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Youth call for action

By Nqobile Buthelezi

Concerns about the possible consequences of climate change are so great that even the leaders of tomorrow have been spurred into action. An African youth delegation has put its energy into a proposal for an international climate adaptation policy. Responding to the call for action, approximately 500 young people from 180 countries around the world have converged on Durban this week for a Youth Summit taking place alongside the 17th edition of the Conference of the Parties.

Ranging from 18 to 34 years in age, the youth delegates have a full programme of their own around the theme "Exploring the Role of Youth in the African Continent in Driving Climate Action". Just like their older counterparts, the young adults are speaking of greening hopes and solutions for Africa. They are discussing issues around alternative energy, water, waste, bio-diversity and social environmental issues. They will also engage in community work around Durban.

A key goal of the youth Summit is to produce a Youth Charter on Climate Change at the end of this conference, which will be handed over to COP17 president, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.

"Youth cannot be excluded from climate engagement; they need to be involved," says Dorah Ntoe, Chief Director of Co-ordination and Information Management at the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). Ntoe adds that unlike other youth



Ninja fighters against global warming - Sandy Chambers from the Australian Youth Climate Coalition with Cat Hudson, Helen Markides and Fatima Ibrahim from the UK Youth Climate Coalition show that young people are ready and willing to fight for their right to a clean environment. Pic: Steven Lang

efforts that go unnoticed, the COP17 Youth Charter will be followed up on ensuring that political leaders insist on its implementation.

Youth Climate Change Art Awards

The youth programme held a gala dinner Monday evening, where DEA Deputy Minister, Rejoice Thizwilondi Mabudafhasi emphasised that climate change discussions and decisions need to consider the ideas of the younger generation. The gala dinner also provided a platform for an awards ceremony for the national climate change art competition that saw many young South Africans show how they see the world in relation to climate change.

"Wherever you are and what you are doing in your country,

let's consolidate, let's show how we as African youth, this is what we are thinking about," she said encouraging the youth," Mabudafhasi said, encouraging the youth to continue involvement in environmental awareness.

DEA Deputy Director General, Blessing Manale, who organised the art competition, said the inventiveness went as far as children sending beautifully painted real trees to his office. "The competition was a way for kids to engage with climate change," said Manale.

The awards ended with soulful sign-off from South Africa's songbird, Siphokazi, who also offered a few words of encouragement to the leaders of tomorrow.

The youth programme runs until 2 December 2011.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1 December 2011

13:00

Canadian youth try to outbid polluters, while Sierra Club declares era of king coal dead

11:00

Canadian youth try to outbid polluters, say, "If Big Oil can buy our climate policy, why can't we?"

13:00

Press conference will address the Forest Code and mega-constructions of Brazil

15:00

Intergenerational equity - discussion on how young people can contribute to climate change solutions

African Group calls for equitable share in Green Climate Fund

By Nii-Laryea Sowah

The African Group of nations, the strongest and most unified coalition force in the on-going climate change marathon summit in Durban, has called for greater leadership and commitment from the industrialised countries on their commitment to fast-track the financing of the Green Climate Fund of \$30 billion from 2010-2012 and \$100 billion per year to 2020.

Even though the countries that comprise the African Group are as diverse environmentally as they are politically their common front remains indivisible. Within the Group there are some members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, such as Angola, Nigeria, Libya, Egypt, Gabon and Algeria whose environmental concerns are different from the Small Island Developing States such as Cape Verde, Mauritius and Seychelles who are pushing for all large emitters to take more responsibilities in reaching the target of a 1.5 degree Celsius increase in temperature above pre-industrial levels.

