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Climate finance falls short

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

Climate finance is falling short of the promised \$30 billion 'fast start finance', the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) report has said.

According to an ACPC report released at COP 17 yesterday, the experience with the "fast-start" pledges and discussions of the \$100 billion promise suggests the adequacy and predictability of climate finance may remain low if the future climate finance architecture reflects current practice.

ACPC Senior Energy and Climate Specialist Yacob Mulugetta said: "African countries, as well as many other developing countries, are vulnerable to climate change and are among those least likely to have the resources required to withstand its adverse impacts – yet there has not been any indication that the magnitude of climate finance will meet the scale of what is needed."

Spokesperson of the African Group, Seyni Nafo, added: "Long-term climate finance needs to be accountable and transparent. In Africa, we need to know how much is new, where it is coming from, and whether it will be directed to the adaptation projects that are desperately necessary."

The report which was launched yesterday showed that: of the \$29, 2 billion pledged since 2009, only between \$2,8 and seven billion dollars is 'new'. The total amount of funds that

are both 'new and additional' would be less than two billion dollars.

The report found there are many lessons to be learnt from the current 'fast start finance' system, which was supposed to deliver \$30 billion in 'new and additional' funding to developing countries, and was agreed to at the Copenhagen climate conference.

"While 97% of the promised \$30 billion has been pledged, only 45% has been committed, 33% has been allocated and only about seven percent has been "disbursed"; That finance is being directed toward 'mitigation' projects over 'adaptation' projects instead of being 'balanced' between the two with around 62% allocated for mitigation, 25% for adaptation and 13% for REDD+ (forestry, which should count as mitigation); The current finance available for Africa and other developing countries under the fast-start finance is not commensurate with the scale required to implement the activities agreed to in the UN climate convention; There are few agreed benchmarks for climate finance so there is limited transparency and accountability as to how the money is provided," said the report.

ACPC is the technical arm of the Climate for Development in Africa programme, based at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, while the African Group includes the 54 African countries represented in the UN climate change negotiations.



Members of Oxfam provided an interesting visual representation for arriving delegates at the International Convention Centre on Friday morning. One young man was dressed in a lounge shirt and tie to represent big business, a second formally attired actor represented a head of state and a woman in a business suit took on the role of a politician. The three of them extravagantly abused water for their own selfish needs while five African women farmers struggled to find enough water to nourish their crops. Kelly Dent, spokesperson for Oxfam International said the purpose of the dramatised scene was to raise awareness of the plight of rural women whose representations for access to water are often ignored by big business and government. Photo: Steven Lang

UPCOMING EVENTS

3 December 2011

08:30

Peaceful mass march to the UN's COP17 conference: The march is estimated to draw support of between 8000 and 10 000 participants.

14:00

Global Day of Action Concert: Civil society for COP 17 hosts the concert for awareness of the importance of sustaining environment and make South Africa a better place to live.

14:00

UNFCCC Executive Secretary launches high-level policy dialogue on Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism at COP17.

Glimmer of optimism at climate talks

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

Climate talks have progressed slowly and little ground has been covered, but manoeuvres by government negotiators in private discussions suggest there is still cause for hope, an aid agency said yesterday.

Christian Aid United Nations climate change expert Mohamed Adow expressed optimism over the talks suggesting a deal could be struck to save the Kyoto protocol under threat from major players such as the US, China, Russia and Canada among others.

“In the open meetings there’s no progress. No-one is saying anything new. But in bilateral meetings we understand they are trying to find the middle ground between them, looking at the options and at possible trade-offs,” Adow said.

“This is encouraging – and it is too early to say these talks are not working. We have seen some good dialogue, albeit in closed rooms, and we want Governments to build on in the days that remain. We want to leave Durban with a deal which is a strong response to the climate chaos which is hurtling towards us – and which is already having devastating effects on poor people.”

He added: “Governments have just over a week in which to agree how to respond to the latest climate science, which shows that without deep emissions cuts now, dangerous global warming will occur. It will cause human suffering on a terrifying scale.”

Christian Aid wants an agreement to extend the Kyoto Protocol and to implement rapid and massive cuts in developed countries’ emissions and real progress towards getting the Green Climate Fund up and running by 2013.

