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POLICY

- 1.1. "Alternative" climate change conference challenges Kyoto
11 January 2006, Radio Nederland Wereldomroep

By Claire Cavanagh: Six of the world's most polluting countries are taking part in a two-day conference in Sydney, which aims to tackle climate change through voluntary agreements, rather than through the Kyoto protocol. The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate will discuss ways of promoting cleaner technologies instead of setting targets to reduce emissions. The six countries, United States, Australia, Japan, China, South Korea and India churn out half the world's greenhouse gases by burning fossil fuels like coal and oil. The Australian government says the plans for using new technologies, such as so-called "clean coal", which is washed of impurities and, more controversially, nuclear power, will be able to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by three times the Kyoto targets. But environmentalists have dismissed that claim as "fantasy". Carbon trading: One of the incentives which could have been offered to polluting industries to clean up their act is something called "carbon trading" where companies switching to cleaner technologies can sell leftover emissions allocations. Although this is an idea being championed by the European Union (and snappily entitled the European Emissions Trading Scheme, or EU ETS), the US and Australia are refusing to set up a similar system for the Asia-Pacific region. Kathryn Fitzpatrick of Greenpeace Australia, who's been following the Sydney conference, said: "It's really starting to look like a trade meeting between Australia and the US trying to sell technology to India and China to solve climate change." Along with politicians (although US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is not present because of the continuing ill-health of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon), executives from major mining and energy firms like BHP Billiton, Exxon Mobil and Rio Tinto have also been invited. Kyoto "damaging": The gathering of six countries was arranged last July as a counterbalance to the Kyoto discussions after Australia and the United States refused to ratify the agreement. Washington and Canberra believe that signing up to the 1997 Kyoto deal would damage their economies. James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said this alternative group would: "develop plans that have

real commitments behind them." The United States has its own target of cutting harmful air pollution by nearly 70 percent from power plants in 2010 and 2015, according to Connaughton. This will cost some 50 billion dollars to achieve: the US already spends more than other countries on developing new energy technologies; three billion dollars is invested annually. But Greenpeace campaigner Kathryn Fitzpatrick says countries like the United States should take a lead from Europe, where renewable energies like wind and wave power are still on the agenda: "Most other nations around the world have taken climate change seriously and they're engaging their academics, bureaucrats and civil society in 'how do we make the transition from economies based on fossil fuel?' Australia is much further behind, probably a decade behind in terms of that discussion in government." Australia has just had its hottest year on record and that's proof enough, according to Kathryn Fitzpatrick, that climate change is happening now and dithering about how to deal with it is extremely risky.

