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CLIMATE CHANGE

1.1. Climate Plan Looks Beyond Bush's Tenure

16 December 2007, The New York Times

NUSA DUA, Indonesia - The world's faltering effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions got a new lease on life on Saturday, as delegates from 187 countries agreed to negotiate a new accord over the next two years - pushing the crucial debates about United States participation into the administration of a new American president.

Many officials and environmental campaigners said American negotiators had remained obstructionist until the final hour of the two-week convention and had changed their stance only after public rebukes that included boos and hisses from other delegates.

The resulting "Bali Action Plan" contains no binding commitments, which European countries had sought and the United States fended off. The plan concludes that "deep cuts in global emissions will be required" and provides a timetable for two years of talks to shape the first formal addendum to the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change treaty since the Kyoto Protocol 10 years ago.

"The next presidential election takes place at the halfway point in these treaty talks," David D. Doniger, who directs climate policy for the Natural Resources Defense Council and served in the Clinton administration, said on his Web log on Saturday. "So the U.S. will field a new team in the second half. And there are good odds that the next president will get serious on global warming."

But the White House, while calling the negotiating plan "quite positive" in a printed statement, said the problem lay elsewhere. It described "serious concerns" about the limited steps taken by emerging economic powers.

Without citing China and India by name, it clearly singled them out, saying: "The negotiations must proceed on the view that the problem of climate change cannot be adequately addressed through commitments for emissions cuts by developed countries alone. Major developing economies must likewise act."

In the talks, China and other emerging powers did inch forward, agreeing for the first time to seek ways to make "measurable, reportable and verifiable" emissions cuts. But those countries showed no signs of agreeing to any mandatory restrictions any time soon, saying their priority remained growing out of poverty.

The finish to the negotiations came after a last-minute standoff in the public plenary at the end of a day of high emotions, with the co-organizer of the conference, Yvo de Boer, fleeing the podium at one point as he held back tears.

The standoff started when developing countries demanded that the United States agree that the eventual pact measure not only poorer countries' steps, but also the effectiveness of financial and technological assistance from wealthier ones.

The United States capitulated in that open session, which many observers and delegates said included more public acrimony than any of the treaty conferences since the 1992 framework.

The concession, though, came after a more profound shift by the Bush administration, which agreed during the two-week conference to pursue a new pact fulfilling the unmet goals of the original treaty; the pact would take effect in 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol expires.

While many observers described the United States change as a U-turn, it was the culmination of months of movement by the Bush administration, which had for years insisted that the 1992 treaty was enough to avoid dangerous human interference with the climate.

In 2005 talks in Montreal, for example, the American negotiating team walked out of one session, rejecting any talk of formal negotiations to improve on that pact.

Since then, the Bush administration has been confronted by new scientific data on climate change and by growing political pressure both internationally and domestically.

Still, while accepting on Saturday the need for a new agreement, the United States retained the flexibility that it had sought at the outset, fending off European attempts to set binding commitments on emission reductions. American negotiators said that was vital to gain global consensus.

The targets sought by Europe and others remain in the action plan - including the need for rich countries to cut emissions by 2020 up to 40 percent below 1990 levels, and a 50 percent cut in emissions globally by 2050. But they are now a footnote to the nonbinding preamble, not a main feature of the plan.

Andrew Light, an expert on environmental ethics at the University of Washington who was in Bali, criticized the Bush administration for insisting on those targets being sidelined, saying the United States had, in essence, rejected the foreboding climate projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which it had repeatedly praised in recent weeks.

"We could have moved on from here with a confident range of future cuts," Mr. Light said. "Instead we have to move on with the same continued uncertainty. At the beginning of the week I was really heartened by the public praise the U.S. delegation was giving to the I.P.C.C. and now I can't help but think, was it all lip service?"

Some environmental groups criticized Europe for not sticking to its guns. But it appeared that, in the end, the Europeans followed a path recommended in a speech last Monday by former Vice President Al Gore, fresh from receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

He advised Bali negotiators to look beyond the Bush administration, whose tenure ends in one year.

Beyond the histrionics and the politics, there were deeper reasons for the continuing clashes: in particular, the huge wave of industrialization and economic growth sweeping Asia.

The United States and Europe were largely responsible for taking the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas emitted by the burning of fossil fuels, to its current concentration of 380 parts per million from 280, a level which, until the industrial revolution, was not exceeded in at least 650,000 years.

But the growth in emissions for decades to come will largely be driven by developing countries, where some two billion people still cook on firewood or dung and crave the comforts and prosperity that come with abundant energy.

According to a recent analysis led by economists at the Electric Power Research Institute, if rich and poor countries do not together divert from "business as usual," the concentration by 2040 could exceed 450 parts per million, a threshold that many scientists say could set in motion harmful changes for centuries to come.

Europe prevailed over the United States in one area, insisting that the next two years of talks proceed on two tracks: one for those countries, including the United States, not committing to mandatory limits, and a second building on the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 update to the original treaty that requires emissions reductions in 36 major industrialized nations, but has been rejected by the United States.

The United States team in Bali had fought against that, demanding that a new agreement encompass the world's major polluters and have sufficient flexibility, and no hard targets, to do that.

But in the end the United States had to agree to two tracks to avoid a total breakdown of the talks.

That is important, environmental campaigners said, because it guarantees work toward new mandatory gas restrictions in 2012, when the limits under the current Kyoto accord expire.

It also sustains a mechanism that, in theory, the United States could join under a new administration - if Congress becomes less insistent that the biggest developing countries move in lockstep.

That demand is reflected in some language in the current climate bill moving forward in the Senate, which demands "comparable" action from such countries.

