



A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the
United Nations Climate Change Conference - Poznań

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Events convened on Tuesday, 2 December 2008

Critical Analysis of REDD

Presented by Friends of the Earth International

This event provided a review of the concept of reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), and gave several indigenous peoples and non-governmental organizations the opportunity to discuss the potential pitfalls of this concept.

Estebancio Castro Diaz, Kuna Yala Nation, Panama, expressed concern that the inclusion of REDD in global carbon markets will impact indigenous peoples' rights to their traditional territories, and said that any such initiative should be based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He lamented that the FAO's definition of "forest" includes monoculture plantations, and that REDD proposals may not support the traditional practice of shifting cultivation.

Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition, stressed that there are numerous international agreements designed to conserve forests, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, but that they have never been fully implemented, and called on developed countries to fulfill their funding commitments. She stressed that REDD is fundamentally about governance, that indigenous participation needs to be more than lipservice, and that there is a risk of elite capture of resources.

Kittisak Rattanakrajangsri, International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal People of Tropical Forests, highlighted a recent meeting on REDD held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. He said that REDD threatens to relocate indigenous people, either forcibly or by governments removing services, such as schools and hospitals.

Samuel Nah Ndobe, Center for Environment and Development, presented on Congo Basin forest governance issues, noting the high levels of conflict over natural resources in the region. He said that structural adjustments required by the World Bank in Cameroon had resulted in 50% of timber resources being allocated to timber concessions, with little allocated to communities, and that land rights were only recognized if the land was cleared and cultivated.

Kate Horner, Friends of the Earth-US, expressed concern that REDD could benefit those historically responsible for deforestation, while punishing forest-dependant people who have maintained them. She said that basing REDD on flawed methodologies and predictive scenarios that lack credibility could result in a glut of "sub-prime" carbon credits that could undermine the system and cause a collapse akin to the current global financial crisis. She highlighted that initiatives such as the US Lacey Act, which bans the import of illegally sourced forest products, merit further consideration.



Kate Horner, Friends of the Earth-US, said that REDD must ensure an equitable outcome for forest-dependant communities.

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Short-Lived Arctic Climate Forcers: Avoiding Arctic Tipping Points

Presented by the Climate Policy Center and Government of Norway

This event focused on means and actions to cut high-impact climate pollutants, which could avoid the overshooting of tipping points in natural and physical systems, and cited irremediable Arctic ice loss and rising sea levels as examples.

Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm, Norwegian Ministry of Environment, noted that the Arctic ice is melting at twice the rate of ice on other land masses. She argued that seabed and permafrost releases of CO₂ may aggravate the situation and explained that Arctic nations have come together to act on climate change. She emphasized that Norway is working on this issue through the Arctic Council, which is examining how to reduce pollutants that have a negative impact on the Arctic region. She stressed that Arctic preservation would require rapid action, noting that the technology to address short-lived gases already exists.

Pam Pearson, Climate Policy Center-Europe, explained the importance of slowing Arctic warming and sea ice melt by reducing high-impact climate pollutants. She highlighted potential tipping points in the climate system, such as increased methane release from permafrost and the seabed, and sea level rise from loss of the Greenland ice sheet. She stressed that reducing black carbon, methane, and ozone could slow the rate of Arctic warming quickly and delay springtime melt. She also described: the Arctic Council response to the problem; the establishment of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program in September 2008; and the development of recommendations to be considered at the Ministerial meeting that will take place in Tromsø, Norway, in April 2009.

William Irving, US Environmental Protection Agency, presented on methane mitigation technologies, as well as potential options and policies, and explained that reducing methane emissions does not involve advanced technologies; instead, it can be achieved through the use of state of the art technologies and behavioral changes. He argued that stabilization of methane emissions could be achieved by 2025, a date calculated based on the emission reduction potential associated with four major methane sources: landfills, coal mines, natural gas and oil systems, and manure management systems. He also emphasized that maintaining stabilization of methane emissions through 2050 would necessitate emission reductions across a wider array of sources, particularly rice production.

Participants discussed: the importance of addressing agricultural spring-time burning to reduce black carbon pollutants in the Arctic nations; the potential contribution of diesel sources; the relationship between the reduction of anthropogenic emissions of methane and ozone layer depletion; and the impact of emissions from permafrost on Arctic nations.



Pam Pearson, Climate Policy Center-Europe, argued that reducing high-impact Arctic climate pollutants can slow warming and melting, and significantly improve the health of local peoples.

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Pam Pearson talked with Taka Hiraish of IPCC and Claudio Chiarolla of the ENBOTS team after the event.

How REDD Policy Options Interact with Forest Measuring and Monitoring

Presented by the Woods Hole Research Center (WHRC)

This event discussed how policy options for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) relate to forest measuring and monitoring needs.

Andrea Cattaneo, Woods Hole Research Center, presented on the implications of REDD policy design on monitoring. He outlined several policy proposals, and said measures to distribute funds among countries would require monitoring of stocks and flows at the national level. He noted that market options, as opposed to fund options, for REDD require more measurement. He highlighted the impact of the availability of spatial detail on the ability to perform natural resource management.