“Rather than taking time to argue about the legal form of a potential new international climate deal which might come into force in six or eight years’ time, Governments should focus on what is most urgent,” Adow said.

“Right now we need ambition – on emis-

sions cuts to prevent dangerous warming and on finance to help poor countries cope with the massive human and financial costs of climate change, which they are already suffering. Delaying everything until 2020 will have catastrophic consequences, many of which will fall on the backs of poor people in Africa.”

The agency said the most important task at hand was to keep Kyoto alive by extending it before its first commitment expired next year and increase countries emissions cuts to sufficient levels.

“This must be done in Durban. Kyoto matters because it is the world’s only law on countries’ emissions of greenhouse gases. It’s the only system we have which says emissions cuts must be based on climate science and equity – not what governments find politically convenient. At the same time, poor countries need the Green Climate Fund to become more than an empty shell. The Durban talks must get the Fund working next year and identify sources of long-term, predictable finance which can start flowing from 2013. The impacts of climate change are not waiting for governments to get their act together,” Adow said.

This comes as South Africa promised to build the climate resilience of the country, and to manage the transition to a climate-resilient, equitable and internationally competitive lower-carbon economy and society in a manner that simultaneously addresses its overriding national priorities for sustainable development, job creation, improved public and environmental health, poverty eradication, and social equality.

Environment minister Edna Molewa said even though South Africa is a relatively significant contributor to global climate change with significant gas emission levels from its energy-intensive, fossil-fuel powered economy it has committed itself to a number of Near-term Priority Flagship Programmes to be implemented as an integral part of the policy.



A group identifying itself as the Robin Hood Tax held an innovative demonstration outside gate B on Friday when they invited delegates to take part in some target practice. Their aim (pun intended) is to impose a one percent financial transaction tax on all trades in stocks, bonds, foreign exchange and derivatives. Funds collected from the taxes would be used to help poor countries adapt to a crisis they didn’t create.

Pic: Steven Lang

Green Climate Fund must go ahead

By Effa Tambenkongho

President of the 17th Congress of the Parties, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, closed the plenary session of the meetings on November 30 with a commitment to continuing transparent and informal discussions on the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

She made these comments in response to concerns raised by the parties after the transitional committee, tasked with making recommendations for the GCF, presented its draft report to the session.

“We can all strive to look forward, cooperate and assist me while working on the basis of what has been presented, to ensure the GCF becomes operational”

Remarks from the countries present argued that while the draft governing instrument was imperfect, the urgency of global climate change demanded that it be finalised in Durban and implemented as early as next year. The US representative said the fund had the potential to become a major funding institution, but noted that the transitional committee had operated under tough time constraints and had left work to be done before the fund could begin disbursing money.

The representative from Saudi Arabia argued that it should not be expected to contribute to the fund, but rather, as a fossil fuel-dependent state, it should rather receive money from the fund.