There were many moments of drama and theater in the negotiations, at a resort complex on the southern tip of Bali, involving 11,000 officials, environmentalists, industry lobbyists and journalists. But nothing else matched the point on Saturday, in the final tumultuous plenary, when the American team was booed for trying to block a proposal by India.

Kevin Conrad, the negotiator from Papua New Guinea, rebuked the American delegation. "If for some reason you are not willing to lead, leave it to the rest of us," he said. "Please, get out of the way."

He was alluding to remarks made by an American official, James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, last week to a Reuters reporter, who quoted him as saying, "The U.S. will lead, and we will continue to lead, but leadership also requires others to fall in line and follow."

That statement had become a sore point to many delegations.

A few more statements were made, but none of America's traditional allies came to its defense.

Finally, Paula Dobriansky, the lead American negotiator, spoke.

"We came here to Bali because we want to go forward as part of a new framework," said Ms. Dobriansky, the under secretary of state for democracy and global affairs. "We believe we have a shared vision and we want to move that forward. We want a success here in Bali. We will go forward and join consensus."

The delegates erupted in lengthy applause, realizing that a deal was finally at hand.

Thomas Fuller reported from Nusa Dua, and Andrew C. Revkin from New York. Peter Gelling contributed reporting from Nusa Dua.

1.2. U.S., E.U., compromise on climate change

15 December 2007, Mike de Souza , CanWest News Service

NUSA DUA, Indonesia -- The Bush administration caved in to criticism on Saturday as it accepted the "Bali roadmap" towards a new comprehensive climate change agreement that must be finalized by 2009.

With the Harper government silent, several developing countries, along with the European Union protested and resisted attempts by the U.S. to get the UN climate change summit to impose unfair obligations on the developing world in the fight against climate change.

The conference was forced to extend for an extra day because of efforts from the U.S. and Canada to block an effort to recognize that the next climate change agreement should be guided by stringent targets in tune with the latest scientific evidence.

Canada's Environment Minister John Baird was also accused of skipping out on key meetings, nearing the final hours of the conference, and of deliberately trying to slow down the process and prevent a consensus.

Federal government officials insisted that Baird was acting to ensure the conference was a success through a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with Canada's allies.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made an unexpected appearance as the talks went into overtime on Saturday expressing his disappointment that nations still had not reached a consensus.

"Seize the moment, this moment, for the good of all humanity," said Ban, in an official address to the conference.

"I appeal to you to make the necessary agreement now, to not risk all that you have achieved so far. The scientific realities affecting our planet demand a high level of ambition."

Negotiations on a separate declaration for members of the Kyoto Protocol are still ongoing.

1.3. EU may boycott US climate change talks

14 December 2007, The Irish Times

The EU may boycott US-sponsored talks on global warming involving the world's 17 major greenhouse gas emitting countries next month unless the US delegation at the UN Climate Change Conference agrees to a meaningful "Bali road map".

EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas bluntly told US delegation chief Paula Dobriansky: "If we have an agreement here in Bali that is substantial, of course the major emitters' meeting has some importance. Otherwise, it's meaningless."

Former US vice president Al Gore, who arrived in Bali earlier, blamed his country as being "principally responsible for obstructing progress here", characterising it as "the elephant in the room that I have been undiplomatic enough to name".

The current deadlock revolves around the proposal - supported by the EU and opposed by the US, Canada and Japan - to include indicative target cuts in greenhouse gas emissions of between 25 and 40 per cent in the Bali mandate.

This mandate would form the basis for a further round of more intense negotiations over the next two years, with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement on how to deal with the threat posed by global warming before the end of 2009.

Yvo de Boer, Dutch executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, warned that the "whole house of cards" could collapse unless a strenuous effort was made to strike a bargain in Bali, possibly at an all-night session tonight.

He set a deadline of noon today (4am Irish time) for a working group of 40 countries to produce a revised draft of the proposed mandate - known as the "Bali road map" - so that it can be translated into the UN's six languages and then considered by the full conference.

"We're in a kind of all-or-nothing situation in that if we don't manage to get the work done on the future [terms for negotiations] then the whole house of cards basically falls to pieces," Mr de Boer told a press briefing in Bali.

With time running out, he said he was "very concerned at the pace of things". But the main stumbling block is the proposal to specify a target range for developed countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25 per cent between now and 2020. Rejecting this as prejudging the outcome, Ms Dobriansky said: "What we need now is a solid Bali road map, one that sets the stage for robust, constructive and ground-breaking negotiations." But Mr Dimas quipped: "What is a road map without a destination?"

In his speech to the conference's plenary session, Mr Gore urged other countries to "find a way to navigate around this enormous obstacle [the US]".

1.4. US Government Proposal Has Potential to Derail Bali Climate Conference

14 Dec 2007, WWF

A move by the US government could push the Bali climate negotiations to the brink of failure, WWF officials warned. The US proposal would eliminate language that called upon developed nations to consider specific, internationally binding, quantified reduction commitments, replacing it with text that calls upon countries to adopt any measures they deem appropriate.

"At the eleventh hour the US has submitted a proposal that is the equivalent of taking no action at all against climate change," WWF International Director General James P Leape said. "This proposal would gut the international effort towards halting climate change and put the future of our planet at risk."

More than 50 members of the US Congress from both parties wrote to President Bush urging him to shift gears and play a constructive role in bringing these negotiations to a productive close.

"The Bush administration has a moral obligation to make commitments that are commensurate with their contribution to the climate crisis," said WWF Global Climate Change Director Hans Verolme. "The US government, aided by a small group of nations including Canada and Japan, has over the last few days thrown up

several roadblocks in the negotiations. We are pleased that several large emerging economies, including China, Brazil, and South Africa, are still showing flexibility and creativity in their contributions to the Bali negotiations. That is the same spirit one would hope we could expect from the US. With these actions, the US jeopardizes the agreements that have already been reached on deforestation, technology and adaptation."

