

## E-news update February 13 2006

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### POLICY

- 1.1. WWF asks for mandatory eco-certification for biofuels

While trying to increase their use, the EU must also endorse the mandatory eco-certification of all biofuels used in Europe, said WWF following the release today of the European Commission's Communication on biofuels. The Communication sets out how the EU plans to increase the use and promote research into the development of more efficient biofuels, both in the EU and in developing countries. However, while it emphasises the importance of mitigating the environmental impacts of biofuel production, it falls short of explicitly calling for obligatory certification of all biofuels used in the EU, whether they come from domestic or imported sources. "It is imperative that the EU establishes a legally binding certification system for both imported and domestic biofuels," said Elizabeth Guttentstein, Head of European Agriculture and Rural Development at WWF. "The certification system must be based on enhancing the potential of biofuels to cut greenhouse gas emissions, while avoiding the wider environmental impacts of biofuel production. This will help to protect the environment in developing countries and contribute to CO2 emissions reductions in the EU in a sustainable way." As the EU is unlikely to be able to meet all its biofuels needs from domestic sources, any scheme designed to ensure biofuels are produced sustainably must cover imported fuels as well. Already millions of hectares of tropical forest have been cleared to make way for plantations of palm oil, soy and sugar - all major sources for biofuels - leading to huge biodiversity losses. As well as polluting soils and waters, the use of pesticides on the crops also threatens biodiversity. The certification system must also cover the climate benefits of any potential biofuel, as energy-intensive production methods mean many biofuels offer little advantage over conventional fuels in terms of overall greenhouse gas emissions. "The current practice of automatically classifying all biofuels as 'renewable' regardless of how they are produced is counter-productive," commented Dr Stephan Singer, Head of WWF's European Climate & Energy Policy Unit. "If the EU is to meet its Kyoto and renewables targets, it must promote those biofuels which offer the greatest greenhouse gas savings, such as sustainably produced forest and wood products." Certification schemes would necessarily have to be easy to apply and flexible enough to take account of local conditions. WWF has already been instrumental in setting up the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, which has brought together

producers, buyers, retailers, financial institutions and NGOs to develop practical criteria for the responsible production of palm oil.

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## ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

### 2.1. Energy Efficiency: The Antidote to the Energy Crisis

9 February 2006

9th Special Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Ministerial Environment Forum: Rapid and global improvements in the energy efficiency of buildings, factories and cars are needed to overcome the world's over-dependency on fossil fuels, environment ministers said today at the end of an international gathering. Energy savings at home, at work and on the world's highways offer the "greatest immediate scope" for tackling the fuel crisis that is challenging the economies of the developed and the developing world, they said. Saving energy and using it more efficiently also carries direct benefits in terms of fighting climate change and reducing health hazardous emissions in cities and in homes. Energy efficiency codes and standards should be adopted world-wide for buildings, electrical appliances, cars and agricultural machinery, ministers concluded. Governments should set the example by focusing their purchasing power on buying energy efficient goods, equipment and services, they said. The conclusions came from delegates from over 150 countries at the end of the 9th Special Session of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Forum. They are contained in the chairman's summary which will be sent to the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to be held in New York in May. Klaus Toepfer, UNEP's Executive Director, said: "Ministers meeting here in the United Arab Emirates have gone to the heart of the most pressing problem facing the planet. And that is energy." "The rising demand for energy and the climbing price of fossil fuels has implications for economic growth, for fighting poverty and for the local and global environment. This was firmly reflected in our discussions and will, I sincerely hope, trigger real international action." Governments also recognized the greater potential of renewables such as wind and solar power and said that real progress in this field had been made since the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Transfer of clean energy technologies and more creative financial measures that reflect the full costs of the production, consumption and use of different energies formed an important part of the discussions. Notes to Editors: Details of the 9th Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum can be found at <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-ix/>.