1.2. Emissions trading: Commission sets out guidance on national allocations for 2008-2012

9 January 2006, Commission Press Release

The European Commission has published a Communication setting out guidance to help member states when they draw up national plans for allocating carbon dioxide emission allowances for 2008-2012 under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). This second trading period is significant because it coincides with the five-year period in which the EU and member states must meet their targets for limiting or reducing emissions of greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. Member states need to ensure that their emissions strategies, in which allocations under the ETS are an important element, achieve their targets. Full info at: <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/9&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>. Standardised information: Experience with the first round of National Allocation Plans (NAPs), covering the 2005-2007 trading period, has shown that such plans need to be more transparent and easier to implement. Therefore, the Commission's new guidance document proposes a set of standardised tables for presenting important information, such as projected emissions, assumptions regarding fuel prices and the reductions expected from other policies and measures. Guidance on setting caps: Given that the 2008-2012 trading period under the European Trading Scheme coincides with the 'commitment period' for meeting emission targets under the Kyoto Protocol, the guidance document signals the Commission's intention to look very closely at the overall policy mix – including use of the ETS – which member states propose in order to achieve their targets. It also offers a consistent methodology for Member States to set caps for their emissions. Scope and definitions: Finally, the Commission addresses the types of combustion installations that should be covered including the situation of 'small' installations, i.e. those emitting relatively low amounts of CO₂ per year. In addition, an ongoing revision of the rules for monitoring and reporting of emissions will ease the administrative burden for small installations. The Commission envisages further help in its forthcoming review of the ETS. Background: National allocation plans: Under the Emissions Trading Directive which established the ETS, governments are required to draw up national allocation plans (NAPs) for each trading period. NAPs fix the total amount of CO₂ that can be emitted by all the installations in their country covered by the scheme as well as the number of emission allowances allocated to each individual installation. An installation that emits more CO₂ than it has allowances for would need to buy additional allowances in the market, while one that emits less has the possibility to sell its surplus allowances. The ETS, the world's first and biggest international emissions trading scheme, began operating on 1 January 2005. Member states are required to notify their NAPs for 2008-2012 to the Commission by 30 June 2006. The Commission needs to approve the plans and has the power to require changes if it finds a plan incompatible with the agreed criteria. The new Communication responds to a Council request from December 2005 asking the Commission to do its utmost to provide early guidance on preparation of the NAPs. The new Communication builds on guidance provided by the Commission for the first round of NAPs. This was published as COM (2003) 830 final. http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0830en01.pdf. 30 June 2006 is the deadline not only for member states to notify their NAPs for 2008-2012 to the Commission but also for the Commission to report to the Council and Parliament on experience to date with the ETS as a whole and to make proposals as appropriate. Preparations for the review are ongoing. The guidance document can be found at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/pdf/nap_II_guidance_en.pdf. Further information on Emissions Trading and climate change policy is available at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/emission.htm>.

ENERGY AND EMISSIONS

2.1. California Regulators Adopt \$2.9 Billion Solar Power Plan

13 January 2006, Reuters

The California Public Utilities Commission on Thursday approved a \$2.9 billion program to make California one of the world's largest producers of solar power. The "California Solar Initiative," backed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, aims to add 3,000 megawatts of solar energy over 11 years through the installation of 1 million rooftop solar energy systems on homes, businesses, farms, schools and public buildings. That amount of electricity would be equivalent to about six new power stations. The measure was approved on a 3-to-1 vote with one commissioner excusing himself because of a possible conflict of interest. Michael Peevey, president of the commission, said the effort "is designed to create a sustainable solar industry" and to demonstrate California's leadership in moving to reduce dependence on fossil fuels to produce energy. If the program is fully implemented, California would become the world's third-largest solar generator behind Japan and Germany. The state currently has about 100 megawatts of solar electricity. The program will offer rebates for adding solar systems and is expected to give a big boost to manufacturers of solar power generating cells and panels. An industry official said the commission's decision will give investors more certainty about the future of solar electricity. "This is a phenomenal decision. The regulatory environment has been the number one uncertainty for the investment community. This long-term program provides the certainty we have been sorely lacking," said Howard Wenger, executive vice president of privately held PowerLight Corp., a Berkeley, California-based solar systems developer. The money for the program will come from existing funds already earmarked for solar energy and gas and electric utility rates. The average residential utility bill would go up by 65 cents a month, according to Environment California, a solar power supporter. Solar spending could save California utility customers an estimated \$9 billion from a reduced need to build new power plants and purchase electricity supplies during high demand days in the summer, according to a commission report. Schwarzenegger pushed a solar energy bill in the state legislature last year, but it stalled amid policy disputes and amendments. The Republican governor's energy goals call for making renewable energy like solar and wind power 20 percent of California's electricity resources by 2017. Story by Leonard Anderson.

