

# ECO



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## Saudi Arabia – A Poor Developing Country?

Last week witnesses from some of poorest communities around the world told their stories about how they cope with impacts of climate change. At another forum, witnesses from Saudi Arabia told their stories about how they cope with the possibility on impact of response measures.

But are both these stories really comparable?

As a member of G77&China, Saudi Arabia does have the privilege to be called a “developing country.” However, its profile does not match the majority of the members of the group.

Saudi Arabia has an over-proportional level of emissions of about 14 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per capita (tCO<sub>2</sub>/cap) per year, compared to the average OECD emissions’ level of about 11 tCO<sub>2</sub>/cap, and those of some Kyoto Protocol signatory countries such as Romania, Poland and Portugal, which have 4 to 7 tCO<sub>2</sub>/cap.

And if you then look at other countries in G77&China such as Tanzania, Kenya and Senegal which have levels of 0.1 to 0.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>/cap per year, you can see the true absurdity of Saudi Arabia’s claim it is poor.

However, one could also argue (if one is Saudi Arabia), that despite being a relatively high emitter, a country still may be poor and needs a just transition to a clean energy future. Is this really the case of Saudi Arabia?

Saudi Arabia has a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (in power purchase parities or PPP) of about \$US11,000 – about 60 percent higher than world average. It is the same range as industrialised countries like the

Czech Republic or Hungary, and considerably higher than that of Poland and almost all other Eastern European nations. The three African countries mentioned have a per capita GDP (in PPP) of 5 to 13 percent of that of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is benefitting substantially from the ongoing jackpot of high oil prices; it produces about one third of all OPEC oil and has almost 40 percent of all proven OPEC oil reserves. The Economist recently calculated that Saudi Arabia increased its net oil revenues by 13 percent in 2004 compared to last year; a value of more than \$US10 billion. This amount was double the annual GDP of Senegal in 2002.

In contrast, the rise in oil prices was extremely bad for developing nations with no alternative for other cleaner energies. For instance, the International Energy Agency recently suggested that a \$10/barrel price increase will slow economic growth (GDP) in OECD by 0.4 percent on average. However, GDP losses in Asia may amount to 0.8 percent. Worse, GDP may fall by 1.6 percent in all least developed countries and even 3 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa on average.

These numbers clearly demonstrate that Saudi Arabia’s current wealth is earned on the back of poor countries. And despite this, they are advocating, while here in Buenos Aires, for a piece of the adaptation cake from those same poor countries. It does not get much more absurd than that.

**Note:** All data presented is from the 2004 IEA Statistics on 2002 fossil fuel related-emissions, the World Bank, and other economic data.

## Arctic Under Attack

The “Impacts of a Warming Arctic” report released in Iceland on November 8 paints a disastrous picture of what will happen in the Arctic if deep cuts to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are not made soon. Most importantly, it finds that global warming is happening two to three times faster than originally feared.

The report, the most comprehensive of its kind, forecasts that in this century the winter temperature could increase by 10°C in the Arctic region. This will result in rising sea levels and extermination of species such as polar bears; it could also affect ocean currents. Changes to the climate are stated to have been caused by GHG emissions particularly because the use of oil, gas and coal “are nowhere greater than in our part of the world.”

The report was commissioned by the member states of the Arctic Council – US, Canada, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark (Greenland, Faroe Islands), Norway and Iceland. Despite its strong warning, the Arctic Ministerial Council, at the Arctic Ministerial Meeting held in Reykjavik, Iceland on November 24, failed to respond to the report in any serious manner due to pressure from the Bush Administration.

As a result, no decision was taken by the ministers on any defined measures to reduce GHG emissions, nor was the US put under any noticeable pressure to shoulder its responsibility for the imminent threats to the Arctic region.

To add to this irony, Sweden’s Minister for the Environment declared satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting. She claimed that the

– continued back page, column 3

## Seminars Should be Based on Both Kyoto Protocol and Convention

A subject of growing corridor debate is a suggestion to convene two seminars of "Governmental Experts" in 2005 to consider future actions on climate change. There is heated debate as to what the seminars' mandate would be and whether they would be held in the context of just the UNFCCC or also the Kyoto Protocol. They would allow for preparation for the discussions required in 2005 about the period post 2012.

