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Critical Concerns
October 2009

"In the space of a few decades, a new form of global inequality has abruptly become politically important. An industrialised minority has been shown to be overusing the earth's ability to cleanse the atmosphere of excess carbon and other greenhouse gases. Awkwardly, this inequality has turned out to be one that threatens survival itself – including, ultimately, the survival of the rich".

Clippings on Critical Issues & Concerns for NGOs, Activists and others concerned with Justice & Social Change

CLIMATE CHANGE *Wheeling and Dealing: From Rio to Copenhagen*

In June, 1992 world leaders gathered at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil for the Earth Summit (The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – UNCED), to give themselves - as they proclaimed - "the last chance to save the world" from an impending environmental crisis. Seventeen years down the line, and after several more world summits, they are still at it. In December 2009 they will meet again at Copenhagen to negotiate a treaty that aims to save the world from the most cataclysmic threat to its existence - the threat of climate change.

At the Rio summit, the first concrete step was taken to address the issue of climate change and resulted in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC - is the first international agreement to prevent serious climate change). The Convention called on all countries to make their best effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to commit developed countries - which cause climate change - by the year 2000. The flaw in the Convention was that world leaders failed to come to an agreement on concrete commitments to reduce emissions that cause global warming. The USA, the largest polluter did not even sign the agreement.

This issue that is at the heart of international negotiations on climate change. At Copenhagen it is expected that the international community will finally come to an agreement on a concrete road map to reduce global temperatures by 2 degree centigrade above pre-industrial levels.

What is climate Change? What is it so dangerous for the planet are two questions for which the answers are established and beyond controversy But the most controversial and vexed question of the century with regard to climate change is what we intend to do about it.

Critical Concerns takes a look at this long and winding road that has brought the international community to Copenhagen.

This compilation discusses the period from the Rio conference of 1992 to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 2004, during which the initial responses to mitigating the effects of climate change were shaped. From Kyoto onwards a definite shift in the nature of negotiations took place – the climate change issue began to be seen in terms of marked oriented solutions within a pronounced neo-liberal paradigm. We take a critical look at the mechanisms put in place since Kyoto - Clean Development Mechanisms - and tracks developments leading up to Copenhagen.

Finally, we also take a look at a possible post-Copenhagen scenario and the alternate pathways to climate justice and sustainable development.

In this issue

WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS

Why we should be concerned about Climate Change

It rained all day. It rained like it had never rained before. Trains stopped, cars were submerged, several died, and hundreds and thousands of people waded through the streets of Mumbai. The city that never stands still came to a grinding halt. It almost sounds like a scene from a sci-fi film, but in fact it is scarily real. Mumbai witnessed the strongest rains ever recorded in India in July 2005. Such catastrophic weather phenomena are often seen as acts of God, and they might well be, but the increasing occurrence of extreme weather in India and around the world points towards a dangerous threat - climate change.

Though floods, droughts, storms and other extreme weather events have always been a reality, they have been rare occurrences interrupting long periods of calm -- sudden outbursts marring nature's largely gentle rhythm. Now, because of human-induced climate change, that gentle rhythm is breaking up. Overwhelming scientific evidence indicates that climate change is real - the world is warming up and climate systems are changing

Throughout the 10,000-year history of human civilisation, weather patterns have remained relatively constant, but the frequency of extreme weather events has increased steadily over the 20th century. The number of weather-related disasters during the 1990s was four times that of the 1950s, and cost 14 times as much in economic losses. These trends confirm the predictions of computer models: as the atmosphere warms, the climate will not only become hotter but much more unstable. Extreme events are likely to increase, and droughts and floods will become more common in many regions.

Climate change is an issue that threatens the entire globe. However, it disproportionately affects developing countries like India and it will be most disruptive to the poorest of the poor - those who have the least resources and the least capacity to cope. With its huge and growing population, a long, densely populated and low-lying coastline, and an economy that is closely tied to its natural resource base, climate change could have potentially devastating impacts on India .

The science of climate change is not a hundred percent accurate and different models and simulations suggest different scenarios. But there are certain facts that all scientists are unanimous about - the earth is getting warmer and climate systems are changing, and the impact of climate change is something that we are already contending with. What is also clear is that human activity has been responsible for this. It is unfortunate and, perhaps, unfair that globally the impact of climate change will disproportionately harm developing nations such as India despite the fact that we have contributed relatively little to cumulative greenhouse gas emissions. But we can't afford to sit around and cry foul. If the recent flooding in Mumbai and other parts of India are anything to go by, we need to get our act together fast. Because with climate change -- when it rains, it pours.

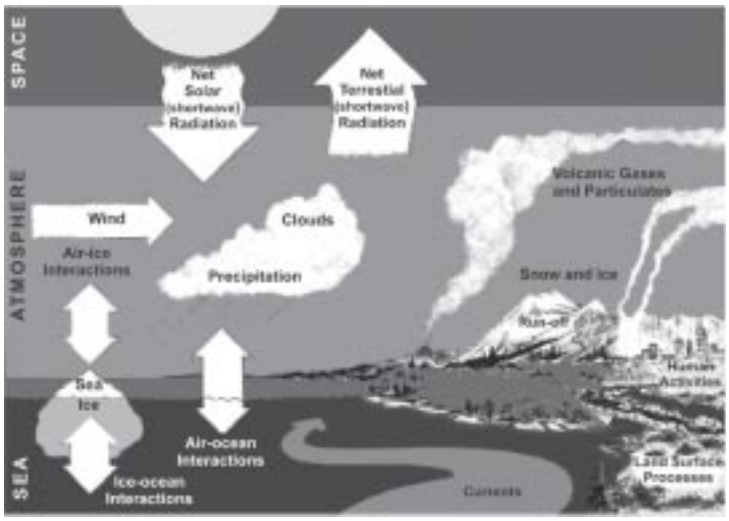
- Aditi Sen, Info Change News & Features, August 2005

What is Climate Change ?

Climate is usually defined as “the average weather.” It is measured by observing patterns in temperature, precipitation (such as rain or snow), wind and the days of sunlight as well as other variables that might be measured at any given site.

- The climate is the manifestation of a highly complex system consisting of five interacting components: the atmosphere (air), the hydrosphere (water), cryosphere (frozen part of the earth), the land surface, and the biosphere (part of the earth where life exists).
- Climate change refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (anthropogenic causes). Climate change can result from the interaction of the atmosphere and oceans. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) puts more emphasis on human activities which cause climate change.
- Changes in the world’s climate are not new. In fact, this is one factor which has influenced the course of human history and human evolution. Historically, humans have been able to cope and adapt to these changes.
- Previously, it was the climate that changed humans. Now, we’re changing the climate, and we’re changing it too fast.
- The climate change we are experiencing now is brought by humanity’s massive dependence on fuels, particularly carbon-based fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas. These fuels bring about greenhouse gas emissions.

What are greenhouse gases and what is the “greenhouse effect”? How are these related to global warming?



What to expect……

Climate change is set to inflict damage in every continent, hitting poor countries hardestand threatening nearly a third of the world's species with extinction. Global warming will affect much of life on earth this century.

Greenhouse gases will change rainfall patterns, punch up the powerof storms and boost the risk of drought, flooding and stress on water supplies.

Asia faces a heightened risk of flooding, severe w ter shortages, infectious disease and hunger from global warming this century.

The region is confronted by a 90- per cent likelihood that more than a billion of its people will be "adversely affected" by the impacts of global warming by the 2050s.

- *120 million to 1.2 billion people in Asia will experience increased water stress by 2020, and 185 to 981 million by 2050.*
- *Cereal yields in South Asia could drop in some areas by up to 30 per cent by 2050.*
- *Even modest rises in sea levels will cause flooding and economic disruption in densely-populated megadeltas, such as the mouths the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta in low-lying Bangladesh.*
- *Cholera and malaria could increase, thanks to flooding and a wider habitat range for mosquitoes.*
- *In the Himalayas, glaciers less than four kilometres long will disappear entirely if average global temperatures rise by 3° Celsius. This will initially cause increased flooding and mudslides followed by an eventual decrease in flow in rivers that are glacier-fed.*
- *Per capita water availability in India will drop from around 1,900 cubic metre currently to 1,000 cu. metres by 2025.*

-The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

- Greenhouse gases (GHGs)1 are chemical compounds such as water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide found in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is the main GHG and its emissions mainly come from burning fossil fuels.
- These greenhouse gases absorb some of the infrared radiation (heat) which reflects back heat that gets trapped by the greenhouse gases inside our atmosphere. This is necessary to make the earth warm, otherwise, it will be too cold. The atmosphere acts like the glass walls of a greenhouse, which allows the sun’s rays to enter but keeps the heat in.
- This natural process is called the greenhouse effect. As humans emit more carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the greenhouse effect becomes stronger and global warming occurs.
- **Global warming** is the noted average increase of the earth’s surface temperature and oceans as compared to previous centuries. This is a result of the continuous trapping of heat within the earth’s atmosphere due to increased quantity of greenhouse gases. Global warming is one of the key aspects of climate change.
- Levels of some important greenhouse gases have increased by about 25% since large-scale industrialization began around 150 years ago.
- A brochure made by the US Department of Energy says “The U.S. produces about 25% of global carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels; primarily because our economy is the largest in the world and we meet 85% of our energy needs through burning fossil fuels.”

It further states “..In the U.S., our greenhouse gas emissions come mostly from energy use. These are driven largely by economic growth, fuel used for electricity generation, and weather patterns affecting heating and cooling needs. Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, resulting from petroleum and natural gas, represent 82% of total U.S. human-made greenhouse gas emissions”

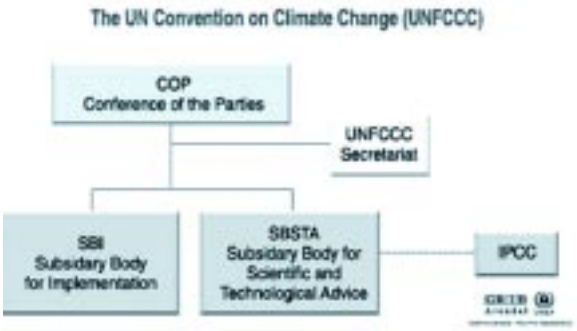
What is the world doing about climate change?
Which multilateral organizations are mainly dealing with it?

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

In 1988 the WMO and the UNEP co-established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an ad hoc, open-ended intergovernmental mechanism composed of scientists from all over the world, tasked to provide scientific assessments of climate change. It is recognized as the most authoritative scientific and technical voice on climate change, and its assessments influence the negotiators of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol. It provides governments with scientific, technical and socioeconomic information which evaluate the risks and develops a response to global climate change.

The IPCC is organized into three working groups plus a task force on national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories:

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)



- The first assessment report of the IPCC served as the basis for negotiating the UNFCCC, the guiding framework by which countries base their responses to climate change.
- The UNFCCC is a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) which was adopted during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the Earth Summit which was held in Rio de Janiero, Brazil in l992. It entered into force in 1994. The UNFCCC sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can beaffected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The Convention enjoys near universal membership, with 192 countries having ratified and acceded to it.
- Its main goal is the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic humaninduced interference with the climate system."
- The main decisionmaking body is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which is composed of 180 states that have ratified or acceded to the agreement. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) provides the COP with timely information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to the Convention. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) helps with the assessment and review of the Convention's implementation.
- However, with the realization that GHG emissions continued to rise around the world, Parties of the UNFCCC began negotiations to come up with a "firm and binding commitment by developed countries to reduce emissions." The result of these negotiations was the Kyoto Protocol.

Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol (KP) was adopted during the 3rd Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP3) in Kyoto, Japan on 11 December 1997. It entered into force on 16 February 2005.

It sets targets for industrialized countries (Annex 1 countries) to reduce their pollution and gives them flexibility as to how they can reach these targets.

The KP is an international agreement that is linked to the existing UNFCCC, but standing on its own. It has the same objectives and institutions as the UNFCCC except for the distinction where the Convention encouraged developed countries to stabilize GHG emissions but the Protocol commits them to do so.

As of December 12, 2007, 176 countries and one regional economic integration organization (the EEC) have deposited instruments of ratifications, accessions, approvals or acceptances. The US remains to be the only country that has not ratified the global treaty.

Road to Copenhagen

The climate change convention is a so-called framework convention. This means that it does not represent the last word on the fight against climate change. It is stated in the treaty that it is to be revised and expanded over time. Neither does it set any binding targets, but aims to get member countries to reduce their emissions in order to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the Earth's climate system. The target was for emissions of greenhouse gases in 2000 to stabilize with those in 1990.