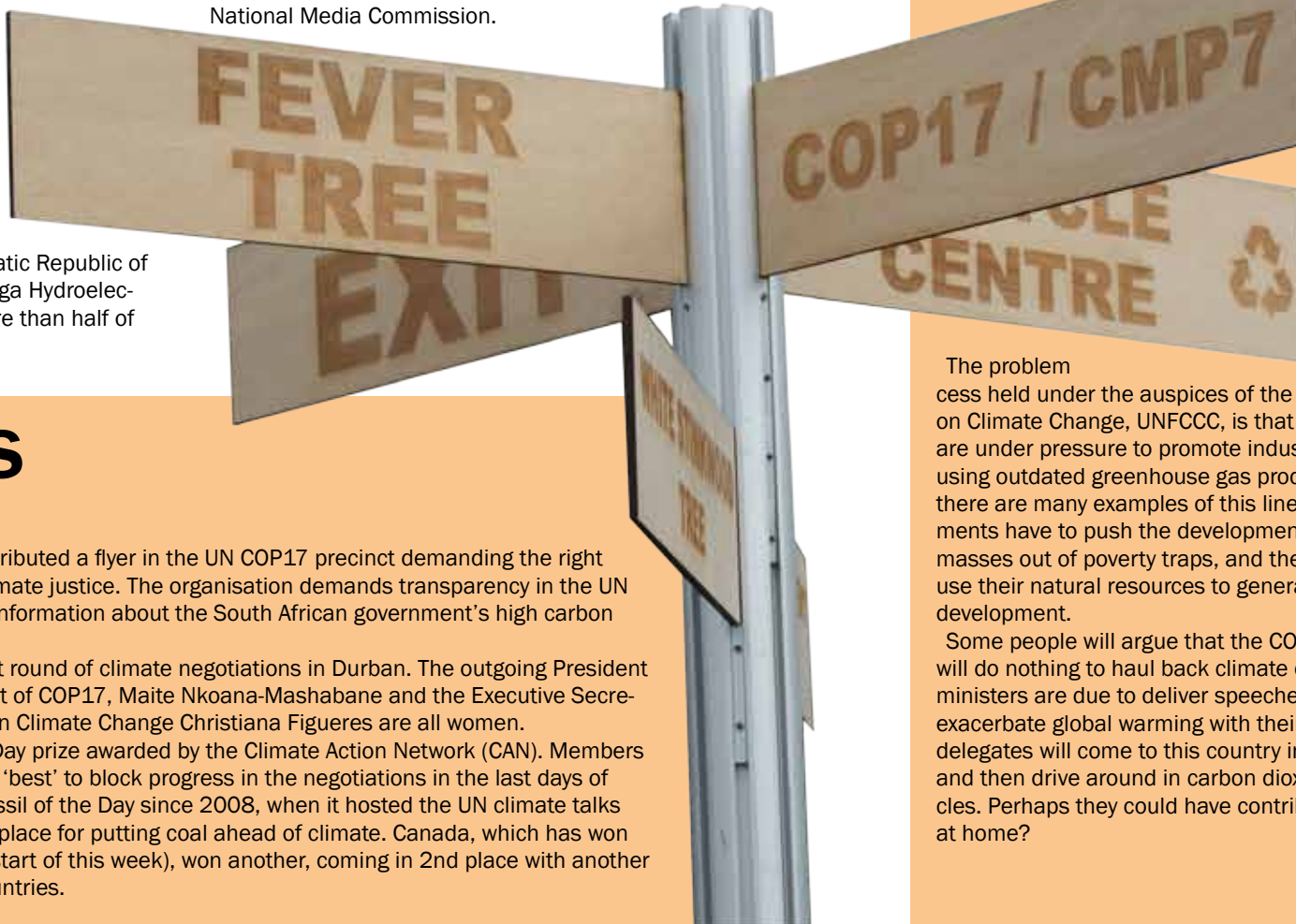
The Least Developed Countries (LDC) including Chad, Burkina-Faso, Niger and Sierra-Leone have a particular interest in finance, technology transfer and adaptation. By and large, however, the African Group has pledged to open a chapter of New Growth Path framework that includes comprehensive green economy interventions with an ambitious focus on renewable energy and the promotion of green industries.

A good example of such a project is an accord signed between the Republic of South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo with respect to the construction of the Grand Inga Hydroelectric Project for a dam that will provide electricity to more than half of Africa's population.

The Africa Group has recognised that African countries are primarily responsible for driving their own sustainable development agenda. They have, therefore, resolved to undertake increased investment in science, technology and innovation in order to ensure that Africa is not left behind in the race for green technologies and to let these priorities guide their national development plans.

To buttress the above optimism the host nation South Africa decided to select the baobab tree, an icon of endurance, conservation, creativity, ingenuity and dialogue, as the symbol for the UN 17th Conference on climate change.

The symbol also serves as a reminder to all Africans that wisdom is like a baobab tree, no one individual can embrace it. This is a true reflection of Africa's position on the negotiations where they hope to achieve a climate regime that is fair, transparent and credible to the benefit of all humankind. – The writer is a member of Ghana's National Media Commission.



Bits 'n pieces

By Steven Lang

South Africa's Right2Know campaign has distributed a flyer in the UN COP17 precinct demanding the right to have access to information relevant to climate justice. The organisation demands transparency in the UN climate change negotiations and access to information about the South African government's high carbon energy plans.