1.5. Gore wrong on US being climate change obstacle: US

13 December 2007, AFP

WASHINGTON - The White House on Thursday slapped back at Nobel laureate Al Gore saying he was wrong to call the United States the obstacle to success at the Bali climate change conference.

"I think he is incorrect," spokeswoman Dana Perino said of Gore's remarks in Bali when he said the United States was the main obstacle to a climate change deal.

"My own country, the United States is principally responsible for obstructing progress here in Bali. We all know that," Gore said to loud applause. "But my country is not the only one that can take steps to ensure that we move forward from Bali with progress and with hope."

The EU, angered by what it sees as US-led efforts to water down the final text, warned it would snub climate talks called by Bush next month in Hawaii if the Bali meeting collapsed.

"If we would have a failure in Bali, it would be meaningless to have the major economies meeting," said Humberto Rosa, secretary of state for the environment from EU president Portugal.

Said Perino: "Obviously, those comments are not constructive to a conversation where everybody wants to get together for this meeting to talk about a framework for moving forward."

The European Union, backed by developing countries, wants a reference by industrialized countries that a cut of 25-40 percent in their emissions by 2020, compared with 1990 levels, will be a guideline for future talks.

The United States is opposed to the 25-40 figures, and delegates say its position is also shared by Japan, Canada and Russia.

1.6. Bali Climate Conference Enters Final Negotiations

11 December 2007, Nancy-Amelia Collins

Debate at the U.N. climate-change conference has intensified over whether to include greenhouse gas emissions targets in a new climate accord. As VOA Correspondent Nancy-Amelia Collins reports from the conference on Indonesia's Bali Island, European nations and many environmentalists want mandatory targets, which the United States and several other nations oppose.

A schoolboy rides his bicycle past a billboard of the UN climate change conference in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, 28 Nov 2007

A schoolboy rides his bicycle past a billboard advertising the UN Climate Change Conference in Nusa Dua, Bali, 28 Nov 2007

The talks in Bali have been dominated by arguments over whether the meeting's final text should include a target for rich nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

The United States, along with Japan and Canada, reject emission targets in the document. They argue it would prejudice the outcome of the negotiations on replacing the Kyoto Protocol, which aimed to reduce global warming. The Kyoto agreement expires in 2012.

Senior ministers from around 190 nations begin high-level meetings Wednesday to finalize the main negotiating draft.

Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change Yvo de Boer

Yvo de Boer

U.N. climate Chief Yvo de Boer told reporters the current draft text includes a 25 to 40 percent reduction target, but it is non-binding and only meant to be used as a guide.

"It is something that governments earlier this year said they should be guided by in the context of the negotiations. So this range does not represent concrete emission reduction targets for industrialized countries and this conference will not produce an agreement on concrete emission targets," said de Boer.

The European Union and many environmentalists say the emission targets are necessary if developing nations are serious about leading the fight against climate change.

Many scientists and environmentalists think so-called green-house gases released by burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil contribute to global warming. They argue that cutting emissions can reduce the effects of warming, such as drought, floods and rising sea levels.

Hans Verolme, of the environmental group the World Wide Fund, says if delegates accept the findings by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change they need to act on emissions.

"The crux of the discussion really is about the level of ambition. Do we take the science seriously, do we listen to the IPCC and [former Vice President] Al Gore, who yesterday received the Nobel Peace Prize, or do we just put it

in some vague text about that we have ambition, a common vision, but do not really define what that means," said Verolme.

Senior officials, including U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and Australia's new prime minister, Kevin Rudd, have begun arriving in Bali for Wednesday's meetings.

1.7. Bali climate talks find focus in fund for poor nations

12 December 2007, Peter Gelling, Herald Tribune

With UN climate talks here so far largely deadlocked, an agreement this week to breathe new life into a fund to help poor countries cope with a warming climate is set to be the big breakthrough of the conference.

The issue of adapting to climate change, despite the conference's primary goal of preventing further climate change, has gained new prominence at the Bali talks. Protecting the neediest countries from the effects of a warming world has now become a central theme of the gathering.

"Climate change affects us all, but it does not affect us all equally," Ban Ki Moon, secretary general of the United Nations, said Wednesday to a room of newly arrived ministers and heads of state at the opening of high-level sessions. "Those who are least able to cope are being hit hardest. Those who have done the least to cause the problem bear the gravest consequences."

The meeting in Bali is part of negotiations on how to invigorate a faltering 1992 treaty, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to replace the Kyoto Protocol, a 1997 addendum that requires three dozen industrialized countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2012.

The adaptation fund, which is managed by the Global Environment Facility, an independent financial organization, was established in Kyoto in 1997, but had been criticized for being too difficult to access and for raising only paltry sums of money.

Under an agreement reached by delegates Tuesday, developing countries and other institutions will have direct access to the fund, which is expected to streamline the funding of crucial projects in the developing world. The fund will be overseen by a 16-member board of representatives from both rich and poor countries.

The adaptation fund is to be maintained using a 2 percent tax on transactions within the Clean Development Mechanism, under which rich nations receive carbon credits for investing in sustainable projects in developing countries. The aim of the fund is to help protect those most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, like drought, flooding and severe storms.

"For the poor, this is clearly a recognition that participants here in Bali are serious about their concerns," said Monique Barbut, chief executive officer of the Global Environment Fund. "They can see that there has been a shift at the conference. It is not all about who is emitting, but it is also about the ones who are suffering from those emissions."

Indeed, in the past few years, negotiations over a global climate treaty have developed a dual focus - mitigating climate change and also adapting to it.