During the 1990s it soon became clear that the UNFCCC convention in itself would not change developments towards growing emissions of greenhouse gases. In 1997 the convention was therefore expanded to include the so-called Kyoto Protocol, which for the first time sets binding targets for how much the industrialised countries should reduce their emissions by 2012. The protocol sets binding targets for the greenhouse gas emissions of 37 industrialised countries.

A group of countries that have ratified the UNFCCC have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol and are therefore not covered by the Kyoto Protocol. The most prominent of these is the USA.

At the 13th annual conference of member countries (COP13) in Bali it was decided to work towards a new agreement for the subsequent years. The plan - which is called the Bali Action Plan - aims towards a new agreement which is to be negotiated at the 15th annual conference - COP15 - in Copenhagen in 2009.

Source: http://en.cop15.dk/climate+facts/process/from+rio+to+kyoto

What after 2012?

- The new process may lead to a new "comprehensive" agreement Or the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol will be retained and the focus will be on strengthening the implementation of decisions already adopted but not implemented
- Developed countries - want to radically change or replace the Kyoto Protocol and even parts of the Convention.
- Developing countries (G77 and China) - supports the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol.

Joining Dots From Kyoto To Copenhagen

1992 | Rio Conference produces the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.** Enshrines two principles — **"common but differentiated responsibility"** and duties of countries based on **"historical emissions".** Says industrialized countries have the responsibility to commit to emission reductions while developing countries should do their best while keeping their development priorities at front. Rich to fully compensate other countries for emission reduction actions

1997 | **Kyoto Protocol** accepted. A **'tool'** within the UNFCCC, it determines fixed targets for emission cuts to be achieved by industrialized countries against 1990 levels. First phase of implementation of protocol is 2008-2012

2002 | Kyoto becomes operative but US & Australia refuse to ratify

2007 | UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns crisis is more imminent, says world must restrain global temperatures from going more than 2 degrees above pre-industrial era to have half a chance of preventing irreversible changes on Earth

At **Bali**, UNFCCC members seek long-term vision where all countries participate in mitigation, stronger and ambitious targets for industrialized countries and payment of full incremental costs of any actions developing countries may take. State actions of developing countries would be scrutinized for the part that is internationally funded. Countries decide to reach a new **"agreed outcome"** by 2009 Dec in Copenhagen. Room for US to take reduction commitments outside Kyoto

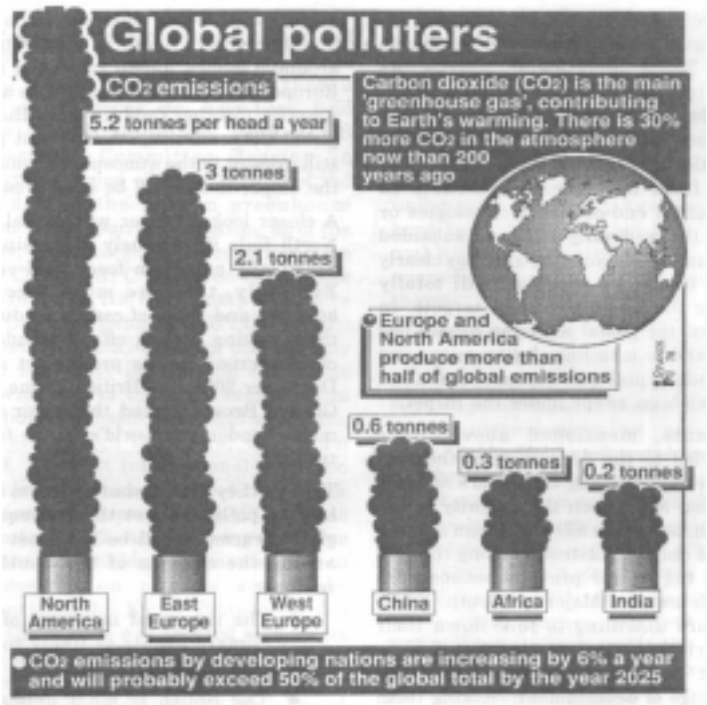
2008 | **Recession hits US and other industrialized countries.** Obama admn revives Major Economies Forum to push for decisions outside UN talks. Backed by EU and other rich countries, reiterates Bush line that emerging economies must also take obligations to cut emissions. G77 opposes

- PM Manmohan Singh, in a change of stance, says **India's per capita emissions shall never rise above the average of the developed countries**
- EU, US ask India to reduce emissions **"below business as usual"** instead of earlier **"emission reduction targets"**
- US unwilling to alter its IPR regime or compensate emerging economies. Same with EU
- US begins work on a domestic comprehensive climate bill; India and China, among others, finalize domestic climate change action plans

2009 | US indicates it prefers to take extremely low level of emission reductions and deeper cuts decades later but refuses to sign Kyoto. EU, US, Japan and others not keen on compensating unless emerging economies put their national action plans into a new treaty as their obligations

- India blinks at Major Economies Forum meet, weakens link between actions and compensation in terms of finance and technology
- Environment minister Jairam Ramesh suggests India can do without compensation. Offers to put self-funded actions under deep scrutiny
- At Bangkok, EU too ditches Kyoto, backs US' call for a single legal instrument with different commitments from emerging economies and developed nations. US says proposed domestic legislations of countries such as India should be turned into commitments under new legal instrument - referred to as the **'Australian Proposal'.** India along with G77 and China vehemently oppose the **"murder of Kyoto Protocol"**
- US says unlikely to commit to emission reduction or finances by Copenhagen in December
- Ramesh writes to the PM, suggesting India should accept Australian Proposal and move away from G77 and not be too argumentative

Times of India, Mumbai, 23 October 2009



200 million at risk by 2050?

The place where most of the world's people could first begin to feel the consequences of global warming may come as a surprise: in the stomach, via the supper plate.

That's the view of a small but influential group of agricultural experts who are increasingly worried that global warming will trigger food shortages long before it causes better known but more distant threats, such as rising sea levels that flood coastal cities.

The scale of agriculture's vulnerability to global warming was highlighted late last year when the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), an umbrella organization representing 15 of the world's top crop research centres, issued an astounding estimate of the impact of climate change on a single crop, wheat, in one of the world's major breadbaskets.

Researchers using computer models to simulate the weather patterns likely to exist around 2050 found that the best wheat-growing land in the wide arc of fertile farmland stretching from Pakistan through Northern India and Nepal to Bangladesh would be decimated. Much of the area would become too hot and dry for the crop, placing the food supply of 200 million people at risk.

"The impacts on agriculture in developing countries, and particularly on countries that depend on rain-fed agriculture, are likely to be devastating," says Dr. Louis Verchot, principal ecologist at the World Agroforestry Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

In a cruel twist of fate, most of the hunger resulting from global warming is likely to be felt by those who haven't caused the problem: the people in developing countries. At the same time, it may be a boon to agriculture in richer northern countries more responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate instability.

Smaller grain harvests will translate into sharply higher food prices. Soaring prices, and "could lead to urban food riots in scores of countries around the world, and those food riots could lead to political instability and that political instability could begin to undermine global economic progress."

Martin Staedt, Saturday's Globe and Mail, Mar. 31, 2009
www.theglobeandmail.com/

The Rich and not so Clean

The Indian poor are subsidising the rich, allowing them a much greater share of the atmosphere than should be rightfully theirs.

Some people are more responsible than others for the warming of the earth's atmosphere that is triggering catastrophic climate change. The biggest emitters of greenhouse gases are today's industrialised countries, the United States topping the list. Countries like India are rapidly increasing their share; but each Indian citizen, on average, still emits a fraction of what each American and European does.

While average emissions per Indian citizen are way below the global average, some Indians - the richest - are already nearing this average. Worse, they are already well above levels considered sustainable. But this is camouflaged by the fact that the vast majority of Indians - the poor - are way below the average.

Greenpeace surveyed 819 households across several income classes, and calculated their carbon emissions based on energy consumption from household appliances and transportation. India's average per capita carbon emission is 1.67 tonnes (compared to the global average of 5.03). But Greenpeace found that the emission of the richest class (those with income above Rs. 30,000 a month) is 4.97, just a fraction below the world average. In contrast, the emission of the poorest class (income below Rs. 3000 a month, almost half of India's population) is only 1.11 tonnes. The richest in India produce 4.5 times more carbon emissions than the poorest.

Greenpeace's fingers point unwaveringly at India's rich for cornering much more of the atmospheric space that all citizens should have equal right to. It warns that the rich are denying development possibilities for the poor.

(The Reality of Climate Injustice, by Ashish Kothari, The Hindu, 18th November,2007)

Urban Rural Divide

A study by the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research found that, in 1989-90, the per capita carbon emission of the top 10% of the urban population in India was 13 times that of the bottom half of the rural population. It is the poverty-stricken Dalit woman who fetches head loads of shrub from long distances for the day's kitchen fire and her children who pore over their books in kerosene lamp glow, that have saved and continue to save this planet from a worse disaster than it faces now. If the excluded and oppressed sections of third world countries demand their rightful share of equitably distributed CDM funds for their own development, that could lead to a different social dynamic than what these societies are used to.

The worst is yet to come....

The International Institute for Environment and Development has studied the possible effects of rising ocean levels, and concluded that one eighth of the world's urban population would become "climate refugees," creating the largest displacement of people in world history. The most vulnerable countries are China (144 million displaced), India (63 million) and Bangladesh (62 million), while lower on the list are Japan (30 million) and the United States (23 million).

Not only will massive amounts of people become homeless, but the changing climate is expected to create other environmental and social crises internationally. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

In Africa, "...between 75 million and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change." And: "...access to food, in many African countries and regions is projected to be severely compromised by climate variability and change."

In Latin America: "Changes in precipitation patterns and the disappearance of glaciers are projected to significantly affect water availability for human consumption, agriculture, and energy generation."

http://www.countercurrents.org/cooke191009.htm

LOOKING BACK AT RIO

It all began at the Earth Summit at Rio or perhaps a little earlier, when the World Resource Institute put out a report that put the blame on developing countries of the south for global warming. Then came. George Bush (the senior) with his proposal to impose international ownership on the global forests as the solution to global warming. He left in a huff, his forest proposal shot down by the conference, complaining, ' that measures to protect the environment might interfere with the workings of the free market or slow economic growth'.

The international community agreed on a toothless climate change convention, without any binding commitments to reduce green house gas emissions. The US did not sign the Convention.

Bush Ambushes UNCED

It was the U.S. government against the world at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio from June 3 to June 14, 1992. Having earlier scuttled the climate change treaty by insisting that it contain no specific greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The U.S. belligerence was so extreme that it threw all other players at the conference - other Northern countries, the Third World and the massive number of non-governmental organization (NGO) observers - into a loose coalition, opposed to the United States.

The United States resisted bold initiatives, expressing concerns about the ways that measures to protect the environment might interfere with the workings of the free market or slow economic growth.

The Climate Change Convention negotiations offer the best example of how the United States succeeded in controlling the Earth Summit's terms of debate. With the United States sticking to its hard line position in negotiations prior to UNCED and George Bush threatening not to attend the conference, the rest of the world's nations backed down from their plan to establish specific emission reduction targets in the climate change treaty. The final agreement called on countries to make their best effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but did not set a goal of achieving 1990 levels by the year 2000 - a standard around which all countries but the United States had achieved consensus.

The Bush administration received a diplomatic slap for its stand on global warming-related issues from the European Community, which announced during the Earth Summit that its 12 members had reached an internal agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2000.

Most UNCED participants, while stating that they had wanted the Climate Change Convention to contain specific targets, hailed the agreement as an important first step in addressing what many consider the world's foremost environmental problem.

To counter its isolation at the conference, the Bush administration worked hard to achieve a set of "Forest Principles" - downgraded from an initially hoped-for Forest Convention - and announced a "Forests for the Future Initiative." The initiative proposes to double worldwide international forest conservation assistance to $2.7 billion. As a "down payment" on the initiative, the administration announced that the United States will increase bilateral forestry assistance by $150 million each year.

The Bush administration's focus on forests did indeed offend may developing countries. In emphasizing forests' function as carbon sinkholes, Bush clearly hoped to divert attention from the U.S. role in sabotaging the climate change treaty. This drew the ire of Third World countries, which demanded that the United States limit its world- leading contribution to the greenhouse effect before calling on poorer countries which are less responsible for global warming to undertake efforts to combat the problem.

