

E-news update October 15 2007

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CLIMATE

- 1.1. Gore Shares Peace Prize for Climate Change Work

12 October 2007, The New York Times

Former Vice President Al Gore, who emerged from his loss in the muddled 2000 presidential election to devote himself to his passion as an environmental crusader, was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday, sharing it with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations network of scientists.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee praised both "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change."

The prize is a vindication for Mr. Gore, whose cautionary film about the consequences of climate change, "An Inconvenient Truth," won the 2007 Academy Award for best documentary, even as conservatives in the United States denounced it as alarmist and exaggerated.

"I will accept this award on behalf of all the people that have been working so long and so hard to try to get the message out about this planetary emergency," Mr. Gore said Friday in Palo Alto, Calif., standing with his wife, Tipper, and four members of the United Nations climate panel. "I'm going back to work right now," he said.

The award was also a validation for the United Nations panel, which in its early days was vilified by those who disputed the scientific case for a human role in climate change. In New Delhi, the Indian climatologist who heads the panel, Rajendra K. Pachauri, said that science had won out over skepticism.

Mr. Gore, a vociferous opponent of the Bush administration on a range of issues, including the Iraq war, is the second Democratic politician to win the peace prize this decade. Former President Jimmy Carter won in 2002.

Mr. Carter, himself a critic of Mr. Bush, was 78 when he won the prize. But Mr. Gore is just 59 and an active presence in American politics, if only as a large thorn in Mr. Bush's side — and in the side of Democrats worried that he might challenge them for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Mr. Gore, who lost the 2000 election to Mr. Bush, has regularly said that he will not run for president again. But Friday's announcement touched off renewed interest in his plans.

Tony Fratto, a White House spokesman, did not go overboard in his praise. "Of course we're happy for Vice President Gore and the I.P.C.C. for receiving this recognition," he said.

In Oslo, Ole Danbolt Mjoes, chairman of the peace committee, was asked whether the award could be seen as criticism of the Bush administration, which did not subscribe to the Kyoto treaty to cap greenhouse gases. He replied that the Nobel was not meant to be a "kick in the leg to anyone" — the Norwegian expression for "kick in the teeth."

"We would encourage all countries, including the big countries, and challenge them to think again and to say what they can do to conquer global warming," Dr. Mjoes said in Oslo.

The four other members of the peace committee generally refuse to comment on the thinking behind the award, which in recent years has moved toward issues at a degree of remove from armed conflict, like social justice, poverty remediation and environmentalism. But in a telephone interview, Berge Furre, one of the four, said, "I hope this will have an effect on the attitudes of Americans as well as people in other countries."

In its formal citation, the Nobel committee called Mr. Gore "probably the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted." It praised the United Nations panel, which is made up of 2,000 scientists and is considered the world's leading authority on climate change, for creating "an ever-broader informed consensus about the connection between human activities and global warming."

While the world's major environmental groups all praised Mr. Gore for his role in raising public awareness, they praised the panel for, in the words of Greenpeace International, "meticulous scientific work."

The two approaches both play a part, scientists said Friday. The Nobel Prize "is honoring the science and the publicity, and they're necessarily different," said Spencer R. Weart, a historian at the American Institute of Physics.

Mr. Gore, who announced he would give his portion of the \$1.5 million prize money to the nonprofit organization he founded last year, the Alliance for Climate Protection, said he was honored to share the prize with the panel, calling it "the world's pre-eminent scientific body devoted to improving our understanding of the climate crisis."

Mr. Pachauri said, "The message that it sends is that the Nobel Prize committee realized the value of knowledge in tackling the problem of climate change." He said the award was an acknowledgment of the panel's "impartial and objective assessment of climate change."

The climate panel, established in 1988, has issued a series of increasingly grim reports in the last two decades assessing issues surrounding climate change. It is expected to issue another report in the next few months, before the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Indonesia on Dec. 3. Some 180 countries are scheduled to begin negotiations there on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, the climate adviser to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and a leading contributor to the United Nations panel's reports, said they were the result of "a painstaking process of self-interrogation."

