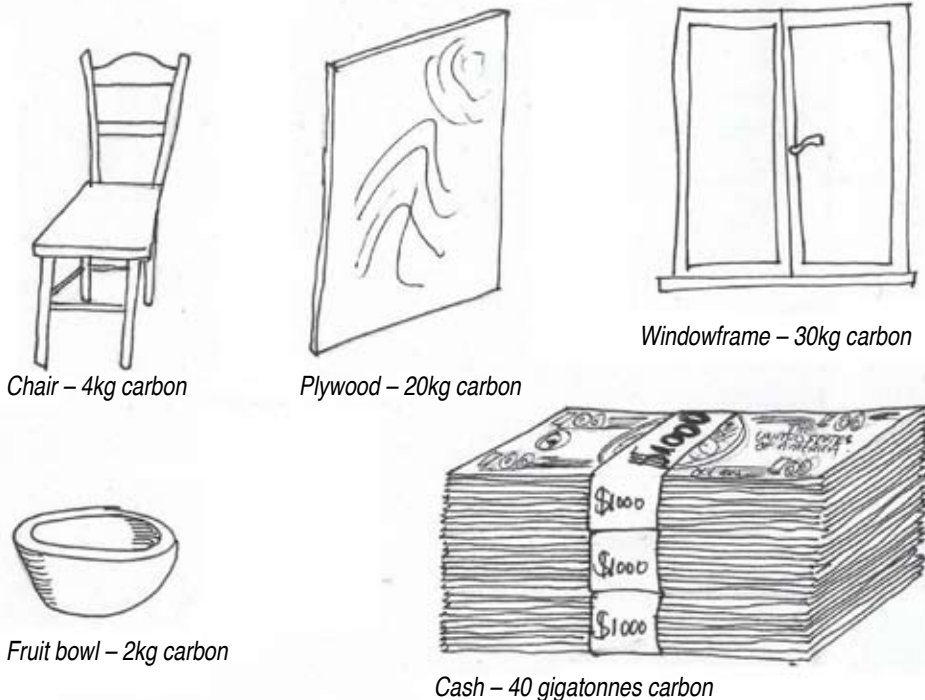
Sorry, folks, but it's time for the magic show to come to a close. The dazzle of disappearing emissions and magical paper work created by the current LULUCF accounting framework must be replaced by robust rules that ensure this sector will play a significant role in preventing a rise in global average temperature towards dangerous climate change thresholds. Although some Annex 1 Parties may be loathe to surrender the mystery and intrigue created by their accounting ledgers, may they be assured that the excitement of incentivizing real and significant emissions reductions from the LULUCF sector will more than make up for the loss of the chimera that is the current accounting framework.

The LULUCF sector can play its part in a comprehensive global agreement. However, it is imperative that the magic loopholes in the current accounting framework be closed so that the emissions and removals are a reflection of what the atmosphere actually sees, not the illusion the magicians wish to create. Currently, some countries report credits, or nothing at all, when in fact the atmosphere sees emissions from activities such as forest conversion, forest degradation and peatland degradation. And this magic does nothing for ensuring the deep emission reductions we need from fossil fuels.

There are a few encouraging signs in the most recent round of Party submissions on LULUCF: For example, there is a growing consensus that emissions from peatlands could be included in a revised LULUCF framework. And some Parties are putting forward new creative ideas to solve old problems.

But there is an unmistakable sentiment in other submissions that the magic show must go on! For example: Proposals for conjuring credits for the carbon stored in newly manufactured forest products while making the missions from the existing, decaying stock of

–continued on back page, col. 3



Chair – 4kg carbon

Plywood – 20kg carbon

Windowframe – 30kg carbon

Fruit bowl – 2kg carbon

Cash – 40 gigatonnes carbon

Eco's guide to harvested wood products, and the carbon they contain

Japan: +4%?

In the afternoon of March 27 in Tokyo, the advisory committee of Japan's government presented "multiple options" for the long-awaited 2020 target. A few hours later, the package was presented here in Bonn to the participants of AWG KP's workshop on the scale of emission reduction by Annex I countries.

ECO found these "options" very disappointing. The options range from +4% to -25% reduction of GHG emissions compared to 1990 levels ... And in case you wonder - no, it is not my typo. The options really include a scenario of "PLUS" 4% compared to 1990 levels.