When the time came for Rio+10 at Johannesburg last August, the US saw to it that Climate Change wasn't even an agenda item and scuttled targets that the European Union and other countries were pushing for the growth of renewable energy

by Robert Weissman, Summit Games: Bush Busts UNCED

Forests of global contention

The underlying theme of the proposed convention, which Bush wanted to take home as his prize from the Earth Summit is as follows.

First, that the tropical forests are in a state of crisis. Second, that the crisis has grown in urgency because of the need to fix carbon dioxide through forests. Third, that national governments in tropical countries are incapable of managing their forests and, hence, the need for global intervention. But just intervention through money is not enough. So, fourth, principles for sustainable forestry must be defined at a global level so that management practices can be regulated.

Fifth, that these forestry practices are best defined by supranational agencies. Sixth, that trade embargoes and codes of conduct can be used as a means to reform forestry management in the tropics. And, seventh, that this proposed system can be enforced through a legal convention which will ensure compliance. A system of policing the world's forests would, thus, be in place.

The idea of a convention raises many vital issues that the people of the South must take note of. There can

continued on pg8

Why blame the South?

A year before the Rio Summit, the World Resources Institute (WRI), a Washington based private research group in collaboration with the United Nations, published a report titled, `World Resources 1990-91:A Guide to the Golobal Environment ',(Oxford University Press, New York). The principle contention of the report was to blame developing countries for global.

However, the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi after examining the WRI report came to the conclusion that, "A detailed look at the data presented by WRI itself leads to the conclusion that India and China cannot be held responsible even for a single kg of carbondioxide or methane that is accumulating in the earth's atmosphere.

The accumulation in the earth's atmosphere of these gases is mainly the result of the gargantuan consumption of the developed countries, particularly the United States". What the WRI report did was, " Heavy emphasis has been placed on carbondioxide production due to deforestation and methane production from rice fields and livestock as compared to carbondioxide production from the use of fossil fuels like oil and coal.

Since developing countries are more responsible for the former, the heavy emphasis on deforestation and methane generation tends to overplay their contribution while underplaying that of the developed countries."

(Global Warming in an Unequal World: A case for Environmental Colonialism, Anil Agarwal & Sunita Naraian, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 1996.)

continued from pg7

be no doubt that there is an urgent need for forest protection and regeneration. But it is important to ask whether it is really possible to manage the world's forests by setting in place a super-centralised system of global decision-making and governance.

Every law gives rise to a bureaucracy. And, in this case, the bureaucracy would be the FAO in Rome and the World Bank in Washington DC. But can a community of multinational bureaucrats and technocrats set practices for sustainable forest management across such a wide range of socio-ecological diversity?

On his insistence, the world has had to agree to a weak climate treaty. The US administration had to take an initiative on something to gain its leadership role and that something, which the US President had in mind, was forests.

On June 1, the White House put out a press release announcing a "Forests for the Future Initiative", which hoped to create "market-type incentives" for forest conservation as countries interested in this money would have to bid and compete for it. The press release also stated that the new initiative would "accelerate progress" towards a Global Forest Agreement .

The forest initiative had all the political elements that could have turned the Rio conference in favour of the US. It could easily have diverted the attention of the summit away from the North"s environmental problems to the South"s forests.

The initiative failed only because of the crudeness of the US position, which totally disregarded southern concerns. In terms of the benefits that the initiative would bring, the White House had only talked of protection of biodiversity, maintenance of carbon sinks and reservoirs, functions like soil erosion control, and economic benefits like plants which can be used to manufacture modern medicines. There was no mention of the fact that forests play a crucial role as a habitat for millions of tribal people across the world.

by Anil Agarwal & Sunita Narain, Forests of global contention, , Down to earth, June, 1992

Forests and Climate Change

***MYTH**: A most effective way in reducing $C0_2$ emissions is for the South and other countries to invest in forests plantation to suck up carbon dioxide and to install nuclear power plants.*

***FACT**: This falsehood is based on the so called Dyson Effect (A British physicist Freeman Dyson's brainwave: to soak up the excess carbon dioxide by planting huge areas of trees) At face value this is a plausible option. However, it is a harebrained approach and even reinforces fantasy! By 1998, international climate negotiators had agreed that putting money into large-scale tree planting was an effective way that the South could "assist" the North in "achieving compliance with their quantified emissions limitation and reduction objectives".*

Thus, in little more than two decades, in short, a farfetched, arrogant scheme hatched by a single intellectual has virtually become received wisdom! (No doubt it has been helped along not only by institutional and corporate politics but also by being associated with the common-sense view that says "there can surely be no harm in planting trees!?"

Everybody wants to believe. But it is pertinent to point out the distinctions! Planting and maintaining an orchard or community woodland, creating village forest belts, planting trees along highways, planting saplings into a garden, is one thing. The global project of carbon "offset" forestry is quite another. The trend it represents is not only not harmless. It is dangerous - dangerous for equity, for democratic politics, for soil, for trees, for forests, for climatic habitability itself.

The belief is on the plausibility through a natural confusion between two sets of propositions:

1. Trees are vitally important for climate. So is practising low tillage agriculture, improving energy efficiency, etc. Besides, it is important not only to cut emissions, but also, where emissions must increase, for them to increase as little as possible. Finally, cutting emissions is important wherever it takes place on the earth's surface given that the atmosphere circulates so rapidly;

2. Conserving forest, planting trees, practising low-tillage agriculture, improvements in energy efficiency, etc., can be trade for emissions cuts in a way that makes the emissions "climate neutral". Actual emissions can be trade for hypothetical emissions reduction below "business as usual" in a away which renders the emissions "climate neutral". An activity in one social context which results in a short term emissions cut can be traded for an activity in another social context which results in an identical short-term emissions cut. For the casual or uninitiated observes point 2 follows from those of point 1. For example, "If you know that saving the Amazon is better for the atmosphere than keeping one car off the road, then you ought to be able to calculate how many cars are equivalent to saving the Amazon. The calculations may be difficult, but don's see why the problems should be insurmountable. But in fact while the propositions of point #1 are common sense, those of #2 are nonsense. Saving something is important and saying it can be quantified and incorporated into an accounting system are two different things.

Trees and soil are highly relevant to climate and to the cycling of fossil fuel emissions, but the relation among the three cannot be quantified in the way a climate market would require. Needless to say, forests are an important part of the planet's carbon cycle. Seasonal cycles the growth of the forests of the Northern hemisphere show up in a seasonal cycle of C02 levels in the atmosphere. So it is easy to see that any major impact of climate on the world's forests could feed back into further changes in climate - especially if the world's forests began to die.

However, trees will soak up more of the atmosphere's carbon in future, because the extra C02 in the atmosphere will make photosynthesis - the process by which all plants grow - happen faster. Moreover, the extra C02 will also speed up the decomposition of leaves. A combination of more forest fires, more pests, more stress caused by changing climate, plus faster decomposition, may in the end cause a reduction in the amount of carbon stored in forests. As the forests released the C02, they would accelerate global warming. Further , using trees even to try to compensate" for current emissions would require impossible continent-sized plantations!

According to scientists writing in the journal, Science, concluded: "prospects of retrieving anthropogenic C02 from the atmosphere by enhancing natural sinks are small... There is no natural 'saviour' waiting to assimilate all the anthropgenically produced C02 in the coming century.

- Facts Against Myths Newsletter, 01 Feb 2007, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai.

UNFCC as a Process..

Overall the Climate Change Convention should be seen as an evolutionary document. The ultimate effectiveness of the Convention now lies in the strength of the protocols yet to be formulated.

A process-oriented text for the convention, as had been advocated by the US, was finally agreed.

This was notwithstanding the fact that most developed nations were unhappy with the text not containing detailed commitments, targets or timetables to cut CO_2 emissions.

Ultimately, however, they agreed to the process-oriented text with the compromise that developed nations be required to prepare national emission inventories and to report periodically on their programmes to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

One delegate said "I don't think we could have gotten any better--because the commitment to specific commitments was just not in the United States interest, and without them, there is no point in having a convention'. Developed nations and the small island states were not prepared to go ahead with a convention that the US would not sign.

The Convention's ultimate objective as stated in Article 2 is to achieve:

...stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. [emphasis not in original]

This is extremely important in its ecological intent as well as being significant as sustainable development is advocated as a goal. Paragraphs 4 and 5 of Article 3 also state sustainable development principles.

The Parties have a right to, and should, promote sustainable development. Policies and measures to protect the climate system against human-induced change should be appropriate for the specific conditions of each Party and should be integrated with national development programmes, taking into account that economic development is essential for adopting measures to address climate change.

The Parties should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change. Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.

Inclusion of the precautionary principle as stated in Article 3.3 is also very significant in that it is an important environmental management guide in a situation of scientific uncertainty.

The Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures, taking into account that policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost.

Also, the reporting process subparagraphs of Article 4.2, which are a compromise which was sought from the US, although weak legally are politically interesting in that they signal that developed countries must make commitments to stabilise emissions by the end of the century aiming at 1990 levels and have these commitments reviewed by the Conference of the Parties periodically.

(International Climate Policy Development and Implementation, Climatic Impacts Centre Annual Report 1993. North Ryde, NSW, Australia: Macquarie University)

Privatising Forests

A particularly popular Western technique is promoting monoculture plantations in the South to "sequester" or "eliminate" CO2 although the science of such sequestering is still very uncertain.

Though there is a scientific consensus that carbon stored above ground (in trees) is not equal to carbon stored below ground (unmined/unused fossil fuels).

This has not stopped the crusaders for emissions trading to claim "carbon neutrality" and "carbon offsetting" through tree planting and other means. Indeed, a new and profitable industry of "carbon neutral" products has developed with producers targeting environment conscious consumers through claims that their products are made from, say, "carbon offsetting" plantation wood.

“Carbon sinks” such as forests and oceans, etc., can only qualify for emission credits if their management is "officially" done. Old growth rainforests where indigenous peoples have lived for centuries do not qualify though corporate-run tree plantations do.

What is going on here? It is not at all difficult to understand. The approach to tackling the issue of global warming is of a piece with the general approach of the WTO and of the new neoliberal economic dogma: private ownership and control plus market allocation is the key to everything. That is to say, it is about privatising water, education, health, social security, etc., emissions trading is based on the principle that the best way to tackle environmental problems (and promote profitable "green capitalism") is to move towards privatising the global commons and resources, i.e., promote the institutionalisation of a property rights regime for the atmosphere itself. And since emissions trading is the key mechanism for tackling environmental problems, it is hardly surprising that there is growing pressure for the rules of such trading to conform to the general rules for governing trade as embodied in the WTO system.

Not only does this make corporate polluters and neoliberal economists (whose very discipline treats the environment with theoretical contempt as "natural capital") happy, but will also most likely lead to further reducing regulation of emissions trading so as to avoid trade conflicts.

Too Little, Too Bad, Achin Vanaik, The Asian Age, 23 March 2005

THE KYOTO AGENDA

By the time, the parties to the Climate Change Convention converged in Kyoto, the climate change agenda had moved far beyond its original environmental or sustainability concerns. It was now increasingly seen as a trade and business issue. Carbon trading and corporate concerns dominated deliberations.

The Kyoto Protocol opened the doors for private corporations to assume important and central roles in meeting national GHG emission reduction targets.

This was accompanied on the other side by the marginalisation of civil society as an important player, which is today deeply divided, dis-empowerd or co-opted to promote the business agenda of climate change agreement..

The Kyoto Protocol was as one commentator put it, 'Acceptance of [the carbon trading provisions of the Kyoto Protocol] represents an article of faith, faith in the free market and faith in the process of globalisation. It rests on an ideological stance

Developed Vs Developing

The Kyoto Protocol is officially the first global legally binding contract aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A hundred and forty-one parties have now ratified the agreement. If any of the participating countries exceed their proposed 2012 target, they will have to make the promised reductions from the 2012 target, and an additional 30% more during the next period. The EU and Japan have already promised to reduce pollution by 8% from their respective 1990 levels.

However, Kyoto still lacks teeth because the United States, the world's largest greenhouse gas polluter, says signing up would ruin the US economy, and that the pact wrongly disregards developing countries. He was also concerned about the pressure on "industrialised" countries to cut back on emissions while developing countries weren't expected to cut theirs back as well. In many ways, the debate over climate change reflects the larger debate about global equity and justice, and the struggle between the rich and the poor. Developing countries opposed the plans by blaming the problem of global warming on the practices of wealthier, developed nations. India and China, in particular, argued the case for the developing countries, refusing to commit to any proposals that could limit their industrial development.

