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'Your children are not used to suffering'

By Steven Lang

Chair of the African Group at COP17, Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, recounted to journalists a somewhat chilling, but nevertheless instructive conversation that he had with one of the European negotiators. He said that now, African children are suffering as a result of global warming brought about primarily by the industrialisation of Europe and other western nations. If global warming continues unchecked, he continued, the European children will also suffer – but the difference is “that your children are not used to suffering”.

This subtle tale of caution was used to graphically illustrate why it is in the best interests of the developed countries to do everything in their power to combat global warming.

Answering questions about why the African Group was so adamant about extending the life of the Kyoto Protocol, Mpanu Mpanu said that it was vital for the agreement to continue with both its adaptation and mitigation elements. He said that if the developed nations only gave large amounts of money to the poorer nations that amount - he used the figure of \$100 billion - might not be enough to help African countries to adapt to new circumstances if the industrialised countries do not reduce their output of dangerous greenhouse gases.

He also pointed out that mitigation efforts were not always helpful and were not yet of great interest to African farmers because “We don't want mitigation on African farmers”. Mpanu Mpanu said leaders were concerned that their farmers might be given incentives to plant mitigation crops even while their people go hungry.

He noted that during the day's plenary sessions, several countries promised to put large amounts

of money into a Green Climate Fund – progress that is to be welcomed, but he expressed concern that these contributions might be diverted from other aid programs. He said that as a representative of Democratic Republic of Congo, he would not be happy to receive funds to help with adaptation in his country if he were to discover that these funds were originally intended for an Aids campaign in Kenya or an education project in Ghana.

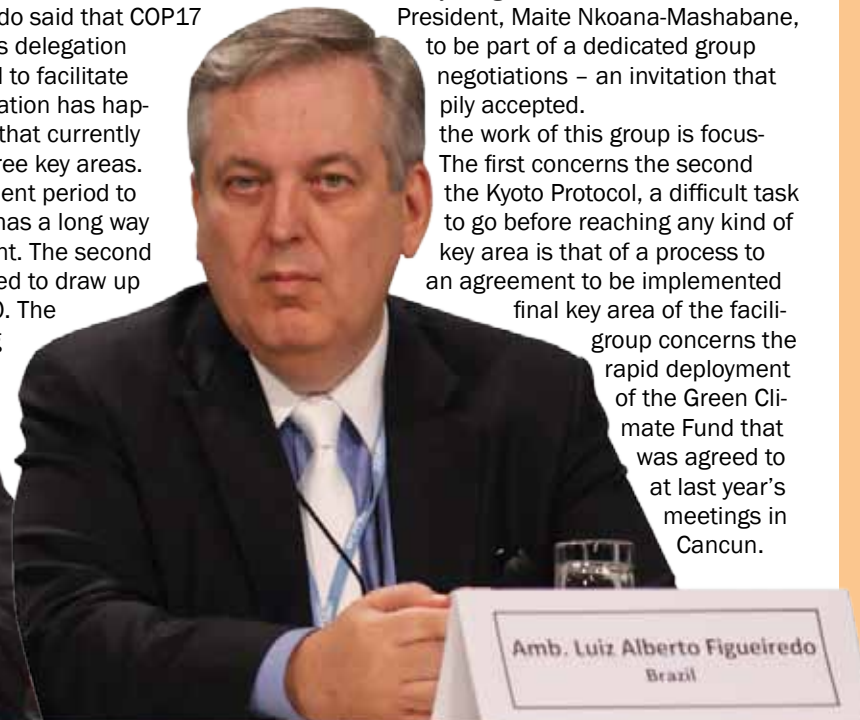
Brazilian delegation is optimistic

Immediately after the African Group press conference, the Brazilian delegation had an opportunity to speak to the media. Delegation leader, Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo, said he was optimistic about progress achieved so far but acknowledged that “we are entering the decisive phase of negotiations”.

He said that “Today is Wednesday, so things are a little bit shaky. Tomorrow will probably be worse, but then in the end, everything will work out”.

Figueiredo said that COP17 invited his delegation to convene to facilitate his delegation has happened. President, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, to be part of a dedicated group negotiations – an invitation that was happily accepted.

He said that currently the work of this group is focusing on three key areas. The first concerns the second the Kyoto Protocol, a difficult task to go before reaching any kind of key area is that of a process to an agreement to be implemented in 2020. The final key area of the facilitation group concerns the rapid deployment of the Green Climate Fund that was agreed to at last year's meetings in Cancun.