Some analysts, however, are skeptical about just how significant the establishment of the adaptation fund will be for the world's defense against environmental disasters associated with rising temperatures.

A recent United Nations Human Development Report detailed how the poor, especially along the equator, are the most vulnerable to climate hazards and lashed out at rich countries for not following through on their original financial commitments to help.

The report said that an additional 600 million people would be hungry, 200 million more displaced by floods and 400 million more exposed to diseases like malaria and dengue, if the world's temperature rises just two degrees Celsius.

Kevin Watkins, lead author of the report, said a lot of uncertainty remained about the level of actual resources that will be mobilized under the new agreement.

"This is not a final solution," he said on the sidelines of the Bali conference. "But we can see how the issue is starting to force its way up the climate change agenda."

Carbon trading is expected to become a \$70 billion a year industry by the time the adaptation fund goes into effect in 2008. Still, garnering only 2 percent of that amount means it will fall well short of projected needs in the developing world. The Human Development Report called for \$86 billion annually in new and additional financing for pro-poor adaptation.

Although not included in this week's agreement, the idea of extending the two percent tax to other financial mechanisms was discussed and could be included in later drafts. But until then, analysts hope that spending the money correctly will make up for not having enough. "It is not simply a question of additional money, it is using the money you already have in a smart way," said Hans Verlome, director of the Global Climate Change Program for WWF. "You will get more bang for your buck by investing in climate smart projects."

1.8. Crunch time' for climate change

The Bali conference was called to draft a follow-up to Kyoto.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has opened high-level talks at the climate change conference in Bali with a call to action.

He said that if no action were taken, the world would face impacts such as drought, famine and rising sea levels.

Delegates are hoping to agree a "Bali roadmap" leading to further cuts in greenhouse gas emissions when the Kyoto Protocol targets expire in 2012.

The US and Canada are among countries opposed to further binding targets.

The UN itself wants developed countries to commit to cuts of 25-40% from 1990 levels by 2020.

"We gather because the time for equivocation is over," said Mr Ban.

"Climate change is the defining challenge of our age. The science is clear; climate change is happening, the impact is real. The time to act is now."

I do not need a paper from Bali in which we only say 'OK, we'll meet again next year again'

Sigmar Gabriel, German Environment Minister

The newly-elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd handed documents to Mr Ban confirming his government's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

"The community of nations must reach agreement," he told delegates.

"There is no plan B; there is no other planet any of us can escape to."

The Australian decision leaves the US as the only industrialised nation outside the Kyoto process.

Security at the summit was enhanced because of the car bomb attack on UN premises in Algeria, which left at least 26 people dead.

Replacing Kyoto

Negotiators have been trying to map out a two-year process that would result in a further set of emissions cuts to replace the current Kyoto Protocol targets.

Broad building-blocks have already been agreed, but much of the detail remains contentious, in particular how much weight to give to the heavy emissions cuts recommended by the UN's panel of scientists.

In a major assessment this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that emissions should peak and begin to fall within 10-15 years in order to avoid damaging impacts.

While acknowledging the science, the US argues for voluntary agreements rather than a global system of binding cuts, and argues that the text coming from the Bali conference should not contain numerical targets.

"We want to launch a process that is open and does not predetermine or preclude options," Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky told reporters.

Germany's Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel issued a sharp rebuke to the US position.

"I do not need a paper from Bali in which we only say 'OK, we'll meet again next year again', he said.

"How can we find a roadmap without having a target, without having a goal?"

There has also been debate about adaptation - how to help developing countries protect their societies and economies against the worst impacts of climate change.

Studies indicate that the sums needed run into tens of billions of dollars per year, but funds committed so far amount to tens of millions of dollars.

"The main issue we've been trying to get across is that climate change is already hitting the poorest - it's not something for the future, it's something that's happening now," said Andy Atkins from the development charity Tearfund.

Mr Atkins said that in Niger, farmers have seen a rainy season shrink from three months each year to just six weeks.

"People in Bali are accepting adaptation will have to be part of a deal," he said. "But it's no good accepting that something is a big problem and then failing to do anything about it."

1.9. Gore has 'no plans' for US presidency, warns CO2 cuts needed for survival of civilization

9 December 2007, The Associated Press

OSLO, Norway: Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore said Sunday that reducing CO2 emissions is essential to the "survival of our civilization" — and reiterated he had "no plans" to run for U.S. president.

At a joint news conference with the U.N.'s chief climate scientist, Gore called for grass-roots movements worldwide to push political leaders into action to curb climate change.

"It is a question of the survival of our civilization," Gore told reporters at the Nobel Institute in downtown Oslo. "CO2 increases anywhere are a threat to the future of civilization everywhere."

The former U.S. vice president and the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shared the coveted award for their efforts to draw the world's attention to the dangers of global warming.

Asked whether he had made any final decision on whether to enter the U.S. presidential race, Gore said: "I have no plans to be a candidate."

He added that he didn't expect re-enter politics in the future, "but I see no reason to rule it out entirely." Gore also said he had not decided which candidate to endorse in next year's presidential election, or whether to endorse anyone at all.

Gore and IPCC chairman Rajendra Pachauri formally receive the Nobel Peace Prize on Monday as world governments meet in Bali, Indonesia, in hopes of hammering out a plan for a tougher treaty to replace the Kyoto climate agreement by 2012.

Gore, who earlier urged the countries to speed up the timetable by two years, said he was optimistic about tougher measures partly because growing public awareness of global warming was spurring "the world's first people power movement" on climate change.

He said that could force "political leaders to take action. They have to find some courage to resist the special interests, the special fears, the concern that often have wider influences than they should and instead respect the demands of the human future."

