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ECO has been published by Non-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 Marrakech, Morocco during the November COP 22 meeting. ECO email: administration@climatenetwork.org • ECO website: www.climatenetwork.org/eco-newsletters • Editorial/Production: Linh Do

All Hands on Deck!

Many of us have spent years in the UNFCCC bubble, where every bracket, and every comma (especially the commas) matter. Slowly, though, we are lifting our gaze and seeing that there is more to action already occurring on the ground. One concrete example is right in this COP's backyard—the Ouarzazate Solar Power Station. It is one of the world's largest solar thermal power plants. It will provide renewable energy to more than one million Moroccans. ECO is impressed by such an innovative project.

This project convinces us that we can learn from the good things already happening out there. Non-state actors, such as cities and regions, businesses, and civil society groups are paving the way by demonstrating ambition and concrete achievements. Can these “outside processes”, such as Global Climate Action (GCA), help increase ambition inside these processes?

Another question remains: How can non-state actors help raise ambitions for the 2018 facilitative dialogue, including leading by example through setting science-based targets? And how can the efforts by state actors help to ensure credibility, ambition and transparency in voluntary initiatives and coalitions under the heading of GCA?

So-called inside and outside processes are both needed to function well. Each can enable and assist the other to create virtuous cycles so that all actors can do more.

ECO and our friends will be exploring these issues at a CAN side event **Tuesday 8 November** at 3pm in room Bering.

First Rule of Holes: When You're in One, Stop Digging

Now that the Paris Agreement has been signed by 193 parties and ratified by over 100, one message is very clear: the era of fossil fuels is over. But it seems that not everyone has gotten the message. In many countries, the coal lobby stubbornly believes it can delay the inevitable.

Let's take Brazil as an example. Brazil likes to boast about being a climate champion. But its Congress just approved a billion-dollar subsidy to the coal industry. Equally problematic, this comes at a time when coal represents less than 5% of electricity generation in Brazil, but over 20% of emissions. Has anyone in the Brazilian Congress done the maths?

The coal industry spends a fortune on lobbying. But President Temer now has the chance to veto this subsidy, as tens of thousands of Brazilians have urged him to do. The world is watching closely, and expects meaningful action from a country that could otherwise be one of the first to reach 100% renewables.

But it's not only Brazil where coal still dreams of a future. Forbes Magazine recently described Japan as having a “renewed love affair with coal”, with over 40 new plants being built, planned or proposed before 2020. If implemented, this would be a nightmare for the climate.

Perhaps even worse, Tokyo's renewed love for coal isn't confined to home. As the world's biggest contributor of public financing for coal projects, Japan invested over \$22 billion overseas from 2007 to 2015, including funding for several proposed coal projects in—wait for it—Brazil. It's high time for Japan to stop sleepwalking, catch up with the times and stop funding the dirty fossils of the past, both at home and abroad.

Turkey's situation is nearly as sickening. The country won COP22's inaugural Fossil of the Day award yesterday, in part for its absurd plans to build 70 new coal power plants that would add over 70 GW of dirty energy capacity. Just writing that sentence makes ECO nauseous. No matter how you cut it, this blatant denial of physics is bad, bad medicine for an ailing climate. If Turkey wants to be taken seriously, it needs to take some remedial lessons and get back on track for renewables. The coal financiers investing there and in the Balkan region are big players: largely Chinese money channelled through different development banks.

All around the world, the coal industry is desperately attempting to defy the laws of physics. It wants us to believe that when you're in a hole, if you keep digging you just might get out. Thankfully, ECO had an excellent physics professor and has sounder advice: when you're in a hole, stop digging. One thing is certain—if we are to deliver on the promise of the Paris Agreement, every country must show more ambition when it comes to emission reductions. Getting rid of dirty coal would be a great place to start.

