

E-news update July 2 2007

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CLIMATE

- 1.1. Live Earth concerts to deliver climate SOS

28 June 2007, Reuters

Former Vice President Al Gore on Thursday urged people worldwide to pressure their governments to cut global warming pollution by 90 percent in developed countries and by more than half worldwide by 2050.

Gore said the July 7 Live Earth concerts -- to be held in Johannesburg, London, New Jersey, Rio de Janeiro, Shanghai, Sydney and Tokyo -- will ask people around the globe to sign the climate change pledge.

Organizers have said the concert, which is being broadcast in more than 100 countries, could be watched and heard by 2 billion people worldwide.

"This is a global challenge," Gore told a news conference in New York. "We will need a tougher global treaty, we will need every nation to be a part of the solution and we will need individuals all around the world to be part of the solution."

"The Live Earth concerts represent an unprecedented opportunity to ask for the world's attention long enough to deliver an SOS and then to begin delivering information about the solutions to every single person," he said.

The seven-point Live Earth pledge demands governments agree and sign within two years an international treaty to fight climate change. It also asks people to cut their own pollution, to make their homes, business, schools and transport more energy efficient, and to plant new trees and preserve forests.

The pledge also asks people to fight for a halt on any new coal burning generators without the capacity to trap and store carbon dioxide gases, for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources, and to buy from businesses and support leaders committed to solving the climate crisis.

"We have to get all nations involved, but in order to accomplish that we have to bring about a sea change in public opinion," said Gore, whose documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" about global warming won two Academy Awards this year.

Scientists say smokestack and tailpipe emissions of heat-trapping gases cause global warming, which could lead to more deadly floods, droughts and heat waves.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that global carbon dioxide emissions must fall 50 to 85 percent by 2050 to stop the planet from heating up more than 2 degrees Celsius.

Gore said Madonna and the Black Eyed Peas had each written original songs for Live Earth, while a third original song would be unveiled on the day. Concert organizer Kevin Wall also promised a surprise event in Antarctica.

1.2. Europe must take adaptation measures to lessen impacts of current and future warming

29 June 2007, Press release by the European Commission

Climate change poses a double challenge: Europe must not only make deep cuts in its greenhouse gas emissions but also take measures to adapt to current and future climate change in order to lessen the adverse impacts of global warming on people, the economy and the environment. This is the key message of a Green Paper published by the European Commission today which sets out options for EU action to help the process of adaptation to climate change across Europe. Adaptation means taking action to cope with changing climatic conditions, for example by using scarce water resources more efficiently or ensuring the frail and elderly are properly cared for during heatwaves. The Green Paper aims to stimulate a broad public debate on adaptation in Europe, starting with a major stakeholder conference hosted by the Commission on 3 July in Brussels.

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "People all over Europe will increasingly feel the threatening effects of climate change on their health, jobs and housing, and the most vulnerable members of society will be the hardest hit. We need to fight the battle against climate change on two fronts. We must sharply reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to prevent future climate change from reaching dangerous levels, but at the same time Europe must also adapt to the climate change that is already happening."

He added: ""Unless the EU and its member states plan a coherent policy response in advance, we could be forced into taking sudden, unplanned adaptation measures to react to increasingly frequent crises and disasters. This would prove far more costly."."

Global and European impacts of climate change:

The European Union's objective is to limit global warming to no more than 2°C above the pre-industrial level, since beyond that threshold the risks of irreversible and possibly catastrophic planetary changes greatly increase. Yet many parts of the world are already struggling with the adverse effects of a 0.76°C rise in the global average temperature, and on current trends the global temperature is likely to increase further by 1.8° to 4°C this century.

Even warming of 2°C will have significant impacts, and Europe will not be spared. Europe has already warmed by almost 1°C over the past century, faster than the global average, and the effects are clearly measurable. For example, glaciers are melting and low-lying ski-resorts are threatened with closure. Southern Europe is projected to dry out further and may become too hot for summer holidays. The summer 2003 heat wave caused an estimated 70,000 premature deaths. Further climate change will heavily affect Europe's natural environment and nearly all sections of society and the economy, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism and healthcare. Coastal zones, low-lying deltas and densely populated river plains could be particularly affected by more frequent storms and floods. Climate change could also lead to major population shifts, including in neighbouring regions.