2.2. India says will not agree to emissions caps

12 January 2006, Reuters

By Michelle Nichols: Asia's third-largest economy said on Thursday it will not agree to binding cuts to greenhouse gases under the Kyoto Protocol, but hopes boosting its nuclear industry will save its cities from choking air pollution. Speaking after the first meeting of a climate change group created by six of the world's top polluters, Indian Environment Minister A. Raja told Reuters on Thursday that India would accept help to reduce emissions but would not be forced into cuts. India has signed the Kyoto Protocol, which obliges about 40 developed countries to cut their emissions by an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012. But, along with China, is exempt from the mandatory cuts because it is a developing nation. India is also part of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate that met in Sydney, along with the United States, Australia, South Korea, Japan and China, which hopes to tackle climate change without hindering economic growth. "Neither the Kyoto Protocol nor this partnership can stipulate anything upon the government of India to reduce emissions," Raja told Reuters in an interview from his hotel suite overlooking the Opera House in Sydney. Environment ministers from around the world agreed in Montreal in December to a road map to extend the Kyoto Protocol climate pact beyond 2012 and to launch new, open-ended world talks on ways to fight climate change that will include Kyoto outsiders such as the United States and developing nations. But Raja was adamant India would not agree to binding cuts. "We are developing countries, we have our own agendas for our development activities, so we cannot give any promise, any commitment to reduce further our emissions," he said. The Asia Pacific Partnership ended two days of talks on Thursday pledging a multi-million-dollar fund to develop clean energy, but said polluting fossil fuels would continue to underpin their economies for generations. Nuclear solution: India is mainly dependent on coal for its energy, but has about 15 nuclear power plants and is under pressure to boost energy production to meet a furious pace of industrialisation. "We believe that nuclear power should be used in India to promote our emission reductions," Raja said. In July 2005,

the United States signed a deal to give India access to nuclear technology, including fuel and reactors, that the developing country has been denied for 25 years. The agreement must be approved by the U.S. Congress and commits India to place nuclear operations associated with its civilian energy programme under international inspection. India has refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has developed nuclear weapons in a race with rival Pakistan. A report released by the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics (ABARE) on Thursday forecast India's nuclear power industry to grow to meet 16 percent of the country's energy demand by 2050 from two percent in 2001. While Indian cities are hugely polluted, the country's per-capita carbon emissions are low -- less than a quarter of the world average and many times less than the United States. But ABARE said India's total contribution to global emissions would rise to 9.4 percent by 2050 from 5.4 percent in 2001, while its contribution to global emissions from electricity generation would rise to 10.3 percent by 2050 from 6.2 percent in 2001. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said pursuing nuclear energy as a means of cutting greenhouse gases was a sensitive issue for each of the six partners. "You have to accept that nuclear power plants, civil nuclear power plants, are greenhouse friendly. There are other issues in terms of disposal of waste and re-processing and security issues," Downer told reporters after the six-nation talks.

2.3. New Source of Global Warming Gas Found – Plants

12 January 2006

German scientists have discovered a new source of methane, a greenhouse gas that is second only to carbon dioxide in its impact on climate change. The culprits are plants. They produce about 10 to 30 percent of the annual methane found in the atmosphere, according to researchers at the Max-Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics in Heidelberg, Germany. The scientists measured the amount of methane released by plants in controlled experiments. They found it increases with rising temperatures and exposure to sunlight. "Significant methane emissions from both intact plants and detached leaves were observed ... in the laboratory and in the field," Dr Frank Keppler and his team said in a report in the journal Nature. Methane, which is produced by city rubbish dumps, coal mining, flatulent animals, rice cultivation and peat bogs, is one of the most potent greenhouse gases in terms of its ability to trap heat. Concentrations of the gas in the atmosphere have almost tripled in the last 150 years. About 600 million tonnes worldwide are produced annually. The scientists said their finding is important for understanding the link between global warming and a rise in greenhouse gases. It could also have implications for the Kyoto Protocol, which calls for developed countries to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases by 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. Keppler and his colleagues discovered that living plants emit 10 to 100 times more methane than dead plants. Scientists had previously thought that plants could only emit methane in the absence of oxygen. David Lowe, of the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research in New Zealand, said the findings are startling and controversial. "Keppler and colleagues' finding helps to account for observations from space of incredibly large plumes of methane above tropical forests," he said in a commentary on the research. But the study also poses questions, such as how such a potentially large source of methane could have been overlooked and how plants produced it. "There will be a lively scramble among researchers for the answers to these and other questions," Lowe added.

