CREDENTIALS

Hold on to your coffee cups and that delicious roiboos tea – we are heading straight into the end game for COP 17. While there is still a long way to go on getting a mandate that has a fighting chance of keeping the world on a lower 2°C path, we must be sure to have all our ducks in a row on the Kyoto side. (And seriously, let’s put aside all this talk about waiting until 2020 for real ambition!)

And by ‘ducks’, we mean credentials. No, not those little cards with the colored stripes on lanyards that let you into certain rooms, or not. Credentials in this context are documents from the top of the government enabling you to do what we need to save the climate in those certain rooms.

In researching our provisional article last week, we came across another interesting provision in the Vienna Convention – the need for delegations to have full credentials underlines the development of a globally legally binding regime.

PEAT LANDS & WETLANDS

LULUCF is in danger of once again of being the rotten apple in the Kyoto basket. Despite its importance to ambitious emissions reductions, countries are allowed to choose for account for only those activities that result in credits.

All significant sinks and sources of emissions should be accounted for in the land use sector. This means accounting for ‘wetland drainage and rewetting’ will provide strong incentives for the conservation of undisturbed peatlands, as well as promote the rewetting of drained areas. Rewetting will also help prevent peat fires, which occur in drained peatlands and add to further emissions.

Organic soils are hotspots of emissions. The reporting data available for organic soils in Annex I and IPCC is providing supplementary guidance for rewetting. With this information, developed countries must ensure accounting for wetlands drainage and rewetting so that LULUCF has environmental integrity and contributes its fair share to climate protection.

ECO applauds AOSIS and the Africa Group who called in no uncertain terms for increasing environmental integrity in LULUCF in today’s KP contact group. Ministers, you’ve heard the call, now’s your chance!

ECO has been saying for quite some time that while the creation of the Green Climate Fund is essential, it would be meaningless if the Fund were merely an empty shell. And we’ve been saying throughout these past two weeks that donors must step up here in Durban and make their initial pledges so that the Fund can get up and running as soon as possible.

Well, kudos to Germany and Denmark for being the first two countries to rise to the challenge. Today, Germany pledged 40 million euros towards the fund, and Denmark chipped in with about 15 million euro. Germany and Denmark should be commended for taking the plunge. What’s more, they appear to have made these pledges without the kind of unreasonable conditions that are often hidden underneath positive initiatives in these negotiations.

Now that the Germans and Danes have shown the way, wouldn’t it be a refreshing achievement if the other 21 Annex II countries followed suit?
Everything Becomes Possible With a Plan

ECO has travelled to all sorts of places while tracking the climate talks. Its passport and encyclopedia-like mind are full of memories, not only about long working hours, sleep deprivation and open-ended meetings, but also about impressive monuments in many of the countries it visited.

The most beautiful man-made marvels like the Great Wall of China, Plaza de Francia in Panama, and la Sagrada Familia in Barcelona were impossible until their inventors had a plan to guide their construction. Similarly, in the decades, and the plans constituted of sub-plans, the plans are updated and updated.

In Durban, countries finally agreed that they need to prepare long-term plans. Low Carbon Development Strategies (LCDs) were decided for developed countries, and developing countries were encouraged to develop them as well. That’s a good place to also build in climate resilience to the already-inevitable impacts of climate change.

In Durban, countries need to start agreeing what the elements of those plans will be. Building on provisions of the Bali Action Plan on adaptation, mitigation, actions and MRV, countries must raise ambition for the following:

* Realistic and achievable emissions reduction targets for developed countries and a trajectory to achieve near-zero emissions by 2050, with indicative decadal targets.
* For developing countries, nationally-appropriate actions.
* Define sector-specific policies and measures.
* Clearly identify strategies and policies that will guide the plan into implementation.
* Outline measures to reach goals, to facilitate accountability.
* Include R&D and technology plans that serve the plans.

**Outline measures that prevent double counting of credits**

LCDs can be an effective way of increasing the ambition for mitigation by all. In developed countries, such long-term strategic plans can help avoid lock-in to higher cost emissions reduction pathways. They can shape infrastructure and technologies that are low carbon and cost effective as well as identify hidden potential, showing increased action by developing countries towards their low carbon development.

As promising as these efforts are, there are many gaps within this strategy, including not yet reached agreement on our global emissions reduction goals by 2050, but some have begun from the bottom up, compiling and implementing their long term plans. A recently released WRF paper outlines the 8 case studies from developed and developing countries that have achieved LCDs and how these states have been benefitting. The host of COP17, South Africa, is leading the way with a focus on implementation through low carbon growth.