The Alliance of Small Island States said it was not satisfied

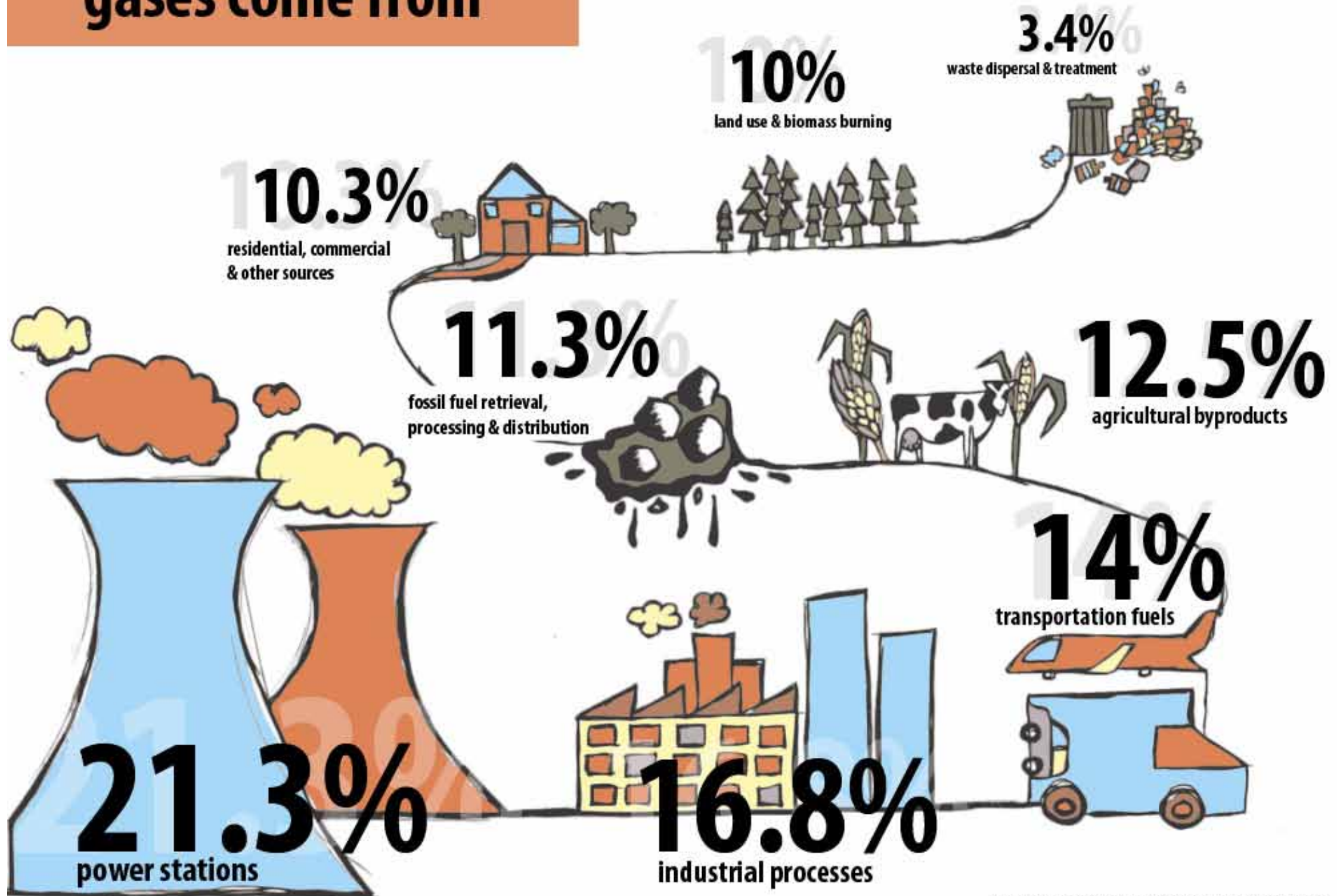
with some of the principles in the draft document; nevertheless, it should be adopted without delay. The representative expressed concern that the fund did not have a solid enough relationship with the Conference of the Parties, thus blurring accountability. It was also unhappy that there were no dedicated funding windows for the least-developed countries.

The proposal of the 40-person delegation of the transitional committee on the draft governing instrument for the Green Climate Fund stated that the GCF should play a key role in channelling new, additional, adequate and predictable financial resources to developing countries. The Fund should promote sustainable development while allowing these nations to limit, or even reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the consequences of climate Change, taking into consideration the role of agriculture as the foundation for the economies of most African countries.

When the GCF transitional committee was set up, the vision was to get rich nations to funnel money into climate mitigation and adaptation projects in developing countries. It will be governed and supervised by a Board that will have full responsibility for funding decisions.

In this light, Switzerland has offered to host the first meeting next year while the World Bank will serve as interim trustee for the fund, subject to review three years after the GCF is established.

Where greenhouse gases come from



On the spoor of the HOGs

By Mike Loewe

Public interest in the COP17 process is growing as fast as a climate change disaster.

The need for information coming out of the world political leaders and their envoys bunkered in the basement of the Durban International Convention Centre has never been greater.

One fascinating solution is tracking.

In Africa we have an obsession with distinguishing between the different paw prints or “spoor” left in the sand by, for example, a jackal, hyena or mongoose (all are pretty similar and fall into the “dog-like” category).

