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Climate Justice protestors reclaim power as UN talks dither

With ministers and heads of states arriving in Copenhagen, protests surrounded the climate change conference venue, while negotiations remained blocked, writes ***Oscar Reyes.***

As the UN climate change conference enters its final days, thousands demonstrated in the streets of Copenhagen as part of the "Reclaim Power" protest. Starting from multiple points around the city, the demonstrators approached the Bella Centre to hold a "People's Assembly" and give voice to climate change solutions that are marginalised from the talks. Despite significant repression from the police, the groups succeeded in holding the Assembly close to the conference venue. The main protest was organized by Climate Justice Action!

At the same time, about 300 delegates from the Climate Justice Now! Network and led by members of the Bolivian delegation and the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, marched out of the Bella Centre and the official process, attempting to join the protests outside. These delegates were met with police truncheons; some were badly bruised.

"First they shut the public out of the climate negotiations, then they shut out 80 per cent of NGOs who have been accredited to attend, and now they are jailing people who challenge the undemocratic nature of the climate negotiations, while the future of life on earth hangs in the balance," says Dorothy Guerrero of Focus on the Global South.

Hundreds more UNFCCC accredited civil society observers were denied access to the Bella Centre all together, including the entire Friends of the Earth International delegation, who staged a sit-in in the lobby at the Bella Centre in response.

"In the wake of the mass exclusions of critical civil society voices from the COP15 process, and with the future of our planet hanging in the balance, we joined the mass nonviolent movement in Copenhagen to protest the unjust agenda of the rich countries," said Anne Peterman of Global Justice Ecology Project. Proposals to limit global warming to two degrees would "literally wipe entire nations off the map," she added.

Going nowhere fast
Inside the conference, negotiations remained deadlocked. The US expressed strong reservations concerning a new summary text from the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action, one of two major strands of the climate negotiations. It is seeking to avoid internationally binding targets equivalent to those established under the Kyoto Protocol.

Meanwhile, the Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen came in for strong criticism when he attempted to table a new text that was "parachuted from the sky," in the words of the G77 and China. They called the process "illegitimate, undemocratic and non-transparent," a concern echoed by President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

Chavez went further and echoed many of the sentiments of the protestors outside. "The rich countries of the north helped bankers, the big banks. I've forgotten the figure, but it's astronomical."

"What they're saying on the streets is that 'if the climate was a bank they would already have saved it'. I think it's true. If the climate was a capitalist bank, a capitalist bank, one of the biggest ones, they would have saved it."

Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, also spoke in support of the protests. "We understand that there are lots of protests outside and inside, and there need to be. I don't believe we will come to an agreement because there can be no agreement if it does not challenge the model that created climate change, which is capitalism" he said.

System change, not climate change
The street protests expressed frustration at a political process that has proven itself incapable of tackling the issues at hand. Inside the talks, climate justice activists continue to oppose and counter jargon-ridden texts on some of the worst excesses of the climate talks – including new Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) schemes, which could trigger land grabs in the global South by many of the same corporations that have driven deforestation.

Pressure from outside sought to draw attention to more systemic failures, too. Whereas market-based solutions translate the problem of climate change into a language of neo-liberal economics – attempting to use the problem of the market to fix the worst market failure, climate change – climate justice activists were inviting a more fundamental rethinking of how goods are produced and consumed, and how the international trade system works.

"We have no more time to waste. If governments won't solve the problem then its time for our diverse people's movements to unite and reclaim the power to shape our future" said Stine Gry of Climate Justice Action.

www.climate-justice-action.org

FEATURE

From African walk-out to sell-out

No one could have predicted that the threatened African delegation walkout – should the negotiations veer sharply towards a bad deal – would turn into a sell-out orchestrated by their chief negotiator, writes ***Trusha Reddy***

The collective disillusionment of African participants to the UN climate change talks hangs heavy as they come to terms with what many may term a "betrayal" by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, head of the African negotiating team. After an impassioned speech that catalysed the consolidation of a progressive African position in June, it only took Zenawi a quick visit to French President Nicolas Sarkozy on a stop over to talks in Copenhagen to do a full U-turn. The move is said to sacrifice the lives of millions of Africans most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The UK economist and advisor on climate change, Nicholas Stern, and close friend of Zenawi is said to have clinched the deal between the two sides, according to the *Times of London*.

The new "European Union-Africa" proposal calls for the halving of global CO_2 emissions by 2050 compared to 1990 levels and for most advanced developing countries to adopt emissions targets alongside developed countries. It also includes the adoption of a "fast-start" fund of 10 billion dollars per year covering the next three years, 2010, 2011 and 2012 supposedly dedicated to adaptation and mitigation actions, including the fight against deforestation, in developing countries, mainly the poor and vulnerable ones. Twenty per cent is pegged for early action on the controversial forest market mechanism, "REDD +". Private financing is thus a substantial inclusion encouraging the development of carbon markets described as "an ambitious reform of global governance".

Africa's position has been that developed countries commit to a 40 percent reduction by 2020 and 80-95% reductions by 2050 on 1990 levels. Some have argued for an even further limiting of the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels with a cut of 45 percent required.

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FEATURE

Europe Union pledges fall short

The European Union consistently presents itself as a good example in promoting an ambitious climate deal. Yet it has stubbornly refused compromises during the Copenhagen climate talks, writes ***Henrik Bang Andersen.***

With a mix of blame game spin, divide and conquer tactics, and a mess of unresolved conflicts and unanswered questions, the past eleven days of climate negotiations have adopted some of the worst practices that can be found in World Trade Organisation talks – and have remained constantly on the verge of collapse.

The EU often proclaims that it is leading the charge for an ambitious deal, but it has shown itself to be an unconstructive negotiating partner. With the fate of the Kyoto Protocol emerging as one of the main sticking points in Copenhagen, the EU has favoured scrapping it, against the will of the whole Majority World.

Despite the EUȝs overwhelming responsibility for climate change, it repeatedly demands more from “major developing countries” – seeking to drive a wedge between a handful of larger players, including China, India and Brazil, and the rest of the G77 grouping of Southern countries. It has also sought intrusive international guarantees on the “monitoring, reporting and verification” of emissions reduction actions, redefining the terms of the Bali Action Plan to turn voluntary initiatives into quasi-mandatory ones.