Some naive delegates who seem to be in denial and feel the US can be re-engaged in the process, believe an objective should be to engage the United States. ECO believes that under the current administration this would be just a waste of time that would also undermine the Protocol and current efforts to address the escalating climate challenges. It is clear that the discussion must focus on how all of us are going to meet the ultimate objective of the Convention – including the design of an effective future framework for action to keep global temperature increase below 2°C.

The seminars would have to be linked to a COP11 decision to make them meaningful. With strong chairmanship, observer status for the Bush minions would reduce the damage they could inflict. If there are to be seminars, it must be clear that they are based on both the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention, and are not part of an open-ended process. They should also allow for participation of constructive civil society stakeholders.

Given the number of issues in play, it is likely that any decision on the seminars will be part of a package agreement. With a growing toll of devastating climate change impacts that clearly do not fall under climate variability, clear progress on bringing constructive actors together to discuss a framework is more important than ever.

While ECO supports the convening of both the seminars in general, we should not lose sight that progress on mobilising finance and adaptation must be given highest priority at COP10.

## Indigenous Peoples Express Concerns Over Lack of Support

Indigenous peoples' representatives at COP 10 have expressed concern over lack of support for Indigenous participation, particularly given the level of threat posed by climate change to them.

Since COP 4, Indigenous Peoples have participated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meetings expressing concern that climate change poses an immediate danger to the continuation of their way of life from the regions of the tropical forests, to the Arctic polar-regions and the tribal small island communities threatened with becoming submerged by rising oceans and the salination of their water supplies.

UNFCCC COP and Subsidiary Bodies meetings are occurring without adequate participation of Indigenous Peoples or their representatives in contravention of international precedents such as the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on Biodiversity, and instruments of the United Nations including the Sustainable Development Commission. These declarations, agendas, conventions and instruments establish the right to consultation and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the drafting and

approval of international or national measures that have impact on Indigenous Peoples.

During COP9, representatives of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus (IPC) did an intervention in full plenary requesting of the governments and the Secretariat that the Convention recognize the fundamental role of Indigenous Peoples in addressing climate change; that the Convention consider the creation of an Inter-Sessional Ad-Hoc Working Group on Indigenous Peoples; and include Indigenous Peoples and climate change as items in the agenda of the COP and the Subsidiary Bodies with specific reference to vulnerability, adaptation, poverty and other climate change related issues.

One year has gone by with no action. Even though there are many issues on the table concerning the provisional agenda items, Indigenous Peoples Caucus of COP10 have prioritised the need to seek resolution of this issue of seeking support from the Convention for future Indigenous participation.

Indigenous Peoples believe in a constructive and participative dialogue and urge the Parties of the UNFCCC to consider their request for equal participation in the COPs.

– Arctic Under Attack, from front page – ministers "had been able to come to an agreement with the US on a strong declaration..." and that "...we accept the width of the problem and our share of the responsibility ..." Similarly, the Norwegian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Environment expressed their satisfaction over US reaction.

Yet, the Declaration did nothing more than to "note with concern the impacts documented by the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) that are already felt throughout the region," and that "...underlying scientific assessment will help inform governments as they implement and consider future policies on global climate change ..."

As both these statements involved input from the US, it shows the Bush Administration admits climate change is already happening. While this should trigger a full review, its not doing so shows the Administration's inflexible and indefensible stand more clearly.

ECO must assume that foreign ministers of the Nordic countries were happily snoring under soothing US lullabies on how actively it is working on Arctic problems, instead of being blunt and direct. Even a conservative newspaper in Iceland concluded on the outcome of the ministerial meeting that ministers "had missed an opportunity to provide leadership on measures responding to the imminent threat to the Arctic biosphere."

CAN urges Nordic governments and other members of the Arctic Council to get real and strongly condemn US attempts at this COP to derail global attempts to stop climate change. The next chance to do so is at this evening's side event on the ACIA.

## Diego

The US may bestride the world like a colossus, but it still finds plenty of time to be petty. Allegedly, Democrat members of the US delegation have (unlike in all previous COPs) been banned from using the facilities of the US delegation rooms. Meanwhile, in response to the lighthearted encouragement for individuals that personally support the Kyoto Protocol to attend the NGO party, the head of the US delegation reacted with maturity. All members of his delegation were formally forbidden from attending the party. A pity for them: they might have seen the enthusiastic participation of the deputy head of Saudi Arabia's delegation – clearly a man of strong personal convictions. Diego joined the rest of CAN in welcoming him. Nothing must stop the fiesta!