Denilson Cardoso, Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (SPVS), described three climate-related projects in Brazil's Atlantic rainforest. He discussed the implications of using two different methodologies for developing baselines for the area. He said that while image analysis was cost effective and efficient for evaluating deforestation, there are challenges in relying on the tool for measuring degradation. He stated that while the best option for evaluating degradation would be diagnosis in the field, this method remains difficult and expensive.

Bronson Griscom, The Nature Conservancy, presented on the inclusion of degradation in REDD measures. He argued that degradation is important because associated emissions could approach those of deforestation, and because degradation can be a catalyst for deforestation processes. He described two methodologies available for measuring and monitoring degradation: mapping spatial distribution of logging and fire, and measuring emissions per unit area from logging.

Alessandro Baccini, Woods Hole Research Center, described a project dedicated to measuring above ground forest biomass in tropical Africa. He described the project's approach, combining remote sensing with forest inventory methodologies, which he said is not only successful in providing spatially explicit estimates of above ground forest biomass but is also cost effective. He noted the limited availability of field observations, and the benefits of using the Geoscience Laser Altimeter System (GLAS) in augmenting data.

Josef Kellndorfer, Woods Hole Research Center, presented on new tools for pan-tropical forest measuring and monitoring. He described the Japanese Space Agency's ALOS/PALSAR (Advanced Land Observing Satellite/Phased Array L-band Synthetic Aperture Radar) observation strategy, and discussed the use of this tool in the Xingu watershed, Brazil. He concluded by highlighting the promise of combining measurement technologies.

Participants discussed: life cycle emissions of forest products; priority needs for data; alternatives for fuel use; the timeline for resolving methodological uncertainties; and the cause of error in measuring and monitoring methodologies.



Josef Kellndorfer, Woods Hole Research Center, discussed the advantages of radar, including abilities to penetrate clouds and reproduce the vertical dimension of forest canopies.



Alessandro Baccini, Woods Hole Research Center, discussed the merits of integrating field measurements with remote sensing.



L-R: Josef Kellndorfer, WHRC; Tracy Johns, WHRC; Assandro Baccini, WHRC; Andrea Cattaneo, WHRC; Denilson Cardoso, Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (SPVS); Bronson Griscom, The Nature Conservancy

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From Vulnerability to Resilience: the Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation

Presented by Practical Action

This event discussed disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures aimed at bolstering the resilience of communities to climate change.

Nigel Timmins, Tear Fund, discussed the definition of DRR, namely when hazards and vulnerability interact or when capacities are overwhelmed. He stated that DRR requires partnerships among communities and involvement of accountable local governments. He argued that risk assessments should be integrated into development planning; community members need to be informed and supported; and certain structural and technical measures, such as early warning systems and emergency plans, should be adopted. He highlighted the Hyogo Framework for Action, a multi-stakeholder platform for cross-ministerial coordination on DRR.

Rachel Berger, Practical Action, described a conceptual framework for DRR. She noted that the timescale of forecasts needed for DRR is five to ten years, whereas climate models typically focus on a 20 to 30 year period and weather forecasts focus on a time period of a few days to several months. She defined three types of climate-related hazards: recurrent hazards such as storms, droughts and frosts; long-term trends in rainfall and temperature; and shifts in climate regimes resulting from overshooting tipping points. She urged adoption of “no regrets” options and strengthening of adaptive capacity to enhance the ability of communities to contend with uncertainty.

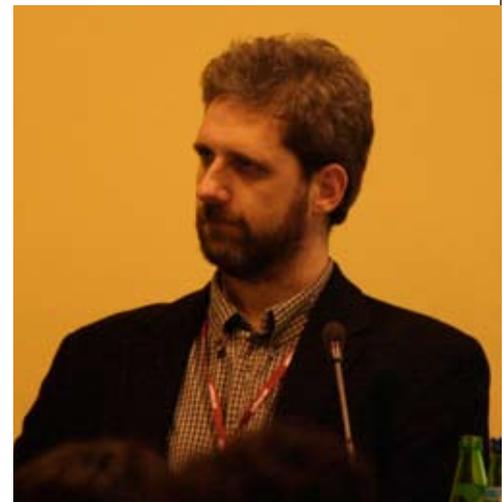
Gehendra Bahadur Gurung, Practical Action, discussed integrating DRR and community-based adaptation by: identifying community perceptions and responses to climate change; including communities in observing climate change and its impacts; and evaluating climate change scenarios for their ability to inform communities. He highlighted several roles the government could play, such as incorporating climate predictions into planning, strengthening early warnings, and ensuring the provision of downscaled climate information. He also discussed DRR experiences in Nepal and Bangladesh.

Jessica Faleiro, Tear Fund, gave an example of integrating climate change adaptation into DRR in Bangladesh, and noted the role of climate information in DRR. She showed a video that underscored the linkages between disaster risks and livelihoods and documented DRR projects in Burkina Faso and El Salvador. She highlighted a Tear Fund report, entitled, “Linking Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.”

Participants discussed: DRR experiences in their own communities; long-term considerations of DRR; differences in adaptive capacity among community members; maladaptation, or experiences in which adaptation measures are perverse or not helpful in the long-term; seasonal migration due to the loss of agriculture; the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge; the role of the private sector; and means to attract funding for DRR.