Weak targets

In Bali, the EU recommended that rich countries should commit to reduction targets between 25-40 per cent by 2020. But only a year - and an economic crisis – later, the EU adopted a “Climate and Energy Package” which backtracked significantly on its own recommendations, with the EU’s total reduction commitment only 20 per cent by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

EU policy states that this target will be raised to 30 per cent in the context of an international agreement, but it has since imposed further caveats on how this clause would be triggered. These include conditions on developing country participation in a new agreement, and on equivalent commitments being taken on by the USA. The calculations themselves are also suspicious, with the “additional” 10 per cent accounted for by a mix of carbon offsets (generated by projects outside the EU) and a change in counting to include land use, land use change and forestry in the 30 per cent target.

It is not just the targets that are weak, though - so are the tools to reach them.

Dodging responsibility

The Emission Trading Scheme is the EU’s main climate policy tool, accounting for almost half of the EU’s CO2 emissions. The EUȝs climate and energy package claims to streamline the system for a third phase, beginning in 2013. However, it is clear that concern for the “competitiveness” of European industries is bigger than the concern for the climate. Having proclaimed the start of a new auctioning regime, consistent corporate lobbying means that 80 per cent of all the allowances will still be given out for free in 2013. A recent European Commission study deemed that over three-quarters of European manufacturers were eligible for free permits under the scheme in its third phase which runs to 2020.

The ability to “bank” emissions trading permits from the over-allocated second phase to the third phase of the EU ETS, which runs from 2013 to 2020, could obviate the need for emissions reductions to occur domestically. Meanwhile, “linking” rules, which allow carbon offsets from the Clean Development Mechanism and Joint Implementation to be traded within the EU ETS, further inflate the cap and undermine the need for domestic reductions.

The missing money

The EU Climate and Energy Package did not contain any commitments on financial support for developing countries. The EU consistently claims it will provide its “fair share”, however. Prior to the High Level part of the Climate Summit in Copenhagen, EU Heads of State agreed in Brussels on a proposal to provide 2.4 billion euro per year over the next three years to help developing countries deal with the effects of climate change. This has been dismissed as derisory by many Southern countries.
Firstly, nothing suggests that the total 7.2 billion will not be taken from the EU-member states’ existing spending on development aid. Secondly, the EU proposal says nothing on how much the EU is willing to commit to in the mid-term. A concrete proposal may have kick-started negotiations in Copenhagen by putting pressure on other developed countries to put forward similar proposals. Instead, strong-arm tactics to encourage changes in the African Union position are being used, which threaten a just outcome.

Henrik Bang Andersen is an activist in Africa Contact, and Policy Assistant to GUE/NGL in the European Parliament. Additional reporting by Oscar Reyes

NEWS IN BRIEF

What’s the beef with Turkey?

Turkey’s national strategic plan for climate change is to be declared today by the Minister of Environment. This plan is “as black as coal and shameful in every aspect”, according to the Greens of Turkey and Global Action Group. The plan states: “Local resources and especially coal, hydropower, wind, geothermal, solar energy will be exploited at the highest level in the long term (3-10 years)”. Coal is thus listed as the key priority in the mix. This is not the only defect in the strategy document. Nuclear energy is also considered as one of the solutions. Other key items in the plan include aiming at a reduction of 7-11% of greenhouse gas emissions rate increase in the energy sector by 2020. The country’s average current annual emissions increase rate is 5,5%, measured from 1990-2007. Seventy five per cent of these emissions come from the energy sector. Turkey broke a record of emissions increases among Annex 1 countries in 1990-2007 period with all 9-136% GHG increase (with and without land use sector). With this new ‘target’ Turkey’s annual emissions increase would only fall to 5,1-5,3%, which is enough to place Turkey’s emissions above the EU average. This target also means that Turkey would have increased its ghg emissions by more than 250% from 1990 to 2020. Consequently, the per capita emission rate in 2020 would be more around nine tons –it was 5,3 tons in 2007. An official demand is also registered as wanting to opt out being in Annex B countries within the Kyoto Protocol, as well as rejecting any kind of emissions reduction target; considering any target as unacceptable for Turkey’s economic interests.

From African walk-out to sell-out (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

African civil society, represented by the Pan African Climate Justice Coalition, released a press statement saying that the proposal contradicts the African position and is tantamount to catastrophe for Africa. The damage caused by allowing warming to rise by two degrees globally and therefore by around 3.5 degrees on the continent of Africa when the IPCC clearly advocates against this, means death to millions of Africans, Mithika Mwenda of PACJA said. If accepted, the proposal also allocates atmospheric space worth more than 10 trillion dollars between now and 2050 to developed countries including France, denying it to developing countries, and threatening Africa’s prospects of economic and social development and the alleviation of poverty.

The offer of a mere 10 billion in financing for all developing countries is just fast-start funding. “Every other African country has committed to policy based on the science. That means at least 45% cuts by rich countries by 2020 and it means $400 billion fast-track finance not $10 billion” said Augustine Njamnshi of Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance. Zenawi had initially called for US$67 billion a year from developed countries to address the impact and adaptation concerns of Africa.

“If Prime Minister Meles wants to sell out the lives and hopes of Africans for a pittance - he is welcome to - but that is not Africa’s position,” Mwenda said.

PACJA is calling for Zenawi to rescind the appeal or to step down as Coordinator of African Heads of State and Governments on Climate Change.

The unilateral action by Zenawi follows the attempts by developed countries to the split G77. Lumumba Di-Aping, the Sudanese chief negotiator of the G77 bloc of countries, representing some 130 nations, now also accuses the European Commission of being an unaccountable institution that has turned itself into the advocate and prophet of market evangelism. On Zenawi he states: “We will need to address this. Africa will not allow the destruction of itself.”

He suggested other African nations will reject the joint EU-Africa proposal but the rest of Zenawi’s African Union has not accepted this. The authors of this proposal include Zenawi, the EU, along with the UK and France.

The proposal will be submitted in the final days of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), COP15 for consideration.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clean coal proposals safely buried?

*Carbon capture and storage (CCS) looks set to remain outside of the Clean Development Mechanism for now. **Ferrial Adam** hails a victory, but warns that the so-called "clean coal" lobby may still get its way in the end*

The latest indications suggest that a decision on the inclusion of carbon capture and storage (CCS) within the Clean Development Mechanism will be deferred for another year, following a discussion at the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) – one of two permanent subsidiary bodies to the Conference of the Parties (COP). Parties critical of the new technology expressed specific concerns over "the long-term liability for the storage site, including liability for any seepage".