So where does that leave us? Emissions in America continue to rise and are now 11% higher than they were in 1990. Most countries that have signed up to Kyoto also admit that meeting their Kyoto targets will be difficult; nations are already falling behind.

One of the things that people are excited about as a possible solution and a potential win-win situation for both developed and developing countries is the clean development mechanism (CDM). This is one of the "flexibility mechanisms" authorised in the Kyoto Protocol. The CDM is a form of joint implementation between industrialised nations and developing countries. The mechanism is designed to allow industrialised nations to meet their commitments in a flexible manner, and, at the same time, allows developing countries not bound by the protocol to participate in the process of global greenhouse gases (GHG) mitigation.

The CDM is supposed to be a market-based way to combat climate change. Through it, developed countries may invest in bankable projects in developing countries by paying the extra cost of upgrading to cleaner technology. In turn, they get credits for the amount of emissions reduced.

But many developing nations contend that these rights should eventually be allocated on a per capita basis, since that is the fairest and most democratic way of sharing an overall global limit to greenhouse gas emissions among the world's people. Northern industrialised countries have always argued for a 'rights-by-income (GDP)' approach, since larger economies, by virtue of their output, would naturally emit more GHGs than smaller economies. Developing countries have challenged this status quo, arguing for a 'rights-per-capita' approach. Each person on the planet, they believe, should have equal atmospheric property rights and therefore equal GHG consumption rights. Another flaw in the carbon-trading regime is that industrial nations are currently permitted to buy as many low-cost reductions in developing nations as they can -- and they can bank those reductions as far into the future as they choose. That means that when poor nations are obliged to begin cutting their own emissions, during a later phase of the protocol, they will be left with only the most expensive options as the cheapest ones will have been bought up by the industrial nations.

by Aditi Sen, InfoChange News & Features, August 2005

The Kyoto Protocol was drawn up in 1997 to implement the UNFCC. According to the protocol, industrialised nations that sign up to the treaty are legally bound to reduce worldwide emissions of six greenhouse gases (collectively) by an average of 5.2% below their 1990 levels, by 2008-2012.

However it took seven years for the protocol to finally become international law. For it to come fully into force, the pact had to be ratified by countries accounting for at least 55% of 1990 carbon dioxide emissions. With countries like the US and Australia unwilling to come on board, the key to ratification came when Russia, which accounted for 17% of 1990 emissions, signed up to the agreement on November 5, 2004.

"Developing Nations Rebuff G-8 on Curbing Pollutants," proclaimed the recent New York Times headline. You had to read through most of the article to discover that the main objection of those pesky "developing nations" representatives was to establishing a long-range goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (50 percent by 2050), without proportionate commitments from the major industrialized countries to nearer-term commitments-at least 20 percent reductions by 2020, as accepted by most European governments-that would facilitate meaningful progress toward the more distant goal.

Development Dialogue no.48, September, 2006

Limitations of Kyoto Protocol

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 the world's governments signed up to the United Nations Framework Convention (UNFCCC). The Convention contains two important principles :

- the precautionary principle - the convention recognises that despite unavoidable scientific uncertainties about climate change and its impacts it is imperative to take a precautionary approach and to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent or more as soon as possible.
- the equity principle - the convention recognises that there needs to be a convergence of national emissions levels based on the principle of equal rights. That is, everyone must have the same right to use energy, or to produce greenhouse gases, or to use the pollutionabsorbing capacity of the natural environment. Emissions Targets - Inadequate and Unjust
- The Kyoto Protocol has set emissions reduction targets for industrialised countries (the main producers of a carbon dioxide) at a mere 5.2 percent, on average from 1990 levels by 2012. This is widely recognised as inadequate to prevent dangerous climate change. According to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - a 60 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions (the main greenhouse gas) is necessary to bring levels in the atmosphere down to even twice pre-industrialised levels.
- The Kyoto Protocol makes no attempt at convergence or even to recognise the principle of equal rights. Instead of being based on equal shares or rights for each individual, greenhouse gas entitlements have been based on national 'current emissions'. By setting industrial countries targets based on their 1990 emissions levels the Protocol effectively gives the right to that level of emissions, at least until 2012. Meanwhile it fails to acknowledge or set any emissions rights for developing countries. In other words, it enshrines the current inequitable and unjust level of emissions. It allows industrialised countries to continue to produce greenhouse gases beyond their fair share and by setting no equitable per capita entitlements to use of the atmosphere, it risks denying present and future generations of developing countries the use of their fair share. The Kyoto Protocol and the proposed' flexible mechanisms' discussed in The Hague fail to fulfil either of these principles. They come nowhere near the precautionary target set by the FCCC and they ignore the principle of equal rights. That is, they will be ineffective and they are unjust.

Eco-Ethic Newsletter, 01 Jul 2002

POLITICS IN THE POST-KYOTO WORLD

The Kyoto protocol is increasingly being understood not as an environmental agreement but a trading agreement. Speakers at a recently organised symposium by the World Trade Organisation noted that the Protocol could well be the most significant trading agreement of the century.

Klaus Topfer, the new executive director of UNEP said at the same meeting in WTO, that the Kyoto Protocol was about the creation of a new property rights regime for a global resource - the atmosphere. But he also went on to say that in his experience, establishing these rights was an issue fraught with tension and conflict. That may be so. But it is vital that these rights be established. The developing countries that are being asked to "assist" in meeting carbon reduction targets of the industrialised world, must do so, with their full entitlements over the atmosphere, a common property of humankind. What is needed instead is a framework built on the concept of "equal per capita entitlements".

They must insist that this "commodification" of the atmosphere - without an appropriate framework of rights - is like the appropriation of the West by the colonisers. This is clearly immoral. And unacceptable.

One of the most environmentally unfriendly decisions of Kyoto was to agree to set a reduction target of 5 per cent by Annex I countries on their 1990 levels. This has set a precedent in target-manipulation that will only lead to more greenhouse gas emissions. In hindsight, Kyoto was a massive exercise in juggling books of rich countries climate accounts. And what is most unfortunate is that it will now force each country to fiddle its own carbon budget.

What was agreed at Kyoto was to set a target of reduction of "at least 5 per cent below 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008-2012." The operative word is 1990 - as it essentially means that the country has to reduce its emissions by 5 per cent below what it emitted in that year.

Take the case of Australia. In 1990, as much as 30 per cent of the country's emissions were from deforestation. Emissions which are still present in the atmosphere and are causing global warming. But instead of being penalised for creating the problem in the first place, Australia has been able to use its high emissions to its advantage by winning the right to count any improvement from this position as its national credit. And, as its deforestation rate is already controlled, Australia can actually increase its emissions above and beyond that figure by 8 per cent.

What then is the implication of the 'baseline' for the future? If this innovative climate accountancy is accepted as the method of calculating a nation's targets then it would serve developing countries to actually increase its emissions as fast as possible.

This precedent being set by the emission-profligate North is going to destroy, not save, the worlds climate system.

POLITICS IN THE POST-KYOTO WORLD,CSE Briefing Paper 2, 2005

CC and Profits

Indian companies view climate change more as an opportunity than a risk because they see themselves earning revenue from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), according to a new study.

The study is the first India report of the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) on the action undertaken by companies to mitigate the adverse impact of climate

According to the report, 79% of Indian companies surveyed saw several commercial risks arising from climate change. These included following emission-reduction norms, dealing with shrinking resources such as water, and those related to changing consumer preferences for environmentally responsible companies and products.

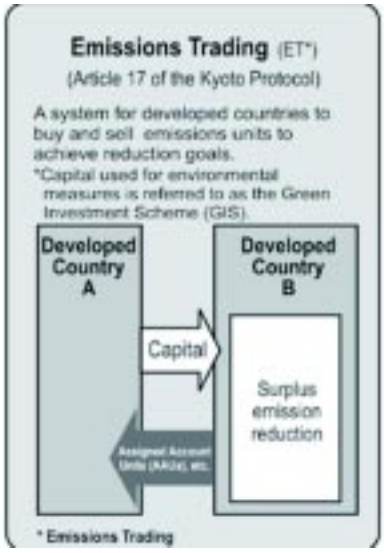
The report said that 85% of the Indian companies saw an opportunity in the global move to combat global warming. India has hogged the major share in carbon projects under the Kyoto Protocol.

Almost half the companies surveyed said they were looking at emission trading opportunities and 21% already have CDM projects in the pipeline.

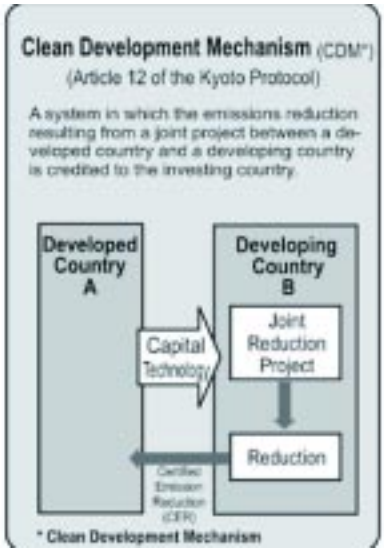
Climate change is an opportunity, not a threat,

http://www.livemint.com/2007/11/22232930/

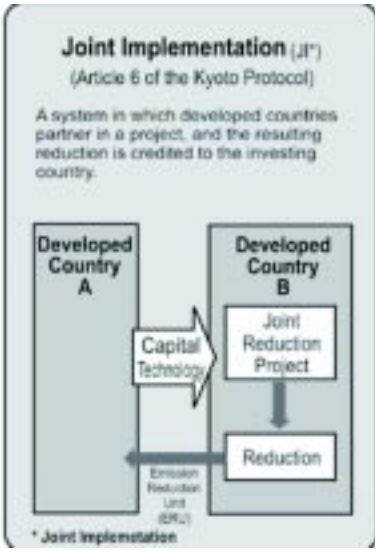
"The Kyoto Protocol totally avoided the material challenge of stopping activities that lead to higher emissions and the political challenge of regulation of the polluters and making the polluters pay in accordance with principles adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio. Instead, Kyoto put in place the mechanism of emissions trading which in effect rewarded the polluters by assigning them rights to the atmosphere and trading in these rights to pollute."- Vandana Shiva.



Emissions Trading which includes carbon emissions trading is very similar to the trading of commodities in a market place. Emissions trading allows countries to exchange emission allowances.



The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) allows a developed country to implement a project that reduces GHG emissions, or subject to constraints, removes greenhouse gases by carbon sequestration in a developing country.



JI is a mechanism where a developed country can receive "emissions reduction units" when it helps to finance projects that reduce net emissions in another developed country.

Winners and Losers

The CDM has largely been rewarding big industrial polluters in the global South that contribute nothing towards sustainable development.

There is a widespread crisis of confidence in the CDM. All but the most dogmatically market oriented NGOs are no longer willing to entertain it as being any part of the solution. The US Government Accountability Office, the "audit, evaluation and investigative arm of Congress," recently released a detailed report that questions the credibility of the scheme. A statement from the International Forum of Indigenous Peoples on Climate Change to the UN climate talks in Bali testified that CDM projects were being carried out "without the free prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples."

The Kyoto Protocol outlines the three purposes for the CDM: assist in the achievement of sustainable development, contribute to attaining the environmental goals of the broader climate change treaty, and assist Northern countries in complying with their emissions reduction commitments.

A result for Northern companies

The first two objectives have been abysmal failures. The third has been a resounding success, but paradoxically so. Meanwhile numerous studies have cast profound doubt on the ability of the CDM to bring climate benefits. A recent study from Stanford's Energy and Sustainability Program

suggested that up to two thirds of CDM projects didn't bring about any emissions cuts.

The CDM has provided a means for Northern governments and companies to 'outsource' their responsibility for taking necessary steps towards a low-carbon economy. This aspect of the CDM's 'success' highlights the climate injustice underpinning the system. The winners are energy intensive companies, whose profit margins have benefited enormously in the short term through the lucrative trade in the credits themselves. Because of fundamental flaws in the design of the CDM, industry has been able to buy cheap carbon credits to meet their emissions commitments and avoid the cost of shifting to low carbon technologies. Add these savings to potential windfalls from new trading options in derivatives and other exotic financial services and its no surprise there is such a 'gold rush' for this lucrative market.

Conversely, Southern countries have lost out enormously. Many projects, such as the waste incinerator in India, have been imposed on communities without their prior, informed consent.

CDM financing has entrenched dirty development by acting as a financial subsidy for big industrial polluters such as chemical factories, coal fired power stations and pulp and paper mills. The CDM has been promoted at the expense of an existing adaptation fund and the truly clean technology transfer that is so urgently needed.