The committee acts at "about the highest level of complexity you can manage in such a scientific assessment," Dr. Schellnhuber said in a telephone interview from Milan.

For a scientist, he said, taking part on the climate change panel entails considerable sacrifices. "It drives you absolutely crazy," Dr. Schellnhuber said. "You fly to distant places; you stay up all night negotiating; you listen to hundreds of sometimes silly interventions. You go through so many mundane things to produce the big picture."

The Nobel prizes are meant to be apolitical, and are awarded independently of one another. (The peace prize is awarded in Oslo, while the others are awarded by various academies in Sweden.) But a number of recent winners have expressed their opposition to Bush administration policies.

The 2005 literature winner, the British playwright Harold Pinter, turned his Nobel address into a blistering indictment of American foreign policy since the Second World War. A co-winner of the peace prize that year, Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, made no secret of his opposition to the American invasion of Iraq and has angered the Bush administration by his measured methods for trying to rein in nuclear proliferation, particularly in Iran.

In its citation on Friday, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said the United Nations panel and Mr. Gore had focused "on the processes and decisions that appear to be necessary to protect the world's future climate, and thereby reduce the future threat to the security of mankind."

It concluded, "Action is necessary now, before climate change moves beyond man's control."

1.2. IPCC expresses surprise and gratitude at announcement of Nobel peace prize

12 November 2007, IPCC

The awarding of the Nobel peace prize to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (jointly with former US Vice-President Al Gore) is a remarkable testament to the dedication and commitment

of the thousands of experts and participants who have produced the Panel's rigorous and comprehensive assessments of climate change research.

"This is an honour that goes to all the scientists and authors who have contributed to the work of the IPCC, which alone has resulted in enormous prestige for this organization and the remarkable effectiveness of the message that it contains" – says Mr. Rajendra Pachauri, the Chairman of the IPCC.

"It is the most significant recognition that the IPCC has received for providing policymakers with objective and balanced information about the causes and impacts of climate change and possible response measures" – says Renate Christ, the Secretary of the IPCC.

Hundreds of authors from all regions of the planet have devoted an incredible amount of time and labour to writing and reviewing the reports. None of them has been paid for their time.

The IPCC assessments are based on peer-reviewed scientific and technical literature. The IPCC reports are written by teams of authors from all over the world who are recognized experts in their field. They represent relevant disciplines as well as differing scientific perspectives. This global coverage of expertise, the interdisciplinary nature of the IPCC team, and the transparency of the process, constitute the Panel's strongest assets.

"The IPCC's doors are open to every expert who is qualified and willing to make a contribution as author or reviewer" says Renate Christ. "This voluntary network of thousands of scientists and experts is what makes the IPCC truly unique."

The number of experts involved in the IPCC process has expanded considerably since the Panel was created in 1988. The procedures governing the writing and approval process have also become increasingly rigorous and transparent. This has been the key to enabling the IPCC to connect the very different cultures and requirements of the scientific and political worlds.

"The IPCC's strength lies in the processes and procedures that it follows. Most important is its ability of carrying out rigorous scientific assessment, which undergoes the scrutiny of government representatives and therefore is accepted by governments. There is no other body in the world that is able to meet these twin objectives simultaneously," says Mr. Rajendra Pachauri.

The IPCC was created almost 20 years ago to respond to growing concern about the risk of anthropogenic climate change. The General Assembly of the United Nations asked the two UN bodies most engaged in the issue, the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, to set up this Panel to provide balanced, objective policy advice.

The First Assessment Report of 1990 was submitted to the UN General Assembly, which responded by formally recognizing that climate change required global action and launched the negotiations that led to the adoption of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In one exact month from now, the IPCC Plenary will meet in Valencia, Spain, to adopt the fourth and final volume of its "Climate Change 2007" assessment report. This short and extremely readable "Synthesis Report", explicitly targeted to policymakers, represents the final step in integrating and presenting the enormous amounts of scientific information contained in the three volumes released earlier this year. The Synthesis Report will be launched on 17 November.