But in Durban a group of seasoned, albeit young international activists have dedicated themselves to tracking wheeler-dealer politicians, who tend to leave a rather more expensive heel mark in the carpet (and the question of whether they have any real bite is yet to be answered).

The official term here (terms and acronyms billow out of the UN’s climate change process like smoke from a veld fire) for a political head who is not quite a HOG (head of government), is a “negotiator”.

Enter Joshua Wiese and his Negotiator Tracker group.

Joshua is a warm, generous and very sharp activist. At an age of 30, he has already racked up an impressive tally of the wonderfully named “COP” climate change conferences, and can quote book and verse from this or that numbered COP.

Over time he’s been bringing teams of young trackers who spend their days keeping an envoy or ambassador in their sights. Recording every utterance, thought or movement of their assigned negotiator is a tracker’s obsession.

“Sometimes we get other people here to serve as our tracker,” he says. This could be a party delegate or a journalist. Sometimes they become quite friendly with the negotiator and this helps.”

Joshua’s crew are billeted in a cubical next to the Climate Action Network among the 400 NGOs and special interest groups who have set up home in the vast ICC exhibition hangars on the edge of the centre.

A few metres down the avenue of organisations is the Bloggers’ Loft and the Digital Media Lounge where scores of writers and social media commentators are in the zone, laptop lids up and keyboards clacking away, digesting, egesting, spouting, thinking for the whole world to read, hear or see.

It’s an incredible network, but one he says is entirely commensurate with the huge world demand for information from this event; the world is in a state of anxiety over climate change and now wants to know what the leaders and the rest here have to say.

Information from the trackers is collated daily, on the hour and is distributed to all who want it. Negotiator Trackers feed a lot of information into the Climate Network

Action Network (CAN), a group of over 700 organisations across almost 200 countries. Significantly, organisations like Greenpeace, Oxfam and Earthlife are members.

CAN holds a daily media briefing in the centre and it is well attended. Today the media will be interested in tomorrow’s Greenpeace Global Action Day march to the ICC.

Already, there has been criticism of delays in the eThekweni Municipality granting permission for the march and one Cape Town magazine says it’s march poster “President Zuma calls for a million climate jobs” was censored by city officials at the printer.

A chat with Joshua can go anywhere; he is a fabulous communicator,

prepared to explain a basic acronym and just as happy to talk about the big issues.

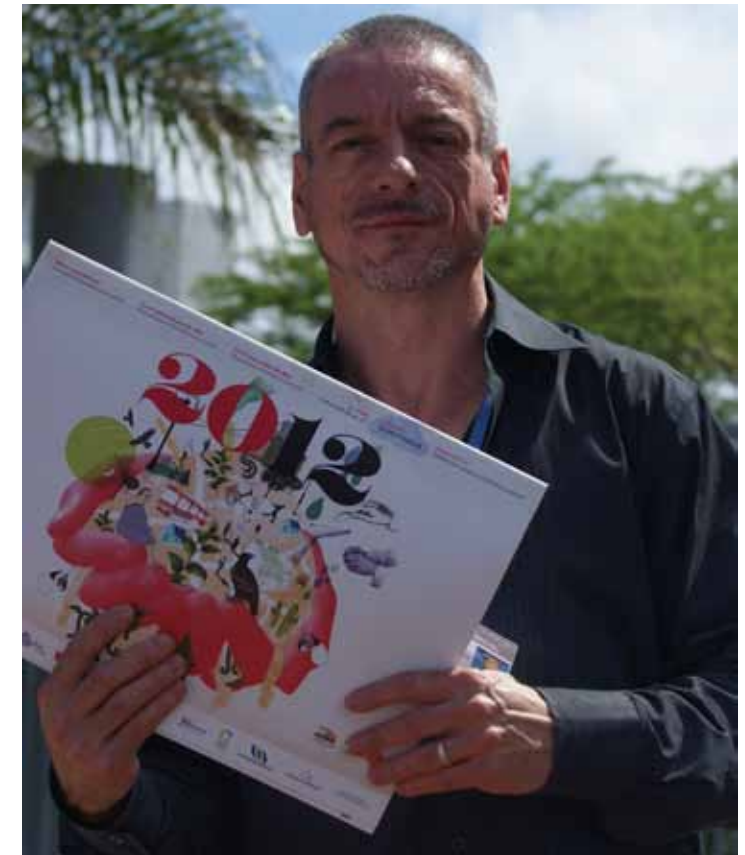
We chat about the amount of emissions in the atmosphere and what “level” is required to stabilise our climate.