Offsets Under Kyoto: a dirty deal for the South Kevin Smith
5 December 2008, tni.org

The CDM Fraud

The world's biggest carbon offset market, the Kyoto Protocol's clean development mechanism (CDM), is run by the UN, administered by the World Bank, and is intended to reduce emissions by rewarding developing countries that invest in clean technologies. In fact, evidence is accumulating that it is increasing greenhouse gas emissions behind the guise of promoting sustainable development. The misguided mechanism is handing out billions of dollars to chemical, coal and oil corporations and the developers of destructive dams - in many cases for projects they would have built anyway.

Any type of technology other than nuclear power can apply for credits. Even new coal plants, if these can be shown to be even a marginal improvement upon existing plants, can receive offset income. A massive 4,000MW coal plant on the coast of Gujarat, India, is expected soon to apply for CERs. The plant will spew into the atmosphere 26m tonnes of CO2 per year for at least 25 years. It will be India's third - and the world's 16th - largest source of CO2 emissions.

Off-the-record, industry insiders will admit that deceitful claims in CDM applications are standard practice. The carbon trading industry lobby group, the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), has stated that proving the intent of developers applying for the CDM "is an almost impossible task". Industry representatives have complained that "good storytellers" can get a project approved, "while bad storytellers may fail even if the project is really additional".

One glaring signal that many of the projects being approved by the CDM's executive board are non-additional is that almost three-quarters of projects were already complete at the time of approval. It would seem clear that a project that is already built cannot need extra income in order to be built.

A rapidly growing industry of carbon brokers and consultants is lobbying for the CDM to be expanded and its rules to be weakened further.

Discredited strategy by Patrick McCully, The Guardian, 21 May 2008

REDD: Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries

REDD initiatives, as they are currently being discussed within international climate negotiations, propose to pay developing countries for the carbon value of their forests. It is believed that these payments could shift the balance away from the economic incentives currently favoring deforestation, thus making sustainable forest management a more profitable alternative. However, issues surrounding the design and implementation of such a mechanism are complicated and contentious. Among several outstanding questions is how to pay for REDD, since it will undoubtedly require substantial resources to be transferred to developing countries if it is to generate meaningful emissions reductions.

The global carbon market established under the Kyoto Protocol--now valued at over $30 billion worldwide--has recently generated excitement as a potential payment mechanism. A 2005 proposal by the countries of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica formalized interest in a system known as "Compensated Reduction" (CR), whereby developing countries are awarded credits, tradable on the international carbon market, for reducing national deforestation rates below a baseline level. Proponents of CR, including many developing countries and several major environmental organizations, see a market-based REDD regime as the greatest potential source of funding for forest conservation and the best way to capitalize on the cost-effectiveness of lowering global emissions through reduced deforestation.

In December of 2007, the World Bank launched the $250 million Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), meant to build capacity for REDD in developing countries while providing a pilot program to test Compensated Reduction. Carbon credits earned through reduced deforestation are currently not eligible for trading within the international carbon market established under the Kyoto Protocol, so FCPF credits are expected to be traded on the voluntary market.

Design and Implementation Challenges for REDD

A carbon market-based funding mechanism, such as Compensated Reduction, is the current forerunner among various REDD proposals, but numerous technical issues pose significant obstacles to design and implementation If they are not fully resolved, a market-based REDD could fail to achieve positive outcomes, or even increase global emissions if developing countries are allowed to sell carbon offsets from reduced deforestation that do not correspond to actual emissions reductions.

For these reasons, non-market options for funding REDD must also be considered, such as using existing development assistance, creating a new dedicated fund, or even redirecting revenues from a carbon tax or national cap and trade programs. But even if outstanding issues can be resolved, there is a real possibility that neither a market-based nor a non-market REDD program will yield desired outcomes when it comes to mitigating climate change or protecting forest services and communities, meaning that other policy alternatives must also be considered.

Its role as part of an international agreement on combating climate change will be decided in December 2009 at Copenhagen.

http://earthtrends.wri.org

The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) scheme could create the climate regime's largest ever loophole, giving Northern polluters yet another opportunity to buy their way out of emissions reductions. With no mention of biodiversity or Indigenous Peoples' rights, this scheme might give a huge incentive for countries to sell off their forests, expel Indigenous and peasant communities, and transform forests into tree plantations under corporate-control. Plantations are not forests. Privatisation and dispossession through REDD or any other mechanisms must be stopped. The World Bank is attempting to carve a niche in the international climate change regime. This is unacceptable as the Bank continues to fund polluting industries and drive deforestation by promoting industrial logging and agrofuels. The Bank's recently launched Climate Investment Funds goes against government initiatives at the UN and promotes dirty industries such as coal, while forcing developing countries into the fundamentally unequal aid framework of donor and recipient. The World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility aiming to finance REDD through a forest carbon mechanism serves the interest of private companies and opens the path for commodification of forests.

These developments are to be expected. Market ideology has totally infiltrated the climate talks, and the UNFCCC negotiations are now like trade fairs hawking investment opportunities

So what's wrong with cap and trade?

In practice, carbon offset projects have most of the times resulted in land grabs, local environmental and social conflicts, the displacement of Indigenous Peoples´ from their territories, as well as the repression of local communities and movements.

There are fundamental theoretical flaws in the whole cap and trade scheme even before you look at the actual record of its implementation. This is because the scheme was never set up to directly tackle the key task of a rapid transition away from fossil fuel extraction, over-production and over-consumption, but sought instead to quantifying existing pollution as a means to create a new tradable commodity. Within this framework, traders invariably opt for the cheapest credits available at the time, but what is cheap in the short-term is not the same as what is environmentally effective or socially just.

Some of the key problems with the cap and trade approach are:

- The "trade" component does not reduce any emissions. It simply allows companies to choose between cutting their own emissions or buying cheaper "carbon credits," which are supposed to represent reductions elsewhere.

- The "cap" has too many holes and sometimes caps nothing. The cap is only as tight as the least stringent part of the whole system. This is because credits are sold by those with a surplus, and the cheapest way to produce a surplus is to be given too many credits in the first place ("hot air" credits as a result of caps being set too high). The aim of trading is to find the cheapest solution for polluting industry, and it is consistently cheaper to buy "hot air" credits than to actually reduce emissions.

> ***Carbon Trading*** *is all about minting money off the climate crisis; not on bringing about a change in the current system of heavy subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. The carbon market is thus perverse to say the least. It offers a false solution to environmental problems. The truth about the global climate crisis is beyond economic perspectives. Hence, the whole carbon trade is an idea ill-suited to the climate change problem. Above all, like all new markets, carbon markets strive both to establish property rights and to make a range of different things equivalent so that they can be exchanged. This is true of both aspects of carbon markets: cap and trade (or emissions trading) on the one hand, and offset trading (or trading in project-based carbon credits) on the other...*
>
> *- Myths of the Carbon Trade FAM, VAK, Mumbai*

Cap setting is a political process that is highly susceptible to corporate lobbying which means that there is invariable over-allocation of pollution permits. In fact, lobbying is encouraged through extensive industry "stakeholder" involvement.

- Offsets loosen the cap. While cap and trade in theory limits the availability of pollution permits, "offset" projects are a licence to print new ones. When the two systems are brought together, they tend to undermine each other - since one applies a cap and the other lifts it. An offset is essentially a permit to pollute beyond the cap.

So who profited from carbon trading?

Companies receive most carbon credits for free. This is equivalent to a subsidy - and with allocations made on the basis of historical emissions, the largest subsidy goes to the dirtiest industry (especially coal-fired power plants).

Windfall profits also arise from an accounting trick around "opportunity costs." Power companies choose to do the cheapest thing to meet their ETS target - which is usually buying Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) credits - but passing on costs as if they were doing the most expensive - actually reducing emissions. Even power companies receiving free credits from the ETS have nevertheless passed on the cost of these credits to consumers. Research by market-analysts Point Carbon and WWF calculated that the likely "windfall" profits made by power companies in phase II could be between •23 and •71 billion, and that these profits were concentrated in the countries with the highest level of emissions.

Carbon offsets have serious negative social and local environmental impacts

The use of "development" rhetoric masks the fundamental injustice of offsetting, which hands a new revenue stream to some of the most highly polluting industries in the South, while simultaneously offering companies and governments in the North a means to delay changing their own industrial practices and energy usage.

Oscar Reyes Red Pepper magazine.
http://www.stwr.org

Civil Society and Carbon Trading

Carbon trading itself is no corporate conspiracy, but rather a joint invention of civil society, business and the state. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been nearly as prominent in Sits development as private corporations.

Although pollution trading derived from the theories of economists working in universities and think tanks, it was written into the 1990 US Clean Air Act Amendments by Environmental Defence, a corporate-friendly NGO that subsequently pushed for it to be included both in the Kyoto Protocol The Washington-based NGO World Resources Institute (partly bankrolled by government and UN agencies, international fi nancial institutions and corporations such as Monsanto, TotalFinaElf, Shell, BP, and Cargill Dow) tirelessly lobbied for carbon trading alongside the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and other corporate pressure groups.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), an organisation with an annual budget 3.5 times that of the World Trade Organisation. WWF also helped develop an eco-label for the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism projects.

Greenpeace, for its part, has moved from being critical of corporate lobby groups and carbon trading to complete acceptance. As forest conservation NGOs such as the Nature Conservancy and

Conservation International move in to mop up corporate and World Bank fi nance being off ered for 'carbon sinks', other NGOs confine themselves to trying to reform or 'contain the damage' done by trading programmes such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Most Northern members of the largest NGO grouping on climate change, the Climate Action Network, have thrown their support behind the carbon market, often demoting themselves to the role of advisers to governments on such matters as national emissions allocations. Critical NGOs are being continually urged 'to unite behind an entirely bizarre, incomprehensible, and totally corruptible system of carbon trading'.

Development Dialogue October 2007

For transparent carbon trading

Global carbon trading has gained momentum. The Worldwatch Institute, drawing from various studies, places the total value of the trade in 2007 at $59.2 billion, an 80 per cent increase over 2006. As the 2012 deadline for reducing emission levels approaches, the volume of carbon trading will be enormous. Asian countries are the biggest sellers and western countries the biggest buyers. A World Bank report on the 2007 carbon market shows that China has a market share of 61 pe r cent and India 12 per cent. The Government of India, as a part of its commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, set up in 2003 a National Clean Development Mechanism Authority, which has been reviewing proposals for carbon credits. However, the final credits are issued by the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism at the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC). India has garnered 35 million of the 102 million Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) issued up to January 2008.

This augurs well for the country and its entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, a few issues surface time and again to remind us how the system can be improved. The pricing of CERs has become a major issue. Studies by groups such as the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi and by the New Zealand government on CER pricing have highlighted the lack of transparency. This hinders the just distribution of benefits and paves the way for manipulation. The data available indicate that the price of CERs ranges from $11 to $22 and naturally such wide variation raises troubling questions. Arguments for lower prices emphasise scale, risk, and delay in delivery of CERs as determining factors. However, the sellers who bear the burden of investment and delivery should be able to reap the benefits of better prices where they exist. Information on prevailing prices should be easily and freely available. This becomes important in the context of calls for including community projects in the carbon trade. Whether transparency can be imposed through a regulatory authority or by an alternative method needs to be discussed and quickly settled. Reducing emissions at source is the best option but until that is achieved a regulated carbon market is a necessity. For India, there is yet another issue. To their credit, private entrepreneurs predominate in the list of projects approved by UNFCCC. Government projects and the public sector, which have not shown any serious interest in accumulating CERs, need to be prodded to follow their example.

The Hindu, Chennai, 13 Feb 2008

Trading Lobby

The lobby -- which includes Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Morgan Stanley, Barclays Plc, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and 168 other firms -- argues that climate change can't be solved without a profit-driven market. The organization and its members haven't disclosed how much they earned from trading carbon permits.

While the total amount of CO2 permits traded doubled last year, the market remains tiny compared with worldwide oil futures, where as much money changes hands in less than two days. New Carbon Finance, a London-based investment adviser that tracks the market, predicts the CO2 market will reach $3 trillion by 2020.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency says the world faces flooding, droughts and food shortages unless it spends at least an additional $4.2 trillion by 2030 to reduce power-plant emissions and boost energy efficiency.

For carbon investors, the "worst case scenario" would be richer nations making direct payments to poorer countries and industry-based emissions trading in developing nations being largely controlled by national governments rather than a single regulator, said Dirk Forrister, who helped advise former U.S. President Bill Clinton on climate change.

