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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

The Danger and Opportunities of 1.5°C for Smallholder Agriculture

The decision to limit global warming to 1.5°C is vital for small scale family agriculture, which is especially climate-vulnerable. However, as the UNEP emissions gap report highlights, there is still too much distance between the Paris Agreement targets and Parties' NDC commitments. This gap reveals a clear imperative for countries to reaffirm and set an ambitious course towards attaining this goal during COP22, a sentiment echoed across platforms here this week.

Maintaining and increasing ambition is crucial, but ECO reminds Parties that they should also consider *how* these commitments will be met. In order to meet the long-term goal, IPCC scenarios estimate that up to a billion hectares of land need to be dedicated to negative emissions efforts such as bioenergy — a strategy that can threaten land rights, trapping farmers between a warming world and restricted land access. If done wrong, climate action in the land sector could have massive negative impacts on food security, adaptive capacities, development potential, gender equality and the livelihoods of communities dependent on small-scale agriculture, as well as on biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, with an increased risk of land-grabbing and rises in food prices.

To ensure the 1.5°C target is reached in the best way, Parties need to be proactive in reducing their emissions before looking at offsets. Strong, comprehensive social and environmental safeguards that ensure human rights must be developed. Parties *must* prioritise emission reductions *before* 2020, instead of delaying on the assumption that they can compensate later with negative emissions. Moreover, solutions are at hand, in the energy, transport, and forest sectors, and within food systems (production and distribution models, diets, food waste, agroforestry/livestock combinations).

In Monday's Opening Plenary Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa stated that COP22 will herald a "new era of international climate action". ECO urges this COP to work on ensuring that the legacy of 1.5°C is a movement towards a more just, equitable, and environmentally sound world — one in which land rights, local food sovereignty, and security are reaffirmed and emboldened, and not a reversal of the (hard won) development gains of the 21st century.

[____]: What this holds for the world?

Don't worry, ECO gets out of the (UNFCCC) house every now and then. Or at least enough to know that there's something going on in America right now, and it could mean good or bad news for the climate.

The Paris Agreement was a watershed moment for the world: it signified a global commitment to climate action. With the US election (finally!) over, the new President will have an opportunity to catalyse further action on the climate, sending a clear signal to investors to stay on track transitioning to renewable-powered economy on track.

Climate is an important diplomatic area for the US, as seen during COP21. It is also an area where the next President should continue to build collaborative relationships to address climate change. All over the world, climate change action is gaining momentum. While ECO might be late to (or recovering from) the US election party, stay tuned for the reaction from Marrakech to the next American President tomorrow.

Let's Make Inclusiveness the Norm

ECO heartily applauds the move by Parties negotiating loss and damage yesterday to deviate from the bad practice of closing informals to Observers after the first session. ECO was inside the second informal meeting (after being there for the first), and neither did the sky fall in nor did Observers disrupt any conversations. The work of the loss and damage mechanism itself already sets a good example of inclusiveness and interaction with civil society. This now sets another precedent which all other informals should follow. We hope this is the beginning of a long running love affair with openness and transparency. With kisses, Civil Society

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Challenging Sacred Cows

It's great that today is Farmers' Day! That way, ECO gets to celebrate and protect the 2 billion smallholder farmers who feed most of our fellow planet dwellers, using less than a quarter of the world's farmland.

Large-scale industrial agriculture drives the majority of emissions from the agriculture sector. Synthetic fertilisers create high levels of emissions. They require large amounts of water, threatening water tables and wetlands and making crops more vulnerable to climate change. What's more, intensive meat production generates high levels of methane emissions and deforestation to grow livestock feed. In contrast, many smallholder farmers — especially women in developing countries — use agro-ecological techniques to strengthen adaptation, nurture biodiversity, soils and natural fertility, all while avoiding emissions.

Putting all that into consideration, it is time to freshen up the SBSTA agriculture talks, which have gone stale. With clear references to food security, sustainable consumption patterns and human rights in the Paris Agreement, negotiations on agriculture have a critical opportunity to make these a reality for the world's farmers facing climate change.

A new SBSTA Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security is critical to provide a sustained space for open dialogue, where countries can consider how to implement their own agriculture NDC pledges, whether on adaptation, mitigation or both.

This new programme should also develop guidance to ensure that food security and farmers' rights, including safe access to land, are protected in the face of climate change or risky new technologies. It should be a space where all aspects of food security — including social, environmental, gender, biodiversity and food production — can be addressed. And guidelines for finance to support the right types of agriculture should be developed.

In particular, a work programme on Agriculture and Food Security must address mitigation in those areas, which, when addressed, have the greatest potential for meeting the 1.5°C goal. These are industrial livestock, intensive agriculture, food waste and retail and consumption patterns. Protecting smallholder farmers means targeting countries with the highest per capita emissions. Now, post-Paris, it's time to challenge a few sacred cows.

The Search for Loss and Damage

Delegates, who amongst you does not have a UNFCCC website horror story? ECO is the first to acknowledge that unfccc.int has improved dramatically over the years, but there's still one problem area, seemingly designed to drive the casual (or even daily) user to the brink of madness: Try to find "Loss and Damage" on unfccc.int.

Go on, ECO will wait for you to try...

...don't worry, we're still here.

Ah, yes, dear delegate, welcome back. Don't worry, we're here for you. We understand. Or did you get there? If so, kudos! ECO wouldn't be surprised if you gave up in frustration, though. Or hurl your mobile device in exasperation. Or worse, your laptop.

It seems the UNFCCC web team has not yet understood that loss and damage is now, in this post-Paris world, wholly separate to and distinct from adaptation and worthy of being found in its separate section, rather than hidden in the bowels of the website, only to be discovered via an interminable set of clicks. After all, if loss and damage has graduated to its own Article in the Paris Agreement, surely it can graduate to its own link on the left hand menu of the website.

Conditional NDCs Must Unlock Ambition

Every single assessment of the NDCs has indicated that Parties are not on track to meet the 2°C goal of the Paris agreement, let alone 1.5°C. Fortunately, some Parties have already put forward the seeds of a possible solution to this problem. Some have used their contributions to specifically indicate additional mitigation potential that could be unlocked with technology, finance and capacity-building support. These efforts, conditioned upon the delivery of support, represent an additional 2.4 GT of emissions reductions in 2030.

If we identified 2.4 GT of additional mitigation potential through contributions without any guidance, how many more GTs could be unlocked if developing country Parties indicated how much they can contribute to the international effort if a specified level of support was provided (in addition to what they could do with their own resources)?

Developed countries should then honour their dual obligations to deliver mitigation efforts within their own borders as well as deliver support to unlock efforts in developing countries that are conditional on receiving support. More than any other space in the negotiations, partially conditional NDCs emphasise how critical the delivery of finance, technology and capacity building is to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. And they offer an opportunity for countries to work collaboratively to unlock additional emissions reductions.

As Parties pursue further discussions on the features to be included in future NDCs, ECO can only hope that they will all agree that clarity on conditional and unconditional efforts is a key feature that can help to unlock greater ambition by quantifying the levels and nature of support required.