Women are playing a leadership role in the current round of climate negotiations in Durban. The outgoing President of Cop16, Patricia Espinosa; the incoming President of COP17, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Christiana Figueres are all women.

Poland has won the much maligned Fossil of the Day prize awarded by the Climate Action Network (CAN). Members of CAN vote for countries judged to have done their 'best' to block progress in the negotiations in the last days of talks. The citation reads, "Poland has not won a Fossil of the Day since 2008, when it hosted the UN climate talks in Poznań. All that changed today, when it took 1st place for putting coal ahead of climate. Canada, which has won plenty of Fossils since 2008 (and plenty since the start of this week), won another, coming in 2nd place with another insult by its Environment Minister to developing countries.

OPINION

Stop with all the hot air

By Steven Lang

It is hard to imagine a more important topic than the air that we breathe, and this is the main focus of high level discussions here in Durban till next week.

There is near universal acceptance that the climate of our planet is heating up due to the large number of greenhouse gases that humans are pumping into our atmosphere. COP17 or the 17th Conference of the Parties, is all about finding ways to stop global warming. Experts do not agree on the likely consequences of continuing to contaminate our air, but all scenarios they put forward have awful ramifications for the future of humanity.

Every single person on this planet should be concerned about global warming, and we should all do as much as possible to cooperate with one another to reverse, or at least halt, this dangerous trend. and we

We are all in this together have to work together to achieve a solution. The air we breathe here in Durban is the same air impregnated with carbon dioxide that belches from coal fired power stations in China or from steel factories in the United States. Attempts to negotiate a solution to global warming from an adversarial stance are therefore pointless and irresponsible.

The problem with the negotiating process held under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, is that most national governments are under pressure to promote industrialisation even it means using outdated greenhouse gas producing technology. In Africa there are many examples of this line of thinking because governments have to push the development agenda in order to lift the masses out of poverty traps, and the easiest way to do this is to use their natural resources to generate cheap electricity and drive development.

Some people will argue that the COP17 conference in Durban will do nothing to haul back climate change. More than 100 ministers are due to deliver speeches, meaning that they will exacerbate global warming with their own hot air. Thousands of delegates will come to this country in ozone destroying aircraft and then drive around in carbon dioxide producing motor vehicles. Perhaps they could have contributed more simply by staying at home?

Financing climate justice

By Alex Lenferna

“One of the main issues is a clear cut definition and regulation of what counts as new and additional funding. Many countries are simply redirecting existing aid funds to climate change issues.”

“As a tool for the deliverance of climate justice and the wealth transfers associated with it, the GCF could be the greatest global mechanism available.”

The largest ever financial vehicle for the distribution of climate justice is soon to be on the negotiating table at COP 17. International delegates at COP 17 are gearing up to discuss the Green Climate Fund, which requests of developed countries to provide developing countries with “scaled up, predictable, new and additional, and adequate funding” to deal with climate change. Its future might, however, be on shaky grounds.

The Green Climate fund is founded on the recognition that developed countries, because of their responsibility for the majority of past greenhouse gas emissions, have an obligation to developing countries who will be affected by the negative impacts those past emissions will have on them – developing countries, although consisting of 80% of world population, are responsible for only 1/5 of historic global emissions. In this light, under the UNFCCC, developed countries have committed to contribute at least \$100 billion per year as soon as possible and no later than 2020. This finance in turn will be used by developing countries to enhance action on mitigation, adaptation, capacity building and technology development, in order to better respond to climate change.

Currently finance to developing countries comes in the form of fast start finance, which is supposed to “approaching USD 30 billion for the period 2010 – 2012” under the Cancun Agreements from COP 16. Of this only \$16 Billion has been budgeted for the fast start period, by the countries who pledged their commitment. Despite the fact that the fast start period’s commitments aren’t on schedule to be met, COP 17 is looking to the future, beyond 2012 when the fast start pledges end and the build-up to the \$100 Billion dollars per annum by 2020 begins. The next step in this process, it is hoped, is the financing of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which still remains very much an empty shell.

\$100 billion when seen alone might seem a rather large figure, but when compared to the trillions of dollars spent bailing out banks in 2008, then \$100 billion to bailout 80% of the world’s population from a dismal climate future seems a bit more reasonable. Also, when compared to 2010’s spending of \$400 billion to subsidise fossil fuels, and \$1.6 trillion on military spending, a paltry \$100 billion doesn’t seem that much, especially considering that amount may not even be enough to address the needs of developing countries.

