

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the Durban Climate Change Conference - November 2011



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Events convened on Thursday, 8 December 2011

Protecting Climate and Improving Air Quality

Organized by UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI)



Achim Steiner, UNEP, called for “action, action, action...!”

Joseph Alcamo, UNEP, presented the new report from UNEP: “Near-term Climate Protection and Clean Air Benefits: Actions for Controlling Short-Lived Climate Forces (SLCF)”. He said that global actions can help enable national and regional initiatives and support the widespread implementation of SLCF.

Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, commended the proposals set forward in the report, and said it is in the national interest of all countries to operationalize actions immediately to optimize the narrowing window of opportunity before 2020. He stressed priority areas and sectors for action in each region with the indicative costs and benefits.

Lena Ek, Minister of the Environment, Sweden, said that the actions underlined in the report are the only way of reducing GHG emissions in the short-term. She stressed the following outcomes: benefits occur mostly where the actions are taken; health issues affects the most vulnerable; and food production can be increased.

Juan Quesada, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Mexico, said the report is an useful tool for national and local governments to contribute to air quality and climate change. He highlighted that Mexico is applying the report to: build a case study; identify opportunities to reduce GHG emissions; and promote efficiency in Mexico’s rural areas. He underscored the need to eliminate agricultural “slash and burn” practice.

Sherry Ayittey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana, indicated that life expectancy has improved in Africa, but millions continue to die from use of wood as fuel in rural areas, highlighting the need for fuel switch. She noted that local sustainability is achieved by implementing actions to combat global warming.

Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment, Canada, noted that in Canada SLCF have severe impacts, and stressed the importance of integrating policies and achieving the goal of limiting the increase of earth temperature in 2 degrees Celsius.

More information:

<http://www.iccinet.org>
<http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/SLCF>

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Climate Change and Public Health: Healthy Climate, Healthy People, Healthy Economy

Organized by Health Care Without Harm, Health & Environment Alliance, Environmental Quality Protection Foundation, and International Federation of Medical Students' Association (IFMSA)

Pendo Maro, Health Care Without Harm & Health and Environment Alliance, moderated the panel discussions, emphasizing the positive message available with tangible medium and long-term impacts to health, economy, and the environment.

Elena Villalobos, World Health Organization (WHO), emphasized the power of the health community, highlighting the increased participation in climate change negotiations. She acknowledged the progress made through partnerships, especially in advocacy. She indicated the gap between legal framework and action, referring to the Convention's definition of adverse effects of climate change, including: implications to health; and references to commitments such as reporting of any adaptation and mitigation programmes.

Nick Watts, IFMSA, outlined the outcome from the Summit that took place on 4 December 2011, that produced the Durban Declaration on Climate and Health. He highlighted the key actions: education and research coordination efforts; mitigation and adaptation within the health system; nationally-based advocacy, reframing issues to the public health sector as a mechanisms to mobilize society; and recognition of the utility of other platforms in addition to the UNFCCC process. He said "although we may be leaving COP 17 without a deal, we do not leave without hope and optimism, looking to the future with re-motivation."

Shu-Ti Chiou, International Network of Health Promoting Hospital & Health Services, explained the role of the health sector in the climate change crisis, urging for: advocacy; example setting in lowering greenhouse gas emissions; and promotion of health and environmental co-benefits such as breastfeeding. She celebrated the power of the health sector having a credible voice on health issues, sharing examples from Taiwan in the establishment of environmentally- friendly hospitals.

Ensuing discussions focused on: ability of communities to influence climate negotiations; utilization of existing instruments; exposure to harmful chemicals in hospitals; gender issues and potential for disaggregating data to provide evidence of social implication of climate change; education challenges and opportunities; links to financing; and risk reduction.



Shu-Ti Chiou, International Network of Health Promoting Hospital & Health Services, explained co-benefits from health, environmental and economic gains.



Pendo Maro, Health Care Without Harm & Health and Environment Alliance, said that regardless of COP 17 outcomes, "we have actions."



Panelists promoted a positive message from the health sector.

More information:

<http://www.noharm.org>
<http://www.env-health.org>

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Weathering Change: Exploring the Impact of Climate Change on Women and Families around the World

Organized by the Population Action International (PAI) and Sustainable Population Australia

Roger-Mark De Souza, Population Action International, suggested that reproductive health, family planning and adaptation strategies could be one of the critical requirements to address climate change threats. He stressed the need for funding mechanisms that empower women through increasing access to family planning and reproductive health.