2.4. Sweden plans on being the first country in the world to be free from oil in 2020

December 2005, Swedish Press

Minister for Sustainable Development Mona Sahlin has declared that Sweden is going to become the first country in the world to break the dependence on fossil energy. Sweden will stop using oil by 2020 and eventually the energy supply of the country will be based on renewable energy only. The goal is to gradually rid the country of gasoline-run cars and oil-heated homes. This is going to be achieved through tax discounts, more efficiency in energy and by large-scale investments in renewable energy and in research. Already next year there will be tax incentives for single family homeowners to switch from oil to renewable energy to heat their homes. Such financial incentives are already available to libraries, aquatic facilities and hospitals that want to switch to more efficient renewable energy. The expansion of distant heating continues to be an important tool in this process. The Swedish government also wants to make environmental cars more affordable. One of the ways it is doing this is by not subjecting fuel that is free of carbon dioxide to the energy tax or 10 the carbon dioxide emission tax. Environmental cars will also not have to pay the congestion tax that will be introduced

in Stockholm in January and many municipalities allow free parking for such cars. Swedish industry and the economy as a whole are already benefiting from a lower dependency on oil in an international comparison. Since 1994 the use of oil in residences and in the service sector has dropped by 15.2 TWH. The consumption of oil in industries has remained at the same level since that year, even though industrial production has increased by 70 percent. A growing number of households make use of the advantages of distant heating as well as of pellets. Minister Sahlin's latest statement on the abolition of oil in 2020 is actually just a confirmation of a goal set a long time ago. Sweden has been a pioneer in the environmental field and has introduced many innovative measures through the years to achieve its goals. Already in 1990 Swedes implemented a "green tax shift". Taxes on energy and on carbon dioxide emissions were raised, while other taxes, such as those on payroll were decreased by an equivalent amount. Sweden also invested heavily in its cities and towns. Municipalities receive grants to conduct long-term climate research and make investments in environment-friendly technology. Not only has this helped cut local pollution, it has also raised the level of public awareness of environmental issues. In 1999 a unanimous national goal was established for all the country's major environmental problems to be solved within one generation, by the year 2020. The Swedish Parliament gave unanimous approval to 15 national targets including a phasing out of all use of hazardous chemicals by 2020; ensuring that all lakes and watercourses are ecologically sustainable, their habitats and ecological and water-conserving function preserved; providing a safe and sustainable supply of drinking water and contributing to viable habitats for flora and fauna; protection of the value of forests for biological production, while biological diversity, cultural heritage and recreational assets are safeguarded, and a healthy living environment to be provided by cities and towns where buildings and amenities must be located and designed with sound environmental principles. There are interim objectives for each target, regional and local objectives to match, and an Environmental Objectives Council to monitor progress towards the goals. Progress is charted through 70 national indicators, which track results and verify whether the country is heading in the right direction.

2.5. Plugging into wind, sun and water

6 January 2006, South China Morning Post

byline: Michael Richardson

China is set to embark this year on a campaign to promote alternative energy sources, using the power of the wind, sun and river water instead of fossil fuels. Its motivations include high oil prices, chronic electricity shortages and air pollution caused by burning coal. Last February, China's parliament passed a renewable-energy law setting tariffs and other incentives to promote non-fossil energy such as water (hydro), wind and solar power. The law takes effect this month. The government says China uses renewable energy to meet 7 per cent of its total needs, and plans to raise that to 15 per cent by 2020. One of the biggest increases is expected in wind energy. A report issued in November by a domestic industry group forecast that the wind-power sector should be able to generate 40GW of electricity a year by 2020. At that rate, it would overtake Germany, Spain, the United States, Denmark and India to become the world's largest producer of wind power. The government is more conservative in its predictions, but still sees great potential for harnessing the wind. "By 2010, we plan to reach 4,000MW, and by 2020 we expect to reach 20,000MW, or 20GW," says Wang Zhongying, director of the Centre for Renewable Energy Development. If anything, he adds, these targets are conservative and may easily be surpassed. Even so, wind power needs to be put in perspective: if the official target of 20GW by 2020 is reached, it will be equivalent to just 1 per cent of China's predicted annual electricity consumption at that time. Most power generation will continue to come from coal, although hydro and nuclear power will be increasingly important. Still, more than 40 wind-power farms are already operating in various parts of China. The biggest is near Huitengxile, in Inner Mongolia. It plans to increase its generating capacity to 400MW by 2008, from 68MW today, making it Asia's largest wind farm. South Korea's Electric Power Corp (Kepco) recently started work on a wind-power plant in Yumen city, Gansu province. It is the first foreign electricity firm to enter China's wind-power market, and many others are likely to follow. Kepco's partner in the project is China Datang Corp. One of the most promising areas for catching the wind is in heavily industrialised Guangdong province. Some local officials say wind power could help cut the air pollution plaguing the province and adjacent Hong Kong, caused partly by plants that burn coal or oil to generate electricity. An expert study commissioned by the Greenpeace environmental group, published in October last year, said Guangdong had the potential to produce 20GW of energy, or 17