Trading of emerging-market credits "needs to be built on a private-sector model," said Forrister, now managing director of Natsource LLC, a New York company that makes money creating, buying and selling pollution rights.

Challenge to Kyoto Carbon Trading

The market for trading rights to spew carbon dioxide, created by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to reduce global warming, is under attack by developing countries and environmentalists as negotiators hammer out a sequel treaty.

Investors who trade pollution permits are fighting proposals to limit or kill a United Nations program that lets European companies offset requirements to cut emissions by bankrolling low-carbon projects in emerging economies. The process creates credits that the World Bank says accounted for 26 percent of the $126 billion of allowances that traded in the carbon market in 2008.

China and Mexico want wealthier governments to subsidize clean-up projects directly, with the Chinese saying investments from Western companies should "not be used to offset" their own cuts. Greenpeace International says the UN system delays rich nations' response to greenhouse gasses. Their approaches would reduce the private sector's role in, and potential profits from, the global-warming fight. Ending offsets would limit trading to permits that European Union governments issue under a related regime that makes up 73 percent of the market.

"There is a growing fear that the whole low-carbon investment scene is being positioned toward the public sector," said Henry Derwent, president of the Geneva-based International Emissions Trading Association. "The public sector has no more than a tiny percentage of the money needed to solve the climate problem," said Derwent, Tony Blair's climate adviser when he was U.K. prime minister.

by Mathew Carr, Bloomberg, June 19, 2009

Third biggest CO_2 emitter

India is the third biggest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world, with state-owned NTPC topping the list of companies belching the deadly gas, according to the new data released by a Washington-based think-tank.

The Center for Global Development (CGD) said India figured at the third position in the list of biggest CO2 emitters through power generation after China and the US.

Of the 638,000,000 tonnes of CO2 emission by India every year, NTPC alone contributes 186,000,000 tonnes, which constitutes about 30 per cent of the total gas release, the data revealed. Talcher power plant in Orissa operated by the company has the notoriety of emitting the biggest quantity of CO2.

When contacted, NTPC officials said in Delhi: "We are among the most efficient producers of power using fossil fuels. NTPC is the second best in the world, emitting only 800 grams of CO2 per kwh of electricity generation. The Times of India, Mumbai, 01 Sep 2008

So what are the alternatives?

If the obesession with economic growth is set aside, it becomes easier to see how tackling climate change and maintaining a sustainable and enjoyable life are far from contradictory goals.

Carbon markets should be dismantled, starting with offsets. A clear intention to discontinue carbon markets can fatally undermine them even in advance of legislative action. Alternatives then need to be developed that are properly consulted and developed together with local communities to prevent a repeat of the dispossession and social injustice caused by offsetting schemes.

A range of different approaches will be needed but may include:

- Recognition of existing climate solutions. The vast range of solutions that already exist - which tend to be distinguished by their sensitivity to the local contexts in which they operate, are overlooked in favour of the accumulation of large-scale "technological fixes" or market-based schemes.
- Leave fossil fuels in the ground. Proposals to halt new coal power plants and the exploration of new and often "uncoventional" sources of oil extraction are at the frontline of the struggle for climate justice - and should form part of a rapid transition to a post-fossil fuel economy.
- Rediscovering environmental protection. There are a broad range of environmental policy instruments that have proven to be more effective than market-based approaches - ranging from efficiency standards for electrical appliances and buildings to feed-in tariffs for renewables. The rediscovery of such measures could form part of a solution.
- New revenues: tax and/or end currency and fuel speculation. Rather than a regressive carbon tax, revenue can be generated by a tax on currency speculation. A heavy tax or an end to speculation on fossil fuel prices would also help as a transitional measure. This should be accompanied by pro-active policy measures to tackle fuel poverty, such as a ban on pre-pay metering.
- Renewable energy should be supported but not uncritically - with the involvement of local populations and not as basis for sustaining expansions in fossil use or support of unsustainable model of industrial expansion.
- Public energy research. Private research on energy alternatives and use favours "least cost" false solutions (eg. agrofuels, hydroelectric dams, nuclear power) rather than environmentally effective alternatives, so is less effective than public research. However, this would need to be allied with the democratic transformation of the institutions of "environmental governance," the agenda for which currently tends to be set by transnational corporations.
- Re-estimating energy demand. Current models presume limitless growth and overstate future energy demand, which has encouraged oversupply and kept prices low - which is, in turn a key structural driver of over-consumption.
- The Transition Towns movement is going some way towards re-estimating demand with its "Energy Descent Action Plans", but lacks a structural analysis of heavy industry use (or capitalist accumulation) and is often divorced from organising for more equitable distribution of energy.
- Changing economic calculations. Cost-benefit accounting either fails to take account of environmental or social costs, or is grossly reductionist in its assumptions.
- Challenging the "growth" fetish. GDP is a very poor indicator of human-well being, so is not a condition for social improvement or a good life.

Oscar Reyes Red Pepper magazine.
http://www.stwr.org

Deforestation is Cheaper!

So it was that, at the Poznan conference, rich countries aggressively pushed a new climate-tack. They cannot reduce at home, so they have decided to find every way to (1) 'offset' their fossil fuel emissions by buying emission reduction certificates in developing countries; or (2) pay to protect emission-absorbing forests; or (3) simply pump their carbon deep into the ground. Indeed, every dirty way not to cut, but to pay, bribe and cajole others to cut will do. Then if all this fails there is the easy fallback: use China and India as punching bags as well as excuses for not taking on hard reductions at home.

In Poznan the effort was to devise a mechanism to pay developing countries to 'avoid' deforestation. Why? Because the Nick Stern report said 20 per cent of the world's emissions were from deforestation in the developing world. Now, this has become a quick-fix solution: stop deforestation and take a 20 per cent advantage in our carbon balance sheet, without doing anything at home.

As a result the mechanism, in negotiators' parlance called redd or 'reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation' naturally, in developing countries is being built with absolutely no understanding that forests here are not mere carbon sticks to beat the world's conscience with, or sinks for garbage carbon, but habitats of millions of people.

There is no comprehension of the role forests play in a developing country's economy or in people's lives. Instead, the intent is misbegotten and single-minded: pay as cheaply as possible to buy rights over forests in the developing world and build as many accounting and certification procedures as possible to make sure there are no 'leakages' in the transaction. It is clearly a great business for the crashed and failed consultancy companies of the western world creative carbon accounting, this time in the forests of the poor.

So, this opportunity, which could have enjoined the interests of forest-economies and its people to plant, protect and manage forests so that the world would in addition get the benefit of reducing emissions, is being lost to the self-interest of greedy polluters.

(2009 is full of promise, Down To Earth, Magazine, 01 Jan 2009)

Climate Justice Now!
The Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading

As representatives of people's movements and independent organisations, we reject the claim that carbon trading will halt the climate crisis. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and the release of their carbon to the oceans, air, soil and living things. This excessive burning of fossil fuels is now jeopardising Earth's ability to maintain a liveable climate.

Governments, export credit agencies, corporations and international financial institutions continue to support and finance fossil fuel exploration, extraction and other activities that worsen global warming, such as forest degradation and destruction on a massive scale, while dedicating only token sums to renewable energy. It is particularly disturbing that the World Bank has recently defied the recommendation of its own Extractive Industries Review which calls for the phasing out of World Bank financing for coal, oil and gas extraction.

We denounce the further delays in ending fossil fuel extraction that are being caused by corporate, government and United Nations' attempts to construct a "carbon market", including a market trading in "carbon sinks".

History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labour, forests, water, genes and ideas. Carbon trading follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the earth's carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity - carbon - the Earth's ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate.

People around the world need to be made aware of this commodification and privatization and actively intervene to ensure the protection of the Earth's climate.

Carbon trading will not contribute to achieving this protection of the Earth's climate. It is a false solution which entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways:

o The carbon market creates transferable rights to dump carbon in the air, oceans, soil and vegetation far in excess of the capacity of these systems to hold it. Billions of dollars worth of these rights are to be awarded free of charge to the biggest corporate emitters of greenhouse gases in the electric power, iron and steel, cement, pulp and paper, and other sectors in industrialised nations who have caused the climate crisis and already exploit these systems the most. Costs of future reductions in fossil fuel use are likely to fall disproportionately on the public sector, communities, indigenous peoples and individual taxpayers.

o The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), as well as many private sector trading schemes, encourage industrialised countries and their corporations to finance or create cheap carbon dumps such as large-scale tree plantations in the South as a lucrative alternative to reducing emissions in the North. Other CDM projects, such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) -reduction schemes, focus on end-of pipe technologies and thus do nothing to reduce the impact of fossil fuel industries' impacts on local communities. In addition, these projects dwarf the tiny volume of renewable energy projects which constitute the CDM's sustainable development window-dressing.

o Impacts from fossil-fuel industries and other greenhouse-gas producing industries such as displacement, pollution, or climate change, are already disproportionately felt by small island states, coastal peoples, indigenous peoples, local communities, fisherfolk, women, youth, poor people, elderly and marginalized communities. CDM projects intensify these impacts in several ways. First, they sanction continued exploration for, and extraction, refining and burning of fossil fuels. Second, by providing finance for private sector projects such as industrial tree plantations, they appropriate land, water and air already supporting the lives and livelihoods of local communities for new carbon dumps for Northern industries.

o The refusal to phase out the use of coal, oil and gas, which is further entrenched by carbon trading, is also causing more and more military conflicts around the world, magnifying social and environmental injustice. This in turn diverts vast resources to military budgets which could otherwise be utilized to support economies based on renewable energies and energy efficiency.

In addition to these injustices, the internal weaknesses and contradictions of carbon trading are in fact likely to make global warming worse rather than "mitigate" it. CDM projects, for instance, cannot be verified to be "neutralizing" any given quantity of fossil fuel extraction and burning. Their claim to be able to do so is increasingly dangerous because it creates the illusion that consumption and production patterns, particularly in the North, can be maintained without harming the climate.

In addition, because of the verification problem, as well as a lack of credible regulation, no one in the CDM market is likely to be sure what they are buying. Without a viable commodity to trade, the CDM market and similar private sector trading schemes are a total waste of time when the world has a critical climate crisis to address.

In an absurd contradiction the World Bank facilitates these false, market-based approaches to climate change through its Prototype Carbon Fund, the BioCarbon Fund and the Community Development Carbon Fund at the same time it is promoting, on a far greater scale, the continued exploration for, and extraction and burning of fossil fuels - many of which are to ensure increased emissions of the North.

In conclusion, 'giving carbon a price' will not prove to be any more effective, democratic, or conducive to human welfare, than giving genes, forests, biodiversity or clean rivers a price.

We reaffirm that drastic reductions in emissions from fossil fuel use are a pre-requisite if we are to avert the climate crisis. We affirm our responsibility to coming generations to seek real solutions that are viable and truly sustainable and that do not sacrifice marginalized communities.

We therefore commit ourselves to help build a global grassroots movement for climate justice, mobilize communities around the world and pledge our solidarity with people opposing carbon trading on the ground.

(Signed 10 October 2004 Glenmore Centre, Durban)

COPENHAGEN AND BEYOND

Ladies and gentlemen, I have the answer! Incredible as it might seem, I have stumbled across the single technology which will save us from runaway climate change! From the goodness of my heart I offer it to you for free. No patents, no small print, no hidden clauses.

Already this technology, a radical new kind of carbon capture and storage, is causing a stir among scientists. It is cheap, it is efficient and it can be deployed straight away. It is called . . . leaving fossil fuels in the ground.

George Monbiot

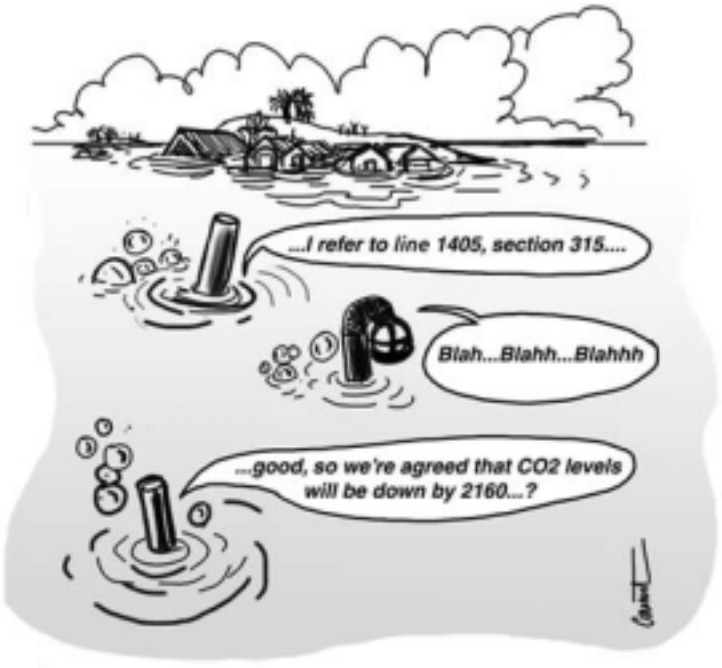
Enough science, now for the politics

But although science is very good at revealing how things are, and suggesting what physical manifestations might follow a particular course of action, it has limited relevance and reach when deciding what should be done in the face of complex dilemmas - such as climate change.

