Perplexing Poland

Has the Polish Government been taken over by the Yes Men? (That would be the somewhat erratic outfit with a penchant for highlighting the superficial and often self-serving follies of leading institutions and firms.) ECO asks this only rhetorically, of course – at times the back and forth made our eyes cross. But let us explain.

There was somewhat mad posting a few weeks ago on the official COP19 website about the economic opportunities that the Arctic ice melt would bring while chasing pirates, ecologists and terrorists off the seas. The Yes Men stepped up to claim credit, sort of. The whole thing left everyone quite perplexed, including the Polish government.

But then the story got better (or really, worse). Check out the official COP Photon application. It actually greets you with this opening message: ‘Climate changes are natural phenomena, which occurred already many times on earth’. So why, huh? ECO has been wondering whether an accompanying yawn is coming, maybe ‘Que sera, sera’.

Inviting 12 fossil industry firms to sponsor the COP, including only the anti-climate lobby Business Europe in the pre-COP, and to top the madness, actually organizing a global coal summit alongside the COP, complete with a ‘Warsaw Commmune’? All this would push the envelope even for the Yes Men.

So Where’s the PUBLIC Finance?

ECO’s ears are hurting from the deafening noise developed countries are making around private finance as being the key to scaling up climate action and meeting the $100 billion target.

Maybe we are just finding it hard to see, on the evidence provided, that developed countries are really trying hard to get away with as little public finance as possible. But so far, the sad reality that since the end of Fast Start Finance, developing countries have been given no clarity on the future scale of public finance they can work with.

Worst of all, most developed countries’ climate financing levels have either plateaued or decreased. And it also turns out most public finance reported to be available in actually recycled ODA or loans to be paid. Do developed countries really expect the private sector to fill the climate finance gap as it continues to grow and even increases investment in the multi-billions in fossil fuels each year? ECO’s sense of humour does not stretch that far.

Meanwhile, ECO has been doing its own detailed analysis of the maths for those private finance-loving Parties.

While surely the private sector must be involved in fixing the climate crisis, private investment won’t reach many of the most vulnerable countries and communities, especially for adaptation. So US $100 billion of public finance will be the key – and a small price to pay for avoiding subsequent trillions in irreversible loss and damage.

And if climate finance is to be used only to catalyze climate-friendly private sector action in developing countries, given the scale of invest-ments needed (in excess of $1 trillion by 2050 alone), the $100 billion must be all public.

Getting both immediate pledges for pre-2020 finance and a roadmap for how we’ll scale up public finance to (at least) $100 billion by 2020 is crucial – both for actual climate outcomes and for trust in these negotiations. If ECO were a smart cookie, and the UNFCCC is not, scaling up public finance would be right at the top of its (finance) ministerial agenda in Warsaw.

The Topsy-Turvy Land Downunder

You may have heard that things have gone a little awry in the climate down under.

Not only has Sydney just had the worst bushfires ever in October (mid-spring), this year saw national temperature records broken month after month after month. After the hottest day ever across Australia in January, the Bureau of Meteorology had to include a new colour, much more of a shade of brown. Yes, and perhaps this is no surprise – now the heat seems to have gone into the heads of the politicians.

Despite the fact that the majority of Australians want action on climate change (as made clear by extensive exit polling at the recent election), the new government has sacked the independent Climate Change Authority (which provided independent scientific advice on carbon policy), and is in the process of repealing Australia’s carbon price and limit on pollution as well as its legislated commitment to 6% reductions by 2020.

Say again? With more than 40 countries, states and provinces around the globe implementing a carbon price, the net outcome is falling backwards, scrapping Australia’s pricing scheme and moving to an inefficient government funded scheme that – wait for this! – pays polluters to pollute.

But unfortunately, there’s even more. What about Australia’s ability to meet the middle and upper end of its 5% to 25% 2020 target range? Seems there might be a flash. Other countries should sound alarm bells and question Australia’s ability to contribute its fair share to cut global pollution and limit warming.

The new Australian government is hardly inclined to take climate change seriously – but they must.

Which Way for Warsaw?

And so here we are once again – with a hop (Doha), skip (Bonn) and a jump (Bonn the sequel) we’re landed back in Poland for another COP.

