



Special Report on Selected Side Events at UNFCCC SB-20  
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## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE SB-20 SIDE EVENTS

Side events at UNFCCC meetings have a place for everyone. They provide an excellent forum for the private sector, environmental organizations, research institutions, intergovernmental agencies and governments to speak freely, showcase their work, dream about the future, and try to sell some carbon to willing buyers. The events provide a platform for both creative and practical expression, often racing ahead in brainstorming the future while governments continue to battle stalemates.

Generally speaking, the content of the side events at SB-20 did not parallel the official negotiations. While the Subsidiary Bodies' negotiations on implementation, and scientific and technological advice plodded along, the side events were sharing exciting on-the-ground experiences, and pre-emptively exploring subjects that will be addressed at COP-10 and beyond. Side events were also used to showcase successful accomplishments, such as the momentous occasion of the presentation of India's initial national communication. This brief analysis will provide a general overview of the SB-20 side events, grouped into three broad themes: adaptation and mitigation; the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms; and the future of the climate change regime.



Joke Waller Hunter and Rajendra Pachauri congratulate the Government of India for submitting its initial national communication.

At SB-20, adaptation and mitigation gained their entry ticket to the negotiations with the organization of two SBSTA Workshops specifically addressing these subjects. However, there were very a few side events dealing with adaptation at SB-20, and these focused primarily on disaster reduction. One side event showcased work done by the Germany Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Mozambique to mainstream adaptation in the work of donor agencies.

Compared to the number of adaptation-related side events, there were many more that explored possible mitigation measures. A couple of side events looked at emissions from various modes of transportation, including trains and aviation. Renewable energy was also presented as a tool for mitigation, particularly when combined with technology transfer. The results of the high-profile renewables 2004 conference, held 1-4 June 2004, in Bonn, Germany, also fed into the SB-20 side events. In addition, many delegates welcomed the side event organized by Peru, which focused on air pollution control as a first step to greenhouse gas mitigation, as it offered practical approaches toward greenhouse gas mitigation.

### ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Adaptation and mitigation are widely recognized as crucial issues for the climate change regime. Indeed, COP-7 side events on adaptation greatly contributed to laying the groundwork for negotiations on the issue by initiating a brainstorming process on ways to streamline adaptation into development policies by making the concept of adaptation more appealing through links between poverty and climate change.

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## THE KYOTO MECHANISMS

Side events related to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI) and the emerging EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) continued to be popular at SB-20, with particular attention to the mechanisms' development and implementation. These events enabled



Looking ahead to the post-2012 world, Jennifer Morgan, World Wide Fund for Nature, proposes a future climate framework consisting of three tracks: a Kyoto Track; a Decarbonization Track; and an Adaptation Track.

the Secretariat, the CDM Executive Board, the International Emissions Trading Association and governments to convey pertinent and practical information to Parties, project developers and other interested stakeholders, and explain new technical developments.

The side events related to the CDM identified the CDM as a multi-

stage approach to mitigating emissions, and reiterated the need for capacity and market infrastructure for implementation. While the CDM projects cycle is still considered risky by projects developers, one of the outcomes of the side events on CDM project development was the recognition that validation is on the right track, and that stakeholders should consider the CDM project cycle as a "learning by doing" process.

In general, the side events on the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms indicated a stronger engagement of the private sector, either seeking clarification on guidelines or supporting CDM projects. These side events also became a place to announce and remind participants and Parties of bold deadlines and targets, including the EU-ETS final allocation decision at the member States level by September 2004. Overall, it seems that the purpose of these side events was not so much to feed in to the negotiations, but to share experiences, clarify information and impart new knowledge.

## LOOKING FORWARD

A number of side events explored ways for advancing the climate change regime, particularly focusing on the post-2012 period. While post-Kyoto scenarios were a dream for the negotiators still battling the "adequacy of commitments" at SB-20, side events were considerably more avant-garde. The futuristic climate bazaar showcased goods of all colors, including:

the evolution of commitments under the UNFCCC; a global climate community through "contraction and convergence"; technology-based options; and multi-regime decision support tools. Although each side event had its own philosophy on how to live in a post-Kyoto world, some concurred on the necessary premises for an effective global climate change regime, including the necessity for a long-term and sustainable development perspective, firm political and financial commitments, the inclusion of externalities in assessing policy costs, openness to a plurality of climate regimes, and engagement of all stakeholders including non-Parties. Recurring themes in the discussions on the future included the importance of Annex I countries to fulfill their obligations before non-Annex I countries can be expected to take on emission reduction commitments, and the importance of mitigation in reaching the objectives of the Convention. Another cross-cutting theme which emerged was the recognition of the limitations of technology development in mitigation.

The non-governmental organization Friends of the Earth organized an exemplary side event showcasing the way forward. The event strategically looked at future actions at the policy level to ensure a viable, long-term, global climate change framework, and identified specific commitments, targets and initiatives proposed by governments and industry to reduce greenhouse gases as well as possible pathways for re-engaging non-Parties. Another interesting side event on ecological and carbon debt, organized by the University of Ghent, provided interesting food for thought on how these equity concepts could be incorporated into the climate change regime. Unfortunately however, the presenters may have been preaching to the converted, as the audience was almost entirely comprised of environmental NGOs.

The discussions on future scenarios also wandered down the path of inter-linkages between the Rio conventions, with countries like Belgium showcasing their achievements in improving synergies. Meanwhile, the focus on Russian ratification took a backseat in SB-20 side events as participants await the nod from Moscow.

## CONCLUSION

Many SB-20 side events were forward looking, discussing subjects that will be addressed at COP-10, such as adaptation and mitigation, and delving into intense discussions on possible ways forward for the climate change regime. In addition, many other events tackled some of the nitty-gritty details and practical implementation issues relating to the Kyoto Protocol mechanisms. Whether the ideas generated in the side events will ever permeate the official negotiations is an important question. Perhaps SBSTA will hold further in-session workshops to help serve this purpose.