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### 2.2. New Report Links Renewable Energy to Climate Change Solutions

8 February 2006

Renewable energy must play a major role in the global energy supply to meet the increasingly serious environmental and economic threats of climate change, according to a new report from the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21). Changing Climates, the Role of Renewable Energy in a Carbon-Constrained World cites an "emerging consensus" in both the scientific and political communities that a global warming limit of 2 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels can avoid the most serious climate change threats. But, the report adds, this level can only be reached with major long-term emission reductions from many different and combined options, including larger renewable energy markets, efficiency improvements, and fossil fuels that are much cleaner than those on which the world's US\$60 trillion economy currently depends. The report's lead author, John Christensen from the UNEP Risoe Centre on Climate, Energy and Sustainable Development, says that many renewable energy technologies have "moved from being a passion for the dedicated few to a major economic sector attracting large industrial companies and financial institutions". However, basic policy questions remain, including the need to ensure technical progress, overcome implementation barriers, and accelerate the shift to renewable energy. "Although there are many good political, economic and social reasons for stimulating a more rapid development of renewable energy – not the least of which is climate change – the sector is hampered by a number of market distortions and institutional, financial, and economic barriers," says Christensen. Changing Climates follows the release of the REN21 Global Status Report that found that US\$30 billion was invested in the renewable energy sector in 2004, which contributes 160 GW, or approximately 4 per cent of global power capacity. To significantly increase this investment and contribution, Changing Climates says economic policy instruments can quickly improve the cost competitiveness of renewable

energy systems and technologies. The report uses a range of different "scenario" analysis from the International Energy Agency and other institutions to show how national and regional strategies can help to grow the renewable energy sector and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Using economic policy instruments, such as renewable energy targets and tax incentives can be an effective strategy to stimulate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in energy markets that are increasingly deregulated and market orientated," Christensen says, citing the evolving experiences with carbon finance and emissions trading as promising longer-term incentives for developing renewable energy markets. One of the report's conclusions is that specific policy tools need to fit local circumstances, but significant experience is already available in both developed and developing countries to guide the use of these policies. With the current and predicted cost competitiveness of many renewable energy technologies, however, it is not necessary to wait for strengthened global agreements before taking action at the national level. Changing Climates was launched today during the 9th Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum which is taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Here, environment ministers from across the world are meeting to discuss energy and other issues topping the environmental policy agenda. The launch of the report coincides with the opening of a new REN21 secretariat office, headed by Paul Suding and supported by UNEP and GTZ, the German Technical Cooperation. The new office is housed in the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics in Paris. Note to Editors: The Global Status Report and Changing Climates can be found at : [http://www.ren21.net/climatechange/Changing\\_Climates.pdf](http://www.ren21.net/climatechange/Changing_Climates.pdf).

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## CLIMATE IMPACTS

### 3.1. Global Warming Boosting Greenland Glacier Flow

6 February 2006, Planet Ark

Two major glaciers in Greenland have recently begun to flow and break up more quickly under the onslaught of global warming, a new study said on Friday, raising the spectre of millions drowning from rising sea levels. The report from the University of Swansea's School of the Environment and Society said the Kangerdlugssuaq and Helheim glaciers had doubled their rate of flow to the ocean over the past two years after steady movement during the 1990s. This spurt meant that current environmental models of the rate of retreat of Greenland's giant ice sheet - which could add seven metres to the height of the world's oceans if it disappears - had underestimated the problem. "It seems likely that other Greenland outlets will undergo similar changes, which would impact the mass balance of the ice sheet more rapidly than predicted," the study said. It said the fact that the two major outflow glaciers had shown the same sudden acceleration despite being more than 300 km apart suggested the cause was not local but more likely climatic or oceanic in origin. "In both of these glaciers the acceleration and retreat has been sudden, despite the progressive nature of warming and thinning over some years," the report said. "The longevity of this flux increase is unknown but could be substantial," it added. The report followed a warning earlier this week from Britain's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research - a branch of the Meteorological Office - that the Greenland ice sheet could be disappearing faster than previously thought. The ice sheet contains one-tenth of the world's freshwater reserves. Scientists predict that global average temperatures will rise by between one and six degrees Celsius this century unless urgent action is taken now to cap and reduce carbon emissions. Even a rise of three degrees could result in cataclysmic species loss, melting polar icecaps raising sea levels by many metres and wholesale famine and disease. Greenland is only part of the picture, and there is also evidence of local warming and melting on the giant Western Antarctic ice sheet. Scientists said on Monday the world had to halt greenhouse gas emissions and reverse them within two decades or watch the planet spiralling towards destruction. The first phase of the global Kyoto protocol on cutting greenhouse gas emissions runs until 2012, and negotiations have only just started on finding a way of taking it beyond that. The United States, the world's biggest polluter, has rejected both the protocol in its current form and any suggestion of expanding or extending it. Story by Jeremy Lovell.