UPCOMING EVENTS

8 December 2011

10:00

Chemistry & the low carbon economy: an international perspective

From 10:00

Ministerial addresses to plenary session: Lesotho, Burundi, Mauritania, Uganda, Benin & Chad

Africa Day panel discussion:

High level panel:

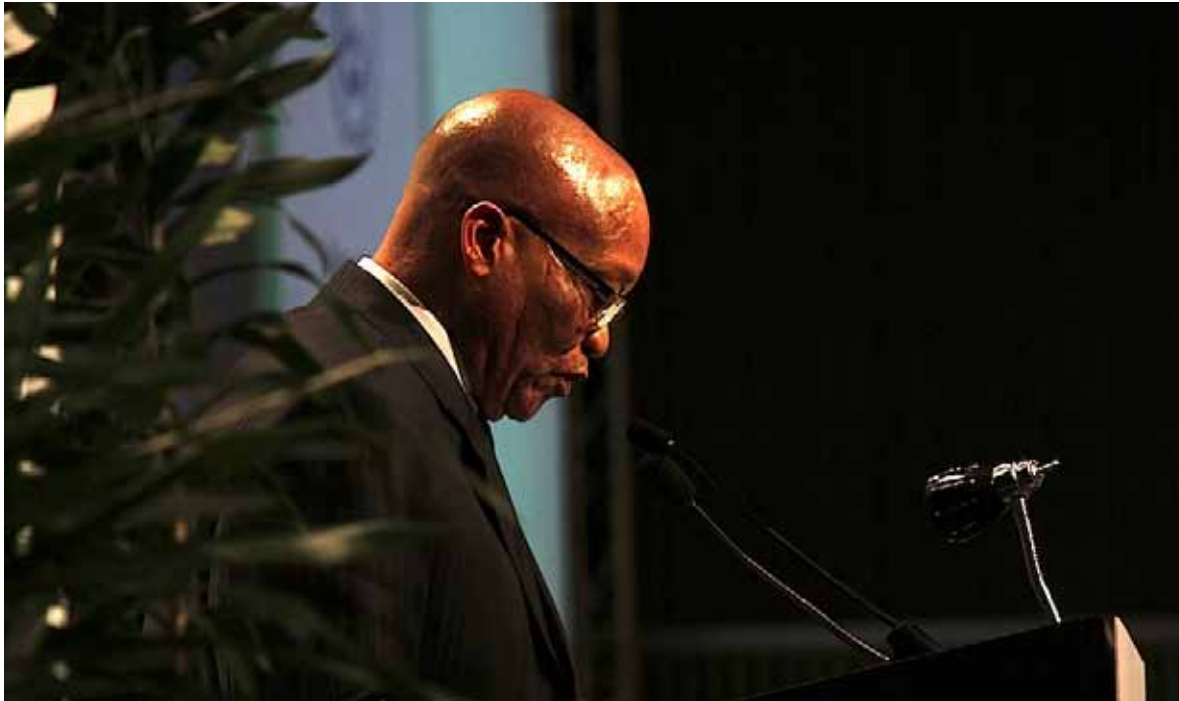
10:30: Theme 1:

Development First.

12:30: Theme 2: Climate Finance & Economics

From 13:00

Sustainable energy access programme



South African president Jacob Zuma addressing the opening ceremony of the COP17 high level segment on Tuesday afternoon. Pic: Noel Kokou

Multilateralism is key - Zuma

By Thobile Hans

President Jacob Zuma urged negotiating parties to secure an enhanced multilateral, rules-based response to climate change that is equally binding on all. Speaking at the opening of high level segment in Durban on Tuesday, Zuma said, “The objective would be for the multilateral rules based system, binding on all Parties, to be implemented by no later than 2020.”

“The time has come for the world to move away from analysis, study and research, to identifying practical adaptation actions that can be implemented on the ground. There can be no dispute that research and analysis are important aspects of adaptation actions.” He asserted that we now need more practical action. “In this regard, the Adaptation Committee must be constituted. Its functions must be decided upon so that it can begin its work.”

Zuma pointed out that humanity has never been so profoundly aware of climate change, its impact and the necessity to radically reduce the emissions to save the next generation. The developing world and Africa in particular are hardest-hit by climate change.

“As we have always emphasized, a global multilateral response grounded in the principle of common, but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, will be the only effective and sustainable answer to this pressing global challenge.

“We have also always sustained that without multi-

lateral rules-based system there can be no guarantee that countries will honour their commitments”.