This year's Nobel Peace Prize is part of that process, Gore said, because it "has already caused increased attention to the problem of moving along to solve the crisis of climate."

Pachauri warned that, in his opinion, data coming in after the panel concluded work on its latest assessment suggests that "the future could very well be far more dire than we believe it is today."

He said the world cannot hope that technology alone will counter the threat, but that people must be prepared to change to way they live.

"I don't think this means we have to go back to living in caves but lifestyle change means you have to be conscious of the impact of your actions," said Pachauri.

Asked by a Norwegian youth newspaper what young people could do, Gore said every effort helps.

"A lot of them you probably know already: Changing a light bulb," said Gore. "All these individual acts are important. They all help, but they won't solve the problem by themselves unless we have changes in the laws and in treaties."

The news conference and meetings with Norwegian leaders marked the start of three days of celebrations of the 2007 Nobel Peace laureates. The ceremony Monday will be followed by a parade and banquet in the winners' honor, and the traditional Nobel peace concert on Tuesday.

The Nobel prizes are always presented on the Dec. 10 anniversary of the death of their creator, Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel. The peace prize is presented in Oslo and the other prizes are handed out in Stockholm, Sweden.

1.10. UN blitz year on climate change is linked to poverty goals

10 December 2007, DPA

New York - As the United Nations was awash with climate change studies and gatherings throughout 2007, a recurring question was whether it is too late to cut greenhouse gas emissions enough to save the world's poor from global warming. An end-of-the-year report by the UN prominently quoted Martin Luther King's sermon on social justice in the 1960s, saying that time ineluctably rushes on, deaf to man's plea for it to stop so humans can correct their errors.

"Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: Too late," King said.

Since the UN-backed Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) began rolling out a series of damning reports in February, the UN has made climate issues its top priority. The 192-nation General Assembly held an unprecedented one-day climate change conference in September, attended by more than 80 world leaders.

Three IPCC reports, compiled by more than 2,000 scientists, said global warming was "unequivocal" and largely the result of human activity. They warned that the world had eight years left to begin reducing greenhouse-gas emissions or face the disastrous consequences that come with a planet heated by more than 2 degrees Celsius.

The World Meteorological Organization said the concentration of carbon dioxide - the chief pollutant - in the atmosphere reached the highest level ever recorded in 2006.

Water vapour, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide - the three major greenhouse gases in the atmosphere blamed for global warming - can remain there for 100 years, the UN Development Programme and UN Environment Programme said in a November report.

"What we do today about climate change has consequences that will last a century or more," according to the study, titled Human Development Report. "The part of that change that is due to greenhouse gas emissions is not reversible in the foreseeable future."

But while scientists and government leaders focus on ways to fight climate change, the UN worries that the danger could derail its ambitious plans to reduce poverty on Earth.

It warned that conditions among the world's 2.6 billion poorest people - those living on less than 2 dollars a day - and the poorest countries will spiral downward as the earth heats up, sea levels rise and agricultural lands are flooded or wilted by droughts.

Another 600 million people will face malnutrition. The sub-Saharan region, with its large concentration of poverty would suffer potential productivity losses of 26 per cent by 2060.

By 2080, 1.8 billion people will face water shortage and large areas in South Asia and northern China will be hit by ecological problems as glaciers retreat and rainfall patterns change.

Flooding and tropical storms could displace up to 332 million people in coastal and low-lying areas, among them more than 70 million Bangladeshis, 32 million Vietnamese and 6 million Egyptians.

Diseases will spread amid global warming, putting an additional 400 million people worldwide at risk of malaria.

"For millions of people, these are events that offer a one-way ticket to poverty and long-run cycles of disadvantage," the report said.

The UN said the potential human costs of climate change have been underestimated. The shocks caused by droughts, floods, storms and other natural disasters have already driven up the number of poor, and global warming will only intensify those impacts.

The UN in 2000 set a goal of halving the number of poor by 2015, but the report said the results will be unequal: some countries are on track to reach the target while others have fallen far behind.

Vietnam has already halved the number of poor and provided universal primary education ahead of the 2015 goals. Mozambique has also significantly reduced poverty, improved education enrollment and cut down on child and maternal mortality rates.

But the report wondered whether climate change might derail those achievements.

"In today's world, it is the poor who are bearing the brunt of climate change," the report said. "Tomorrow, it will be humanity as a whole that will face the risks that come with global warming."

The report warned that the world was edging closer to "tipping points," which are events beyond human control that could lead to ecological catastrophes, including the melting of the Earth's ice sheets that could transform human settlement patterns.

The consequences of those ecological disasters may not be seen now, but future generations will have to live with them, the UN said.

The UN development report was published ahead of a major UN climate conference on the Indonesian island resort of Bali in December, where governments hoped to map out a strategy to complete talks by 2009 on a replacement for the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. The UN General Assembly plans to meet in February to review outcomes of the December Bali conference.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who took up the climate change mantle since taking office in January, travelled to Antarctica for a first-hand look at the melting ice shelves and to Brazil's Amazon rainforest, where he reported that the so-called "lungs of the earth" are being "suffocated."

The UN itself plans to move towards "carbon neutrality" in its worldwide operations, starting with its headquarters in New York, which is scheduled to undergo a largescale renovation by the end of 2008.

1.10. The real answer to climate change is to leave fossil fuels in the ground

11 December 2007, The Guardian

All the talk in Bali about cutting carbon means nothing while ever more oil and coal is being extracted and burned Ladies and gentlemen, I have the answer! Incredible as it might seem, I have stumbled across the single technology which will save us from runaway climate change! From the goodness of my heart, I offer it to you for free. No patents, no small print, no hidden clauses. Already this technology, a radical new kind of carbon capture and storage, is causing a stir among scientists. It is cheap, it is efficient and it can be deployed straight away. It is called ... leaving fossil fuels in the ground.