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### 3.2. Global Warming a Major Health Risk – Scientists

February 9 2006, Planet Ark

Global warming is already causing death and disease across the world through flooding, environmental destruction, heatwaves and other extreme weather events, scientists said on Thursday.

And it is likely to get worse. In a review published in The Lancet medical journal, the scientists said there was now a near-unanimous scientific consensus that rising levels of greenhouse gases would cause global warming and other climate changes. "The advent of changes in global climate signals that we are now living beyond the Earth's capacity to absorb a major waste product," said Anthony McMichael of the Australian National University in Canberra and his colleagues, referring to greenhouse gases. The scientists' review of dozens of scientific papers over the last five years said health risks were likely to get worse over time as climate change and other environmental and social changes deepened. "The resultant risks to health ... are anticipated to compound over time as climate change along with other large scale environmental and social changes continues," they wrote. The review said climate change would bring changes in temperature, sea levels, rainfall, humidity and winds. This would lead to an increase in death rates from heatwaves, infectious diseases, allergies, cholera as well as starvation due to failing crops. They said climate change may already have led to lower production of food in some regions due to changes in temperature, rainfall, soil moisture, pests and diseases. "In food insecure populations this alteration may already be contributing to malnutrition," it said. The scientists said sea levels had risen in recent decades, and people had already started moving from some low-lying Pacific islands. Such population movements often increased nutritional and physical problems and disease, they said. "The number of people adversely affected by El Nino-related weather events over three decades, worldwide, appears to have increased greatly," it said, referring to the weather pattern caused by warming of the Pacific Ocean off South America. The review called for research to identify groups vulnerable to climate change and said health concerns should be included in international policy debates about global warming. "Recognition of widespread health risks should widen these debates beyond the already important considerations of economic disruption," they said.

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### 3.3. Global warming: passing the 'tipping point'

11 February 2006, The Independent, <http://news.independent.co.uk/environment/article344690.ece>

Our special investigation reveals that critical rise in world temperatures is now unavoidable. By Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor: A crucial global warming "tipping point" for the Earth, highlighted only last week by the British Government, has already been passed, with devastating consequences. Research commissioned by The Independent reveals that the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has now crossed a threshold, set down by scientists from around the world at a conference in Britain last year, beyond which really dangerous climate change is likely to be unstoppable. The implication is that some of global warming's worst predicted effects, from destruction of ecosystems to increased hunger and water shortages for billions of people, cannot now be avoided, whatever we do. It gives considerable force to the contention by the green guru Professor James Lovelock, put forward last month in The Independent, that climate change is now past the point of no return. The danger point we are now firmly on course for is a rise in global mean temperatures to 2 degrees above the level before the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. At the moment, global mean temperatures have risen to about 0.6 degrees above the pre-industrial era - and worrying signs of climate change, such as the rapid melting of the Arctic ice in summer, are already increasingly evident. But a rise to 2 degrees would be far more serious. By that point it is likely that the Greenland ice sheet will already have begun irreversible melting, threatening the world with a sea-level rise of several metres. Agricultural yields will have started to fall, not only in Africa but also in Europe, the US and Russia, putting up to 200 million more people at risk from hunger, and up to 2.8 billion additional people at risk of water shortages for both drinking and irrigation. The Government's conference on Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change, held at the UK Met Office in Exeter a year ago, highlighted a clear threshold in the accumulation of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere, which should not be surpassed if the 2 degree point was to be avoided with "relatively high certainty". This was for the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> and other gases such as methane and nitrous oxide, taken together in their global warming effect, to stay below 400ppm (parts per million) in CO<sub>2</sub> terms - or in the jargon, the "equivalent concentration" of CO<sub>2</sub> should remain below that level. The warning was highlighted in the official report of the Exeter conference, published last week. However, an investigation by The Independent has established that the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent concentration, largely unnoticed by the scientific and political communities, has now risen beyond this threshold. This number is not a familiar one even among climate researchers, and is not readily available. For example, when we put the question to a very senior climate scientist, he said: "I would think it's definitely over 400 - probably about 420." So we asked one of the world's leading