Mr. Rajendra Pachauri of India was elected Chairman of the IPCC in 2002. He succeeded Robert Watson of the UK (1997 - 2002) and Bert Bolin of Sweden (1988 - 1997). During his Chairmanship, Mr. Pachauri, regarded as an effective team builder, has emphasized the world-wide coverage and interdisciplinary nature of the IPCC work.

1.3. Fed Govt interested in modified Kyoto Protocol: Turnbull

10 October 2007, AAP

The Australian government might ratify an amended Kyoto Protocol, Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull says.

And in a move that would see Australia become an international advocate for environmental protection, the government could also press developed countries such as the United States to accept binding greenhouse gas emission targets.

Mr Turnbull told Fairfax Ltd that Australia's self-imposed targets meant it was in the national interest for other developed countries to do the same.

If an effective international agreement were reached through an amended version of the Kyoto Protocol, the coalition would be happy to commit to it, Mr Turnbull said.

"Australia is committed to a new, environmentally effective global agreement, and if it is global and effective and involves all the major emitters we would expect to sign it," he said.

"Whether this new agreement is done by amending the Kyoto Protocol or by entering into a new protocol with another name remains to be seen - but that is a question of process only."

The comments come after leading scientist Professor Tim Flannery said a report due out next month shows Australia's greenhouse gas emissions had already reached levels that would cause dangerous changes to the climate.

ENERGY

2.1. EIB reinforces financial support for cleaner energy

27 September 2007

The European Investment Bank (EIB), the Bank promoting European Union objectives, is reinforcing its support for cleaner energy with a landmark carbon fund and nearly EUR 450 million in fresh finance to improve energy efficiency, boost renewable energy sources and minimise greenhouse gases across Europe.

Focusing on "Investing in Energy – Mastering Climate Change" at its 2007 EIB Forum in Ljubljana on 27-28 September, the Bank also announced a renewed policy on lending to the transport sector to ensure that it targets the most efficient and sustainable ways to satisfy transport demand.

The latest moves add to the EIB's already extensive funding for carbon and climate change initiatives, made in the context of the European Union's new Action Plan for Energy Policy. "Energy conservation means substituting technology and ultimately capital for energy. And using alternative energies means employing technology and capital in order to exploit free and renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind, wave or geothermal resources," EIB President Philippe Maystadt said.

"Moving towards a low-carbon economy therefore ultimately means the large-scale employment of capital. The EIB is ready to take up this challenge."

The Forum sees the launch of the innovative European Post 2012 Carbon Fund, the first carbon fund aimed at underpinning the market value of carbon credits after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. A direct result of on-going cooperation between the EIB and three leading European national financing institutions – Spain's Instituto de Credito Oficial (ICO), Germany's KfW Bankengruppe and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) – the Fund will support environmentally beneficial projects including renewable energy, energy efficiency, forestry and methane capture, by acquiring carbon credits generated in the period 2013-22. The Fund, the first signing of which is targeted at EUR 100 million, complements three other carbon funds created by the EIB with other national and international financial institutions.

The Forum also sees the signature of five new loans to support energy supply and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency across Europe:

The EIB will lend EUR 350 million to modernise electricity generation in Slovenia. The project, for a new 600 MW steam turbine power plant in Šoštanj, will use the latest technology to cut carbon emissions from lignite-fired generation while exploiting this major local fuel resource to help meet increased energy demand and contribute to a secure electricity supply.

The Bank will also lend EUR 30 million in the form of a framework loan to Slovenia's Environmental Development Fund, to fund projects with a particular focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy as well as water and wastewater.

An additional EUR 13 million will be lent to support the completion of Slovenia's new Avče hydropower pumped-storage plant. The plant will help cut greenhouse gas emissions by using off-peak electricity to pump water at night, and reversing the flow to generate electricity at peak hours.

Elsewhere, the EIB will invest EUR 25 million in the Enercap Power Fund, financing projects using renewable energy sources in Central and South-Eastern Europe with a focus on Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Croatia. The Fund, to be signed subject to final legal documentation, will support projects based on the use of mature technologies in the wind sector, as well as in biofuels and other renewable energy.