With their National Climate Change Response Strategy, South Africa has laid out a comprehensive set of measures needed for implementing the low carbon growth effective. These include tax incentives, fiscal subsidies, renewable energy, energy efficiency targets coupled with appropriate standards and monitoring mechanisms.

As promising as these efforts are, there are many gaps within this strategy, including the incorporation of Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS) as part of the renewable energy framework, which would allow emissions to rise too high for too long. In 2009, the UK developed an LCDS, the Low Carbon Transition Plan 2014, which identified the priority of energy efficiency policies and increased the use of renewable energy and heat and transport. They identified gaps in inclusion of international aviation and shipping emissions — gaps that still desperately remain to be tackled.

LCDs have demonstrated positive approaches towards low carbon growth and in developing countries. As well as employing investment in low carbon opportunities areas, these plans may also expose the remaining gaps that still need tackling within countries. This step is crucial in developing LCDs and progressing domestically to shape activities and behavioral patterns.

Durban can also make decisions in helping to setting common guidelines and enabling support for preparation of plans. Including timelines and the key elements of such plans will enable all countries to achieve their collective climate masterpieces.

Fossil Fuel Subsidies: A 3-Point Plan for Durban

While ECO has cheered the high level commitments by the G20 and APEC to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, actual progress has been slow. In Durban, Parties have a number of politically realistic opportunities to advance actions on fossil fuel subsidies. Eliminating fossil fuel subsidies can drive the transition to a Gigatonne gap and help achieve the emissions reductions necessary to stay below 2°C or even 1.5°C. It can also provide Annex II Parties with the opportunity to use a share of income that could be used for climate finance. Parties can and must move forward in the near future with a three-point action plan.

1. Strengthen Reporting. The status of fossil fuel subsidies should be reported as part of a country’s national communication, the process should be strengthened to increase transparency. The task in Durban is to agree to revise national communications guidelines for both developed and developing countries respectively, and recognizing the need to enhance fossil fuel subsidy reporting as part of those discussions. Of course, there are also a number of other benefits from revising the guidelines.

2. Close the Gigatonne Gap. Fossil fuel subsidies have a greenhouse gas equivalent. As a part of a decision on paragraphs 36-38 of the Cancun Agreements, Parties should launch a process to close the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies needed to be part of those deliberations and should return clearly reflected in the text.

3. Expand Sources of Climate Finance. The OECD has estimated that US $45 to $75 billion a year has been spent on fossil fuel subsidies in its most recent years, while the IEA in its 2011 World Energy Outlook identifies US $400 billion globally in consumption subsidies. In a time of financial crisis, these resources could be much better used promoting climate friendly initiatives and energy access for all.

ECO encourages Parties to agree on a work programme for innovative sources of long-term finance, which should include consideration of the shifting of fossil fuel subsidies as a possible source.

Canadian Youth Stand for the Future

Early yesterday afternoon, Canada’s Environment Minister strolled onto the stage of the plenary, ready to deliver yet another closing speeches and a addTo the podium. But the affable Mr. Taylor was not there to deliver the same speech as the Secretary-General sulphurous, as had been the case for the past many years. Instead, he was there to present the Canadian Youth Stand for the Future.

There are definite consequences from the recent challenge of the UNFCCC’s 100 Emission Reductions (CERS). One is 20% lower estimates of revenues for the Adaptation Fund going forward until the end of 2012.

In 2010, the first year of fast-start finance, around US $80 million was contributed. This is in addition to revenues from the CERs by Spain, Sweden and Germany, but no new pledges were made in 2011.

And what about the other developed countries setting the Adaptation Fund Board – Japan, UK, Norway, France, Switzerland, Finland. They have worked towards and achieved a more programmatic sector approach.

There are three options to contribute money to the Adaptation Fund. The first is through the CDM and CDM credits, which are neither significant nor large. The second is through the reduced and小明 can real change be made.

Global Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund

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Three-point plan for Durban could be an even bigger impact on the world’s total carbon emissions.

ECONs would like to clarify that the 2nd place fossil fuel for the EU was based on a misinterpretation, since the EU’s proposal to move towards 80% of the 1990 emissions by 2050 was misunderstood in the debate.

The focus of the AF on concrete adaptation programmes and projects and its special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable communities remains as important as ever, especially since the GCF will have a more programmatic sector approach.

No one should turn their back on the AF, and ECO would like to remind that the AF doesn’t dry up by pledging further contributions and takes to increase CER prices.

#1 UNITED STATES

LEGALLY BINDING

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