Indeed, it’s been a busy few months with the IPCC AR5 report from Working Group I (and shutting down the deniers), both China and the US taking explicit action to curb coal, and some movement from the Montreal Protocol negotiations and even the ICAO. We are excieted to see whether this momentum plays out in Warsaw, but you can tell we’re also a bit worried.

ECO welcomes our readers to Poland! (Despite the inappropriate scheduling of coal conferences! So what’s in store over the next two weeks?)

In the coming days, we can see some wildcards on the table. How will the Brazilian et al. objections be reconciled? How many lawyers will the US bring out of the woodwork to ensure no mention of ‘compensation’ crops up?

But there are also some positives. With the completion of the Kyoto Protocol and Bali negotiating tracks, negotiators will feel less of an imperative to make their decisions until the last minute to avoid scaring off the complicated flow charts that tried to keep up with seven negotiating tracks at once.

And the simplified schedule should also concentrate minds on the key issues that urgently need to be addressed. Progress here in Warsaw on climate finance, loss and damage and pre-2020 ambition is essential to build trust and to lay the foundations for an ambitious and effective 2015 agreement in Paris.

We must see much greater clarity at the end of these two weeks on the process and timeline for countries putting forward their proposed post-2020 ambition pledges – and the developed countries, their indicative post-2020 financial pledges – as well as a clear process for a full and meaningful review of those pledges well in advance of Paris. That review must assess both the collective adequacy of the pledges against the global temperature limitation goal, and their individual fairness against a set of equity criteria and indicators.

Parties need to go home from COP 19 fully aware of their homework assignments to build up their post-2020 pledges in order to put them forward in 2014. They also must focus on ways to close by 2020 the sub-

The New Unnormal

“If not us, then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?” Those words of Philippine lead negotiator Naderev Sano touched the hearts of all COP18 attendees in a powerful speech just one year ago, just after Typhoon Bopha (Pablo) struck the southeastern Philippines and killed more than 1,000 people.

Who could imagine that just one year later this country would face the most powerful and strongest storm ever to touch land – Super typhoon Hayian (Yolanda), with a death toll that might surpass 10,000, and millions more affected. These real losses of lives and physical damages occurred despite strenuous efforts to avoid such a disaster. It points to a new world where there is no more normal.

ECO would like to express its solidarity with the Filipino people, and grief for those who are suffering at the moment from this storm. It appeared so magnificent in the photos from the space shuttle, and yet so utterly devastating to millions on the ground, and especially to girls and boys who lost their fathers and mothers, and to the parents, it points to a new world where there is no more normal.

ECO has been co-operatively produced by the Climate Action Network at the UNFCCC meetings in Warsaw, November 2013. Visit www.climateactionnetwork.org for more info.

ECO has been produced without Governmental Environmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. ECO is produced co-operatively by the Climate Action Network at the UNFCCC meetings in Warsaw, November 2013. Visit www.climateactionnetwork.org for more info.

ECO email: administration@climateactionnetwork.org - ECO website: http://climateactionnetwork.org/eco-newsletters - Editorial Production: Fred Heutte
From Talk Shop to Action Shop: A Modern Fable

"Mummy, before you go to work, tell me again the story about how ships and airplanes saved the world..."

"Sure, dear. Back at the beginning of the century, it all seems to have started with a meeting of a group of diplomats who wanted to actually do something to control pollution from ships and airplanes."

"But they never argued so much as when one group of countries got together and argued that the rest of the countries really needed to do something about this, too."

"And what they wanted the world to do was to actually do something about this problem to reduce the nastiest smokes, the things that are bad for the environment."

"Some rich countries thought all the ships and airplanes should get the same treatment. Some poor countries (and some richer ones who still wanted to be treated like poor ones) thought this was the worst idea in the world, because if all ships and airplanes were treated equally, all cars, steel mills and coal plants might also be treated equally."

"But why would they do something silly like that, mummy?"

"These diplomats weren't quite sure how to balance the benefits of pollution control against the costs, but they wanted to hear each other's ideas and see how they could work together to find solutions."

"That's right, dear, the arguments went on and on. Until one day they stopped. No one was quite sure why,..."