Zuma referred to adaptation and financing as two critical issues expected to be discussed this week at the conference. Finance remains one of the key issues, not only for a comprehensive climate deal, but also to pace the goal of community on a path to build resilient societies.

“The need for the dedicated financing to be made available for adaptation programmes and assistance will continue to be of critical importance in all future climate change negotiations,” he said.

With reference to future actions, it remains of critical importance that the level of ambition should correspond with the demands of science. Any agreement on a future response should also take into account what science prescribes, as well as the outcome of the 5th report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The South African president said another challenge to overcome is the lack of confidence from developing countries in the delivery and transparency of the pledged Fast Start Finance. “The developed world must continue to take the lead. On the other hand, the developing countries must show willingness to take their fair share of responsibilities, keeping in mind the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, to deal with challenge of climate change,” Zuma said.

OPINION

Durban’s Dirty Number: 2020

By Alex Lenferna

Monday was an interesting day for climate discussions, however much of it was happening behind closed doors out of the reach of the negotiator tracker team, NGO’s and media. Nonetheless, news of China’s potential willingness to take on legally binding agreements, and its possibility to be a game changer within climate change negotiations set the corridors of the ICC abuzz. Furthermore, amidst discussion in the long-term cooperation action plenary about the inadequacies of financial mechanisms, the implementation of elements of the Bali Action Plan, and a proposal to include the rights of nature by Ecuador, much discussion was had about the review of the 2 degree emissions reduction target currently agreed upon. The discussions around the review, which is set to take place in 2015, involved numerous constituencies calling for a shifting of climate change targets to 1.5 degrees as opposed to 2, in order to better ensure a safe climate future. However, even though AOSIS has made it explicit that this review is a matter of survival for them, such a call may increasingly be wishful thinking in the face of one worrying and politically significant number, 2020.

In my previous article, I described how the African group was making a noble push to save the Kyoto Protocol, but it is important to keep things in perspective, the 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP2C) is supposed to be only a bridging step towards a broader more ambitious agreement. What is needed afterwards is a more ambitious, hopefully legally binding global treaty that will help to close the gigatonne gap. The African Group, among other political blocs, is asking for this new treaty to come into effect by 2015, some parties, however, including the US, are calling for the agreement to be pushed back to 2020. This push if successful could have disastrous effects and make the review for a 1.5 degree target seem like a game of fantasy policy making completely detached from the realities of climate change.

Until the new post-Kyoto agreement comes into play the parties would be locked into the agreed emission reduction targets from the Cancun Agreements (if they sign onto the

Kyoto Protocol). These targets, if maintained until 2020, while certainly better than nothing, would lock us onto a path towards 3.5 degrees Celsius, according to a recent analysis by Climate Action Tracker. In order to deviate from that pathway towards a 2 degree (never mind 1.5 degree) target, the effort that would have to be taken from 2020, as opposed to if we implemented the new treaty on 2015, would be monumental, and, quite frankly, politically impossible. That is because the longer the delay the faster we need to reduce emissions and the harder it becomes. According to the Climate Action Tracker report if we take on an ambitious new treaty at 2015 to take us 2 degrees, we will need to reduce our emissions by 2.1% per year. If we wait until 2020, however, the rate of reduction in order to arrive at the same target, if we only move at 2020 will be 4% per annum. Given that the highest predicted reduction rates at 3.5% per annum, according to the UNEP Emissions Gap report, that would put us in the realm of the extremely difficult to impossible and the costs of doing so would be immense.

It’s blindingly clear then that we cannot afford to push a new agreement to 2020, however, countries like the US continue to push for that date. If there push is successful, perhaps it is time we start asking ourselves how meaningful a review which asks for revision of targets from 2 degrees to 1.5 degrees really is. The emissions reduction curve will be far too steep to allow us to get to 2 degrees, so why even begin to discuss 1.5, unless simply to show how far off the mark we really are? Delaying until 2020 will condemn people to worldwide suffering for generations to come; can we really allow Durban to be remembered for setting the wheels in motion that allow that to happen?

Alex Lenferna is the lead tracker of the South African Government during COP 17 under adoptanegotiator.org, as well as chairperson of the South East African Climate Consortium Student Forum (www.ru.ac.za/rugreen). Follow Alex as he tracks South Africa’s progress within COP 17 on Twitter (@a_lenferna), Facebook/Alex Lenferna or (www.adoptanegotiator.org).