Benefits of adaptation:

Given these current and future impacts, adapting to climate change is now an indispensable complement to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Early action to adapt to climate change could

bring clear economic benefits and avoid social disruption by anticipating potential damage and minimising threats to ecosystems, human health, property and infrastructure. Adaptation could also create new economic opportunities, such as new markets for innovative products and services.

Options for EU-level action:

All actors will need to be actively involved in adaptation to climate change and efficient coordination between measures in member states, regions and communities will be vital to keep the cost low. The European Union can play an important role in supporting adaptation efforts by adjusting relevant policies, filling knowledge gaps and coordinating strategies.

Certain sectors, such as agriculture, water management, biodiversity protection and fisheries, are largely integrated at EU level through the single market or common policies. It thus makes sense to integrate adaptation goals into these sectors, as well as into EU spending programmes, for instance on regional development, agriculture, fisheries, social, research and rural development.

The Green Paper sets out four lines of priority actions to be considered:

Early action to develop adaptation strategies in areas where current knowledge is sufficient;

Integrating global adaptation needs into the EU's external relations and building a new alliance with partners around the world;

Filling knowledge gaps on adaptation through EU-level research and exchange of information;

Setting up a European advisory group on adaptation to climate change to analyse coordinated strategies and actions.

Next steps:

The 3 July conference at the Charlemagne Building will launch a broad public debate which will include an internet consultation lasting until November. The Green Paper is also addressed to the EU institutions and committees. The responses will feed into the development of a Communication on adaptation to climate change to be issued by the Commission by the end of 2008.

Further information: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/eccp_impacts.htm.

1.3. EU, China launch project on climate change

29 June 2007, PTI

China and the European Union on Thursday announced the launch of a joint project to deal with climate change and boost the clean development mechanism (CDM) in the world's most populous nation.

According to the agreement, the EU will provide 2.8 million euros into the EU-China CDM Facilitation Project which aims to promote sustainable development in China by developing the regulatory and policy regimes to facilitate application of the CDM in China.

The project targets EU and China joint climate change objectives, first counsellor of the Delegation of the European Commission to China and Mongolia, Nicholas Costello, said.

"(The project) will facilitate the implementation of the CDM, make it easier to exchange information on CDM projects and encourage EU companies to engage in CDM projects in China and hence to tackle climate change on a global scale," Costello said.

The project has been launched a week after the Dutch government's environment agency declared that China has overtaken the United States to be the world's No. 1 top emitter of carbon dioxide.

The EU-China Facilitation Project, which will run until 2010, will support China's CDM through research, capacity development, technical exchange and training activities.

Technical cooperation will be established with Chinese government agencies, standards and certification companies and wider stakeholder groups so that knowledge of CDM issues can be widely disseminated, Costello added.

The promotion of CDM is a specific objective of the EU-China Climate Change Partnership that was established in 2005.

The CDM was set up under the Kyoto protocol.

1.4. Dutch Customers Start Moving to Climate-Conscious Banks

22 June 2007, Milieudefensie / Friends of the Earth Netherlands

Dutch customers are starting to move to climate-conscious banks. One hundred customers of banks with the worst 'climate performance' have already left their banks since June 10 to join more climate-conscious banks.

Forty climate-conscious bank customers today cut in half their bank cards outside banking giant ABN AMRO offices because they no longer want to be customers of banks like ABN AMRO that invest money in industries like oil and coal that cause climate change.

The dissatisfied customers represent a group of more than one hundred people that have left their bank and moved to a new bank following the start on June 10 of a Milieudedefensie / Friends of the Earth Netherlands campaign called "Climate Change, Not with My Money". Since June 10 more than 2000 bank customers ordered information about moving to climate-conscious banks.

"We welcome the fact that an increasing amount of customers no longer accepts that their own bank invests in industries that cause climate change," said Donald Pols, Friends of the Earth Netherlands Climate and Energy campaign coordinator. "They are taking action to make sure that their money is not used to finance things like coal plants and oil extraction."

A report published last week by Friends of the Earth Netherlands concludes that Dutch banks are responsible for financing more than 594 million tonnes of CO2 emissions annually. This is three times as much as the entire Netherlands emits in a year. ABN AMRO and ING/Postbank are the most destructive for the climate, followed by Fortis and Rabobank. The most climate conscious banks in the Netherlands are Triodos Bank and ASN Bank.

According to Pols, bank customers can substantially influence the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. "Transferring ten thousand euros savings from ABN AMRO to the Triodos Bank or ASN Bank results in as much reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as not driving your car for six months," said Pols.

