

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP 15 and COP/MOP 5)

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Events convened on Monday, 14 December 2009

Greenland Sea Ice Sheet - Melting Snow and Ice: A Call to Action

Presented by Denmark and Norway



Former US Vice-President Al Gore noted the wide range of impacts caused by melting, highlighting that continued research demonstrates that the Antarctic has tipped into a negative ice balance. He also discussed the various implications of melting for humans, including displaced populations and freshwater availability.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, said that without science and evidence, we would not be ready to make vital decisions on behalf of humanity and our planet.

More information:

<http://www.amap.no/swipa/press2009/GRISindex.html>

Robert Corell, US scientist, Per Stig Møller, Danish Foreign Minister, and Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Foreign Minister, jointly opened the event, noting it would present results from two reports outlining the most recent data available on rates and impacts of melting snow and ice.

Møller introduced the first report, entitled "The Greenland Ice Sheet in a Changing Climate," stating that it is the first assessment with a comprehensive focus on the Greenland ice sheet. Dorte Dahl-Jensen, Danish scientist, presented the Report, highlighting that, as a result of climate change, the increased loss in mass through runoff and ice discharge far exceeds the increased mass received from snowfall in the Arctic. She explained that for the 50 and 5-10 year means respectively, the total mass balance is -30 and -160 Gt/year.

Møller highlighted the implications of melting for sea level rise and, in turn, for security. Emphasizing the importance of the human dimensions of Arctic development, he noted the opportunities presented by melting, including for resource exploitation and the opening of new shipping routes.

Premier Kuupik Kleist, Greenland, noted challenges faced by Greenland, including the economic survival of hunters and fishers. He emphasized the need for Greenland to invest in its education and health sectors and to improve housing and business development.

Corell then presented the second report, entitled "Melting Snow and Ice: A Call for Action," highlighting: significant Arctic sea ice thinning; the declining capacity of the oceans and terrestrial biosphere to absorb CO₂; and positive feedbacks related to decreases in reflective capacity due in part to black carbon-induced melting. Støre highlighted misconceptions that scientists were being too radical in their estimates of sea level rise, when in fact they were being too conservative.

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Gro Harlem Brundtland, UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, closed the event, calling on COP 15 to act decisively to safeguard the planet and promote a common future. Lykke Friis, Denmark, closed the event.

Acting on Climate Change: The UN System Delivering as One

Presented by the UN

Heads and senior officials of UN agencies presented perspectives on the intersection of adaptation and development, and on the relevance and integration of their agencies' efforts. President Mohamed Nasheed, Maldives, opened the session, stating that good governance is central to successful adaptation.

Helen Clark, UNDP, outlined the UN system's efforts in building climate resilience, including through national adaptation planning, finance leveraging and integrated data collection and analysis. Achim Steiner, UNEP, outlined the value of ecosystem-based adaptation, pointing to forests, lakes and coral reefs as examples of ecosystems that support not only biodiversity but also livelihoods.

Josette Sheeran, World Food Programme (WFP), presented conclusions from a recent WFP document on hunger and climate change, highlighting that instability in food supplies has become commonplace. Michel Jarraud, WMO, called climate a "cross-cutting issue," and underscored the need for strengthening networks to communicate scientific information to policy makers.

In a video address, Ann Veneman, UNICEF, linked climate change to food insecurity and malnutrition. She said this contributes to an "intergenerational cycle of poverty." Senior officials from UN systems and regional processes, including the World Bank, UN-Habitat, FAO and ILO, among others, then presented sectoral perspectives. They highlighted efforts to consider climate risk in finance activities and to integrate climate change preparations with city planning. Commentators encouraged: primary public health interventions; integrating labour-market considerations in national adaptation strategies; protecting agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources; recognizing the role of information and communication technology in mitigation and adaptation; and "climate-proofing" industry.

Participants discussed, among other things: the centrality of women in adaptation activities; country-led development strategies; and climate change-induced conflict and displacement.



Noting debates over the effectiveness of UN agencies, President Mohamed Nasheed, Maldives, emphasized the continued relevance of the UN system, and advised against dismantling it.

More information:

<http://www.unsystemceb.org>

<http://www.undg.org>

<http://www.wfp.org/content/climate-change-and-hunger-responding-challenge>

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Beyond Copenhagen: Agriculture and Forestry are Part of the Solution

Presented by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)

Ajay Vashee, IFAP, read an opening statement that emphasized, among other things: the need to address agriculture, forest and rural development in an integrated manner; the need for policy processes to respond to local communities' situations; and the critical rights and roles of indigenous peoples in mitigation and adaptation.