That's because you don't eat your alphabet soup

But mom, I don't understand climate change



KEY:

LULUCF: Land use, land-use change & forestry
 RINGOs: Research & independent non-government organisations
 G77: The Group of 77 established in 1964 by 77 developing countries
 TAP: Technology Action Plan
 REDD+: Reducing emissions from deforestation & forest degradation
 QELROs: Quantified emission limitation reduction objectives
 KP: Kyoto Protocol

Canadian youths ejected

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

Members of the Canadian Youth Delegation were ejected from COP17 today as Canadian Environment Minister Peter Kent delivered his opening address at the United Nations climate negotiations. The six youths, who received an ovation from the crowd watching Kent's address for poking fun at the minister, were ejected from Durban International Convention Center's plenary hall. Their accreditation was also revoked upon their expulsion.

Just as Kent began his speech, four young women and two men stood up and turned away from the Minister revealing the message "Turn your back on Canada" prominently displayed on their shirts.

One of the young men who participated in the

action, James Hutt said: "Our so-called Environment Minister entered these talks by going on record that he would be defending the tar sands. I have yet to hear him say that he's here to defend my future."

Another youth Tasha Peters said: "This extraction-happy government hasn't limited their reckless behaviour at the climate talks here in Durban. Canada has been called out for lobbying to lower EU fuel quality regulations to allow the expansion of world's largest and most destructive mega-project – the Alberta tar sands."

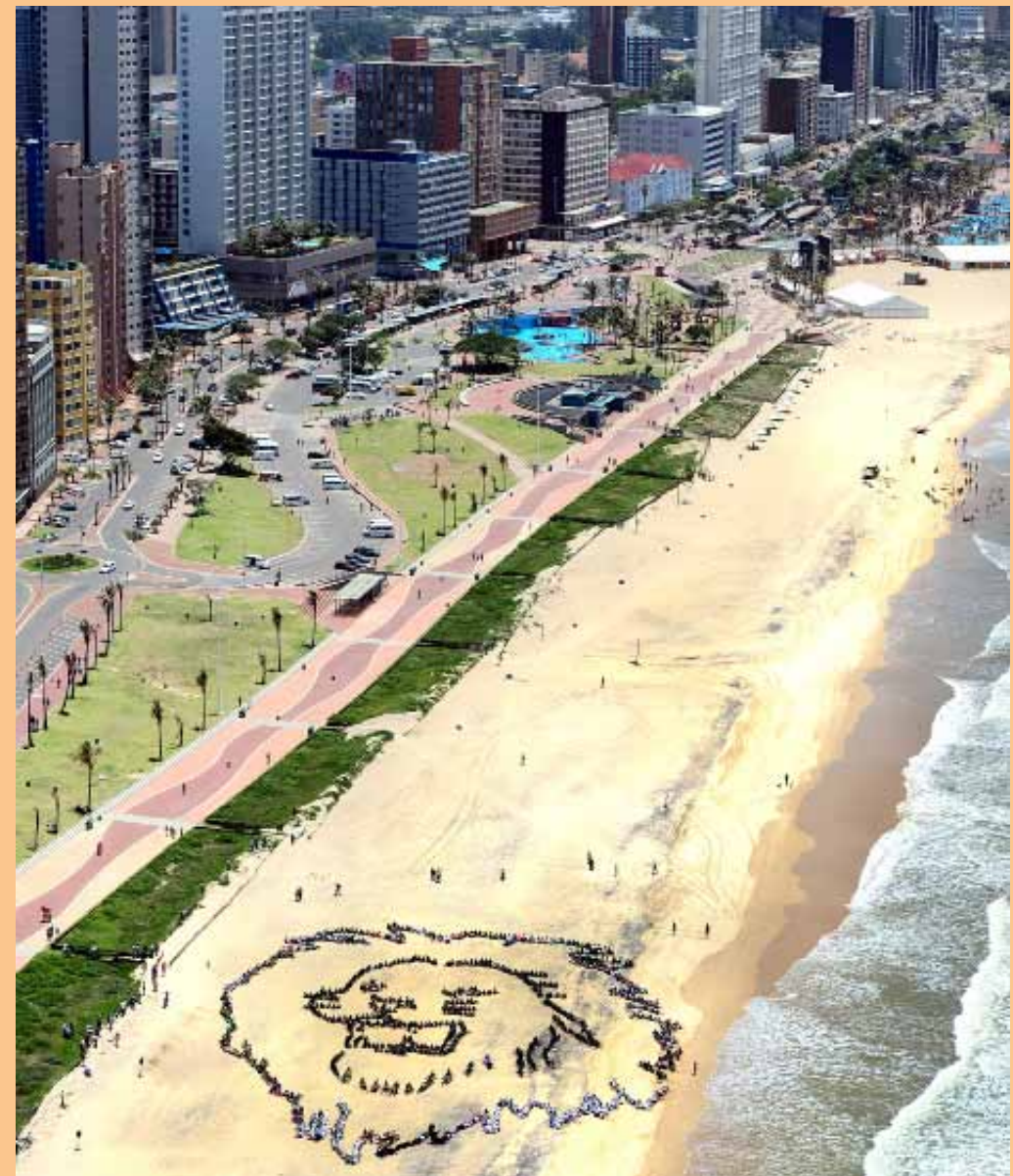
As the negotiations have progressed in Durban, Canada has won 12 'Fossil of the Day' awards due to their action in Durban. Over the past week and a half young delegates have challenged Canada's irresponsible negotiation strategies, indicative of the close relationship between Canada's climate policy and dirty fossil fuels.