Gehendra Bahadur Gurung, Practical Action, said that providing local communities with climate change information could strengthen livelihoods and infrastructure.



Pablo Suarez, Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, moderated the discussion.



L-R: Gehendra Bahadur Gurung, Practical Action; Jessica Faleiro, Tear Fund; Pablo Suarez, Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre; Nigel Timmins, Tear Fund; Rachel Berger, Practical Action

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Principles and Procedures for Technology Transfer Mechanisms under the UNFCCC

Presented by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

This event discussed technology transfer (TT) under the UNFCCC, existing constraints on TT and ways forward.

Dalindyebo Shabalala, CIEL, described the institutional framework for TT. He explained that in the context of multilateral environmental agreements, TT should not be understood as the transfer of knowledge from the research phase to the commercialization phase; instead, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Draft Code of Conduct on TT as well as Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 on the transfer of environmentally sound technologies can be useful to define TT commitments under the UNFCCC. He also noted that the concept of TT is often associated with the sale of goods and cross-border investment movements. He said that high information costs, insufficient resources to purchase technologies, and right holders' refusals to sell or license the technology, as well as poor technology needs assessments by recipient countries, may constrain international TT.

Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network, argued that while the conceptual framework of UNFCCC is very well thought out in terms of principles, architecture, objectives and sharing of responsibilities, implementation of TT has not lived up to expectations. She emphasized the need to restructure the economy for advancing TT, because the environmental crisis and the economic crisis are "two sides of the same coin." She said that monopolistic restrictions run against the natural flow of technology, which should be adapted to local needs and assessed to evaluate social, environmental, and economic impacts. She concluded that while climate-friendly measures already exist in many developing countries, the finance to scale up such measures is extremely limited.

Steve Sawyer, Global Wind Energy Council, noted that the private sector is large and diverse and argued that a governmental body responsible for regulating TT is a mistake. He also stressed the need to define the responsibilities of public and private sectors clearly, with the latter having a major role to play in the rapid diffusion of existing climate-friendly technologies and cooperative research and development.

A participant noted that countries have been calling for the establishment of a subsidiary body on technology transfer. Another argued that market demand, which is absent in developing countries as they lack UNFCCC commitments, is a significant issue for mitigation technology transfer.



Dalindyebo Shabalala, CIEL, argued that national institutions responsible for technology transfer should be established in developing countries.



Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network, called for a declaration on intellectual property and climate change, including patent exclusions and flexible compulsory licensing mechanisms to facilitate access to clean technologies.



L-R: Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network; John Charles Nordbo, WWF Denmark; Dalindyebo Shabalala, Center for International Environmental Law.

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Key Issues for Poznan

Presented by the Third World Network

This event provided a forum for developing country representatives to highlight issues that they consider to be important for this Conference of the Parties, including an examination of the “shared vision” concept, finance and technology transfer. They also discussed what would be required in order to achieve a “fair deal” for developing countries at the Copenhagen meeting next year.

Bernarditas Muller, the Philippines, lamented that 16 years after the establishment of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), discussions are still focused on its implementation. She called on developed countries to recognize their responsibility in addressing climate change and fulfill their commitments.

Surya Sethi, India, said that the UNFCCC already contains a “long-term vision,” and that the emphasis should be on delivering on established commitments. He said that any future approach must be based on equity and historical culpability for the problem of climate change. He noted that the per capita carbon consumption gap is widening between North and South countries, and that improving living standards in developing countries will require an increase in their emissions.

Amjad Abdulla, the Maldives, said that if the UNFCCC had been fully implemented and commitments contained within had been honored, the Bali Action Plan would not have been needed. He said that countries such as his could be made less vulnerable through provision of adequate adaptation resources, citing the example of the Netherlands.

Kamel Djemouai, Algeria, said that in order for a “fair deal” to be achieved in Copenhagen, the process must be transparent and fair, noting that non-Annex I countries are hesitant to commit due to uncertainties regarding the objective of the Copenhagen negotiations.

Martin Khor, Third World Network, said that the climate crisis requires the magnitude of funding recently allocated to bailing out the financial sector. He expressed hope that the US could play a more positive role in the climate negotiations under the Obama administration, and that developed countries will agree to a G-77/China proposal for a development fund administered by the UNFCCC. He said that there is a misconception that the Kyoto Protocol will expire, noting that this is only the end of the first commitment period.

Kate Horner, Friends of the Earth, said that fulfilling mitigation commitments must remain the top priority, and noted that California had managed to established a strong emissions cap. She said that political will combined with progressive economic policies can catalyze climate change action, and suggested that funding could come from the US\$16 billion in subsidies currently allocated to the oil industry.



Martin Khor, Third World Network, called on developed countries to help developing countries design their own climate-friendly technologies.



Surya Sethi, India, said that setting targets for 2050 is too late to avoid catastrophic climate change



L-R: Amjad Abdulla, the Maldives; Surya Sethi, India; Bernarditas Muller, the Philippines; Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network; Martin Khor, Third World Network.

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