Article continues

On a filthy day last week, as governments gathered in Bali to prevaricate about climate change, a group of us tried to put this policy into effect. We swarmed into the opencast coal mine being dug at Ffos-y-fran in South Wales and occupied the excavators, shutting down the works for the day. We were motivated by a fact which the wise heads in Bali have somehow missed: if fossil fuels are extracted, they will be used.

Most of the governments of the rich world now exhort their citizens to use less carbon. They encourage us to change our lightbulbs, insulate our lofts, turn our televisions off at the wall. In other words, they have a demand-side policy for tackling climate change. But as far as I can determine, not one of them has a supply-side policy. None seeks to reduce the supply of fossil fuel. So the demand-side policy will fail. Every barrel of oil and tonne of coal that comes to the surface will be burned.

Or perhaps I should say that they do have a supply-side policy: to extract as much as they can. Since 2000, the UK government has given coal firms £220m to help them open new mines or to keep existing mines working.

According to the energy white paper, the government intends to "maximise economic recovery ... from remaining coal reserves".

The pit at Ffos-y-fran received planning permission after two ministers in the Westminster government jumped up and down on Rhodri Morgan, the first minister of the Welsh assembly. Stephen Timms at the department of trade and industry listed the benefits of the scheme and demanded that the application "is resolved with the minimum of further delay". His successor, Mike O'Brien, warned of dire consequences if the pit was not granted permission. The coal extracted from Ffos-y-fran alone will produce 29.5m tonnes of carbon dioxide: equivalent, according to the latest figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to the sustainable emissions of 55 million people for one year.

Last year British planning authorities considered 12 new applications for opencast coal mines. They approved all but two of them. Two weeks ago, Hazel Blears, the secretary of state in charge of planning, overruled Northumberland county council to grant permission for an opencast mine at Shotton, on the grounds that the scheme - which will produce 9.3m tonnes of CO₂ - is "environmentally acceptable".

The British government also has a policy of "maximising the UK's existing oil and gas reserves". To promote new production, it has granted companies a 90% discount on the licence fees they pay for prospecting the continental shelf. It hopes the prospecting companies will open a new frontier in the seas to the west of the Shetland Isles. The government also has two schemes for "forcing unworked blocks back into play". If oil companies don't use their licences to the full, it revokes them and hands them to someone else. In other words, it is prepared to be ruthlessly interventionist when promoting climate change, but not when preventing it: no minister talks of "forcing" companies to reduce their emissions. Ministers hope the industry will extract up to 28bn barrels of oil and gas from the continental shelf.

Last week the government announced a new tax break for companies working in the North Sea. The Treasury minister, Angela Eagle, explained that its purpose is "to make sure we are not leaving any oil in the ground that could be recovered". The government's climate change policy works like this: extract every last drop of fossil fuel then pray to God that no one uses it.

The same wishful thinking is applied worldwide. The International Energy Agency's new outlook report warns that "urgent action is needed" to cut carbon emissions. The action it recommends is investing \$22 trillion in new energy infrastructure, most of which will be spent on extracting, transporting and burning fossil fuels.

Aha, you say, but what about carbon capture and storage? When governments use this term, they mean catching and burying the carbon dioxide produced by burning fossil fuels. It is feasible, but there are three problems. The first is that fossil fuels are being extracted and burned today, and scarcely any carbon capture schemes yet exist. The second is that the technology works only for power stations and large industrial processes: there is no plausible means of dealing with cars, planes and heating systems. The third, as Alistair Darling, then in charge of energy, admitted in the Commons in May, is that the technologies required for commercial carbon capture "might never become available". (The government is prepared to admit this when making the case, as he was, for nuclear power, but not when making it for coal).

Almost every week I receive an email from someone asking what the heck I am talking about. Don't I realise that peak oil will solve this problem for us? Fossil fuels will run out, we'll go back to living in caves and no one will need to worry about climate change again. These correspondents make the mistake of conflating conventional oil supplies with all fossil fuels. Yes, at some point the production of petroleum will peak then go into decline. I don't know when this will happen, and I urge environmentalists to remember that while we have been proved right about most things we have been consistently wrong about the dates for mineral exhaustion. But before oil peaks, demand is likely to outstrip supply and the price will soar. The result is that the oil firms will have an even greater incentive to extract the stuff.

Already, encouraged by recent prices, the pollutocrats are pouring billions into unconventional oil. Last week BP announced a huge investment in Canadian tar sands. Oil produced from tar sands creates even more carbon emissions than petroleum extraction. There's enough tar and kerogen in North America to cook the planet several times over.

If that runs out, they switch to coal, of which there is hundreds of years' supply. Sasol, the South African company founded during the apartheid period - when supplies of oil were blocked - to turn coal into liquid transport fuel, is conducting feasibility studies for new plants in India, China and the US. Neither geology nor market forces is going to save us from climate change.

When you review the plans for fossil fuel extraction, the horrible truth dawns that every carbon-cutting programme is a con. Without supply-side policies, runaway climate change is inevitable, however hard we try to cut demand. The talks in Bali will be meaningless unless they produce a programme for leaving fossil fuels in the ground.

ENERGY

2.1 China shuts 11.1 mln kw of thermal power capacity

10 December 2007, www.chinaview.cn

BEIJING, Dec. 10 (Xinhua) China has closed 365 small thermal power generators with a total capacity of 11.1 million kilowatts so far this year, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

Shuttering these facilities is part of the nation's energy-saving and pollution-reduction program. China has vowed to cut the amount of energy consumed per unit of GDP (energy intensity) by 20 percent and emissions of major pollutants by 10 percent between 2006 and 2010.