"By stalling international progress, the actions of this government put the future of our country and our generation in danger; we won't take that sitting down," said Hutt. "As long as Canada is at the negotiation table, promoting industry over human rights, we will never see the climate agreement the world needs. It's time to leave Canada behind."

Young woman turns her back on Canada.

Pic: Rebecca Quicoe

Canadian youths staging their protest. On the screen behind the youth is Kent delivering his address. Pic: Rebecca Quicoe



Members of the global TckTckTck campaign join 2 000 students to form the world's largest human lion and call for urgent action on climate change at UN talks in Durban. Pic: Shayne Robinson, Greenpeace, SpectralQ

Aerial art for climate action at COP17

By Steven Lang

Members of the global TckTckTck campaign joined 2 000 Durban students in creating the world's largest human lion on South Beach. Their goal was to urge leaders at COP17 to have the courage to create a breakthrough agreement that will ensure a safe future for young Africans and people all over the world.

The stars of the event were the more than 2 000 students from Durban schools (Addington Primary, Hartley Primary, Wembley Primary, Vumukhule Primary, Embonini Primary, Tholisu Primary, Sawela Primary). TckTckTck Board Chairman and Greenpeace chief Kumi Naidoo attended and made a short speech, while international aerial artist John Quigley photographed the lion from a helicopter above Addington Beach.

SA Transport Minister saddles up for a greener future

By Mike Loewe

Cycling was cheap, safe, and did not pollute, South African Transport Minister Sibusiso Ndebele said and then got onto his COP17-branded bike and rode off with a hint of a wobble.

He met Durban's eThekweni mayor James Nxumalo and a group of cyclists halfway along the Durban Golden Mile beachfront at lunchtime yesterday.

Diplomats and VIPs joined the mayoral group at Snake Park and they made an interesting peleton, with three or four police officers, in cycling terms, doing all the hard work at the front.

A police officer brought up the rear in her electric three-wheeler.

Then one poor official straggler came veering into sight. Journalists said they'd seen him take three or falls.

The Transport Minister said he wanted to promote cycling in schools because it was healthy, efficient and climate friendly.

The happy crowd of diplomats riding 17 of South Africa's Shova Kalula – each with a COP number strapped to the front – insisted the Minister get the COP17 numbered-bike.

Ndebele clipped his helmet on his head and took a downhill cycling route onto the Golden Mile, followed a good few minutes later by the inexperienced official, who looked determined to follow the boss no matter what – even if that meant going over the handlebars.



Africa confronts Europe over 'new mandate' calls

By Wisdom Mdzungairi

African civil society leaders from across the continent have petitioned climate negotiators and warned that focusing on launching a new mandate at the Durban climate talks risks backtracking on promises to the poor and the planet.

In a letter to the COP 17 negotiators, the civil society groups with support from global movements, called on developed countries to urgently scale up the ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. They also reminded negotiators that current emission reduction pledges may lead to the world warming to 5 °C.

For Africa, this means 7 or 8 °C of warming and unimaginable human suffering.

Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)'s Michele Maynard said: "Following what some delegates say, you would think that the purpose of these negotiations was a 'new roadmap' – that's just not true. Of central and agreed importance is the need to negotiate deep emission cuts as a part of a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Coming up with new 'mandates' and 'roadmaps' is a distraction from that very necessary action. It's also a breach of faith - in 2007 all countries agreed to do this.

"A climate agreement that does what is necessary to protect Africa is like cooking a good recipe. It needs just enough emission cuts and a dollop of finance and technology for responding to climate impacts. We've got the recipe from the Bali Action Plan, we've got all the ingredients, even started cutting up some of the vegetables, but now some

people want to cook something else. That's a recipe for doing-nothing and delay."