But the aggressive lobbying in favour of new CCS centres and demonstration sites across the world means that campaigners need to remain vigilant: the postponement may just amount to a short pit stop on the way to eventual inclusion of coal in the CDM.

Fast gaining popularity amongst some of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, CCS is the term used to describe the technology of capturing greenhouse gas emissions from industrial processes and pumping them into underground reservoirs for storage. It is claimed that this process could reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Although the technology is untested and is proving to be more expensive than renewables and energy efficiency, it is being promoted by the fossil fuels and energy industries as an alternative to reducing the reliance on fossil fuel energy sources.

CCS is also being considered for inclusion in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which could provide an additional huge source of revenue for energy companies adopting it. Discussions on CCS eligibility has been ongoing for the past four years in COP negotiations and the CDM's Executive Board. The CDM Board was formally requested to consider the inclusion of CCS at COP14 in Poland.

At a side event in Copenhagen organised by Lund University, proponents of the nascent technology suggested that without CCS we would not be able to stabilise carbon emissions. It was also argued that CCS can be used as a "political tool to entice big polluters and fossil fuel industry into the fold of climate change".

There are several critiques of this reasoning. Even if the technology can be made to work, it is believed that it will be at least 20

to 25 years before CCS makes a meaningful contribution to climate change mitigation. Furthermore, one of the biggest dangers of CCS is that it will be a licence for industry to continue producing large amounts of CO_2. There is no evidence that existing coal plants can be retrofitted to establish CCS. In addition, there is no guarantee that the CO_2 disposed of underground will be stored permanently and not leak. Some studies have shown that leakage is likely due to the differences and instability of the geological formations, whilst the vast pipeline infrastructure required to make CCS a reality could also be subject to leaks.

The implications of leakage for the global climate system could thus be catastrophic. Besides the fact that this could provide a false perception of the scale of CO_2 that could be released into the atmopshere, CCS would merely shift the responsibility of dealing with these emissions to future generations. "Twenty years from now we will realise that we could have done much more with renewables rather than wait for CCS to prove itself. A premature reliance on unproven technologies such as CCS runs the risk of diverting investments and research funding away from more sustainable technologies and mitigation options," said one participant at the Lund University event.

The United Kingdom announced four demonstration sites earlier this year with the intention of testing and then patenting the technology to sell to developing countries. The potential to subvert the idea of technology transfer is not lost on developing countries and is included in Africa's position, for instance, which argues against patents on technologies. The European Union has generally sanctioned the use of CCS and reports suggest that on 10 December the European Commission announced plans to plough 1 billion euros into six CCS demo projects alongside existing funding for such schemes, which include future revenue from carbon market auctions. The US Department of Energy also said it would provide \$979m for three CCS projects, with a handful of private companies set to put in another \$2.2bn. Petrochemicals giant Sasol launched South Africa's first CCS centre in October with much fanfare from business and government.

Whilst the inclusion of CCS in the CDM appears to be off the table for now, the game is by no means over yet.

www.earthlife.org.za

NEWS IN BRIEF

Technology transfer: Progress without substance

With the high level phase of negotiations now underway it the tricky subject of patents on technology is still being dodged.

"On technology ...we've seen real advances of substance," says Yvo De Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Yet with new proposals on "technology development and transfer" nearly complete, the most fundamental issues – on finance and intellectual property rights – have been sidestepped altogether.

Angelica Navarro, Bolivia's lead negotiator at the UN Climate Change talks argues that "Intellectual Property is a key issue in these negotiations". She says that a technology transfer mechanism requires the mandatory exclusion of patents on green technology for developing countries.

"The flexibilities in the current trade system are absolutely inadequate," explains Navarro. "You may have several patents for a windmill, and it is even more complex for solar power. Current rules mean that every single country has to ask for licensing for every single patent – and we are more than 130 countries in the G77 - so just imagine the enormous effort and time consuming process that goes into it. On top of that, we don't have the quantities of lawyers and experts that multinationals and big countries have, so the power struggle plays in their favour."

Yet all references to Intellectual Property in the Copenhagen negotiating texts remain stubbornly in brackets at the behest of the United States, which is opposing any mechanism that would pool the rights for essential clean technologies, along the lines of patent pools in the field of HIV/AIDS protection. Earlier this year, the US House of Representatives voted 430-0 in favour of this position, and US negotiators have repeatedly insisted that such references be deleted. The Business and Industry Non-Governmental Organisations (BINGOs) have also lobbied hard, with General Electric leading the charge.

A second key problem remains too. "It's hard to know what's possible in terms of tech transfer — and what can actually be done — until you know how much money you have," says Victor Menotti, executive director of the International Forum on Globalization. And long term financing for clean technology, as with other money supposed to be offered up as part of industrialised nations3 obligations, is nowhere on the table.

CARBON OFFSETS

1. WHAT ARE CARBON OFFSETS?

Carbon offsets are "emissions-saving projects" created to supposedly compensate for continued pollution in industrialised countries in the North. These projects are undertaken by companies, international financial institutions, governments. Offsets usually run in parallel with "cap and trade" schemes, in which the cap is supposed to set a limit on pollution. Carbon offsets generate "credits" which permit pollution over and above this limit. The UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is the largest offsetting scheme with almost 1,800 registered projects in developing countries in September 2009, and over 2,600 further projects awaiting approval. Based on current prices, the credits generated by approved schemes will be worth around $35 billion by 2012.

Although offsets are often presented as emissions reductions, these projects move the responsibility for reducing emissions from one location to another, normally from countries in the North to countries in the South. This frequently results in increased emissions, whilst also exacerbating social and environmental conflicts.

2. SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH CARBON OFFSETTING?

Carbon offsets allow companies and countries to buy their way out of responsibility for cutting their own emissions with theoretical reductions elsewhere. There are both inter-governmental schemes – most notably the UN Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) - as well as voluntary programmes undertaken largely for purchase by individual consumers. Unfortunately both systems are deeply flawed:

Shifting responsibility. Offsetting does not reduce emissions at source, but allows companies and governments in the North that have the historical responsibility to clean up the atmosphere to buy credits from projects in the South. These projects often make existing conflicts for those living near them worse. Moreover, they delay domestic action in economically rich, industrialised countries.