Various different sources of funding for the GCF have been proposed. One such source is a tax on various global financial transactions – the aptly named Robin Hood Tax – which has the potential added benefit of reducing speculative financial transactions and thus helping stabilize global markets. Another source is a tax on aviation and shipping emissions, which was recently proposed by the European Union. The global response to EU’s proposed regional tax has been less than encouraging, but much of the disagreement has to do with the limited and regional nature of EU’s proposed tax, rather than with the tax itself. Oxfam, WWF and the International Chamber of Shipping, on the other hand, have proposed a global shipping tax in order to ensure that there isn’t “carbon leakages” from sectors not regulated under a less than global taxation mechanism. The Climate Action Network consisting of over 700 NGOs is demanding that the GCF is funded by such public sources of finances, as well as other possible sources of funding, such as special drawing rights, but, discussions on sources may be shot down before they get out of the blocks.

A 40-nation committee, co-chaired by South Africa’s NPC Chairperson Trevor Manuel, created a report detailing the potential working of the GCF. Consensus on the report was blocked, however, by two of global climate negotiations most infamous nations, the US and Saudi Arabia. They did, however, agree to let the report pass, but noted their disagreement with sections of it. However, with discussion on the Green

Climate Fund and long-term financing set to reopen today, that disagreement may come back to haunt the global community. If Saudi Arabia and America decide to reopen discussion on the report, this might stall decisions on climate finance for quite some time to come, and delay meaningful action on it. Furthermore, with rumors circulating that the Bolivian Alliance for the America’s and a few other countries might want to reopen the document as well, the threat of a can of worms opening up that will take forever to close, is quite real.

There are still a number of issues that need to be ironed out with regards to financing. One of the main issues is a clear cut definition and regulation of what counts as new and additional funding. Many countries are simply redirecting existing aid funds to climate change issues. More nefariously, the US and a few other countries are accused of using the threat of withdrawal of funding aid to hold recipient countries hostage to their political will during the climate negotiations – a political will which might very well jeopardize their future.

As a South African, with one of the highest current per capita carbon emissions, I cannot help but wonder, if the GCF is successful, when will we and other “progressive” developing countries like China, Brazil and India (with our ever-increasing emissions) stop being recipients of the GCF, and start being contributors to it? Nonetheless, as a tool for the deliverance of climate justice and the wealth transfers associated with it, the GCF could be the greatest global mechanism available. While, one can understand why Republicans skeptical of the climate change see the GCF to be the tool of global socialism, for those of us who understand that the impacts of climate change are real and who recognize the developed world as the cause of many of those impacts, justice needs a vehicle, let’s hope Saudi Arabia and the US don’t create an intractable oil slick on its road through COP 17.



Kyoto 2 doubtful

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

The Kyoto Protocol is set to crash land as parties stick to their entrenched positions despite clear indications climate change effects could weigh down progress in developing countries, in particular Africa.

Kyoto, which is based on a sharp distinction between developed and poor countries and requires action only from industrialised nations end next year, but the least developed countries are pressing for renewal of the protocol for another two years because it is the only legally binding document at their disposal.

In an interview with reportingDNA, vice chairperson of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action, Margaret Mukahanana, confirmed that the agreement was in danger. She said prospects of a pact are “far-fetched” in the light of the intransigent positions taken by major players.

“These negotiations are at a slow pace, and are likely to be highly charged and political. Some economies are powered by oil. How then do you balance the equation? There is also no guarantee that the EU could contribute to the Green Climate Fund with the Eurozone crisis. Already indications are the eurozone itself could collapse,” Mukahanana said.

“The world is dangerously close to passing the threshold for runaway climate change, but it’s very difficult to get a deal here...”. European Union commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard said if the EU were to take up a second Kyoto commitment period with a few other developed economies, it might cover at most 16% of global emissions, where the first Kyoto period covered around one third of global emissions.

“How can this be labeled a success for the

climate? To have a chance of achieving this, what we actually need is a global framework for action by all major economies in developed and developing economies alike. A framework for action that truly reflects the world of the 21st century in which all pledges have the same legal weight,” she queried.

Hedegaard said the EU is open to a second Kyoto commitment period on condition the environmental integrity of Kyoto is improved and Durban agrees on a clear road map and timeline for finalising this framework within the next few years and applying it no later than 2020. “I hope that all countries will show the political will and leadership needed to initiate such a process in Durban. In Copenhagen, leaders pledged to stay below the two degrees. Now the time has come to show they mean it,” she added, in a statement.