Maynard added: "This letter is a clarion call to negotiators – you either see the science, and recognise its urgency; or you don't. You either hear what the world's poorest people are saying and care; or you don't. Any outcome which locks in the current proposed emission cuts or puts off talking about how to bring those cuts into line with the science is utterly unacceptable."

The letter was signed by movements representing hundreds of civil society organisations across Africa and the world.

The groups wrote in their petition: "Agreeing to a new mandate that replaces the Kyoto Protocol would mean action is effectively delayed for five to 10 years. A new treaty will take several years to negotiate with several more years needed for ratification. Further, there is no assurance that countries that have repudiated the existing legal architecture, like the United States, will agree to or ratify a new agreement, nor that such agreement will not be a weak and ineffective 'pledge and review' system.

"While many developed countries seek to end the Kyoto Protocol, they simultaneously attempt to retain and expand their favored elements of the Kyoto Protocol, like the CDM, in a new agreement and shift their responsibilities onto developing countries. Without legally binding emission reductions under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries must not be allowed to have access to the carbon markets."

Some Least Developed Countries have disappeared from the map

By Effa Tambenkongho

The Minister of Forestry and the Environment of the Gambia, Jato Sillah has said that some Least Developed Countries have disappeared from the world map as they are now below sea level because climate change has caused sea levels to rise. He was speaking at the Durban climate change conference on the behalf of the 48 countries which are considered as Least Developed Countries, (LDCs).

Sillah said the LDCs are facing an escalating crisis as large numbers of people are forced to migrate in search of arable farm lands due to the severe degradation of their own lands. He said developed countries often ignore the collective needs of people in LDCs who are desperately trying to make a living. Referring to the suffering caused by developed nations who have polluted the earth through their industrialisation process, Sillah said "our human rights have been violated".

The Gambian Minister decried the lack of progress achieved in terms of recognising the rights of the LDCs to sustainable development, so "must we wait for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report to take action?" He challenged the positions of some of the developed countries who have argued that it would be cheaper to delay implementing mitigation strategies until 2020 or 2030. He said that any delays will only cause more grief and destruction for the LDCs.

LDCs aim to rescue the Kyoto Protocol, and so they have appealed to the countries causing the delay to consider their plight. He said they believe the Kyoto Protocol will narrow the wide gap between the LDCs and the developed world.

He urged negotiators at COP17 to press ahead with the establishment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) so that adaptation strategies will not be held hostage by certain developed countries

Nigeria calls for more action in Durban

By Rebecca Quaioco

Described as the 'Big Brother' of Africa, Nigeria has not been spared the devastating effects of climate change.

With a population of 142 million, Nigeria according to its Environment Minister, Hadiza Ibrahim Mailafia is currently facing its worst flooding records and other unimaginable consequences of climate change in the country.

Mailafia who was speaking at the high-level meetings of ministers in Durban, says the Kyoto Protocol is an important solution to current problems with climate change in Nigeria and Africa as a whole and therefore added her voice to the call not to kill the Protocol in Durban.

"We must take bold and decisive actions now if the earth is to be saved", she said.

Durban she added, "is a beautiful city and we should not pollute it by killing the Kyoto Protocol".

She also said it was important that promises and pledges made in Cancun were heeded so that developing countries can meet their mitigation targets.

COP17 climate lords must listen to scientists

By Nqobile Buthelezi

Heads of government and negotiators are locked in talks regarding commitments to the Kyoto Protocol and carbon accountability. However, those who are really in the know – the scientists, feel that negotiating platforms should pay more attention to scientific considerations.

“Mitigation activities are essential to reduce the scope and scale of global warming, however an area which is not prevalent in COP17 discussions is that of anthropogenic and natural carbon emissions, which is crucial to understanding the gravity of the climate change situation.” These are words of Dr. Pedro Monteiro, Chief Scientist at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in South Africa.

Dr Monteiro and his team are conducting research on the Southern Ocean, analysing its capacity to absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the coming years if carbon emissions are not halted. He explains that anthropogenic emissions are the carbon releases resulting from human activity, and natural emissions being a bi-product of natural biodiversity processes.

The Southern Ocean has been one of the earth’s most important assets to human survival as it has acted as a regulator of regional climates, storing 40% of all

man-made CO₂ in its interior. However, ‘it has very large opposing natural fluxes that are sensitive to small changes in the climate, which easily match the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets. The pressing question then is what happens when large natural systems change; when global climate changes start to drastically affect the earth.