But exactly what action is it that the science demands? And action by whom and by when? These are questions for politics to decide, not for science to dictate.

The underlying reasons for human-induced climate change open up questions that are even more intractable to science. The idea of climate change has re-animated many long-standing debates around power, justice and development in a colonising and colonised world.

Anil Agrawal and Sunita Narain captured this vividly in their famous depiction of luxury versus survival emissions: those associated with non-essential lifestyle choices like international tourism or garden hot tubs versus those from essentials activities such as cooking, heating and lighting. Ethically-charged discussions about individual, political and historical responsibilities and about the nature of human well-being are now firmly embedded in climate change discourse.



The idea of climate change that science has so powerfully revealed is in turn unmasking the many reasons why we so often disagree in our crowded, troubled and divided world.

It may indeed be clear from the science that 'urgent action' is needed. But does this mean radical changes in consumption practices or radical decarbonisation of energy technologies? And who is to take this action: politicians, business leaders, entrepreneurs, the rich of the West or the rich of the world? And by when are such actions demanded? Through the haze of emission reductions goals for 2050 or through more prosaic and modest short-term goals for the next five years? These are the questions in dispute. Simply 'letting the science speak' is far from enough.

As we enter another round of negotiations in Copenhagen it is vital that we understand the many valid reasons for disagreeing about climate change. We must recognise that they are rooted in different political, national, organisational, religious and intellectual cultures - in different ways of 'seeing the world'.

Climate change: Enough science, now for the politics Mike Hulme

Science and Development Network 3 September 2009

The mean world of climate change

Let us also be clear that international negotiations on climate change stink. The mood is downright belligerent and selfish. The club of rich countries, that once agreed to 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (meaning countries would act based on their responsibility in creating the problem), are learning hard lessons. In the past 15 years, their emissions have increased, not decreased. Now, they want to find any which way to please their green constituency, but also balance their economic growth imperatives and ensure their industry remains competitive.

Their strategy has many parts and players. First, the most climate-renegade nation, the US, is allowed to point a finger at China, India and other emerging countries. The US is constantly allowed to get away by saying if these countries do not take action, it will not. Even if this means ignoring that US emissions, already one-fourth of the global total, have increased, and accepting what the US says: that its emissions will peak after 2025, or 10 years after what scientists say is the least risky target for global emissions to peak and then decline. Second, this strategy lets the guru of energy efficiency, Japan, provide an alternative road-map that is merely a win-win solution for its industry. Third, the green-czar, the European Union (EU) can use tough words, then cave in at strategic moments, for the sake of pragmatism in global action's.

The stage is now set for the last act of this deadly climate-play. Down To Earth Magazine, 16 Jul 2008 Sunita Narain

How the different countries stand on climate change

Europe
Views itself as the world leader and wants to limit climate change to 2C above pre-industrial levels. Has pledged to cut carbon emissions by 20% by 2020, and to raise this to 30% if there is agreement at Copenhagen

US
The Bush administration regularly stalled on climate targets. Barack Obama's team has yet to make its position clear, but has promised "vigorous engagement" at Copenhagen. Will want greater effort from developing countries, China in particular

China
More aware of climate change than often given credit for. Likely to resist binding targets, but some pledge of future action will be needed to appease US. Has requested that rich countries pay 0.7% of GDP to poorer ones to help them adapt to the effects of global warming.

India
Has taken a hard line so far and voiced its opposition to legally binding targets. Has indicated it would be willing to work to keep its growing per capita emissions below those of industrialised countries

Russia
One of the great unknowns. Russia's crucial gas resources have made it more bullish at climate talks, and the Kremlin resents being ranked alongside countries such as Argentina, Mexico and South Africa in the negotiations.

- *Energy Information Administration, The Guardian, 08 December 2008?*

India's Position

In terms of India's position in the negotiations, the country has consistently maintained that it needs the "ecological space to grow," and that it cannot afford to take on mandatory emission cuts at this stage in its development. India's stand is a valid and well-reasoned one, but as is often the case with domestic policymaking in India we adopt the ostrich approach of burying our head in the sand. It is time India looked up and seriously confronted the dangers of climate change at home, moving beyond deal-making and bargaining. India needs to begin exploring options for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and adaptation to climate change and variability. Given the sub-continent's extreme vulnerability to climate change, this is a battle that will ultimately be fought in our own backyards. So we had better gear up for it.

Source: InfoChange News & Features, August 2005

The US and Climate Change

In July 1997, The US Senate voted 95-0 to sink any treaty which failed to treat developing countries in the same way as it treated the rich ones. Though they knew this was impossible for developing countries to accept, all the Democrats lined up with all the Republicans. The common refrain was"we will not submit this agreement for ratification [in the Senate] until key developing nations participate".

So why, regardless of the character of its leaders, does the US act this way? Because, like several other modern democracies, it is subject to two great corrupting forces. First, the role of the corporate media - particularly in the US - in downplaying the threat of climate change and demonising anyone who tries to address it.

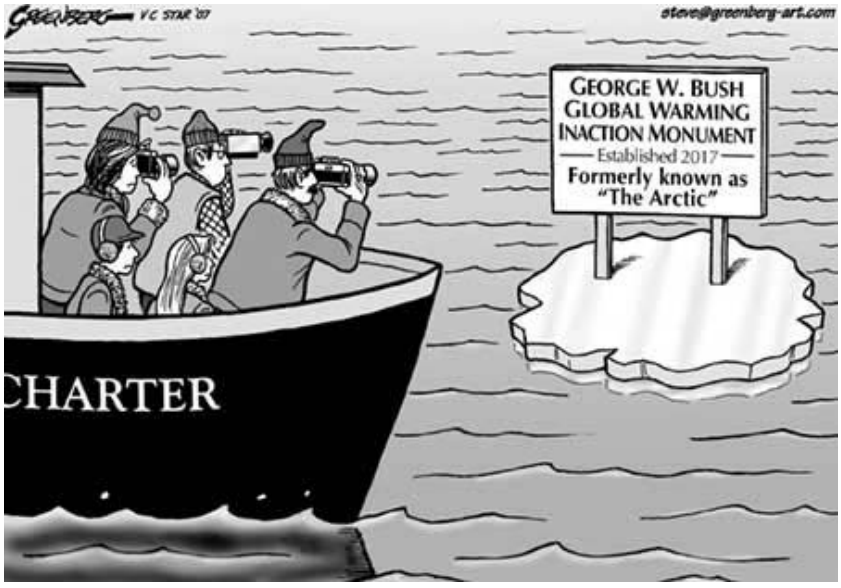
Let us consider instead the other great source of corruption: campaign finance. The Senate rejects effective action on climate change because its members are bought and bound by the companies that stand to lose. When you study the tables showing who gives what to whom, you are struck by two things.

One is the quantity. Since 1990, the energy and natural resources sector - mostly coal, oil, gas, logging and agribusiness - has given $418m to federal politicians in the US. Transport companies have given $355m. The other is the width: the undiscriminating nature of this munificence. The big polluters favour the Republicans, but most of them also fund Democrats.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, oil and gas companies lavished money on Bush, but they also gave Gore $142,000, while transport companies gave him $347,000. The whole US political system is in hock to people who put their profits ahead of the biosphere.

So don't believe all this nonsense about waiting for the next president to sort it out. Until the American people confront their political funding system, their politicians will keep speaking from the pocket, not the gut.

- Counter Currents.Org, 18 Dec 2007



Change in Position?

In a confidential letter which Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh has written to the PM, suggesting that India should opt out of the Kyoto Protocol, jettison the 131 G77 developing countries (and China), and voluntarily accept cuts in emissions without the slightest guarantee of any funding or technology from industrial nations in return. Simply and baldly stated, this goes against each and every principle which India -during the epoch-making UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and nearly two decades since - has in fact articulated on behalf of all developing countries.

There is only one moral to be drawn from this sordid drama.

A section of India's decision-making elite - both in the political-bureaucratic system on the one hand and business interests on the other -- clearly believes that it is in India's interests now to align itself with the US in its foreign policy. President Obama has made no secret of the fact that climate is one of the cornerstones of US international policy. This is of a piece with India signing the nuclear deal with the US, even at the risk of destabilising its own coalition, on the specious plea that this would boost India's energy supply.

It is another matter that if and when the entire Indo-US nuclear energy deal goes through, it will supply just 7% of the total energy, which is hardly substantial, leaving aside the serious objections to nuclear energy itself.

Who will take a bow when the curtain falls in Copenhagen? By all accounts, India and China are waiting in the wings, to flank the US and EU who are the main dramatis personae, with Japan and Australia in between.

India's climate volte face: Tragedy or farce?, Darryl D'Monte, Infochange, News & Features. October 2009

A Coalition of the Willing?

As the clock ticks to Copenhagen, how low is the world prepared to prostrate to get climate-renegade US on board? Is a bad deal in Copenhagen better than no deal?

The global consensus is industrialised countries need to cut at least 40 per cent over 1990 levels, to avert a 2°C rise in temperature. But the US, after much fanfare on its Nobel-awarded president, has proposed a puny target of 20 per cent of 2005 levels by 2020. Now, this country's greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 20 per cent between 1990 and 2005. Thus, it is saying it plans to do nothing but stabilise by 2020. It does nothing to cut its gargantuan emission share-with some 5 per cent of the world's population, it currently emits 18 per cent of global emissions. This single country is responsible for 30 per cent of the global stock of emissions in the atmosphere - this is criminal, when you think of the impact of climate change on the poor of the world.

Finally, it has made it amply clear it will do this little bit only if China, India and other 'polluting' nations are with it in this grand cop-out plan.

n other words, the world now needs a second coalition of the willing - this time for President Barack Obama. This time, not to go to war with Iraq, but to blow up the chance of an effective agreement in Copenhagen.

The generals are putting together the coalition, building block by building block.

But if we want to be part of the coalition, we must agree to their proposal. It is here we must spot the similarities between the 'leaked' letter of the minister of environment and forests to the prime minister, which asks for domestic legislation, international scrutiny on our mitigation actions, which we have to do for our own good and support for the Australian proposal. If we accept this proposition, we will be the deal-makers. We will break ranks with the G-77/China bloc and join the gang of the powerful polluters.

Will this 'pragmatic' approach to bring the world's most renegade nation to the table be effective for climate change? Unequivocally, no. It will dismantle a multilateral agreement based on setting global targets to reduce emissions, equitable burden-sharing and strong mechanisms for the most powerful to comply.

This coalition of the willing has many powerful takers. In the days to come, the chorus will grow. Watch and wait. Hear and listen. The world is moving towards climate-disaster, and no Nobel Peace prize can cover that up.

Business Standard, Oct 28, 2009

In all possibility, Copenhagen may well witness mass mobilisations of CSO on lines of Seattle.

"A network of radical green groups is planning to disrupt the international climate change meeting in Copenhagen in December by invading the conference centre and occupying it for a day, it has emerged.

The anti-globalisation group Climate Justice Action has said it hopes to mobilise up to 15,000 protesters to storm the climate summit and a large carbon dioxide emitter nearby, while negotiators try to thrash out a replacement for the Kyoto protocol.

"We want to take over the summit space to set the global agenda away from false, market-based solutions, towards an agenda of social justice," said Tadzio Müller, a 32-year-old German activist who is part of the group organising the protest. "Real emission cuts will not be achieved by initiatives like carbon trading...It is (the pursuit of) economic growth that is driving us into climate chaos."

Toward a Movement for Climate Justice

At various venues around the world, activists have been meeting for over a year to plan a concerted grassroots response to the upcoming UN climate summit.