On average, the closed generators had a single-set capacity of 30,000 kilowatts and consumed 488 grams of coal to generate one kilowatt-hour of electricity. Their age averaged 28 years.

Almost half the affected capacity (47 percent) was located in just five regions: Henan, Jiangsu, Shandong, Inner Mongolia and Sichuan. These closures involved 191 generators with 5.26 million kilowatts worth of capacity.

China's top five power enterprises, local investment corporations and local state-owned enterprises carried out most of the closures, shutting down 199 generators with a total of 8.51 million kilowatts in capacity. These shutdowns comprised 76.7 percent of the total, with the remaining 23.3 percent from private enterprises.

NDRC is a macroeconomic management agency under China's State Council, which formulates policies and guides economic restructuring.

EMISSIONS

3.1. International Energy Agency calls for mitigation of climate change now by realising huge potential of energy efficiency; CO2 emissions are already some 20% higher today than in 1997

11 December 2007, Finfacts Team

The International Energy Agency (IEA), the 26-country membership energy adviser to industrialised countries, including Ireland, today called for action to mitigate climate change and realise the huge potential of energy efficiency.

"On this 10th Anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol agreement, we do not feel it is the time to celebrate", said Nobuo Tanaka, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) today at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP-13) in Bali. "CO2 emissions are already some 20 percent higher today than in 1997 and are set to increase even further and faster." He referred to the IEA World Energy Outlook 2007 "China and India Insights (WEO)", showing that, absent new policies, energy related carbon emissions will increase by almost 60%, reaching 42 billion tonnes (Gt) in 2030. This is higher than last year's projection by 1.5 Gt because of much greater coal use than expected, driven by high oil and gas prices. Despite many ambitious policy instruments and rising energy prices, emissions continue to rise in IEA countries.

"More than ever, we need to act NOW. Energy production and uses are a big part of the problem: the energy sector and players must deliver the solution. For a start, all parts of governments with energy responsibilities must rapidly engage in designing effective policies," Tanaka stressed. "Much stronger action is needed everywhere to curb, stabilise and reduce man-made CO2 emissions in the foreseeable future. We don't have any time to lose; decisions need to be taken now and implementation has to begin immediately. The cost of inaction will be high otherwise. This is a global problem and needs to be tackled on a global basis with the participation of all emitters." British Energy to extend the life of two of its oldest nuclear reactors to 2016

Robin Pagnamenta

British Energy provoked protest from safety campaigners yesterday by announcing plans to extend the lives of two of its oldest British nuclear power stations — Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B — by five years, until 2016.

Bill Coley, its chief executive, said that the two reactors, which a year ago were forced to close because of cracks found in boilers, could be kept running for a further ten years beyond that, until 2026.

Construction of the stations at Hinkley Point, near Bridgwater, Somerset, and Hunterston in North Ayrshire, Scotland, began in the 1960s. The advanced gas-cooled reactors, which together generate about 5 per cent of the UK's electricity needs, entered service in 1976 and were due to be retired in 2011.

However, Mr Coley said that a technical and economic reevaluation of the plants had led to authorisation being granted to continue operating them for at least five extra years.

The announcement dismayed environmental groups. Ben Ayliffe, nuclear campaigner at Greenpeace, described the decision as "completely ludicrous". He said that British Energy, which generates around a fifth of the country's electricity, has faced a string of technical problems with its ageing fleet of eight nuclear power stations, some of which date back to 1965.

Mr Coley, however, dismissed any safety concerns. "If there were any safety issues whatsoever, I would shut them down straight away," he said, adding that British Energy planned to invest £90 million overhauling the two reactors over the next three years, including upgrading boilers and transformers.

He added that there were similar plans to extend the lives of two other nuclear power stations, at Hartlepool and Heysham, which are due to be decommissioned in 2014. A decision on these will be taken in 2011.

Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B have been subject to outages and load restrictions in recent months related to the boiler cracks.

Hinkley Point is generating only around 420 MWh, roughly 70 per cent of full power.

At the time of the outages, Mr Coley said that these had been caused not by human error but by the age of the plants and the strain of operating at high temperatures.

Mr Coley denied that the life extensions would ease the pressure on the Government to develop new nuclear power stations. "This does not obviate the need for new generating capacity of all types in the UK," he said.

In November, British Energy said that costs associated with the problems at its power stations were expected to run to at least £50 million.

As well as cracks in the graphite brick cores of the ageing reactors at Hinkley and Hunterston, corrosion was also discovered on wires in two reactors at its 35-year-old Heysham 1 and Hartlepool plants. These two sites, which are capable of supplying power to 1.5 million homes, have been out of action ever since. It remains unclear when they will reopen.

The proposed life extension of the Hinkley and Hunterston plants precedes an announcement by the Government on its commitment to a new generation of nuclear power stations, expected early next year.

The existing British stations are reaching the end of their lifetimes and by 2023 all but one, Sizewell B, are due to be shut.

If it does support nuclear power, the Government will join countries including China, India, Russia and the United States in pressing ahead with ambitious nuclear programmes, as the world seeks to wean itself off fossil fuels linked to climate change.

3.2. Upcoming car emission law: Commission about to flunk climate test

12 December 2007, Greenpeace

Brussels, Belgium — The proposal on binding carbon dioxide emission limits for new cars, scheduled for next week, will be fundamentally flawed and doomed to fail unless the Commission takes immediate action to correct it, according to Greenpeace.(1)

Greenpeace is particularly concerned that the European Commission may decide on a weak emission standard to be set for new cars from 2012 and that it may fail to set a longer term standard altogether for 2020 and that the proposal will favour heavy cars.