“The earth has a way to balance itself, where the oceans absorb 2.2 gigatons of carbon and the balance is absorbed in the atmosphere. However, this does not call for a celebration, as the oceans will not carry on doing this in the coming few years, as changes in the climate are becoming drastic,” explains Monteiro.

He cites three reasons why the earth is going to be in trouble in the coming five years as a result of climate change, and why negotiating parties should ‘sign the commitment deal now’;

- The oceans are warming up and warm water has a lower carrying capacity of CO₂
- Warmer oceans mean fewer nutrients for microscopic life forms which absorb half of the ocean’s carbon dioxide load
- The ocean’s Ph levels are decreasing, which in turn

decreases their capacity to take on more carbon dioxide “If there is a small adjustment in the carbon levels, as little as three percent, the impact will be bigger. The three percent might seem small, but the impact is bigger than the amount the ocean is able to take up of our emissions. Therefore we could find ourselves in a situation in the next five years where even the fastest we try to reduce emissions, the harder it becomes,” says Monteiro. “The illusion is that if we stop now, CO₂ levels will drop quickly, but actually not.”

Alecia Nickless, a researcher at the CSIR, has started measuring CO₂ fluxes in the savannah ecosystem in the Kruger National Park in the eastern part of South Africa. “We have towers collecting data for 11 years now in the Skukuza area. We want to see how the ecosystem takes up and emits CO₂ and turns it to plant material, which is essential for life” says Nickless.

Working with national transportation company, Transnet, the CSIR is looking into install more towers in a number of other areas which will help to estimate CO₂ emissions that in turn can be used to model those of the whole country.

Regarding South Africa’s climate action strategy, both Monteiro and Nickless suggest a rejection of the current technology used to produce electricity. “Alternative energy

“Mitigation activities are essential to reduce the scope and scale of global warming, however an area which is not prevalent in COP17 discussions is that of anthropogenic and natural carbon emissions, which is crucial to understanding the gravity of the climate change situation.”

and as little coal as possible can ensure we bring CO₂ levels down,” says Monteiro. “The goal should be to depend on more efficient systems. The government has already decided they are building new coal stations, but we believe we should have less dependence on coal,” concludes Monteiro.



Health practitioner takes temperature of the globe to ensure temperature has not exceeded two degree Celsius. Pic: Effa Tambenkongho

Health practitioners want health issues in mitigation policy

By Effa Tambenkongho

The World Health Organisation, prominent global health figures, medical doctors, nurses, medical students and public health federations, have joined together to warn that if the world cannot agree on major emission reductions, it will be signing death warrants for humanity in the years ahead. The various health leaders speaking at a press briefing on Tuesday warned against health consequences, insisting that health should be incorporated in the negotiations of climate change at COP 17.

In an earlier meeting dubbed the First Global Climate and Health Summit held at the Tropicana Hotel in Durban, the health experts produced a declaration asserting that a fair, binding, and ambitious climate agreement will result in significant health benefits, saving lives and money. The health practitioners said that if there is no immediate intervention; temperatures will rise above the two degrees Celsius limit above pre-industrial levels that scientists warned could be a tipping point for runaway global warming. This could