Four Conclusions on BA2016

Now that the Standing Committee on Climate Finance (SCF) has presented its 2016 Biennial Assessment (BA2016) of climate finance, the report's key findings and recommendations are meant to guide negotiators through the next two weeks' worth of climate finance agenda items. ECO finds four items to be particularly noteworthy:

First, the SCF had the interesting recommendation (probably inspired by studying the chaotic jungle of past Biennial Reports) that Parties should be enabled to provide additional information on, you guessed it, how they have identified finance as being "climate-specific". ECO reads this as a finely-worded, slightly ironic critique of what's plain for everyone to see: the current, very lenient reporting system creates the temptation to overstate the climate-relevance of provided funds. Of course, ECO is quite sure this would never happen because anyone would seek to inflate their numbers. But to many it seems like a lot of work to track down what portion of funds was aiming specifically at climate action. That's especially for flows where climate is one of many objectives. Clearly, tightening these reporting guidelines should be addressed in the SBSTA negotiations on accounting modalities.

Second, the BA2016 confirms what every other climate finance report has said: the continued existence of an ugly imbalance between adaptation and mitigation in climate finance (with the notable exception of the UNFCCC funds). The recent \$100 billion roadmap released by developed countries highlighted that, in 2020, a mere one-fifth of the total is projected to target adaptation. The BA2016 confirms that observation. Parties should address this when negotiating their COP22 decision on long-term finance. Or perhaps developed countries have some announcement up their sleeves for next week to do away with that imbalance?

Thirdly, as ECO hears the SCF present its executive summary, ECO wonders how much the BA2016 will say about finance for loss and damage. The Biennial Assessment's next iteration should study such flows, based on conclusions from the WIM and the SCF's work on accounting for loss and damage separately from adaptation. This should be combined with a proper work plan of at least two years for the WIM, to understand—and scale up—loss and damage finance further.

Fourthly, ECO was pleased that yesterday's panel discussing the BA2016 also mentioned the role of future iterations of the Biennial Assessment in understanding progress toward implementing Article 2 c) of the Paris Agreement: to make all flows—whether public or private—consistent with low-emissions, climate-resilient development.

After noting these points of direction, ECO wonders: why not reserve one chapter of the BA2018 to study fossil fuel subsidies, including an evaluation on actions taken by countries to remove them? Consider this something to chew on for those seriously planning to implement the Paris Agreement.

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Moving Transparency in the Right Direction

With transparency coming into focus in the APA, here are three cheat sheet answers to help with the transparency eye chart.

Transparency is a cross-cutting issue and Article 13 has many facets, making it a complicated piece of the Paris Agreement puzzle. To deal with this complexity, Parties need a boost of strong modalities, procedures and guidelines (MPG).

The first step is to build a common and inclusive framework to enhance effectiveness. This means ensuring all strands of the transparency framework are tied together with flexibility and in the context of equity, to account for differing national circumstances. The MPG must be the leader of the transparency pack on several fronts. These include the level of action and support for how Parties implement the commitments, in the context of the cross-cutting principles reiterated in the Agreement, including the integrity of ecosystems, human rights and gender equality. Secondly, non-Party stakeholders can provide a great contribution to the effectiveness and integrity of the transparency framework. The modalities, procedures and guidelines should recognise and promote this role.

Finally, the entire process needs to be complete and ready for 2018. When aiming to reach such an imperative goal, concrete steps must be taken. Hence extra sessions might be necessary to make this transparency framework operational for 2018. Also, it will aid national implementation to be comparable across the board. Let Marrakech be the constructive conversation that kick starts this. It's a continuous journey; but let's not forget that all marathons started with a single step in the right direction.



Year of the Turkey

Everyone loves a good COP -- so much so that even though delegates are roaming around a half-finished conference centre. And although we don't know where the 2017, 2018 or 2019 COPs will be hosted, we do know one thing: 2020 could be Year of the Turkey.

The Government of Turkey's bid for the 2020 COP has caught the eye of some who happened to find themselves wandering around the colourful pavilions in Area D. It cannot overshadow the awarding of the Fossil of the Day award for most ironic agenda item request. Despite having not yet even ratified the Paris Agreement (like the hundred odd countries that have), yesterday Turkey had the nerve to ask for an agenda item on financial support under the Paris Agreement and the Green Climate Fund. Brave, courageous, audacious—or simply ludicrously out of touch?

Unfortunately, it is possibly the latter, given Turkey's plans to support the opening of new coal plants and increase its greenhouse gas emissions in the near term. Instead of pretending to access financial support under the Agreement, Turkey should do the simple 1, 2, 3: ratify, increase ambition in its national climate action plan and move towards 100% renewable energy.