

eco



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Shattered Ice – Scattered Ideas

It looks as if Nature may be fast outpacing human capacity to think collectively and to act decisively, for better or for worse.

The news flash on the Wilkins Ice Shelf in the Antarctic Peninsula is particularly worrying. This ice sheet was formed almost 10,000 years ago, at a time when *Homo sapiens* was perhaps still challenged by the difficult choice between living in a cave or staying up a tree. It seems that after two hundred years of unmanaged industrial growth, we may be discovering that our choice was ill-planned.

REALITY: The IPCC projected in 2007 that world sea levels were likely to rise by between 18 and 59 cm (7 and 23 inches) this century. But it did not factor in any possible acceleration of ice loss from Antarctica. Even a small change in the rate could affect sea

levels, and Antarctica's ice sheets contain enough water in total to raise world sea levels by 57 meters. Signs are that even science is unable to keep pace with the impacts of warming around the globe. The temperatures in the Antarctic Peninsula are already 3°C above 1950 levels.

POLITICAL Reality: Agreed, the political mandates are short and medium term. However, given that, we have one inhabitable planet to share and ever stronger signs from around the world that the climate is changing fast. Faster than the discussion around a Shared Vision for 2050 in these talks. Can it be that hard to find common ground around this issue?

Perhaps we are missing the iceberg for the ice cubes...

Ecosystems Matter for Adaptation too!

Healthy ecosystems are essential to life on earth. They regulate our climate, provide food and fresh water, buffer people against the impacts of floods and droughts, and are at the heart of the culture and well-being of innumerable communities. Robust ecosystems are also a critical line of defence against the impacts of climate change, building resilience and enabling adaptation, particularly for the world's poorest people, who are most immediately dependent on the services ecosystems provide.

UNFCCC Article 2 recognizes the imperative to sustain healthy ecosystems, through its aim to stabilize GHG concentrations at levels that allow them to adapt naturally. In recent days, the G77 and China, along with many individual developing countries, have also highlighted the value of ecosystems for adaptation. But without comprehensive submissions to the AWG-LCA, the vital role that such systems play in adaptation could be neglected or ignored.

In particular, such submissions need to request that the value of healthy ecosystems is acknowledged in the Shared Vision for Long-Term Cooperative Action and referenced in the Adaptation Framework, drawing on Article 2 of the Convention. Along with community-based approaches and valuing traditional knowledge, ecosystem approaches should be integrated into the Enhanced Action on Adaptation, which should identify options for responses that maintain the integrity of ecosystems, and the services they provide. Ecosystem approaches, including ecosystem restoration, need to be embedded in agreed principles and guidance, through knowledge-sharing and 'learning by doing', in appropriate technology transfer and risk management, and through institutional arrangements.

So far, this is another area where those countries most impacted by and least responsible for climate change are coming forward with the new ideas. Perhaps some Annex 1 parties have forgotten that they too ultimately depend on a healthy natural environment?



Financial mechanism pilot project, 1546

Going for the Burn

Lemania: Madam Chair, I thank my most distinguished colleague from San Seriffe for his most perspicacious observation that fire has in fact broken out at the back of the room. However, if I may draw your attention to paragraph 6 line 3 of his proposed revised text, I would like to suggest that the words 'fire' and 'fighting' should in fact not be separated, as together they form a compound noun. Thank you Madam Chair.

Chair: San Seriffe, is this acceptable?

San Seriffe: Madam Chair, in my country it is the practice to separate compound nouns. It seems to me that the original language is quite comprehensible.

Lemania: I am sorry, Madam Chair, but I believe that my distinguished colleague's proposed text would imply that it is the fire itself that is doing the fighting, whereas surely we should be proposing that the fire should be fought.

Chair: Ruritania, you have the floor.

Ruritania: Madam Chair, might I propose a compromise suggestion, which would be to insert a hyphen between the two words.

Chair: As I see that neither Lemania nor San Seriffe have their flags up, I assume that this compromise is acceptable, that is to say that in paragraph 6 line 3 we insert a hyphen between the words 'fire' and 'fighting', and I now offer the floor to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia: Madam chair, I would like to draw your attention to paragraph 7 of the proposed revised text by my distinguished colleague from San Seriffe, in which he suggests that the fire be put out by throwing water on to it. In my country, water is a scarce and valuable natural resource: I propose therefore that we should replace the word 'water' with the word 'gasoline.'

Kuwait: I would like to add to my distinguished Saudi colleague's suggestion. If we could perhaps insert the words 'or other petroleum distillates' after the word 'gasoline', this would give us some choice in the matter, and give us the flexibility we may require when we come to dealing with this most important matter.