per cent of its current demand. About 10,000 turbines, or windmills, would be needed to hit that target. At present, the wind-power industry in China is limited by high costs: the price of power from a 100MW wind project is over twice as high as the equivalent from a coal-fired utility. Around 80 per cent of the equipment is imported, and few Chinese firms make the larger turbines needed for more cost-efficient generation. However, China plans to build its first offshore wind farm in the Bohai Sea, off Hebei province, this year. Shi Pengfei, vice-chairman of the Chinese Wind Energy Association, says he expects the cost of wind-generated power to move closer to that from coal-burning plants when there is around 3GW of wind-power output - a point expected to be reached in the next few years. Michael Richardson is a visiting research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. This is a personal comment.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

3.1. Study Finds Global Warming Is Killing Frogs

12 January 2006, The Wall Street Journal, Page B1

By Gautman Naik: Conservationists have been puzzled for more than a decade by the mysterious disappearance of harlequin frogs from the pristine, high-altitude tropical forests of Costa Rica. Now a group of scientists believe they have pinpointed the likely cause: global warming that promotes a fungus that is fatal to the frogs. The finding, published today in the journal *Nature*, is likely to stoke the debate about whether climate change is affecting the dynamics of disease, and why amphibians are dying out in such massive numbers world-wide. Recent data indicates that, since 1980, as many as 122 amphibian species are likely to have become extinct and one-third of known amphibian species are threatened. In Costa Rica, researchers found that the region's brightly-colored harlequin frogs were succumbing to a disease caused by the chytrid (KIT-rid) fungus, which also has been implicated in a wave of amphibian deaths elsewhere in the world. Using records of sea and air temperatures, the scientists discovered that the frogs were disappearing at a rate in near-lockstep with the changing climate. "About 80% of the disappearances of frogs correspond to unusually warm years" when the fungus thrives, said J. Alan Pounds, the study's lead author and resident scientist at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve in Costa Rica. The fungus grows on amphibians' skin, creating a dermatological condition for the creatures that is often fatal. About two-thirds of the harlequin species, which once thrived in the tropics of Central and South America, vanished in the 1980s and 1990s. But establishing a causal link between large-scale, long-term global warming and the elimination of specific species in a particular region isn't easy. The fungus-related frog deaths in Costa Rica "could be a roll of the dice one time, or it could be several interconnected factors contributing to the problem," said Ben Orlove, a professor of environment science and policy at the University of California, Davis. Habitat destruction, pesticides and other factors have all been blamed for amphibian declines. Still, the demise of amphibians is part of a far-larger pattern. The earth has witnessed five known extinction waves affecting many species. What makes the current one different, scientists have concluded, is that it is likely to have been triggered mainly by human activity. Bird, mammal and amphibian species are disappearing in recent decades at a rate estimated at 100 to 1,000 times as high as the expected, natural extinction rate. In the past 500 years, human activity has forced 844 species to extinction, according to the World Conservation Union, a Switzerland-based agency whose members include some 82 states, 111 government agencies and other groups involved in ecology and conservation. Amphibians are in the deepest trouble. They may be particularly vulnerable because they go through several life-cycle stages, making them prey to more predators and environmental shifts. And while they perform the nifty trick of absorbing oxygen through their skin, that probably makes them more susceptible to toxins and infection. According to the Global Amphibian Assessment, a large, world-wide study that reported its findings in 2004, about 43% of amphibian species are declining, 27% are stable and less than 1% are increasing. The status of the rest isn't known. Almost certainly, factors such as loss of habitat, pesticides and change in land-use patterns contribute to the decline in amphibian species across the globe. "The assumption, then, was that [amphibians] would do just fine in protected areas" such as Costa Rican cloud forests, said James P. Collins, a professor at Arizona State University in Tempe and chairman of the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force. But since Costa Rica's harlequin-frog population is diminishing anyhow, "the climate-change explanation attracts attention," he said. Last fall, scientists and conservationists met in Washington and drew up a global action plan to save the world's frogs, toads and salamanders from oblivion. The estimated cost over five years: more than \$400 million to move their populations from threatened areas, breed them in