experts on the effects of greenhouse gases on climate, Professor Keith Shine, head of the meteorology department at the University of Reading, to calculate it precisely. Using the latest available figures (for 2004), his calculations show the equivalent concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>, taking in the effects of methane and nitrous oxide at 2004 levels, is now 425ppm. This is made up of CO<sub>2</sub> itself, at 379ppm; the global warming effect of the methane in the atmosphere, equivalent to another 40ppm of CO<sub>2</sub>; and the effect of nitrous oxide, equivalent to another 6ppm of CO<sub>2</sub>. The tipping point warned about last week by the Government is already behind us. "The passing of this threshold is of the most enormous significance," said Tom Burke, a former government adviser on the green issues, now visiting professor at Imperial College London. "It means we have actually entered a new era - the era of dangerous climate change. We have passed the point where we can be confident of staying below the 2 degree rise set as the threshold for danger. What this tells us is that we have already reached the point where our children can no longer count on a safe climate." The scientist who chaired the Exeter conference, Dennis Tirpak, head of the climate change unit of the OECD in Paris, was even more direct. He said: "This means we will hit 2 degrees [as a global mean temperature rise]." Professor Burke added: "We have very little time to act now. Governments must stop talking and start spending. We already have the technology to allow us to meet our growing need for energy while keeping a stable climate. We must deploy it now. Doing so will cost less than the Iraq war so we know we can afford it." The 400ppm threshold is based on a paper given at Exeter by Malte Meinhausen of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. Dr Meinhausen reviewed a dozen studies of the probability of exceeding the 2 degrees threshold at different CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent levels. Taken together they show that only by remaining above 400 is there a very high chance of not doing so. Some scientists have been reluctant to talk about the overall global warming effect of all the greenhouse gases taken together, because there is another consideration - the fact that the "aerosol", or band of dust in the atmosphere from industrial pollution, actually reduces the warming. As Professor Shine stresses, there is enormous uncertainty about the degree to which this is happening, so making calculation of the overall warming effect problematic. However, as James Lovelock points out - and Professor Shine and other scientists accept - in the event of an industrial downturn, the aerosol could fall out of the atmosphere in a matter of weeks, and then the effect of all the greenhouse gases taken together would suddenly be fully felt. 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## PUBLICATIONS

### 4.1. Renewable Energy Toolkit: An Operational Guide for Electric Services, (REToolKit)

World Bank Energy and Mining Sector Board is pleased to announce the launch of the Renewable Energy Toolkit: An Operational Guide for Electric Services (REToolKit). About REToolKit - <http://www.worldbank.org/retoolkit/>. The REToolKit provides a broad set of tools to assist Bank staff and our developing country partners in improving the design and implementation of renewable energy (RE) projects. It incorporates best practices and lessons learned from RE projects supported by the World Bank Group and others. It is operationally oriented to address practical implementation needs at each stage of the project cycle. Use of this reference tool is expected to result in lower costs and less time for project preparation, and result in more effective and sustainable RE projects. REToolKit is a web-based knowledge portal that directly responds to the needs assessment conducted with the World Bank task managers. The current version of the REToolKit addresses renewable energy for electric services. This is the first phase of a series planned knowledge products that are intended to broaden its scope to include renewable energy developers, bankers, policymakers, etc., and also address renewable energy for non-electric services, environmental and social assessment frameworks, and monitoring and evaluation in the next phases. We welcome your comments and suggestions for improvement. Please write to Xiaodong Wang, email: [xwang1@worldbank.org](mailto:xwang1@worldbank.org).