Selling stories. Offsetting rests on "additionality" claims about what "would otherwise have happened," offering polluting companies and financial consultancies the opportunity to turn stories of an unknowable future into bankable carbon credits. The net result for the climate is that offsetting tends to increase rather than reduce greenhouse gas emissions, displacing the necessity to act in one location by a theoretical claim to act differently in another. Moreover, countries that host offset projects have a new barrier to the implementation of environmental regulations, since to do so would remove "additionality" and thereby cut of potential revenue.

Making things the same. The value of CDM projects is premised on constructing a whole series of dubious "equivalences" between very different economic and industrial practices, with the uncertainties of comparison overlooked to ensure that a single commodity can be constructed and exchanged. This does not alter the fact that burning more coal and oil is in no way eliminated by building more hydro-electric dams, planting monoculture tree plantations or capturing the methane in coal mines.

Offsets burst the cap. While cap and trade in theory limits the availability of pollution permits, offset projects are a license to print new ones. When the two systems are brought together, they tend to undermine each other – since one applies a cap and the other lifts it. Most current and proposed cap and trade schemes allow offset credits to be traded within them – including the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) and the cap and trade schemes currently being debated in the US Congress.

3. CARBON OFFSETS SUBSIDISE INCREASED GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

One of the most frequent justifications put forward for carbon offsets is that they should ensure that the cheapest reductions are made first. In practice, these tend to be generated by loopholes and generous subsidies for the deployment of existing technologies, rather than stimulating shifts to a more sustainable future.

As of September 2009, three-quarters of the offset credits issued were manufactured by large firms making minor technical adjustments at a few industrial installations to eliminate HFCs (refrigerant gases) and N_2O (a by-product of synthetic fibre production). It is estimated that a straightforward subsidy to regulate HFC emissions would have cost less than €100 million – yet, by 2012, up to €4.7 billion in carbon credits will have been generated by such projects. N_2O reductions also use simple, existing technologies that could have been implemented far more simply by subsidies and regulations.

A second example involves new "supercritical" coal-fired power plants, which have been eligible for CDM credits since autumn 2007 – despite the fact that coal is among the most CO_2 intensive sources of power. This sets up a perversely circular structure where, instead of envisaging a rapid transition to clean energy, the CDM is subsidising the lock-in of fossil fuel dependence through incentives for new coal-fired power stations in the South. With the credits that these new plants will generate, the CDM is at the same time encouraging a continued reliance on coal-fired power stations in the North as well.

4. CARBON OFFSETS HAVE NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

The use of "development" rhetoric masks the fundamental injustice of offsetting, which hands a new revenue stream to some of the most highly polluting industries in the South, while simultaneously offering companies and governments in the North a means to delay changing their own industrial practices and energy usage.

"Any further expansion of the CDM is an excuse to avoid real emissions reductions. The CDM and the carbon market are instruments that commodify the atmosphere, promote privatization and concentrate resources in the hands of a few, taking away the rights of many to live with dignity. CDM are not a mechanism for mitigating climate change. It is not just "carbon" or pollution that is being traded, but people's lives."

-Closing statement of the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, UNFCCC COP 14, Poznan, Poland, 12 December 2008. Presented by Mr. Tom Goldtooth, Indigenous Environmental Network.

"Carbon offsets perpetuate elite consumption in the misplaced hope that it can be compensated for. CDM in India is dominated by polluting industries that continue to harm communities and ecosystems, emit toxic fly ash and carbon, pollute rivers and underground aquifers. Corporations with bad environmental track records earn huge money through flimsy, non-verifiable and mostly false claims of emissions reductions."

- Memorandum to the Government of India, Joint statement of Indian Climate Justice and Social Movements, November 2009

Carbon offset projects often result in land grabs, local environmental and social conflicts, as well as the repression of local communities and movements. In other words, the people who have had least to do with causing climate change are those who are most adversely effected by these "development" projects.

5. WHAT IMPACT WILL NEW TRADING SCHEMES HAVE ON OFFSETTING AND FOREST CARBON MARKETS?

The most active buyers of offset credits in 2008 were European companies, which bought 80 million credits from the CDM or Joint Implementation projects (a similar UN scheme, operated in countries which have emissions reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol) as either a cheaper alternative to reducing emissions (under the EU ETS), or for the purpose of speculation and re-sale. This market is likely to expand rapidly if the proposed US cap and trade scheme is passed, which would allow US companies to purchase from 1 to 1.5 billion international offsets every year. This could spur on an increase in damaging offset projects, creating enormous pressure to reduce the already-inadequate checks on their environmental and social integrity.

6. CAN THERE BE GOOD PROJECTS?

There cannot be good offset projects. Carbon offsetting exists to continue fossil fuel-based energy use and consumption in the North. It acts as a backdoor to avoid responsibility for reducing emissions at source.

Further, the types of industry that are being funded in the South are largely those which cause the worst social and local environmental problems. Even taking a look at some of the "renewable energy" projects, it becomes clear that local communities rarely benefit from these installations – in numerous cases, communities do not receive electricity from wind turbines and other renewable sources. Such projects have often displaced and criminalised communities through land grabs and persecution by local authorities.

7. BUT ISN'T CARBON TRADING BETTER THAN NOTHING?

As carbon trading acts as a distraction and even increases emissions while exacerbating local conflicts, it is not a question of fixing carbon offsetting but rather of taking measures that actually tackle the real causes of climate change.

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> - Memorandum to the Government of India, Joint statement of Indian Climate Justice and Social Movements, November 2009

8. CAN THE COPENHAGEN NEGOTIATIONS REFORM OFFSETTING?

The slow pace of negotiations and contested nature of continued commitments under the Kyoto Protocol means that little agreement is likely to be made in Copenhagen on the reform of offsets. But various proposals remain on the table, and look likely to stay there as negotiations continue over the next year or more.

These proposals include expanding the existing CDM to cover new greenhouse gases, industrial and land management activities; "standardisation" measures that would relax the already-weak rules on environmental integrity; "sectoral" (or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action, NAMA) crediting; and the potential to generate credits from Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) projects.