Jane O'Sullivan, Sustainable Population Australia, emphasized that giving women control of their fertility will empower them to deal with the effects of climate change. She called for adoption of family planning programmes to effectively reduce family size and population growth. O'Sullivan said that, without a political focus on population, support for family planning and reproductive health withers, fertility reduction slows, and population increment reverses.

Dingaani Mithi, Journalists Association Against AIDS (JournAIDS), Malawi, spoke of his country's many women who struggle with access to reproduction control mechanisms, and stressed that degradation, due to population pressure, is a problem in Malawi. He called for political will and policy mechanisms to enhance capacity building and education through media outreach programmes, and emphasized that family planning has to be very high on the agenda.

Esther Agbarakwe, PAI Advocacy Fellow, Nigeria, urged political stakeholders from the UN to better equip themselves on the issue of gender and the youth. She noted that the world has exceeded the 7 billion mark, and underlined that her peers will spend the next forty years de-carbonizing the earth, since they will inherit a planet submitted to climate change.

Negash Teklu, Population, Health and Environment (PHE) Ethiopia Consortium, told of the rise in population growth in Ethiopia, and explained the integrated approach taken in his country. He said it is possible to scale up family planning views, and warned success in reaching the Millennium Development Goals can only be achieved through success in population, health and environment interventions.

Isaac Kabango, Climate Action Network, Uganda, urged for immediate action and stressed that the problem is moral and requires a brave, clear and immediate approach. He insisted that resilience cannot be addressed by one institution alone, but requires a multi-stakeholder approach. He condemned the perspective of politicians to focus on markets and voters, and called for inclusion of informal structures such as indigenous community leaders.

During the ensuing discussion, participants spoke about: the direct link between population density and carbon emissions; mitigation strategies in relation to population growth; policy gaps and political rhetoric that fail to address the real issues; community ownership; and specific challenges and strategies regarding climate change.



Esther Agbarakwe, PAI Advocacy Fellow, Nigeria, as youth activist, said "we will inherit the earth with climate change", for better or for worse.



Jane O'Sullivan, Sustainable Population Australia, suggested that "omission is a barrier" when policies fail to address population growth.

More information:

<http://www.populationaction.org>

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L-R: Jane O'Sullivan, Sustainable Population Australia; Roger-Mark De Souza, Population Action International; Dingaan Mithi, JournAIDS, Malawi; Esther Agbarakwe, PAI Advocacy Fellow, Nigeria; Negash Teklu, PHE Ethiopia Consortium; and Isaac Kabango, Climate Action Network, Uganda; explored the impact of climate change on women and families around the world.

Climate Change, Violent Conflict and Human Security

Organized by the Climate Change, Hydro-Conflicts and Human Security (CLICO), Initiatives of Change

Matthias Duwe, Ecologic Institute, framed discussions, commenting on the missing data to understand the complexity of resource availability, cultural and traditional factors and climatic conditions.

Carola Betzold, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), outlined findings from a recent media-based, preliminary study, indicating drivers for conflict, including the: political environments; and demand side such as socio-economic factors. She added that climate change is an indirect influence to water-related conflicts.

Jennifer Helgeson, Initiatives of Change, explained efforts by her institution to create a worldwide network to build trust to equitably share resources, with a focus on land restoration. She described the complicated web connecting climate change and human security.

Sergio Zelaya Bonilla, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), reviewed the objectives of UNCCD to: improve living conditions of affected populations; improve conditions of affected ecosystems; generate global benefits; and mobilize resources. He identified areas of synergy such as food security, climate change, and biodiversity. He lamented that missing from these discussions were the farmers and agroforesters who could share valuable knowledge.

Martin Frick, Third Generation Environmentalism (E3G), discussed challenges in the art of diplomacy, including: lack of certainty in climatologically averages creating a false understanding of potential outcomes and possible political compromises; and climate vulnerability whereas climate is a threat multiplier. He identified the need for integrated policies to manage risk and a multilateral approach, saying that women are key drivers for sustainable development.

James Thurlow, UNU World Institute for Development Economics, provided insights into a case study from Niger that concluded that ecosystems services change in availability and access due to conflict, and additionally, conflicts over natural resources are aggravated by anthropogenic climate change.

John Dennis Liu, Environmental Media Project (EEMP)/IUCN, illustrated a successful model for large-scale restoration of degraded ecosystems. He advocated for redefining the economy to go beyond production and consumption, which denies access to marginalized communities and fails to value ecosystem services.



John Dennis Liu, IUCN/EEMP, expressed that change can start by how you tell a story.



Matthias Duwe, Ecologic Institute, praised the solutions presented by John Liu as well as the transferability of the model.

More information:

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The panel engaged discussions on implications of climate change on human security and conflict.