Frances Seymour, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), underscored that agriculture is a key driver of deforestation, and that agriculture and deforestation must be addressed in concert. Urging participants to look beyond a zero-sum game between forests and agriculture, Seymour stated that much land is being used in a suboptimal manner and that there are opportunities to maximize both food security and carbon sequestration.

Alexander Müller, FAO, stressed that climate change and agriculture are intrinsically linked, with the agricultural sector offering significant potential to sequester carbon. He called for the establishment of a work programme under the UNFCCC to undertake gaps-analyses, direct research and focus on institutional capacity building.

M. S. Swaminathan, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, argued that COP 15 underscores the need for sustainable food security. To achieve this goal, he said, more participatory research is required on climate-resilient genes and on the carbon sequestration potential of the agricultural sector.

Mark Cackler, World Bank, invited participants to comment on the opening statement with a view to improving its content. Participants discussed: the moral responsibility of developed countries to assist developing countries in meeting climate change challenges; the meat intensive "European" diet; the benefits of REDD++ over REDD+; and technology transfer.



M. S. Swaminathan, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, stated that women are the holders of much traditional knowledge about climate resilience and suggested the establishment of gender-balanced local climate risk groups.

More information:

<http://www.ifap.org>

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200 NGOs in Action in Asia and Africa for Sustainable Energy

Presented by the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)

Roque Pedace, INFORSE, said the event would present examples of work by 200 NGOs in Asia, Africa and the Caucasus to promote sustainable energy. He noted that although the projects' benefits are high, the ability to scale them up is limited by poor access to financing.

NGO representatives from ENDA-Tier Monde (Senegal), Earthlife Africa, and Climate Development Initiative (Uganda), described a variety of successful, small-scale renewable energy technology (RET) initiatives in Africa. They highlighted the need to: support entrepreneurs and develop markets for RETs; use social sustainability as an entry point to environmental and economic sustainability; and invest in decentralized energy systems.

NGO representatives from the Integrated Sustainable Energy and Ecological Development Association (India), Women Action for Development (India), and the Centre for Rural Technology (Nepal), stated that: women are negatively impacted by climate change because their work often relates to agriculture; teaching the poor about RETs is needed, but the poor also require access rights to necessary resources; and strengthened institutions, public-private community partnerships and micro-financing are critical to scaling up RETs.

NGO representatives from Unison (Kyrgyzstan) and the Green Movement (Georgia) noted that RET use and energy efficiency potentials have yet to be realized, but are hindered by the inability to obtain necessary financing. Sabine Bock, WECF, lamented the poor geographical distribution of CDM projects, and noted that only about ten projects are community- and household-based. Stating that the CDM Executive Board has attempted to address these shortcomings, she stressed that CDM projects must benefit the poor in all non-Annex I countries.

Participants discussed: the role of youth in facilitating renewable energy solutions; the potential to combine micro-financing and CDM financing; and empowerment of women through small-scale rural energy initiatives.



Sabine Bock, WECF, stressed the need for a financial mechanism that specifically targets pro-poor sustainable development in addition to climate change mitigation.

More information:

<http://inforse.org>
<http://www.wecf.eu>

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Cities, Population Dynamics and Climate Change

Presented by UN-HABITAT

Jose Miguel Guzman, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), stressed that urban migration is increasing exponentially, and underscored the need to plan cities to account for future population growth. Anna Tibaijuka, UN-HABITAT, explained that city slums will grow in the 21st century and that women and children will suffer most.

Olav Kjørven, UNDP, detailed how Montevideo, Uruguay, is working as part of a North-South-South network towards reducing its contribution to climate change. Achim Halpaap, UNITAR, explained UNITAR's emphasis on working with sub-national authorities to deliver capacity building and inter-regional lesson sharing.

Sylvie Lemmet, UNEP, emphasized the need to refurbish existing buildings and build new energy efficient buildings, adding that the number of different stakeholders in the construction industry pose a key challenge to a low-carbon urban future. Jan Kubis, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), stated that the largest potential for GHG savings in the construction sector is from residential houses.

Wolfgang Förster, City of Vienna, Austria, outlined Vienna's work on energy efficiency, which includes stringent standards for new buildings and retrofitting.

