



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

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Events convened on Friday, 12 December 2008

Al Gore Speaks on Climate Change

Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, introduced 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Al Gore. He highlighted Gore's role in raising global public awareness of climate change, and commended him on his important work, which, he said, inspired people to listen, stop, think and act.

Gore introduced his remarks by stating that humanity has arrived at a moment of faithful decision. He described the new science on climate change, including that related to extreme events, tipping points, species extinction, droughts and floods, and ocean acidification. He said that the science is clear, but a sharp contrast between two rates of change exists: first, related to the rate of climate change, and, second, related to the rate of action on climate change. He noted the level of pessimism at the Poznań negotiations, especially with regard to: the global recession; the drop in oil and coal prices; the absence of a feeling of urgency; the gap between rich and poor not being closed with sufficient speed to build the necessary unity; and the powerful resistance of business lobbies.

Gore, however, stated that he believed that the causes for hope and optimism are greater than the causes for doubt and discouragement, such as: efforts in China related to unprecedented levels of tree planting and a green economic stimulus package; efforts in Brazil related to halting deforestation; and technological advances. He noted progressive actions in the US, including California's mandatory emissions reductions, cities embracing the Kyoto Protocol principles, and the cancellation of proposed coal-fired power plants. He discussed President-elect Obama's prioritization of the climate issue, especially with regard to his commitment to engage in the international climate negotiations.

Gore stressed the need to link poverty reduction with emissions reductions, and called for adequate funding for adaptation. However, he emphasized that mitigation is the primary task, adding that without it adaptation would prove impossible. He called for capacity building in developed countries to overcome the hurdles that prevented the developed world from acting. He underscored the challenge inherent in reaching a target of 450 ppm of carbon dioxide, but argued that the target would need to be toughened to 350 ppm in order to avoid dangerous levels of climate change.

In conclusion, Gore voiced his confidence in reaching an agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009, and said that "not only can it be done, it must be done." He stated that reaching agreement was not a political issue, but rather a moral and spiritual one, and said the climate crisis offered a generational mission and moral purpose. He called on Heads of State to meet several times before the Copenhagen negotiations, and concluded by passing along a message from the people of the US: "Yes we can."



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Al Gore said that the conditions that make the planet hospitable to humans are at risk of being destroyed.

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The Economics of Adaptation to Climate Change

Presented by the Government of the Netherlands

This event convened a high-level panel to present and discuss an ongoing World Bank study, entitled "The Economics of Adaptation to Climate Change."

Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, noted challenges in carrying out the study, including: time pressures associated with being prepared for Copenhagen in December 2009; the mobilization of political support; transfer of results of individual case studies to the global level; and differentiation between adaptation and development. She highlighted the need for transparency in ensuring credible outcomes.

Hannah Ryder, Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK, highlighted the importance of the World Bank Study in providing additional information on estimated levels of adaptation financing. She stressed the need to learn from experiences from the delivery of foreign aid.

Sergio Mergulis, World Bank, said the study's objectives include determining the total cost of adaptation at the global level, noting the tradeoff between arriving at a number in a timely manner, prior to Copenhagen in December 2009, and ensuring the credibility of the data and results. He described methodologies, including those that could determine what level of adaptation could be deemed adequate. He discussed the relationship between adaptation and mitigation, namely the notion that diverting resources for mitigation towards adaptation will prolong climate change and, thus, necessitate greater adaptation.

Mergulis stressed the need to differentiate between development and adaptation, and the role of the public versus private sectors. He noted difficulties associated with predicting global environmental and economic conditions between 2010 and 2050. He emphasized working from the ground-level up, and combining field work with macroeconomic analysis. He noted that the study considers multiple sectors, and incorporates the impacts of climate change and resultant loss of agricultural productivity.

Two leaders from countries involved in the study then described their adaptation activities. John Vargas, Vice-Minister of Environment and Planning, Bolivia, stressed that the current food, climate and financial crises are linked and must be addressed simultaneously. William Kojo Agyemang-Bonsu, Environmental Protection Authority, Ghana, described adaptation needs for addressing concerns related to health, agriculture, and poverty reduction.

Participants discussed adaptation as a learning process that is beyond technology and infrastructure, and the need to approach adaptation strategically.



Ms. Hannah Ryder, Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK, said that challenges associated with aggregating results from disparate country case studies are surmountable.



Sergio Mergulis, World Bank, described the methodologies involved in estimating global adaptation costs, including six country case studies.



L-R: Sergio Mergulis, World Bank; Katherine Sierra, World Bank; Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, the Netherlands; John Vargas, Vice Minister of Environment and Planning, Bolivia; Interpreter; William Kojo Agyemang-Bonsu, Environmental Protection Authority, Ghana; Hannah Ryder, Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK.

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Achieving a Just Economic Framework in COP 14

Presented by 350.org and the International Forum on Globalization

This event gave participants the opportunity to analyze and discuss the results of the Poznań negotiations in terms of the prospects for reaching an agreement in Copenhagen.

Bianca Jagger, World Future Council, underscored the necessary actions to reduce carbon dioxide concentrations to 350 ppm, *inter alia*: hold governments accountable in Copenhagen; foster the adoption of renewable energy worldwide; demonstrate that cities can be operated solely on renewables; tax emissions; strengthen forest protection and reforestation; reject nuclear energy; and eschew carbon capture and storage.

Victor Menotti, International Forum on Globalization (IFG), highlighted that a trust-building breakthrough has occurred in Poznań which has deepened the dialogue between US and developing country leaders, in particular, on the issues of financing and technology transfer. He stressed the need to further discussions on a "global climate fund" separate from the World Bank, and to take immediate actions to make deeper, faster cuts.

Ely Katembo, 350.org, discussed 350.org's global activities, including outreach to communities that lack computer access. He showed pictures of communities that were organizing around the concept of the 350 ppm target. He concentrated his remarks on outreach in Africa and the importance of incorporating young people into the climate negotiations, as they are the ones who will be impacted by a 2050 emissions target, and highlighted a call for action, to be carried out on 24 October 2009, for support of the 350 ppm target.

Bill McKibben, 350.org, said that a year ago, no one knew the significance of the number "350." He discussed the importance of NASA scientist Jim Hansen's publication that calls for a 350 ppm target. He stated that Gore's reference to the 350 ppm target in his speech in Poznań, Poland echoed the support that the target is gaining. He said that deep, profound change is needed, which will not be comfortable, nor cheap. He urged ceasing global use of coal by 2030, and sooner in developed countries.

Participants discussed, *inter alia*: the notion of "abolition" of carbon dioxide emissions; demonstrating means to reach the 350 ppm target through modeling scenarios; appropriate means for reaching the 350 ppm target; the benefits of holding optimistic versus pessimistic outlooks; biochar; phasing out fossil fuels by 2050; engagement of China; and competitiveness issues. Concluding the event, Claire Greensfelder, IFG, urged participants to consider how they can make a difference during the next year.



Bianca Jagger, World Future Council, highlighted that climate change has an impact not only on the environment, but also on human rights, poverty, hunger, mass migrations, and economics.



Bill McKibben, 350.org, called for a "real movement" that is grassroots, global, and comprised of a large number of people.



L-R: Victor Menotti, International Forum on Globalization (IFG); Ely Katembo, 350.org; Claire Greensfelder, IFG; Bianca Jagger, World Future Council; Bill McKibben, 350.org; May Boeve, 350.org.

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