“We thought at Copenhagen (COP15, 2009) we would be able to come under the “Oh S**t!” moment,” he says holding his hand parallel to the ground and driving his other under it, like an object moving under a bridge, “but then we went here” (his emissions hand rising like a Boeing on take-off).”

But we can never give up on trying to get that trajectory down he says, lowering his jet hand though it is still high above the “Oh S**t!” hand.



Joshua Wiese, head tracker, is on the perfumed trail of the HOGs (heads of government). Pic: Mike Loewe



Yves Lessard greeted delegates by giving them beautifully illustrated calendars featuring artists from around the world as part of a campaign to raise awareness about environmental issues. Pic: Steven Lang

Two surprises for fossil award

The Fossil Awards for Friday produced two huge surprises and one rather predictable presence on the podium. For the first time in the history of the award, Brazil took first place for its ridiculous statements in defence of its new forest code, while the other new comer to the awards, New Zealand took second place. Canada under the guiding hand of its environmental minister, Peter Kent, who seems to be enjoying his country’s notoriety, takes a third place.

The Fossil Award citation for Brazil read, “Brazil the same country that hosted the Earth Summit in 1992 that gave rise to the Climate Convention and later to the Kyoto Protocol. The same country that will host the Rio+20 meeting next year. To what end we ask? If the new Brazilian forest law, now going through congress, is approved as is, it will be a disaster for the Brazilian forests, for the climate, for the indigenous people in the Amazon and elsewhere, for the preservation of biodiversity and priceless environmental services”.

The first place award for Brazil was clearly a shock even to the organisers, the Climate Action Network (CAN), but the third place for Canada surprised no one as that North American country wins its third award in four days - and that is only because there was no award on Thursday.

South Africa asks Canada to reconsider

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

South Africa has pleaded with Canada to reconsider its position not to enter into the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol at the on-going UN Climate talks in Durban.

The call follows Canadian Environment Minister Peter Kent's sentiments expressed early this week saying Kyoto was "the past". He would not confirm media reports that Ottawa was planning to formally withdraw from the treaty, one of the main topics of global climate talks here.

On the other hand, South Africa said it believes the climate change talks must be inclusive to assist the process of ensuring a balanced outcome to emerge from the current talks. "The effects of climate change are real and already here with us. South Africa would like to call on Canada and other developed countries to ensure that they heed the call made by the developing countries particularly in Africa and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) who feel the brunt of climate change effects," the government said.

"The Kyoto Protocol is an important first step towards a truly multilateral rules based legally binding global emission reduction regime that will stabilise greenhouse gas emission (GHG), and provides the essential base for international agreement on climate change involving the participation of all countries in accordance with their common, but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities."

The Kyoto Protocol is an international legally binding instrument in terms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The major feature of the Kyoto Protocol is that it sets up multilaterally agreed rules governing binding targets for 37 industrialised countries for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These amount to an average of a five percent reduction in GHG emissions below 1990 levels over the five-year period 2008-2012.

Meghan McCarthy from Canada representing the Canadian Youth Delegation to COP17 said the youth want to apologise for irresponsible Canadian policies such as Environment Minister Kent's declaration to defend the tar sands at the COP17 climate negotiations and Canada's recent rejection of the Kyoto Protocol. Pic:

Steven Lang



Greenpeace protesters scaled a crane and hunger banners at Eskom's Kusile power plant in Delmas, South Africa. Supplied

Activists question SA's commitment

By Mike Loewe

Greenpeace protesters scaled a crane and hunger banners at Eskom's Kusile power plant in Delmas, South Africa.

Activists have reacted with alarm to the South Africa's intention to burn 32 billion tons of coal by 3011 and have questioned SA's glib commitment to carbon capture, saying the process is untested, expensive and dangerous.