There are three main drivers underlying these new proposals. First, they would help wealthy, industrialised (Annex 1) countries avoid having to make emissions reductions domestically.

Second, they represent what Henry Derwent, President of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), has referred to as "a sectoral overcoming of common but differentiated responsibilities." In other words, they would redefine the basis of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change so as to undermine the principle that Annex 1 countries are largely responsible for human-induced climate change and should therefore take responsibility for it.

Third, from the point of view of financial speculators, these proposals scale up carbon markets in ways that increase the scope of financial speculation. A broad range of new credits would provide the basis for many new carbon derivatives, similar to the sub-prime mortgage derivatives that caused the recent financial crisis.

> *"We challenge States to abandon false solutions to climate change that negatively impact Indigenous Peoples' rights, lands, air, oceans, forests, territories and waters. These include nuclear energy, large-scale dams, geo-engineering techniques, "clean coal", agro-fuels, plantations, and market based mechanisms such as carbon trading, the Clean Development Mechanism, and forest offsets. The rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect our forests and forest livelihoods must be ensured."*
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> - Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change, Anchorage Alaska, 24 April 2009

9. WHAT'S IN THE LATEST NEGOTIATING TEXTS?

Most of the text on offsets in the Copenhagen negotiating texts remains in brackets, meaning that it is not yet agreed.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol contains a detailed range of proposals to broaden the inclusion of land use, land use change (LULUCF) and forestry-related activities in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This would include expanding crediting from "forest management" activities, adopting a definition of forests that explicitly includes plantations. Cropland and wetland management would also be eligible for credits, while controversial "soil carbon management" proposals (such as biochar, which involves the burying of charcoal in soil) also find their way into the texts. A decision on these matters, following further scientific advice, is envisaged at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP17/MOP7) in South Africa in 2011.

There are also proposals to include a range of new greenhouse gases in the CDM, most notably nitrogen trifluoride (NF3), which is used in the production of solar cells and liquid-crystal displays. NF3 has 17,200 times the potency of carbon dioxide, according to the scientific body under the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Treating NF3 reduction as a potential source of offsets could yield similar scams to those surrounding CDM projects for the reduction of other potent gases, such as HFCs and N_2O.

In the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA), the latest negotiating paper on "cost-effective" mitigation suggests that a new market-based mechanism be created, without specifying what it would be. Yet prior discussion on the matter makes clear that that the options under discussion - "a work programme to promote market-based mechanisms that complement other means of support for nationally appropriate mitigation actions" or a market-based mechanism that could "cross broad segments of the economy" - refer to proposals for sectoral carbon markets.

These would apply offsetting to whole economic sectors rather than simply projects, scaling up its scope while removing even the facade of "additionality" . Other possibilities that have been discussed include the use of "standardised baselines" and "positive lists," which would make it quicker and easier for project developers to gain approval for large volumes of offsets without any reference to the likely environmental or social effects of projects in the localities where they are hosted.

Further proposals include "full fungibility" i.e. the ability to exchange carbon credits from offset schemes and permits from cap and trade schemes without legal limits. At present, the EU ETS excludes offsets from forestry and agriculture, and hydropower credits that do not adhere to World Commission on Dams guidelines – a practice that could be illegal under this proposal. In addition, there are new proposals for "sectoral crediting" which would introduce new offsets.

FEATURE

Halting the Tar Sands: COP15's role in stopping the move into unconventional oil

Following the financial crisis of 2008 the fate of a number of the Canadian tar sands projects hangs in the balance. COP15 has a crucial role to play in ensuring they do not proceed writes ***James Marriott***

Photo illustration: Stig

Over the past decade there has been growing international opposition to the development of the tar sands of Alberta. These extraction ventures - dubbed 'the most destructive projects on earth' - have become recognised as threatening to have a devastating impact on the global climate. The sheer scale of the projects and the intensity of their energy usage means that they constitute an industrial tipping point, a step change from one form of hydrocarbon - convention oil - into a far more carbon intense form - unconventional oil. Furthermore, Canada is the international oil industry's test site, if extraction can be undertaken on the scale envisaged in Alberta then it opens the flood gates for unconventional oil extraction around the world, in Congo, in Madagascar, in Russia, in Jordan and elsewhere. If it becomes acceptable to finance the tar sands of Alberta, then the global finance sector will have 'normalised' a disastrously high-carbon development path. It is for this reason that the Canadian tar sands have become a frontline in the struggle against the destruction of the climate though the extraction of oil & gas.

But how are these projects to be stopped? And what is the role of COP in stopping them? In order to explore this question, let us look closer at oil giant BP's involvement in the tar sands.

In 2003 John Browne, the former Chief Executive of BP, publicly dismissed the idea of investing in the tar sands, bucking the trend set by rivals Shell and ExxonMobil. But in December 2007, just a few months after Browne's resignation, BP purchased a fifty percent stake in the Sunrise Tar Sands field costing $5.5 billion. This joint venture with the Husky Energy company, aims to produce 2.25 billion barrels of oil from the bituminous crude that lies beneath the forests of Alberta between 2015 and 2050.

The intention is that Sunrise will be a Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage (SAGD) project, so in order to steam the heavy oil out from deep underground, BP aims to inject water heated to boiling point by burning natural gas piped in from the planned gas developments in the Arctic Ocean. The infrastructure of extraction will require swathes of pristine forests to be felled, rivers of water to be utilised, an airport to be built, access roads to be constructed, and an army of workers to be marched in. Once the bitumen has been extracted, it will have to be cleaned of sand and clay in an upgrader, once again fuelled by natural gas - it is this energy consumed in the extraction process that makes these projects have such a high impact on the Earth's climate. From the upgrader the synthetic crude - syncrude - will be piped via a dedicated 1500mile pipeline to Toledo in the USA - a pipeline longer than the famed Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline in the Caucasus. At Toledo the plan is to dramatically enlarge the existing refinery, so that the syncrude can be processed into gasoline for cars and trucks, jet fuel for planes, feedstock for petrochemical works.

In the months that followed the December 2007 announcement, all was set to go and the soaring oil price only made this costly project look ever more profitable. But 18 months ago at 147 dollars a barrel the oil price hit the ceiling, and the US economy went into recession. Oil collapsed to 30 dollars a barrel and every project in the tar sands province of Alberta was questioned on the grounds of economic viability. By early 2009 BP announced that the Sunrise project was on hold, a final decision to sanction the scheme would be made early in 2010.