The United States has however, refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol – and indications are that it may never do so – while Japan, Russia and Canada have made it clear they have no intention of signing up for a second commitment period.

Climate crisis brings business and activists closer

By Mike Loewe

It would be a travesty to allow the only international “rule book” on reducing global carbon emissions – the Kyoto Protocol – “to die on African soil”, the head of the Climate Action Network (Can) International, David Turnbull, told a full press briefing in Durban on Tuesday.

Support for the save Kyoto campaign at the UN’s COP17 Conference came from three significant members of the 700-member Can International network – Greenpeace International, Oxfam SA and Christian Aid.

In contrast to an earlier (half empty) press briefing from the northern hemisphere-based Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE), which called for the world’s nations to move along and commit to a “global low-carbon future”, the CAN briefing saw journalists’ hands shoot up and questions flew – a good indication that CAN, and particularly Greenpeace still command a good deal of international media attention.

While the business council’s approach was heavily reliant on a faith in “market mechanisms”, and one speaker on the panel, Jim Wolf of Jupiter Oxygen Corp, even suggested that countries (including Africa) should offer his firm “incentives” when buying his technology, there were a few key commonalities to the approaches taken during both briefings.

Turnbull, and especially Tove Ryding of Greenpeace International, went for the political jugular, accusing Canada of being a divisive “joke” going as far as saying that if Canada could not show belief in the COP17 process, “Canada should leave the room”.

Middle ground between these two sectors – business in the developed world and the international climate change movement – was evident.

BSCE President Lisa Jacobson demanded that nations implement decisions taken at Cancun and set up the Climate Technology Center & Network, provide the interna-



Tove Ryding of Greenpeace International

tional business community with “market signals” which would drive investment into clean energy technologies, set up the Green Climate Fund “and recognize the vital role of the private sector finance in meeting long-term objectives”.

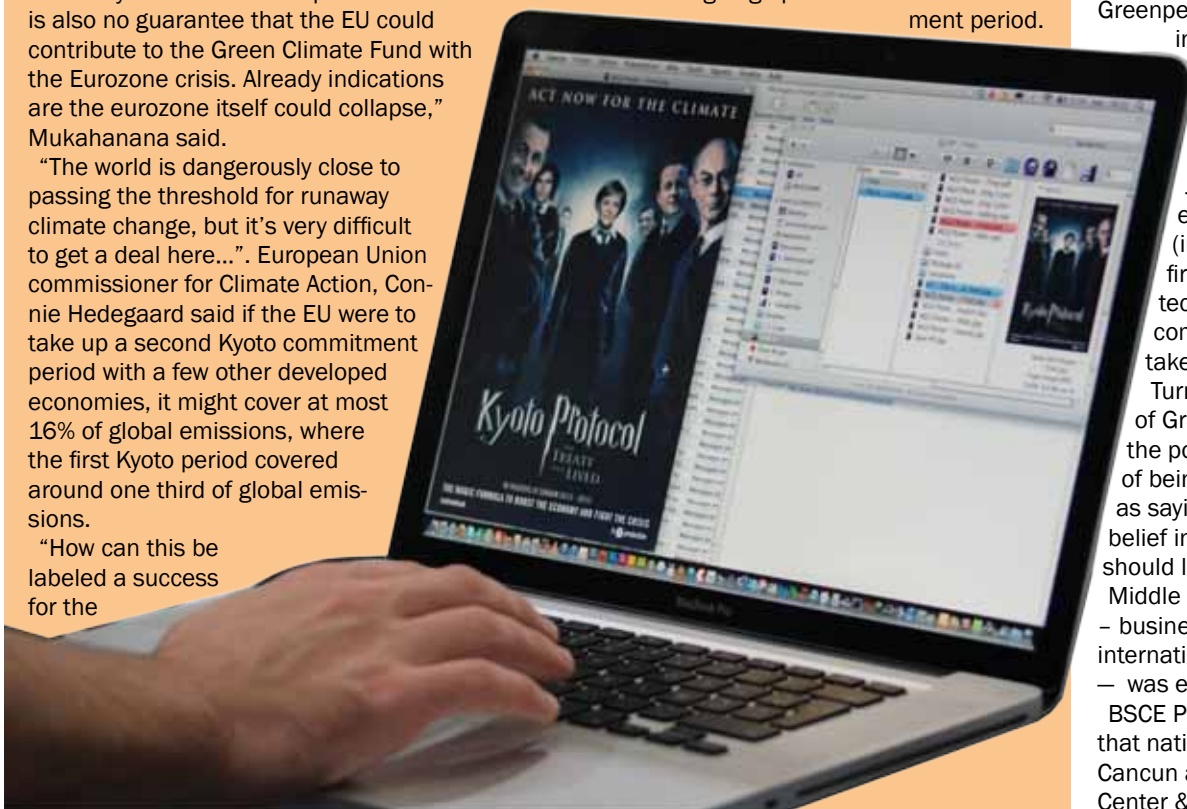
Speaking on the CAN International platform, Oxfam South Africa’s Rashmi Mistry also said it was “crucial” for COP17 countries to fill the Global Climate Fund immediately with the promised \$100bn.