Jason Hartke, US Green Building Council, argued that the private sector has a strong role to play in financing buildings while simultaneously securing economic, social and environmental benefits.

Marta Delgado, Mexico City, Mexico, outlined energy efficiency activities in her city, and its active involvement in an international network to draw lessons from other "mega-cities." Parliamentarian John Towley, Wales, set out a number of Wales' targets on mitigating climate change, which includes a zero-carbon target for all new buildings.



Jan Kubis, UNECE, argued that the global effort to mitigate climate change must focus more on improving the energy efficiency of residential housing.

More information:

<http://www.unhabitat.org>

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A Successful International Climate Agreement: Contributions and Expectations from European Business

Presented by **BUSINESSEUROPE**

This event, moderated by Nick Campbell, **BUSINESSEUROPE**, presented European business, EU and city perspectives on mitigation activities and expectations for an international climate change agreement.

Philippe de Buck, **BUSINESSEUROPE**, stated that the European business community accepts current EU climate policies, and is forwarding a “plea for a strong and ambitious agreement” in Copenhagen. He introduced the **BUSINESSEUROPE** Copenhagen Scorecard, explaining it sets out business expectations for a predictable climate regime, including binding targets and a long-term and transparent financing mechanism.

Maud Olofsson, Sweden, said a transition to an “eco-efficient economy” need not be complex, and encouraged investment in areas with rapid payoffs, such as in energy efficiency. Ulla Hamilton, Deputy Mayor of Stockholm, Sweden, detailed Stockholm’s success in combining a growing economy with reduced environmental impacts, particularly through city planning in infrastructure, energy supply, waste management and transportation systems.

Hans Straberg, Electrolux, cautioned that climate change should not be used to increase trade protectionism, saying only an open economy can “meet and conquer” the challenge. He highlighted three principles needed for a global framework on climate, namely a price on carbon emissions, a level international playing field and global harmonization of product standards. Jos Debelke, European Commission, suggested that if the US were to pass climate legislation involving a carbon trading system, it would provide an opportunity to consider a future transatlantic, and eventually OECD-wide, carbon market.

Panelists were asked about, among other things: the need for European and business leadership on emissions reduction targets; benchmarking for emissions reductions; and the role of price floors in carbon markets.

In closing, Maud Olofsson, Sweden, expressed optimism about the potential for COP 15 to achieve an agreement, pointing to the need for trust, mutual understanding and ambitious commitments.



Maud Olofsson, Sweden, pointed to the climate crisis as a “golden opportunity” to shift to a green economy.

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More information:

<http://www.businessseurope.eu>
<http://www.eumayors.eu>
http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

Building on Copenhagen: A High-level Dialogue

Presented by The Pew Center on Global Climate Change (Pew) and World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

This event summarized key actions taken in Australia and at the sub-national level in the US, and discussed the role of the private sector in GHG mitigation.

Elliot Diringer, Pew Center, opened the event, highlighting the explicit political emission reduction commitments from major industrialized countries, and stressing the need for COP 15 to establish a clear process and deadline for a new agreement in 2010. Bjorn Stigson, WBCSD, then chaired the remainder of the event.

Governor Chris Gregoire, Washington state, US, highlighted various state-level actions in Washington, including the Western Climate Initiative, which now includes seven states and four Canadian provinces. Martin Parkinson, Australia, underscored his country’s commitment to a 5-15% reduction of emissions relative to 2005, or up to 25% if there is a comprehensive international agreement. He stressed that the 5% reduction is non-conditional, but that the outcome at COP 15 will significantly influence the domestic debate. He emphasized the need for absolute reductions from developed countries and reductions below business-as-usual in developing economies.

Gina McCarthy, US, explained the recent US Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) endangerment finding. She explained that the endangerment finding confirms the link between GHGs and “human health and welfare,” thereby allowing the EPA to regulate GHGs under the Clean Air Act. Bill Tyndall, Duke Energy, said that unless the draft US climate bill is viewed as a “jobs bill,” it will be difficult to pass, but expressed confidence that this would occur in 2010. Graeme Sweeney, Shell, stressed the need for a strong political agreement, stating that it must embrace: REDD+; CCS; a domestic cap-and-trade system that is linked to established mechanisms within the Kyoto Protocol; and an agreed measurement process.



Gina McCarthy, US, said the EPA is “on the job and will continue to act...and will continue to let science and the rule of law guide those actions.”

More information:

<http://www.wbcscd.org>
<http://www.pewclimate.org/>

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