"We are alarmed by information that the law will only state a weak, short-term standard on carbon dioxide from cars and that it will fail to include a limit for the year 2020. The climate challenge requires significant and continuous cuts in emissions across all the main polluting sectors for decades to come. But on passenger car emissions, the Commission is ignoring real solutions and settling only for a quick and dirty, short-term option," said Franziska Achterberg, EU transport policy campaigner of Greenpeace.

Greenpeace calls for a doubling of energy efficiency of new cars between now and 2020. For the year 2012, the draft proposal will most likely set a weak limit of 130 g CO₂/km.

"Carbon dioxide from cars must be regulated urgently, with a first limit of 120 g/km taking effect in 2012. Fixing further reductions, until 2020, in the same law, will benefit the climate and give industry sufficient time to prepare itself for its cleaner future," Achterberg added.

Moreover, the Commission will probably differentiate standards for individual car manufacturers on the basis of their cars' weight. An increase in car weight has been identified as one of the major reasons why carmakers failed to make the emission cuts they had promised under an earlier voluntary agreement. (2)(3)

"If the Commission proposes a weight-based standard, it will create a disincentive for cars to become lighter, one of the principal means to reduce emissions. Years of emission cuts lost to weight increase must be made up for, not rewarded," Achterberg continued.

Greenpeace urges the European Commission to propose legislation next week that:

- limits average emissions from new cars to 120 g CO₂/km by 2012 and 80 g CO₂/km by 2020;
- contains sanctions for non-compliance in the range of €150 for each gram over the manufacturer's fleet limit, which take effect from 2012 and are not phased-in later;
- uses the vehicle's footprint (defined as track-width multiplied by wheelbase) as the basis of differentiation between manufacturers' standards.

3.3. EU Ministers must step up!

12 December 2007, CAN-Europe

Bali Negotiations need visible leadership to build agreement by end of the week

Nusa Dua, Bali. One day before the start of the Ministerial segment of the UN climate negotiations, Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-Europe) calls on EU Ministers to act so as to secure a good outcome in Bali. 'EU Ministers are coming to Bali to talk, but they must ensure to produce more than hot air. As the public faces of European

governments that are championing strong climate protection, they must deliver on their assumed leadership role on climate change when addressing their counterparts from around the world during the high-level meeting,' stated Matthias Duwe, Director of Climate Action Network Europe. 'The EU cannot afford to be vague. EU Ministers have to say clearly what their citizens expect the Bali summit to deliver: the start of negotiations that will deliver a strong international framework to avert the climate crisis', he added.

"The crucial process that needs to be started in Bali also needs to be filled with life, with clear ambitions and substance', Duwe continued. 'We expect all EU Ministers to strongly re-endorse their stated objective to keep global average temperature rise below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels and insist on the respective emission reductions language to achieve this goal.' he concluded. CAN-Europe urges EU Ministers to ensure that the deadline for the completion of the upcoming negotiations is set as the year 2009, in order to avoid a gap after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. They should also be explicit in their speeches about a few key elements:

- Acknowledge that industrialised countries will continue to take the lead in the fight against climate change, following their historical pollution responsibility and the spirit of global equity;
- Define reduction targets according to the latest findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): Global greenhouse gas emissions have to peak and decline within a decade and have to be reduced by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. Consequently, developed countries have to take the lead and commit themselves to a reduction range of at least 25- 40% by 2020 from 1990 levels;
- Show that they are ready to deliver on their commitments by putting in place a process to deliver the much needed mechanisms to support technology transfer, adaptation and the fight against deforestation, including through substantially scaled up finances to be leveraged from the UN climate treaty system;
- Support the positive movements made so far by key developing countries in Bali and work with them and other key countries towards an ambitious outcome;
- Reject strongly advances by other industrialized countries including the US to move away from absolute emission reduction requirements for developed countries or attempts to obstruct the negotiations with unacceptable demands from the developing world.

3.4. World needs 30 nuke plants/year for power, emission cuts: IEA

11 December 2007, Nusa Dua, Bali (Platts)

Power companies around the world would need to build some 30 nuclear plants a year between 2013 and 2030, as well as use other clean or renewable technologies, to meet growing demand and achieve emissions cuts, according to the head of the International Energy Agency. The aim is to achieve a 50% cut in emissions from 1990 levels by 2050.

Speaking on the sidelines of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's Bali talks Tuesday, IEA executive director Nobuo Tanaka said that to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gases recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world would need to build 30 nuclear plants of 1000 MW each year between 2013 and 2030. It would also need 22 coal-fired plants with carbon capture and storage at 800 MW each; 20 gas-fired plants with carbon capture and storage at 500 MW each; Two hydro dams of the size of China's Three Gorges Dam (1.7 million MW each); 400 combined heat and power units at 40 MW each; and 17,000 wind turbines of 3 MW each.

Tanaka said the IEA had estimated that the global power sector would need to invest \$22 trillion by 2030 to achieve these targets. "This would be done by the private sector, so governments need to provide a stable, predictable framework for companies to act," he added.

He presented the agency's forecast that global greenhouse gas emissions would rise from 27 billion mt in 2005 to 42 billion mt in 2030, an increase of 1.8% per year. But if the measures and policies currently being considered by governments worldwide are put into force, emissions could rise to 34 billion mt in 2030, an increase of just 1% per year.

However, Tanaka said, the IPCC's suggested target of a halving global GHG emissions by 2050 would require emissions to drop to 23 billion mt/yr.

The IEA head also said that boosting energy efficiency was a key element in reducing emissions. He listed actions such as reducing the amount of power used by appliances on stand-by, phasing out incandescent light bulbs and improving energy efficiency of buildings. These and other measures, he said, would also imply lifestyle changes around the world.