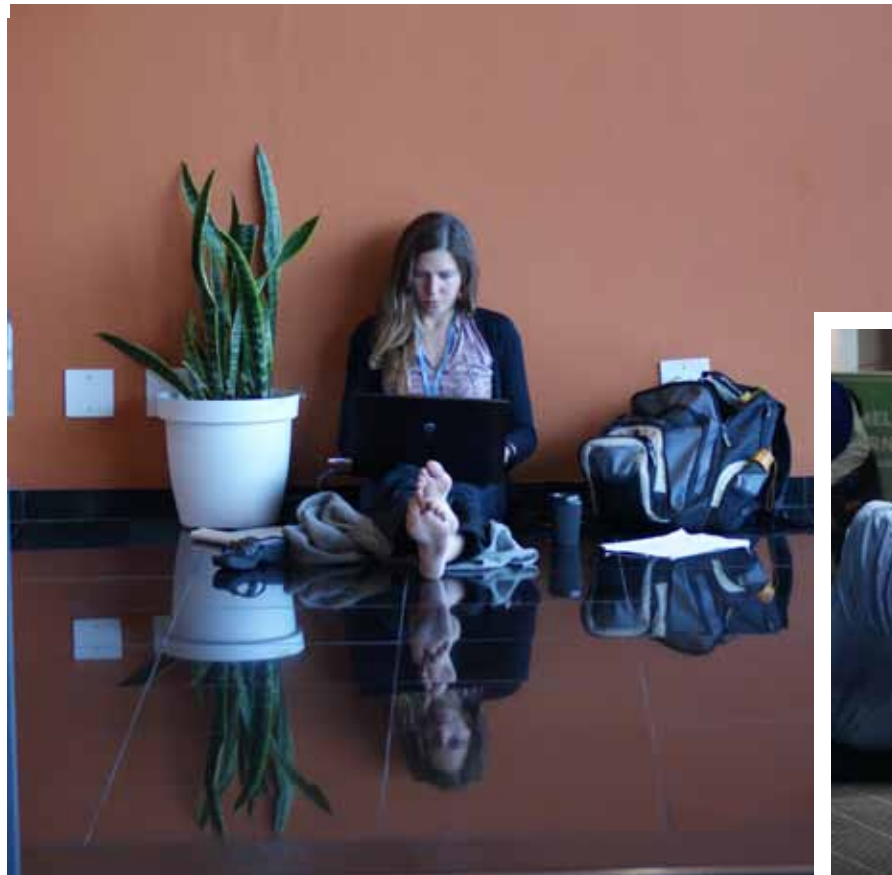
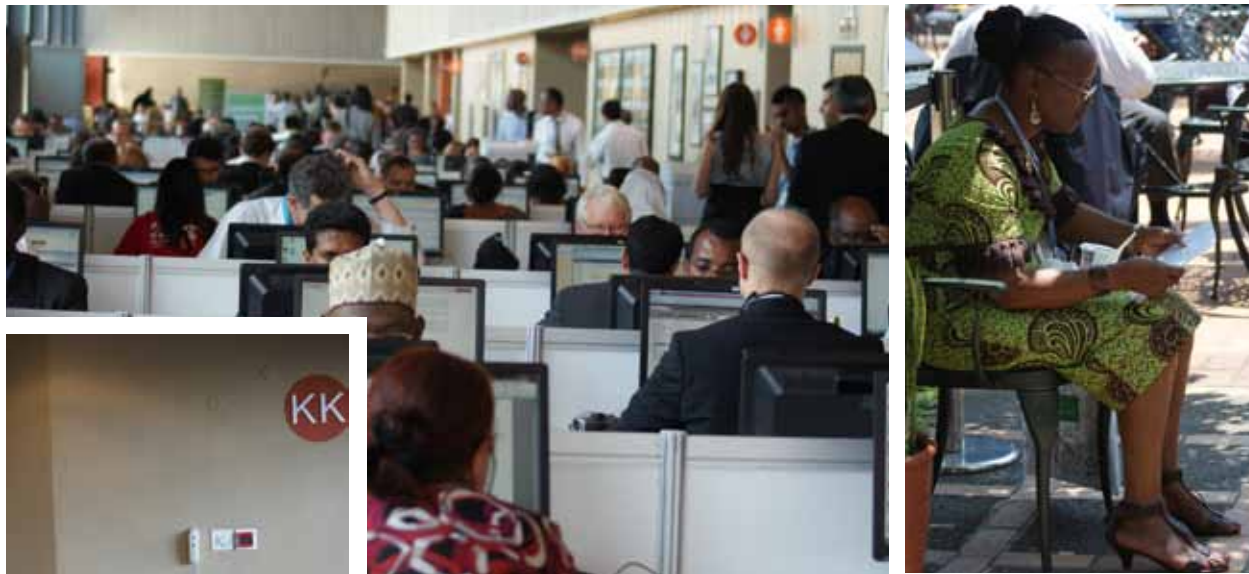
endanger the health of billions of human beings as the rate of bacterial reproduction increased.

Dr. Maria Neira, head of the WHO delegation at COP 17 said they want health issues to be included in the mitigation policy of COP 17. “We need urgent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to stop the escalating health risks”. She added that there is a need for genuine support for a more resilient climate and sustainable development to gain the health benefits of a green economy. Failure to act she said, would put the life of humanity at an unacceptable risk.

Dr. Rajen Naidoo of the Nelson R. Mandela Medical School in Durban, also a speaker at the press briefing, said that it is difficult dealing with sicknesses caused by climate change while they are still dealing with challenges presented by HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases. “We need to develop ways to address these issues which are at great risk”. He said programmes of mitigation and adaptation at COP 17 must include health.

Working space at ICC

There are huge open spaces at the ICC in Durban, but there are also around sixteen thousand people trying to find a place to work. Pics: Steven Lang



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