So the fate of this project, the fate of these Alberta forests and rivers, the fate of the livelihoods of First Nations peoples, the fate of a vast quantity of carbon that might be released into the atmosphere, all these hang in the balance. Six men at BP's head office in London will ultimately make the decision to go ahead or retreat from this frontier of unconventional oil.

As the delay in the sanctioning of the project illustrates, the economics of the project are extremely vulnerable to the oil price, but they are also vulnerable to the cost of regulation. BP cannot go ahead unless it can convince the finance sector, the institutional investors, of the long-term viability of the venture. Sunrise is set to have a production life running out to 2050, far longer than a conventional oil field, and investors need to be reassured that the project will be able to generate profit over this long life cycle. But this is a risk, no SAGD project has yet undergone a full life cycle, and after the oil price the greatest threat to the financial viability of Sunrise lies in carbon regulation.

If COP 15 ushers in drastic emissions cuts it will undermine the economics of Sunrise. If international pressure forces Canada to cut back it's emissions - in contrast to its appalling record over the past decade - then tar sands projects will either be inoperable or will require an intensive usage of carbon capture and storage (CCS), a highly controversial new technology. However, not only is the technical viability of applying CCS to tar sands projects heavily debated, but so too are the costs that intensive CCS will add to tar sands extraction. The threat of a tough emissions regime being implemented in the coming decade will help the confidence of the investor sector in the viability of Sunrise.

BP has said it will make its decision whether to go ahead with Sunrise in Northern spring of 2010. If there is a strong signal from this COP then it will strengthen the resolve of that international civil society campaign to oppose the development of tar sands and will weaken the finance sector's support for the project. Of course, Sunrise is just one among hundreds of projects in the Albertan tar sands, but a decision by one of the three major international oil companies not to go ahead with tar sands development, to retreat from this frontier of unconventional oil, would send a powerful signal to the entire hydro carbon's industry.

www.platformlondon.org

And the winner is...

Out of the eight nominees and with 37 per cent of the ten thousand votes that were cast for the Angry Mermaid award on the website and at the Klimaforum in Copenhagen, world's largest seed company Monsanto (featured in *Climate Chronicle* Issue 3) emerged as the winner. Agriculture giant Monsanto was nominated for promoting its genetically modified (GM) crops as a solution to climate change and pushing for its crops to be used as agrofuels. The expansion of GM soy in Latin America is contributing to major deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. The Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) of which Monsanto is a member, is helping to promote the company's cause by allowing GM soy to be labeled as "responsible". Monsanto also wants GM soy to be funded under the Clean Development Mechanism.

Oil giant Shell took second place with 18 per cent of votes for lobbying to sabotage effective action on climate change. The American Petroleum Institute (API) followed with 14 per cent of votes as the key oil industry lobby organisation in the United States, representing some 400 companies that cover the spectrum of the oil and gas industry. API has a history of lobbying against legislation on climate change.

www.angrymermaid.org

FEATURE

REDD text an insult to Indigenous Peoples

Whilst the latest Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) text doesn't have the words "Made in the USA" anywhere on it, it should have, writes **Chris Lang.**

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperation Action produced a REDD text yesterday in Copenhagen. At the beginning of the week, the US and Colombia derailed the forest negotiations jointly earning themselves the Climate Action International's Fossil of the Day third prize for "sinking REDD". In a marathon session on Monday night, the text expanded from three pages to seven pages.

"The U.S. has wreaked havoc on this process in the last 48 hours," complained Roman Czebiniak of Greenpeace.

The United States' strategy is simple: They refuse to budge, they remove everything they don't like, and they demand lots more to be inserted that they do like. At the last minute they agree to a text, that in fact was what they wanted all along. And then they get congratulated for fooling us all.

With only two days of negotiations remaining, the chances that REDD will be the only agreement to come out of Copenhagen is high. The chances that REDD will be used to greenwash the North's failure to reduce its emissions from burning fossil fuels are even higher.

The greenwash has already started. Earlier this week, the *New York Times* reported that REDD "may turn out to be the most significant achievement to come out of the Copenhagen climate talks." In a similar vein, US television broadcaster CNBC reported that, "Defining how a forest can generate carbon credits could be the one landmark agreement coming out of the UN climate talks in Copenhagen."

Without meaningful cuts in emissions from burning fossil fuels, tropical forests will go up in smoke. Four years ago, a drought in the Amazon meant that the rainforest did not sequester its usual two billion tons of carbon dioxide and dying trees released three billion tons of carbon dioxide. The total five billion tons additional carbon dioxide is more than the combined emissions of the European Union and Japan.

The REDD text itself is deeply flawed. It is not a "significant achievement". It stinks. Any mention of targets for stopping deforestation have gone. There are no commitments for long-term finance. Safeguards are weak to the point of non-existent. Leakage is not meaningfully addressed. The principle of free, prior and informed consent by indigenous people is nowhere to be seen.

Indigenous People have been pushing for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be included in the REDD text. The words are in fact in the text. But all the safeguards are carefully tucked away behind the words "promoted" and/or "supported". To meet the "safeguard", and therefore qualify for REDD funding, a government can say that it is supporting respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples. Holding a meeting in the capital city and inviting five indigenous representatives would probably qualify. The word "promoted" is even weaker. The word "should" earlier in the sentence provides even more wiggle room.

The 'safeguards' then, amount to little more than a list of positive things that ideally should be done.

> With only two days of negotiations remaining, the chances that REDD will be the only agreement to come out of Copenhagen is high.

The Indigenous Environmental Network describes the REDD text as "a slap in the face of Indigenous Peoples". Alberto Saldamando of the International Indigenous Treaty Council notes that, "Indigenous Peoples rights are mentioned once in the form of a recommendation for nation states to consider, but not as a requirement. But ensuring basic human rights for the worlds populations who are most affected by climate change should not be voluntary. It is a matter of obligation."

If, like Jeff Horowitz, co-founder of Avoided Deforestation Partners, you believe that we must save the forests at all costs and that doing so should allow the pollution in the North to continue, then this is the REDD text you were waiting for. "We can't tell people to stop driving cars and trucks. But we can stop deforestation," Horowitz told CNBC. "The value is in the carbon."