Friends of the Earth Netherlands / Milieudedefensie has been talking to the big Dutch banks for over a year, asking them to move towards a more climate conscious investment policy. "To date our call for action has been ignored. Now their customers are taking action by choosing to put their money where they know it will be invested without harming the climate", said Donald Pols.

1.5. Swinney assault on climate change 'long on hot air, short on substance'

<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/politics.cfm?id=976742007>

Scotland is to lead the world in action to combat climate change, cutting carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

John Swinney, the Cabinet secretary for finance and sustainable growth, told the Scottish Parliament he was committed to an ambitious programme of cuts that would be an inspiration to the world and help to turn this country into "the green energy capital of Europe".

However, he was accused of performing a "major U-turn" by dropping an SNP manifesto commitment to mandatory annual emissions reductions of 3 per cent.

He also faced criticism for a lack of any kind of early route-map – showing how a target described by Mr Swinney as "ambitious" could be achieved – and not bringing in financial penalties for government departments and public bodies which miss carbon-emission targets. Mr Swinney said the country was already feeling the effects of climate change "with, for example, increased frequency and intensity of rainfall".

"We want to show that a prosperous and low-carbon economy is possible," he said. "By taking a lead, Scotland can demonstrate what can be achieved."

The Westminster government has set an emissions reduction target of 60 per cent and there were concerns raised that the higher Scottish target could hit businesses. But Mr Swinney stressed the potential benefits.

"We will propose a framework within which Scottish industries can invest with certainty in world-beating, low-carbon technologies. We want Scotland to become the pre-eminent location for clean-energy research and development in Europe. We want Scotland to become the green energy capital of Europe," he said.

Speaking later, he stressed the First Minister Alex Salmond's commitment to clean-coal technology, after news that ScottishPower-Iberdrola is to invest in this at its power station in Longannet, where Scotland's last deep coal mine closed in 2002.

Labour's Rhona Brankin, the spokeswoman for the environment, said the statement showed the SNP could not be trusted, as it had talked about mandatory annual targets to reduce emissions, but was proposing only to monitor this.

"The early signs of this government are not good on climate change. They are talking tough, but they have done a major U-turn on 3 per cent mandatory targets and nobody knows where they've got the 80 per cent figure," she said.

Duncan McLaren, of Friends of the Earth Scotland, said a system of annual carbon targets - with financial penalties for departments and bodies that fail to meet them - should be established to speed up progress.

How the 80% target could be achieved:

Cutting Scotland's carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 will depend to a large extent on actions outwith the control of Holyrood.

John Swinney, whose responsibilities include sustainable growth, suggested insulation was a first step ordinary people could take.

An estimated 4.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide - about 10 per cent of total emissions in 2004 - could be saved if every house in the country had a full energy-efficiency makeover.

A host of wind farms coming on stream by 2020 should make big inroads in reducing emissions. At the current rate of progress, 54 per cent of Scotland's electricity could come from renewables by 2020.

By 2030, emissions could be cut by up to 70 per cent through new climate-friendly technologies. Green taxes and a more extensive European carbon-trading scheme could also be brought in, while capturing and storing in old gas and oilfields could be used to deal with emissions from fossil-fuel power stations.

By 2050, hydrogen produced from renewable sources or clean coal could account for about a quarter of total energy use, fuelling cars and providing homes with electricity. Biofuels would also be commonplace.

1.6. US Ambassador urges APEC declaration on climate change

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/07/01/1966940.htm>

The United States Ambassador to Australia, Robert McCallum, says his country wants a declaration of fundamental climate change principals agreed at September's APEC meeting in Sydney.

Last month the Prime Minister John Howard appointed a special envoy to work with leaders in the Asia Pacific to develop a joint regional climate change strategy ahead of the meeting.

Mr McCallum says there should be recognition that climate change must be addressed cooperatively by the global community in a way that does not sacrifice economic development.

He has told Channel Ten it is difficult to say whether greenhouse gas emissions targets will be set at the Sydney meeting.

"When you're talking about a summit involving 21 nation states, one anticipates more fundamental principals on which all of the nation states may agree that would ultimately serve for a long range aspirational goal, but which would then be addressed by individual nations having some flexibility in defining their own plan," he said.

ENERGY

2.1. EU households urged to shop around for energy

1 July 2007, euters

Household consumers throughout most of the European Union won the legal right to choose their electricity and gas providers on Sunday, as EU rules aimed at avoiding blackouts and spurring competition took effect.