South Africa is Africa's biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, accounting for 80 percent of the continent's output, says the SA government. South Africa is ranked by climate activists as the 11th biggest emitter in the world, higher than a number of European countries.

"That is a human and climate time bomb," says Climate Action Network (CAN) member, Heffa Schucking of German-based NGO Urgewald.

The notion of pumping carbon into underground sinks, such as old mines, is highly risky.

Schucking says: "It's crazy to think of spending billions in carbon capture when the technology is unproven and uses (dirty) energy just to pump it into the ground. One small leak and people will suffocate. Carbon dioxide is odourless."

In Germany, a row broke out over who would be responsible and liable for the sites, and who would be prepared to insure the ventures.

South African official sources are also reportedly touting undersea storage options off Mossel Bay, home to the apartheid regime's notorious Moss gas drilling and refinery operation, which is still in operation. Other sites mentioned are in Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Western Cape.

Bank Tracks' Yann Louvel says South Africa's commitment to renewable energy contributing 9% of the total energy mix over the next 20 years was very unambitious. Germany's renewable energy consumption is already at 20% of their national total.

They also questioned South Africa's commitment to nuclear power plant construction. Bank Track compared all announced or projected costs of building nuclear plants around the world and actual costs on completion: "The final costs are always 300% more."

They criticised State power company Eskom's gargantuan new coal plant projects, Medupi and Kusile, saying they alone would eat up the carbon emission savings of the million solar heaters the SA government intends installing.

Bank Tracks says a reading of the portfolios of banks around the world reveals that since 2005 Eskom has been funded mainly by three banks; Crédit Agricole (489 million Euros), JP Morgan Chase (424), Deutsche Bank (408). There are a number of other banks in a so-called second tier.

Africa sees opportunities beyond climate change

By Suleiman Mustapha

“While Africa produces the least amount of carbon dioxide compared to any other region in the world, it is considered the most vulnerable to droughts, floods and other extreme weather events that scientists fear will increase as the Earth gets hotter. Already, changing weather and rainfall patterns are having a major impact on the continent with record greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, more frequent and intense extreme weather events.”

“New hydro projects are under consideration in Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Cameroon. Kenya is expanding geothermal power production. And through the Lighting Africa initiative, the aim is to bring light to 250 million Sub-Saharan Africans by 2030 through high-tech energy-saving lamps.”

As the world gathers in the South African City of Durban for the biggest annual summit to review and take stock of the collective decisions on fighting climate change, the global gaze is turning to Africa and how the continent is coming to terms with a changing climate.

While Africa produces the least amount of carbon dioxide compared to any other region in the world, it is considered the most vulnerable to droughts, floods and other extreme weather events that scientists fear will increase as the Earth gets hotter.

Already, changing weather and rainfall patterns are having a major impact on the continent with record greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

The devastating drought that hit the Horn of Africa earlier this year affected 11 countries and 12 million people. In stark contrast, the Niger River rose to its highest levels in 80 years last year, making one million people homeless in West of Africa.

Meanwhile, Lake Chad, which is the source of water for 30 million people in Chad, Niger and Nigeria, is drying up as rainfall patterns change across the continent leading to migration and conflict.

In Ghana, it is feared that acute water shortages linked to climate change could see the country become one of the world's water-stressed nations by 2025, according to a study by researchers who say urgent adaptation measures are needed to help Ghanaians cope with dwindling water supplies.

Water stress – which occurs when demand for water exceeds supply during a certain period or when poor quality restricts its use – not only affects individuals' access to water for drinking, cooking and washing but also impacts farming, power generation and economic growth.

Ghana is forecast to experience a general reduction in annual river flows of 15-20 percent by 2020, rising to 30-40 percent by 2050, according to the study by Ghana's water research agency, the Water Research Institute, part of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

“Considering the effects of climate change

that we are currently experiencing in Ghana, water scarcity is most likely to worsen in many parts of the country in the future,” said the institute's lead research scientist Barnabas Amisigo.

According to Obiageli Ezekwesili, World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region, climate change is adding to an already tough set of development challenges for the continent.