Christian Aid’s Mohamed Adow said “Durban must enter into an ambitious second commitment to the Kyoto Protocol”. In the same way that Africa was known as the birthplace or cradle of humanity, COP17 should be the starting point for the building of a modern-day “Noah’s ark” which would comprise all the best elements of design and adaptation to assist humanity in surviving in a changed climate.

Similarly, at the business council press briefing, Steve Sawyer of the Global Wind Energy Council, said business the world over was no longer fighting to against the call to reduce global emissions, and was taking a survivalist approach. Business was now very “positive” and “wants to see” emission reductions.

CAN International’s Turnbull said it was “too early” to say Kyoto would “fail” in Durban, but if that did happen then the world and its scientists had failed to “get governments to listen”.

However, he said: “We don’t expect Durban to fail. Durban can succeed if the parties let it.”



Ensuring food security in Africa

By Rebecca Quaiocoe

The world needs to increase food production considerably to feed a population that currently stands at seven billion and that is set to reach nine billion by 2050. According to experts in the field, global food production needs to increase by about 80 percent by 2050 to be able to feed the world.

The challenge however, is that climate change is making it impossible for a lot more food to be grown as greenhouse gases already in our atmosphere are expected to drive climate change for the next two or three decades causing more high temperatures, droughts and floods – a situation which will create a whole host of economic and ecological consequences.

In the last two to three years, there have been significant price spikes in food prices following

decades of declines in real prices. Those spikes have had devastating consequences, exacerbating poverty for about hundred million people between 2007 and 2008 and a further 40 million between 2010 and 2011.

Findings solutions

To help find solutions to an almost perpetual cycle of food insecurity, especially in Africa, the Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change made known before the opening of the on-going UNFCCC-COP17 in Durban, its recommendations for achieving food security while addressing the effects of climate change.

The panel included scientists from 13 countries who are experts in agriculture, climate, economics, trade, nutrition and ecology. It spent the past year analysing a wide range of climate studies – a year that included climbing food prices, humanitarian disasters and political unrest – all of which, the panel says, threaten food security. It says climate change will only make things worse.

According to Professor John Beddington, Commission Chair and Britain's Chief Scientific Advisor, "The current situation is just unacceptable as a large portion of people is food insecure."

What to do

The Commission in its report, released seven recommendations which include integrating food security and sustainable agriculture into both global and national policies; raising the level of agricultural investment; sustainably increasing agricultural production while reducing the environmental impact; and assisting vulnerable populations to adapt to climate change and food insecurity.

Experts argue that Africa has what it takes to produce food for its population of about one billion people and even export food to other regions of the world. The continent is blessed with good weather and geographical conditions and has the capacity to produce food to feed its inhabitants, all things being equal.

African economies

However, the situation varies from country to country as a World Bank publication indicates that low-income and lower-income countries are experiencing an average five percentage points' higher food price inflation, when compared to better-off countries.

Agriculture remains the strength of most African economies and according to scientists, if it is given priority attention in Africa, the region has the capacity to withstand the vagaries of rising global food prices.



FAO's Raymond Ntshangase and Denise Martinez Breto are concerned about the effects of climate change. Pic: Steven Lang

Why they came to Durban



Usha Nair – member of oldest women's group in India (All India Women's conference – it is 83 years old) - I came to make presentations on income generation through solar appliances.

Antonin Acquarone – from France – I am making the link between the Global Campaign for Climate Action and Climate Action Network (CAN)



Joshua Schewitz – from Israel – Representing the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael – sharing our knowledge and experience as part of the global effort. It is our goal of Tikun Olam – healing the world.

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