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## CONFERENCES

### 5.1. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries

A workshop to discuss methodological and policy issues: Bad Blumau / Austria, 10-12 May 2006. (SBSTA 24 in Bonn is on 15-26 May 2006). Organized and co-funded by: Joanneum Research, Austria; Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), USA; Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); The Global Carbon Project (GCP); The INSEA project (Integrated Sink Assessment Project) with funding

from European Commission, DG Research. Workshop website: [www.joanneum.at/REDD](http://www.joanneum.at/REDD). Workshop announcement: [www.joanneum.at/REDD/First\\_Workshop\\_Announcement.pdf](http://www.joanneum.at/REDD/First_Workshop_Announcement.pdf). Workshop registration form: [www.joanneum.at/REDD/Registration.doc](http://www.joanneum.at/REDD/Registration.doc).

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## 5.2. Linking Schemes: Potential Impacts of Linking the European Union Emissions Trading System with Emerging Carbon Markets in other Countries

Date: 29 – 30 May 2006. Venue: Brussels, Belgium, Fondation Universitaire, Rue d'Egmont 11, B-1000 Bruxelles/ Brussels. We especially invite contributions addressing issues such as: economic and financial consequences of linking, institutional and legal dimensions of linking, ecological and ethical dimensions of linking, interrelation with the international climate regime. Deadline for submissions of abstracts: 3rd March 2006. Selected papers will be compiled in a book publication. The conference is the final conference of the JET-SET project (<http://www.wupperinst.org/Sites/Projects/rg2/3214.html>). Funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research and co-ordinated by the Wuppertal Institute, the project assesses different future scenarios of linked company-based emissions trading schemes.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 6.1. New climate adaptation resource webpage

The Climate Change and Disasters Group, as part of the Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction Team at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK, are pleased to announce the launch of the new website as part of the Linking Climate Adaptation (LCA) Network: [www.linkingclimateadaptation.org](http://www.linkingclimateadaptation.org). The aim of LCA Network is to help communities, policy-makers, practitioners and academics share experiences and knowledge about adaptation to climate change. The new website supports this objective by providing: an introductory guide to climate change adaptation topics; access to web-based climate adaptation publications, each individually summarised; an index of organisations conducting work in this field with links to appropriate online information; a platform for the LCA Network and list-server for sharing information and announcements across the wider adaptation community; a base for adaptation discussions - currently focusing on NAPAs and shortly to cover disasters and climate change, and future adaptation policy. The LCA Team welcome comments, additions and suggestions and would be happy to include additional organizations and publications for inclusion on the website.

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### 6.2. New WISIONS grants: energy in schools

WISIONS is pleased to present its 5th PREP brochure on the topic 'Microfinance and Renewable Energy – Investing in a sustainable future'. The new and previous PREP-brochures can be downloaded at: WISIONS' homepage <http://www.wisions.net/pages/Downloads.htm>. The PREP-brochure on Microfinance and Renewable Energy contains good practice projects from Peru, South Africa, China and Nepal. Short descriptions of these and additional good practice projects are available at <http://www.wisions.net/pages/GoodPractice.htm>. WISIONS also launched its new PREP-call on 'Energy in Schools'. With its upcoming brochure on this topic, WISIONS aims to focus on the significance of and possibilities for integrating energy into schools, and to collect world-wide successful projects that have already been implemented and promote them further. Up to 5 good practice projects will be chosen for publication and will receive a grant of 500 Euros. The application deadline is on March 15th, 2006. The fields of interest include: Special energy education programmes at schools; Energy saving projects at schools; Renewable energy projects at schools (e.g. combined with investment possibilities). How to participate: Send a brief description of your successfully implemented good practice project dealing with Energy in Schools to [info@wisions.net](mailto:info@wisions.net). WISIONS gives you feedback of the project's qualification for application. In case of positive response fill in the application form and send it back to WISIONS. Your project will be published in a PREP brochure and/or on the WISIONS homepage. Has your project been decided for being published in the PREP brochure, you will additionally receive a grant of 500 Euros. All PREP brochures will be available in hardcopy and online. They will be distributed among networks, politicians, scientists and other relevant multipliers. All necessary information is available at: <http://www.wisions.net/pages/PREP.htm>.