The EU wants to improve competition in energy markets to help bring prices down, encourage investment in infrastructure, secure supplies and stimulate the production of renewable fuels.

It started the process of market liberalisation several years ago, but huge former monopolies still dominate the gas and power business, keeping prices high and thwarting newcomers.

"I encourage European consumers to take advantage of their freedom to chose their energy suppliers. A functioning EU energy market can only be obtained if consumers participate in the market actively," Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs said.

EU rules gave businesses a choice of energy supplier in the bloc in 2004, but energy companies had until now to give the same options to households and other consumers.

Worries about increased import dependence on Russia has helped put energy policy at the top of the EU's agenda. The executive European Commission believes a strong internal gas and electricity market throughout the 27-nation bloc is a key ingredient to energy security, largely because more competition will encourage suppliers to invest in networks to prevent potential blackouts.

It has promised to come up with draft laws later this year that could shake up asset ownership rules for utility giants such as Germany's E.ON and France's EDF.

"Some other obstacles to a truly competitive internal market remain," Piebalgs said in a statement on Sunday, adding the EU executive would table further legislative measures soon.

Ownership clash:

Brussels wants utility giants to be forced to separate or split off their generation businesses from transmission networks in a process called "ownership unbundling", but EU governments are lukewarm about the prospect.

Some forms of unbundling are already required. The Commission noted that from Sunday larger and medium-sized local electricity and gas distribution firms must be organised as legally separate companies, even if ownership remains in the hands of the larger utility groups.

"This measure will enhance the independence of the distribution companies from their parent companies with the aim of ensuring a fair access of all suppliers to the distribution network," it said.

Many countries opened their markets to competition before the July deadline, but problems still persist.

Brussels has taken legal action against national governments on issues including the persistence of regulated prices, insufficient powers of regulators, and preferential access given for some long-standing electricity or gas contracts.

The Commission says Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Britain all have liberalised electricity and gas markets already, while the electricity markets are open in Finland and Sweden and the gas market is open in Italy.

But Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Northern Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia must now open their markets, with effect from Sunday, it said.

Some countries, including Estonia, Greece and Portugal, have extensions to open their markets later.

2.2. Biofuels stampede 'damaging the environment'

29 June 2007, Daily Telegraph London

The rush for biofuels is causing massive environmental damage and must be halted, a campaign group claims.

Whole ecosystems are being destroyed and hundreds of thousands of people are being thrown off their land to make way for the crops needed to make biofuel, it alleges.

The charity Grain says there has been a stampede towards biofuels - an alcohol-based fuel made from crops and trees planted on a large scale - as a 'greener' alternative to fossil fuels.

But it claims that some biofuels are as damaging as traditional fuels and there is hardly any saving on carbon emissions.

For its hard-hitting report Grain claims it has gathered material from around the world and concluded that the rush to biofuels is causing enormous environmental and social damage, "The numbers involved are mind-boggling. The Indian government is talking of planting 14 million hectares of land with jatropha.

"The Inter-American Development Bank says that Brazil has 120 million hectares that could be cultivated with agrofuel crops; and an agrofuel lobby is speaking of 379 million hectares being available in 15 African countries. We are talking about expropriation on an unprecedented scale," the report states.

Grain claims even the term biofuel is wrong and misleading and should instead be called agrofuel in that it is being taken over by big business and exploited as another commodity.

In Latin America, Asia and Africa, the report claims, the push for agrofuels is leading to the reintroduction of the old colonial plantation system at the expense of indigenous farming systems and local communities.

The EU has said it wants to see at least 10 per cent of road fuel derived from plants by 2020 and President Bush recently announced a 15 per cent target for the replacement of petrol by biofuels in US vehicles.

In the next 18 months, biofuel production in the US will double to about seven per cent of the petrol consumed.

The plant fuel industry acknowledges there is a limit to the energy to be obtained from crops but believes biofuel can be produced sustainably on a large scale.

But critics say biofuels lead to deforestation - in itself one of the biggest causes of CO₂ - as vast areas are cleared to grow the crops.

The growing clamour for biofuels has led to a fall in the amount of grain being grown and a consequent rise in prices which has hit the poorest the hardest.

CONFERENCES

3.1. Energy for a Clean Environment
2 - 4 July 2007 in Póvoa de Varzim, Portugal
More info: <http://rgesd.ist.utl.pt/cleanair>.