But for those who believe in the importance of human rights, indigenous rights, local peoples' rights and land rights this is the time to withdraw support for REDD. No rights, no REDD.

www.redd-monitor.org

The Durban Group for Climate Justice releases a new statement against REDD and REDD+.

Go to www.durbanclimatejustice.org for the full text.

STATEMENT

OILWATCH call for the emancipation of territories and peoples' from fossil energy

At KlimaForum09, Copenhagen, 11 December 2009

The planet is experiencing a severe ecological crisis and communities living in harmony with and caring for nature are being pressured to unbearable extremes. The atmosphere is being polluted, rivers damaged, forests destroyed, and so is the livelihood of communities in the South, health of individuals, communities and nature.

It is clear that the greatest efforts against climate crisis are those made in different model other than the polluting model that has driven the world into the present crisis. These efforts are being made within communities, organizations and amongst groups of women and men around the world who are committed to life and nature. This knowledge and these efforts, locally, regionally or globally, gain more importance when they are collectively articulated.

OILWATCH proposes an agenda that goes beyond international negotiations on climate, to one that serves to strengthen the base from which we can move forward towards the constitution of societies and territories free of crude oil and other fossil fuels. Our proposed agenda demands that the world begins to:

- Work for the transformation of the technological model to one that frees us from dependence on hydrocarbons and minerals
- Support the efforts of peoples to emancipate themselves from crude oil as an energy source; build energy sovereignty, recognizing the efforts of communities and how their resistance is keeping the oil underground
- Strengthening food production, not for trade but for fighting hunger, in order to build and strengthen food sovereignty
- Counter the cult of the car and savage urbanization with the ecologically sound models
- Break with the paradigm of unlimited growth based on the market and the commodification of nature
- Restore clean and free water to the territories and peoples, through the protection and restoration of ecosystems affected by extractive activities and implementing sustainable technologies.
- Move towards a legal system that protects the rights of peoples who are resisting and that are repressed and criminalized; advance towards a doctrine that upholds the rights of nature; define a strategy for recognition and reparations for the historical, social and ecological debt;
- Identification of a global goal of sustainable countries that is respectful of nature and of human and collective rights, economic and social rights, environmental rights and the right to continue to exist on the planet (Annex 0 nations)

OUR IMMEDIATE AGENDA

1. Build common agendas from the various networks and organizations in order to confront and change the current model of civilization.
2. Work towards oil-free territories without destructive activities and create an Alliance of Liberated peoples and territories.
3. Recover lost local knowledge on water, climate and energy and share this local knowledge between peoples.
4. Reinforce resistance to projects that are predatory on nature and create collective dynamics in order to protect defenders of nature.
5. Denounce the false solutions to climate change; condemn unjust mechanisms such as the carbon market and further debts for adaptation, as well as technologies aimed at manipulating nature.

We urge delegates and peoples to take adopt this agenda and make our meetings in Copenhagen meaningful. Emancipation from carbon tyranny NOW!

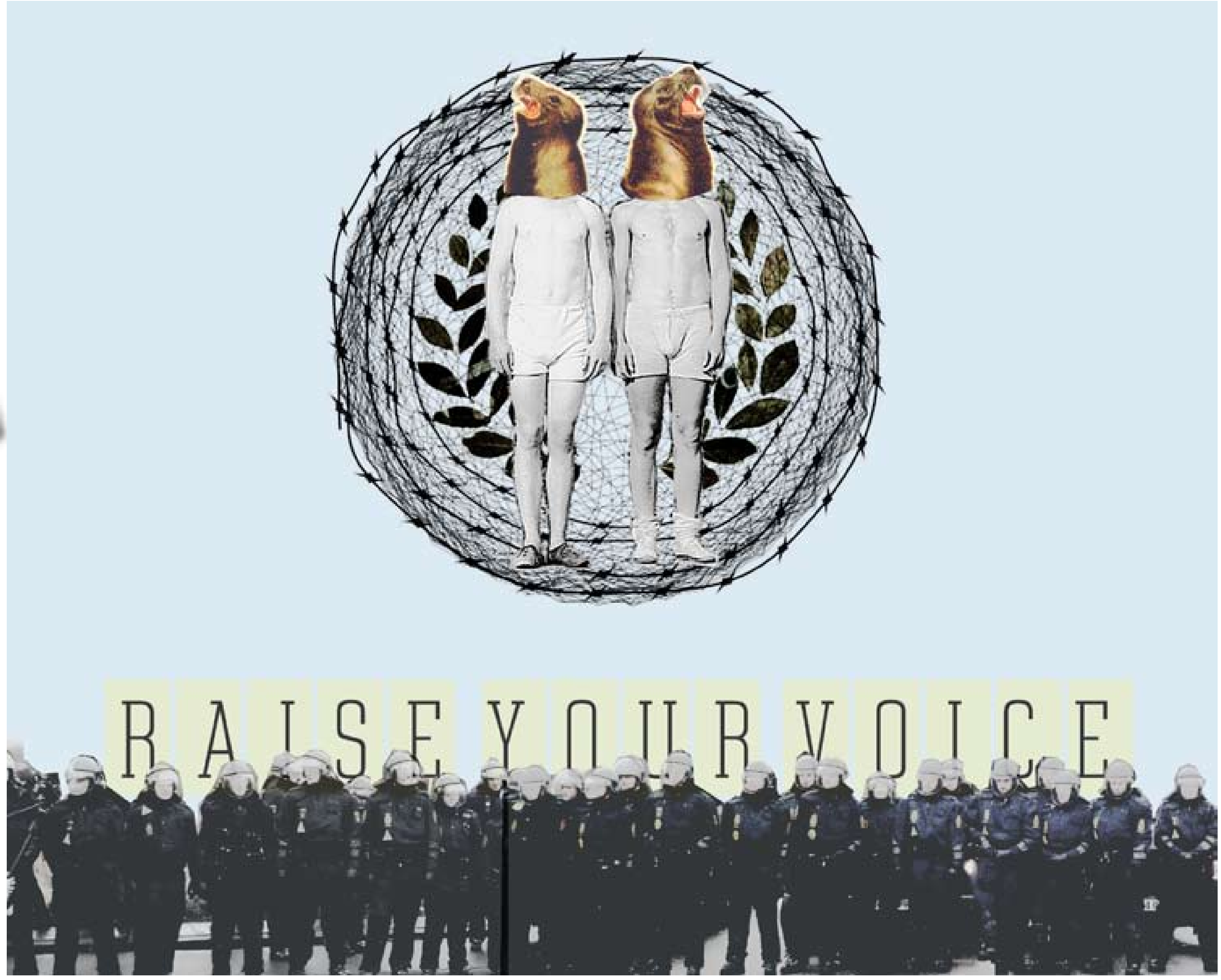
www.oilwatch.org

"You're sexy, you're cute, take off your riot suit."