A further EUR 25 million will be invested in the DIF Renewable Energy Fund, focused on equity financing for renewable energy in North-West Europe – mainly the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark and the UK. Wind projects will be the main focus, with other renewable energy projects undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

President Maystadt welcomed these initiatives and highlighted an impressive start to the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF), the latest in a series of joint EIB-European Commission initiatives, which was launched in June 2007 and has already committed funds of more than EUR 350 million. Created to

provide strong additional support to research, development and innovation projects in Europe, the RSFF has already seen a firm focus on renewable energy technologies, including funding for four ground-breaking concentrating solar thermal power (CSP) generating plants in Spain.

Background information:

The promotion of sustainable, competitive and secure energy is a key policy objective of the European Union. As the EU's long-term financing institution, the European Investment Bank (EIB) made support for Europe's energy needs a top lending priority in 2007, targeting the increase of renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy saving, research and development in energy, and security and diversification of supplies. The EIB has set itself a minimum annual lending target of EUR 800 million for renewable energy projects.

Since the beginning of 2006, the EIB has provided loans in excess of EUR 6 billion for energy investment projects within the EU, of which EUR 456 million in 2006 and already EUR 901 million in 2007 have been for renewable energy projects.

The 2007 EIB Forum taking place in Ljubljana (Slovenia) on 27-28 September will look at different world energy scenarios, assess their economic and environmental sustainability, and discuss the political choices to be made. Energy supplies and the full spectrum of energy sources, from fossil and nuclear to renewable energy, will be considered, as well as energy demand in major sectors such as the car and steel industry, energy consumption for heating and lighting, and the potential for greater energy efficiency. On-line information on the EIB Forum can be accessed at www.eib.org/forum.

The EIB policy paper "Clean Energy for Europe: A reinforced EIB contribution" is available on the Bank's website at <http://www.eib.org/about/publications/clean-energy-for-europe.htm>.

Further information on the EIB's climate change activities can be found at <http://www.eib.org/projects/topics/environment/climate-change>.

2.2. Barroso rejects Greens' nuclear demand

4 October 2007, The Financial Times

José Manuel Barroso, European Commission president, on Thursday rejected demands that his antitrust chief refrain from judging cases involving the nuclear industry because of a conflict of interest.

Dany Cohn-Bendit, Green party co-leader in the European parliament, and his fellow MEPs made the call after Neelie Kroes, the competition commissioner, backed atomic power publicly at a conference in Madrid this week.

In a letter they also called for a re-examination of last month's decision to clear French export credit guarantees to Areva, the state-owned nuclear energy champion, for a reactor in Finland.

"It is inconceivable for the EU competition commissioner to be neutral when assessing illegal state aid for nuclear power, while at the same time being 'completely in favour of nuclear power', even if this is in a personal capacity," the letter said.

The Commission last week cleared a €570m (\$805m) French loan to Finnish power company TVO to buy a reactor from Areva because it was at a market rate and TVO could have got the money privately, it said.

"It is only legitimate that this investigation be reopened under the charge of a clearly impartial arbiter," the Greens' letter said.

A spokeswoman for Mr Barroso said the allegation was "unfounded". "Do the Greens think that a Green politician should not be energy commissioner?" she said.

State aid decisions were taken according to a defined set of rules, she said.

Nevertheless, some governments said they would be watching future decisions carefully. A spokesman for Sigmar Gabriel, German environment minister, said that Ms Kroes was entitled to personal views.

However, he added that the nuclear industry was dependent on state money. "No nuclear power station can be built without state help. It is not a free market. The Commission has to act as watchdog.

"We had to be very careful to make sure our renewable industry was compliant with the rules and it should be the same for nuclear."

Ms Kroes, 66, has already agreed to step aside in cases involving her previous business interests. The Dutch ex-transport minister held board positions for several companies including Thales, the French aerospace company, Volvo, the Swedish carmaker and P&O Nedlloyd, the Anglo-Dutch shipping line.