3.2. "Adapting to Climate Change - Launching a public debate on options for EU Action"
3 July 2007 in Brussels.
To register for this event, please go to: <https://www.synergyregistrations.com/registrations/eccp>.

3.3. Energy Supply Security - Present and Future Issues
5 - 6 July 2007 in Krakow, Poland
More info: <http://www.agh.edu.pl/news.php?id=754>.

3.4. Scientific framework of environmental and forest governance -- The role of discourses and expertise
27 and 28 August 2007 in Goettingen, Germany
Further information at: <http://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-6/60000/61200/61202/activities/> or <http://www.iufro.org/download/file/1648/3058/goettingen07-call-for-paper.doc>.

3.5. European Photovoltaic Solar Energy Conference and Exhibition
3 - 7 September 2007 in Milan, Italy
More info: <http://www.photovoltic-conference.com>.

3.6. International Congress on Plant Oil Fuels
6 - 7 September 2007 in Erfurt, Germany
More info: <http://www.pflanzenoel-kongress.de/index.php?lng=en>.

3.7. General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities
27 - 28 September 2007 in Pärnu, Estonia
More info: <http://www.reiser.ee/conference/ubc.htm>.

3.8. RENEXPO 2007 - International Trade Fair and Conference for Renewable Energies
27 - 30 September 2007 in Augsburg, Germany
More info: <http://www.renexpo.de/?lang=en>.

3.9. European Sustainable Energy Seminar and Tour
1 - 5 October 2007 in Samsø, Denmark
More info: http://www.inforse.org/europe/seminar07_samso.htm.

3.10. European Meeting Point: Energy for Development 2007
10 - 12 October 2007 in Beja/Alentejo, Portugal
More info: <http://www.energyanddevelopment-2007.net>.

3.11. UN Millennium Development Goals - discussing practical examples on a local level
18 - 20 October 2007 in Bonn, Germany
More at: <http://www.service-eine-welt.de/en>.

3.12. COP 13, COP/MOP3

Venue of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) and the third session of the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 3) Nusa Dua, Bali, 3 to 14 December 2007.

The Bureau of the UNFCCC met on Tuesday, 13 February 2007 and decided to accept with gratitude the offer by the Government of Indonesia to host COP 13 and COP/MOP 3 at the Bali International Conference Centre and the adjacent facilities and services in Nusa Dua.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to complete the corresponding host country agreement with Indonesia in time for the sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies in May 2007.

Further information on the Conference will appear on the UNFCCC website.

PUBLICATIONS

4.1. Impact of CO2 quota allocation to new entrants in the electricity market

Abstract: The present study shows that allocation to new entrants will have the following long term consequences if the allocation principles from the 2005-7 National Allocation Plans are continued:

Investments in new capacity will shift from gas power and renewables to coal power increasing CO2-emissions by 40 million tonnes/year in the long term (a 6 per cent increase).

Distortions in the market will lead to a welfare-economic loss of almost €5 billion (net present value) at a CO2-price of 20 euro/tonne.

Carbon prices will rise, and hence exacerbate the welfare-economic loss mentioned above. If carbon prices reach 40 euro/tonne, this may endanger the functioning of the EU ETS as the subsidy for fossil-fuel plants will exceed the investment costs of new power plants.

Find the publication at: <http://www.mst.dk/Udgivelser/publications/2007/06/978-87-7052-494-0.htm>.

ANNOUNCEMENT

5.1. Invitation for inputs: Energy Security in the Balkans

CSIS - Center for Security and International Studies, Romania is inviting input for the publication on energy security in the Balkans:

The Editor invites experts and academics interested in the energy future of the region to join their efforts and to assume the challenge to offer a joint (though not unitary) vision about the international topic of energy security in Southeastern Europe focusing on the opportunities and vulnerabilities that the SEE is facing or might face in the foreseeable future. We are interested in papers that tackle the proposed theme through the authors' national filters considering both the domestic interests and the importance of the energy determinant and their implications for the national and regional security in an unstable international environment. Another aim of the publication is to use these insight visions of the SEE states and of the region as a whole as an instrumentality and chance to stimulate a coordinated research in the area by facilitating the opportunities to make the necessary acquaintances. The editor welcomes any relevant input from "out of area" researchers in order to assure the objectivity of the perspective.

Language: English

Deadline: 1 August, 2007 (This deadline is set for receiving intent expressions and abstracts for the chapters, while the second and final deadline for receiving the papers has been established for 1 October).

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