captivity or conduct studies. In Costa Rica, Mr. Pounds and his colleagues studied air and sea surface temperatures from 1973 to 2000 and found that rising temperatures enhanced cloud cover over tropical mountains, leading to warmer nights and cooler days. The change appears to have favored the chytrid fungus, which grows and reproduces best at temperatures from 63 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit. One solution for the harlequin frogs might be to move their populations to altitudes where the fungus doesn't thrive as well, Mr. Pounds says. But key questions remain unanswered. "Climate change may be helping the fungus spread, but we don't know where the fungus came from" or whether it can survive without amphibians, Mr. Pounds says. "These are the parts of the story that aren't entirely clear."

CONFERENCES

4.1. 12th PhD workshop on International Climate Policy

On April 28th and 29th, the 12th PhD workshop on International Climate Policy will be held at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. This is an opportunity for PhD students in the field of international climate policy to present ideas, interact with other PhD students, and get informal feedback on their work. Participation is free, travel costs need to be borne by the participants. Until 28th February 2006, you can register for the workshop at <http://www.rug.nl/edrec/PhD-Workshop/index>. Please read the terms of participation carefully and return the registration form to Vlasis Oikonomou (v.oikonomou@rug.nl). The organisation especially welcomes presentations in the following categories: Adaptation to climate change; Post 2012 climate negotiations; Market based climate change policy instruments; Technology and innovation policy but also presentations in other relevant topic areas can be accepted, depending on the number of presenters. If you have any questions, you can always contact me via email (v.oikonomou@rug.nl) or phone +31 645380712.

PUBLICATIONS

5.1. Environment and health

EEA Report No 10/2005, published at: http://reports.eea.eu.int/eea_report_2005_10. Abstract: Public concerns, evidence from research and increasing scientific knowledge are all driving widespread discussions on environment and health problems. The issue of environment and health is characterised by multi-causality with different strengths of association. This means that the links between exposures and their health consequences depend on the environmental pollutants and diseases being considered, but are also influenced by factors such as genetic constitution, age, nutrition and lifestyle, and socioeconomic factors such as poverty and level of education.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

6.1. Invitation for comments – JI project in Hungary

SGS has been contracted for the determination of the "Hungarian programme for rehabilitation of landfills through mitigation of methane gas emissions". The project proposes to build and operate installations for extraction of methane gas at 2 landfills in Hungary: Nagykanizsa and Baja. The project aims to invest into biogas collection systems and biogas recovery systems with generation of electricity at these sites. In accordance with the JI rules and modalities, SGS would like to invite comments from Parties, stakeholders and observers on the project. The PDD for this project is available on the following webpage: <http://www.sgsqualitynetwork.com/tradeassurance/ccp/projects/project.php?id=73> and is open for comments until 08-02-2006.

6.2. Invitation for comments – JI project in Russian Federation

DNV Certification is currently making a determination of the "Renewable heat and electricity generation in the remote villages of Irkutsk oblast" project in the Russian Federation. The project seeks to install three biomass heating plants (total capacity 13.95 MWthermal) and twelve biomass combined heat and power plants (total capacity 7.20 MWeI) during 2006 – 2008 in fifteen towns and