(Flames engulf all)

■ This first appeared in Eco some fifteen years ago – how things have changed! Let us hope we are not reprinting it again in 2024.

LUDWIG

Ludwig understands that, caught up in the atmosphere of passion around the youth delegation, certain Developed Country Parties neglected to make a donation towards their "How Old Will You Be?" T-shirts. Ludwig would like to encourage these Parties to make good their contributions as soon as possible – if they don't, he understands that they will be leaving the next generation literally in debt, not a particularly good precedent in these proceedings.

Why REDD is Special

ECO is relieved that REDD has finally got some air-time in the LCA; Accra was a long time ago and a lot of trees have been cut down since then. ECO would like to highlight the following points, which the Chair summarized in yesterday's mitigation contact group:

- ECO supports PNG in reminding the Parties that if REDD is 20% of the problem, it should be 20% of the solution.
- The Congo Basin countries pointed out that REDD is about fashioning a new low-carbon development path for whole countries, and other parties noted the role for REDD as part of countries' NAMAs.
- The LCA Chair wisely recognized the importance of including co-benefits such as biodiversity and watershed protection in MRV systems. ECO, however, likes to think of these as "core" benefits, not co-benefits.
- Most Parties noted the importance of recognizing and ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples: ECO strongly supports calls to reference the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. After all, you wouldn't like it if someone sold your house without your free, prior and informed consent.
- Panama and others noted the importance of starting to discuss positive incentives for REDD; in the context of a global deal to keep warming to as far below 2°C as possible in a safe and equitable manner (OK, ECO admits, we put that last part in).

- The Chair rightly mentioned the uncertainties of "merging" (MRV) REDD and ensuring the permanence of emissions reductions – an area that needs more time within the negotiations.
- Norway underlined the need for broad inclusion of all forest countries, including those with low deforestation rates. Many parties also highlighted the importance of national approaches; both are vital to avoid leakage, i.e. chopping down trees in other countries.
- Tuvalu and the LDCs raised the very important issue of governance. As ECO has previously stated, funding for REDD must be tied to strong requirements for good governance.

The Chair has asked Parties to present their views on the 'specificity of REDD' or as ECO likes to think of it 'why REDD is special'. Discussions on REDD must proceed apace with those in other fora, e.g. financing, but we can't risk a Kyoto-style loophole bonanza. Humans have cut down trees for twelve millennia, while coal power plants are merely two centuries old. Finding an alternative to chopping down trees is somewhat more difficult than pressing the on/off button on coal power plants. And we need to do both as aggressively as possible. ECO supports Peru's call that we take this opportunity to ensure that we send the right signal from Bonn that leads us on the right path to a successful agreement in Copenhagen.

Where are the Brollies hiding?

Since President Obama moved into the White House, ECO has been puzzled with all kinds of existential questions on the Umbrella Group. Things have changed a lot since the time George W. was in charge. The most important question for ECO: is there still any fun? Can we still find some good old Brollies or two throwing a wrench in the works?

With no one to hide behind, some of the Umbrella Group countries seem to believe that, in recent days, they could hide behind some creative accounting.

Australia and New Zealand say they support stabilising GHG concentrations at 450ppm. Who they expect to reduce emissions to get there is something they have not yet explained.

To get 450ppm, Australia's own modelling showed it should take a -25% target. But on Friday, surprisingly, Australia tabled its mid-term reduction of 5 to 15% of 2000 levels by 2020 (meaning in fact a cut of 4% to 14% below 1990 levels). A target that its own analysis suggests will lead to at least 510ppm. Can someone loan Australia a calculator?

New Zealand's Minister Tim Groser told Parliament that the 450ppm stabilisation goal "may not be sufficient." Instead, he suggests that New Zealand might be open to a lower goal.

How it intends to get there is anyone's guess as NZ doesn't even have a target and has abandoned much of its climate change programme.

At the same time, Canada and Japan seem to have difficulties at home with their pesky opposition making the news with some real climate leadership.

Canada's majority opposition has already voted for legislation for -25% on 1990 levels by 2020 and -80% by 2050. Meanwhile, the minority Government's delegates here are off target, banking on a proposal to borrow AAUs from future commitment periods to make up for their short-sightedness.

In Japan, the main opposition party is proposing -25% on 1990 levels by 2020. The October election will tell whose target hits the mark. Meanwhile here in Bonn, the Japanese delegation may not be able keep up, announcing that it would not table any kind of mid-term target by June. It's even trying to keep open the option of increasing emissions compared to Japan's existing Kyoto target.

So there is still some fun, but a different kind of fun. The Brollies can't navigate together in the wash of a reinvented USA. They used to be the schemers and scammers of the UNFCCC, now it's nonsense, guys, nonsense.