The ECO reading Kyoto geeks might be wondering: "but... wasn't Japan's Kyoto target something like -6%?"

The answer is yes. So what does this mean?

It means the Japanese government is openly considering the option of going backwards from their Kyoto commitments while the rest of the world is discussing ways of going forward.

While the lower end makes people wonder what Japan is thinking, the upper end of -25% is not very reassuring either. IPCC AR4 indicates Annex I countries as a group need -25~-40% reduction to mini-

mize the risks of climate change. -25~-40% reduction "as a group" does not necessarily mean individual countries should commit to this range but, when it comes to the most vulnerable countries, even the IPCC range may not be enough to avoid serious climate impacts.

Countries like Japan, which have both responsibility and capability, have to lead the way. The fact that Japan did not consider the IPCC's upper end when delivering their options shows there are some forces within the government who want to lower the level of ambition. Another problem with the way the committee presented those options is that it only emphasized costs.

The options were explained with GDP loss, impacts on unemployment rates and possible impacts on households. It is important to assess possible costs but, on the other hand, the committee put little emphasis on the possible benefits of taking actions.

It is worth mentioning that Japan is considering, at least at the moment, these options without using offsets. But this should not be used as a reason to adopt a low target. If Japan wants to be a constructive force (let alone a "leading" force) in the road towards Copenhagen, it has to come back with an ambitious number by the June meeting.

-Show's over, from front page

products disappear; wanting to claim as many credits from LULUCF as possible, without even the monitoring to back it up; using a special magic wand to get credits after factoring out all emissions that would result from business as usual activities and all natural disturbances.

Several Parties are "grossed out" by net accounting because it doesn't add up for them, and others think net is the best way to catch some credits. Others still want to travel through time by changing the base year to suit their needs.

It is clear that options for this sector range from those that could strengthen the integrity of LULUCF accounting, and thus a global climate agreement, to those that may undermine efforts to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

This session must focus LULUCF negotiations in order to deliver a real outcome for the environment. Negotiations must deliver text that lays out clear, transparent rules and processes that demonstrate the commitment of Parties to close the loopholes, keep the base year, reduce LULUCF emissions and ensure that credits do not undermine the goal of staying as far below a two degree increase in global temperature as possible. The time for magic shows is over!

Africa: the Endless Battle

Africa as of today does not have the capacity to adapt to climate change; it lacks adequate capacity for monitoring, lacks early warning facilities, relevant scientific and technological skills and has limited skilled human resources.

Uncontrolled global warming risks increasing the aid-dependence among many African countries. Already a majority of the countries on the continent are grappling with adaptation to a number of severe climate change impacts. During the last year, the continent suffered from worsening floods. These floods hit the helpless and increasingly hopeless poor.

The increasing floods are also responsible for water-based diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, that have claimed the lives of mainly children and women. Many marginalized groups in flood prone areas are slowly being decimated by food poisoning; especially poisoning from dirty water from receding floods. Ironically however, desertification is also increasingly becoming a major impediment to the fight against disease, hun-

ger and poverty.

But will we continue to look the other way while those responsible worry about the political feasibility of resolving this issue? It is evident that industrialized nations are the major emitters of greenhouse gases. It is also common knowledge that continued emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere will continue altering and aggravating the effects of climate change. Industrialized nations have greater economic and technological resources that can help adapt to these forced changes. They can also make a big contribution towards cleaner and responsible production thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"Yes we CAN" was President Obama's campaign slogan. But was the call for change only for US politics? No, the change must be local and global and it should include climate change. The United States should have started to play a leading role on climate change years ago, but for it to act now is better than not acting at all. Africa should be high on the climate agenda. Or else it will be the lost continent.

Bonn city centre, 9pm Saturday

Lights Out!

If you see a blue box near the chairman's seat in the plenary, know: This is a ballot box.

It is filled with the symbolic votes of hundreds of millions of people from around the world who voted with their light switch for climate on Saturday night during Earth Hour.

Over 4000 cities and towns in 88 countries took part in what is the first ever global vote on climate change. Earth Hour signals a real desire from people all over the world for urgent action on climate change.

Scouts presented the ballot box to Yvo de Boer on Sunday. The box remained near the pulpit throughout the session.

The ballot box represents a mandate for action. Mandatory, urgent, now.