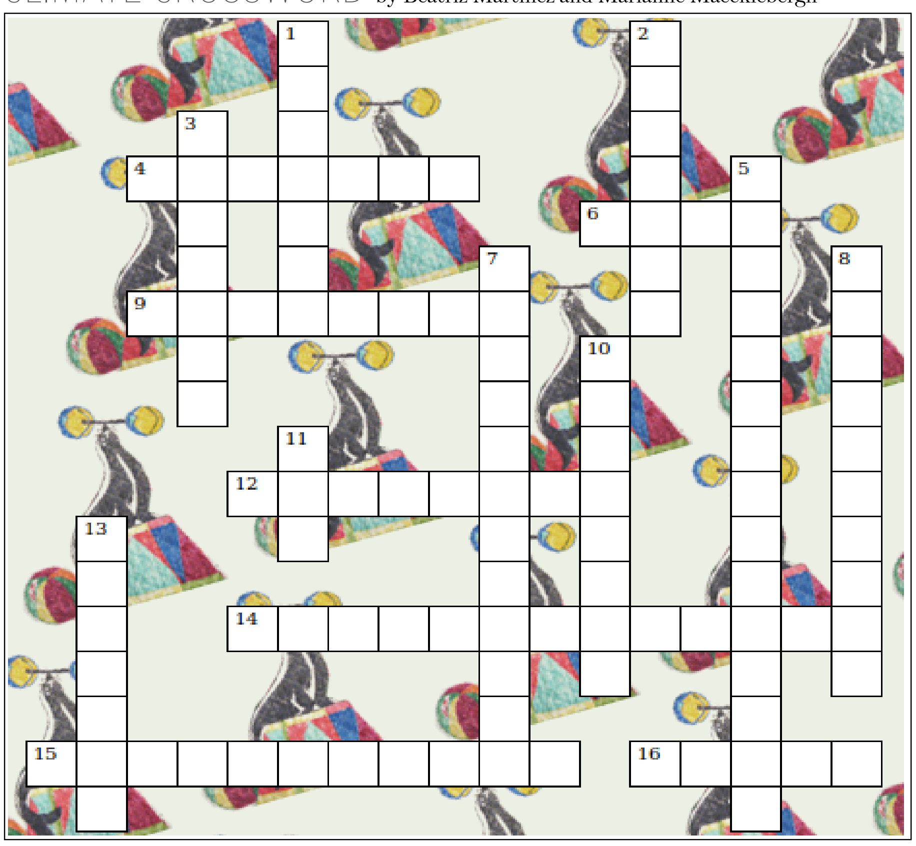
Climate Justice Action chant, 16 December, after other appeals had failed to stop police brutality

"You do it because you enjoy the pain"

Artur Runge-Metzger, EU chief negotiator explains why he loves his job



CLIMATE CROSSWORD by Beatriz Martinez and Marianne Maecklebergh



ACROSS

4 The plural form of a low-branching widely cultivated annual herb of the legume family (Arachis hypogaea), and what countries most responsible for climate change are offering those suffering from it.

6 She was on the bridge and lost her change and forestry.

9 A mainly tropical genus of an originally American plant belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae, used for massive agrofuels production, and causing severe impacts on countries such as Mali.

12 US industrial agriculture transnational promoting unsafe GMO crops and winner of the 2009 Angry Mermaid awards.

14 A combination of political, military and economic strategy to keep control over people who might oppose you by encouraging disagreement or fighting amongst them, and often used by industrialised nations towards developing countries in international negotiations

15 The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, and too often denied to communities on the ground.

16 Though it could be mistaken for a constituency within the climate change process under the UNFCCC, it is actually the name of a Central African country that is already severely suffering the effects of climate change.

DOWN

1 CDM eucalyptus plantation project based in Minas Gerais, Brazil, which has caused major impacts on the livelihoods of local communities and which is still stubbornly presented as a success story by the World Bank.

2 Lack of success; likely end of the UN climate negotiations.

3 A fabled marine creature with the head and upper body of a woman and the tail of a fish who is currently extremely angry in Copenhagen.

5 Number of people that marched for climate justice on Saturday 12 December in Copenhagen.

7 A permit that allows the holder to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide under the creative financial framework of the Kyoto Protocol.

8 A hydrocarbon deposit, such as petroleum, coal, or natural gas, derived from the accumulated remains of ancient plants and animals; the dependency of some societies on their massive use is a main driver of climate change.

10 Country, formally part of Denmark, where negotiators can feel in their element playing diplomacy games and building false solutions.

11 Referring to the time or moment when people want climate justice.

13 Family name of the Swedish astronomer who developed the temperature scale most used for international studies on climate.

Answers **ACROSS:** 4. Peanuts 6. Lulu 9. Jatropha 12. Monsanto 14. Divide and rule 15. Human rights 16. Congo **DOWN**: 1. Plantar 2. Failure 3. Mermaid 5. Hundred thousand 7. Carbon credit 8. Fossil fuel 10. Legoland 11. Now 13. Celsius

Answers from Monday 14 December 2009 **ACROSS:** 1. Climate refugee 4. Reclaim Power 6. Ringo 7. Samakqawsay 9. Sea level 11. Underhanded 13. EU-ETS 14. Carbon foot print **DOWN**: 1. Carbon efficiency 2. Endless growth 3. Supreme Master 5. Magic 8. CDM 9. Mars 10. Reduce 12. Hope

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CARBON TRADE WATCH

T N I

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.
www.carbontradewatch.org
www.tni.org

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.
www.issafrica.org
www.ipocafrica.org

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.
www.earthlife.org

The Centre for Civil Society aims to advance socio-economic and environmental justice by developing critical knowledge about, for and in dialogue with civil society through teaching, research and publishing. It is part of the School of Developing Studies of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs

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