Around 560 million Africans do not have access to modern energy, for example. And weak infrastructure water, roads, electricity and communication technologies cuts economic growth by two percentage points per year.

Cost of adapting

With the cost of adapting to climate change added to the mix, Sub-Saharan Africa alone will need to find another \$14-17 billion a year between now and 2050, according to a recent World Bank study.

But as the momentum heightens for action to fight climate change, Ms Ezekwesili remains optimistic about the continent's future. If Africa's economies continue to grow at the present rate, the continent's GDP could double in about 12 years.

“This means Africa has a unique opportunity as it goes about building its roads, cities and ports for the future,” adding that, “Our growing cities can be low-carbon and our agriculture can become climate-smart and more productive”, Ms Ezekwesili said.

The World Bank Group has about US\$7 billion in planned investments to help Africa deal with climate change.

These efforts range from helping countries come to terms with climate risks and vulnerabilities to designing new climate-friendly policies to making the shift to renewable forms of energy.

“Our goal in Africa is to build a longer-term vision for growth. We have several programs that are supporting countries to design policies that show a different pathway to growth,” says Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, World Bank Program Manager, Africa Region.

The World Bank-supported Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) is one such program working in Niger and Zambia.

“The process of designing the program has been important. In Niger, they were building a development program around food security. We helped push the envelope and now the plan incorporates climate change considerations, explain Pswarayi-Riddihough.

PPCR is part of the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs), a dedicated resource for climate action with the World Bank as one of the partners. Similar plans are being developed for 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Africa showing the way

As it grows, Africa needs climate-resilient infrastructure that can withstand 1-in-50 year flooding rather than the 1-in-100 year type.

Progress is being made in Ethiopia, more stringent road building norms are being adopted that will avoid the larger cost of future repair.

In Madagascar, preparing and adopting emergency preparedness plans are helping build resilience to more frequent cyclones.

In the Niger River basin, home to over a 100 million people in nine countries, riparian countries have come together to chart a development plan for water storage, irrigation, hydropower, and fisheries. The groups of countries have asked the World Bank to help the Niger Basin Authority assess risks from climate change to the broader plan and reflect these in future climate-resilient investments.

Some of the tools that are being used to better manage water resources include a new breed of sensors, mobile phones, satellite remote sensing systems, and new open data platforms.

Mobile phones, for example, are being used to send text messages to farmers about their quotas of irrigation water for the day.

The World Bank has also been reaching out to a new generation of creative thinkers in Africa through events like the Hackathon organized in Zambia last month to help find technological solutions to climate risks and water scarcity.

Africa is also showing that it is possible to make the shift to renewables while providing much-needed access to energy.

New hydro projects are under consideration in Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Cameroon. Kenya is expanding geothermal power production. And through the Lighting Africa initiative, the aim is to bring light to 250 million Sub-Saharan Africans by 2030 through high-tech energy-saving lamps.

Agriculture which employs up to 70 per cent of people in some countries is a big priority for Africa. Now, 12 West African and Sahelian countries are implementing an action plan for climate smart agriculture which increases productivity while sequestering carbon.

The Humbo Community-Based Natural Regeneration Project is regenerating almost 3,000 hectares of native natural forest and the community is earning revenues from the sale of carbon credits to the BioCarbon Fund. In Kenya, farmers will soon be getting carbon credits for introducing better farming practices.

But as Ezekwesili says, “climate change is not purely about threats, it's actually the opportunities that it presents to Africa to completely transform its development path”.

COP17 images

*Clockwise:
Environmental organisation, Greenpeace displays posters urging US President Barack Obama not to listen to polluters*



Visiting exhibitions and discussing the affairs of the world can sure work up an appetite. The food stalls at the expo centre have been doing great business this week.



Nokuthula Gcabashe and Thembeke Khumalo promote the CEBA initiative aimed at uplifting local communities by creating 'green' jobs for the poor and unemployed, restoring the ecosystems that are important to the welfare of these communities and reducing our collective vulnerability to climate change.



Alex Kofer tells visitors all about worm farms that are used to dispose of vegetable waste matter in an environmentally friendly manner.



Pics: Steven Lang



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