Anticipating that the forthcoming Copenhagen agreement is likely to fall far short of what the world needs to prevent unprecedented climate disruptions, their focus from the outset was to highlight the limits of business-as-usual and the need for direct action against the root causes of climate change, while demonstrating just and sustainable alternatives. At a meeting of the emerging Climate Justice Action network, participants from more than 20 countries, including several from the global South, agreed on an ambitious alternative agenda to the business-dominated deal-making at the UN level.

"We cannot trust the market with our future, nor put our faith in unsafe, unproven and unsustainable technologies," the meeting's declaration reads. "Contrary to those who put their faith in 'green capitalism,' we know that it is impossible to have infinite growth on a finite planet." The statement calls for leaving fossil fuels in the ground, popular and community control over production, reducing the North's overconsumption, respecting indigenous and forest peoples' rights and, notably, reparations for the ecological and climate debts owed by the richest countries to those who are most affected by resource extraction and climate-related disasters.

The emerging discourse of climate justice reflects a growing understanding that those most affected by accelerating climate-related disasters around the world are usually the least responsible for causing disruptions in the climate. Thus any movement seeking an adequate response to global climate changes needs to clearly face this discrepancy and prioritize the voices of the most affected communities. Many people around the world are simultaneously impacted by climate disruptions and by the emerging false solutions to climate change, including carbon trading and offsets, the destruction of forests to create biofuel (agrofuel) plantations, large-scale hydroelectric developments, and nuclear power. Corporate "solutions" to global warming often expand commodification and privatization, whether of land, waterways, or the atmosphere itself, largely at the expense of the same affected communities.

This outlook was first widely articulated following a meeting in Durban, South Africa in the fall of 2004. Representatives from groups (including social movements and indigenous peoples organizations) based in Brazil, India, Samoa, the US, and UK, as well as South Africa, drafted the Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading, which has since gained over 300 signatories from around the world. The Durban Group has helped bring people to the sites of various UN meetings to represent those affected by increased resource extraction over the past several decades, as well as the accelerating conversion of forests to monoculture plantations that is partly justified by the North's desire for carbon offsets.

Internationally, people from Pacific Island nations, in some cases already losing land and groundwater to rising seas, have been in the forefront of calls for immediate action. The worldwide confederation of peasant movements, Vía Campesina, with affiliated groups in more than 80 countries, has joined the call for actions in Copenhagen, challenging the status of carbon as a newly privatized commodity and arguing that the UN climate convention "has failed to radically question the current models of consumption and production based on the illusion of continuous growth."

The increasing urgency of the climate crisis has clearly hit a nerve among people of many walks of life, all around the world. While the outcome of Copenhagen remains highly uncertain, it is clear that such a flowering of creative and determined popular responses is precisely what is needed to reverse decades of willful inaction by the world's elites and reach beyond the limits of politics-as-usual.

Toward Climate Justice: Can we turn back from the abyss?

By Brian Tokar August 19, 2009, For Z Magazine, September 2009

No to neoliberal illusions, yes to people's solutions!

For centuries, productivism and industrial capitalism have been destroying our cultures, exploiting our labour and poisoning our environment.

Now, with the climate crisis, the Earth is saying "enough", "ya basta"!

Once again, the people who created the problem are telling us that they also have the solutions: carbon trading, so-called "clean coal", more nuclear power , agrofuels, even a "green new deal". But these are not real solutions, they are neoliberal illusions. It is time to move beyond these illusions.

Real solutions to the climate crisis are being built by those who have always protected the Earth and by those who fight every day to defend their environment and living conditions. We need to globalise these solutions.

For us, the struggles for climate justice and social justice are one and the same. It is the struggle for territories, land, forests and water, for agrarian and urban reform, food and energy sovereignty, for women's and worker's rights. It is the fight for equality and justice for indigenous peoples, for peoples of the global South, for the redistribution of wealth and for the recognition of the historical ecological debt owed by the North.

Against the disembodied, market-driven interests of the global elite and the dominant development model based on never-ending growth and consumption, the climate justice movement will reclaim the commons, and put social and economic realities at the heart of our struggle against climate change.

We call on everyone - workers, farmers, fisherfolk, students, youth, women, indigenous peoples, and all concerned humans from the South and the North - to join in this common struggle to build the real solutions to the climate crisis for the future of our planet, our societies, and our cultures. All together, we are building a movement for climate justice.

We support the mobilizations against the G20 summit and on the global crisis from 28 march to 4 April, and the 17 April 2009 mobilisation of La Via Campesina.

We support the call for an International Day of Action in Defense of Mother Earth and Indigenous Rights on 12 October 2009.

We call for mobilisations and diverse forms of actions everywhere, in the lead up to, during and beyond the UN climate talks in Copenhagen, especially on the Global Day of Action on 12 December 2009.

In all of our work, we will expose the false solutions, raise the voices of the South, defend human rights, and strengthen our solidarity in the fight for climate justice. If we make the right choices, we can build a better world for everyone.

Climate justice Assembly Declaration, Bélém, Brazil, 1 February 2009

A way out ?

It is rapidly becoming clear that the dominant paradigm of economic growth is one of the most significant obstacles to a serious global effort to deal with climate change.

The central problem, it is becoming increasingly clear, is a mode of production whose main dynamic is the transformation of living nature into dead commodities, creating tremendous waste in the process.

It has been the generalization of this mode of production in the North and its spread from the North to the South over the last 300 years that has caused the accelerated burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil and rapid deforestation, two of the key man-made processes behind global warming.

Thus, for the South, the implications of an effective global response to global warming include not just the inclusion of some countries in a regime of mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, although this is critical: in the current round of climate negotiations, for instance, China, can no longer opt out of a mandatory regime on the grounds that it is a developing country.

Nor can the challenge to most of the other developing countries be limited to that of getting the North to transfer technology to mitigate global warming and provide funds to assist them in adapting to it, as many of them appeared to think during the Bali negotiations.

These steps are important, but they should be seen as but the initial steps in a broader, global reorientation of the paradigm for achieving economic well-being

In this regard, climate change is both a threat and an opportunity to bring about the long postponed social and economic reforms that had been derailed or sabotaged in previous eras by the elite seeking to preserve or increase their privileges.

The difference is that today the very existence of humanity and the planet depend on the institutionalization of economic systems based not on feudal rent extraction or capital accumulation or class exploitation, but on justice and equality

Anju Sharma, Centre for Science and Environment March 31st, 2000

An Alternative Understanding

It was not by chance that the socio-economic and political crisis of the post-war mode of development went hand in hand with the politicisation of the environmental crisis The crisis became obvious in the 1970s when public debate and social movements put the problems of societal appropriation of nature on the political agenda.

At the beginning, the environmental crisis was dealt with symbolically and by more or less technocratic state policies. After the mid- 1980s some 'solutions' became more and more obvious. After the Rio Conference on sustainable development in 1992, the road towards institutional innovations seemed to be opened and ways of dealing with the most fundamental environmental problems established: new international institutions like the Framework Convention on Climate Change, private companies which understood the profound and innovative changes that were necessary - certain sectors such as the automobile and chemical industries promoted their strategies under the label of sustainability - and an increasing public awareness.

In the course of the 1990s, the Rio Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity were themselves articulated through neoliberal politics - that is, they became one institutional dimension of the neoliberalising of nature. We can also observe a strong institutional selectivity towards market-based instruments in the very constitution of international climate and biodiversity politics. But more generally, a neoliberalising of nature took place: its privatisation, marketisation, de-regulation but also re-regulation (that is, state policies in order to facilitate privatisation and marketisation), market proxies in the residual public sector and respective flanking mechanisms in civil society.

At the 'Rio +10' conference in Johannesburg in 2002 it became clear that the strategies of the corporations consisted much more of a 'greenwashing' than real changes and that the public awareness reached among the global elites and middle classes was only translated into institutional changes as long as their own production and consumption norms were not questioned.

Policies were and are in the interest of the owners of assets and of the global middle classes including the middle classes in economically emerging countries such as China, India or Brazil. The Western way of life still promotes its attractiveness worldwide. Human wellbeing and social security are still equated with economic growth and this means the resource-intensive growth of car production, of airports, of industrialised farming, projects of ocean fertilisation, and so on. It is therefore possible to speak of an imperial way of living in Northern/ Western countries and also in the nations of the Global South with their growing middle class. That means that quite a large portion of the world's population lives by exploiting nature and exploiting other people(s); this is also one crucial element that despite the obvious crisis in the dominant relationships with nature remains largely uncontested. Governments and business intend to create in this situation a win-winwin- win situation through dominant political and economic institu tions: the proposed sustainable strategies are considered to be good for business, good for consumers, good for society as a whole and good for nature - and, therefore, justify state and intergovernmental policies.

In the context of the above, We need to ask whether the highly politicised topic of the environmental crisis and especially of climate change can open up a way for more transformative thinking and action. Socio-ecological conflicts reveal that much more is at stake than symbolic policies to slow down climate change through global resource management: questions of democracy and decision making, power over social knowledge remain. The political challenge is not just to of production, distribution and consumption. The forms of access to the material means of social and individual reproduction, and the power-mediated framing of environmental problems or 'the' ecological crisis, are both at stake.

It might be useful to develop radical demands and proposals through debates and the exchange of views and experiences. These should be articulated in relation to specific problems and alter the ways in which they are interpreted, thus offering possibilities for action. One major debate was initiated by Walden Bello's quest for 'deglobalisation' of the international political economy (2002): he argues, among other things, for a need to reject Western consumerism and a focus on resources from outside via foreign direct investment and proposes the promotion of environmentally sound and local technologies, distributional justice, self-determination and an important role for the democratic state

Therefore, it is not enough to bargain over emissions targets; a broad and - since different interests prevail - conflictive learning process has to take place in order to promote alternative but attractive ways of living, producing and consuming, based on a relationship with 'nature' that goes beyond one of domination.

Emancipatory politics seeks to strengthen alternative strategies and forms of living through cooperative learning processes and where necessary through conflict. But in contrast to the 1970s, in most countries there seem to be no relevant social forces that might be capable of changing the overall dynamics and orientation towards the exploitation of nature. However, the terrain is full of contingencies and this might give critical thinking and emancipatory action a chance. Therefore, we need a reflection of different strategies to maintain and shape societal relationships with nature.

(Extracted from: Environmental crises and the ambiguous postneoliberalising of nature, Ulrich Brand, Development Ddialogue January 2009)

Towards a post Industrial Stone Age?

With the use of fossil fuels since 500 years, energy use has increasing asymptotically, and with it eMergy appropriation and accumulation. Our primary commercial energy use today is one-sixth of the energy produced by photosynthesis, and has a 30-year doubling time. Consequently, we are currently consuming 1.4 times earth's bio-capacity, thus liquidating earth's natural capital.

We face two tipping points today, each with the potential to pose grave risk to human society as we know it. The first is the rapid exhaustion of our primary energy sources-oil and gas, with no techno-economically viable alternative source-nuclear, green, geotectonic-available as a replacement. A steep energy price rise and a consequent deep global recession are predicted to happen in the near future.

The second is global warming, which is expected to drastically impact the environment, human health and livelihoods within this century

The classic response to these issues has been to suggest technical, legal and economic fixes-alternate energy sources, Kyoto Protocol, supply side management of energy. None of these will work as the global economy is based on greed, and has permitted energy accumulation on a massive scale in the hands of a few. Its consequences-peak oil and climate change-have interfered with the Carbon cycle to such an extent, and in such a fundamental way, that many believe that we have already crossed the point of no return, or have a very narrow window of a couple of decades to rectify the situation.

Development as understood-growth, equity and social justice-has failed. Economic growth will slow down and even become negative with rapidly rising energy prices and climate change impacts setting in. Trickle-down theory has failed and inequity has only grown in the last 150 years. Mass poverty and massive global inequities between nations and economic classes can no longer be reduced by the "economic growth" mantra. With the failure of equity, social justice cannot happen. By going against the laws of nature, capitalism has become self-limiting. Sustainable development has become an oxymoron. Development must therefore be re-defined as:

Carbon Footprint

A carbon footprint is "the total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event or product"

The smaller the carbon footprint, the more environment-friendly is the organisation. Once we have accurately determined the current carbon footprint, we will need to identify the hotspots of energy consumption, optimise energy efficiency, and identify solutions to neutralise the CO2 emissions that cannot be reduced by any energy saving measures.

That being said, relying entirely on one indicator can sometimes be misleading. One example could be biofuels, for which a low carbon footprint could give the impression of a truly eco-friendly product, despite its negative land use impacts, ultimately increasing the pressure on rainforests and other rich habitats.

- Carbon footprint, The Hindu, Chennai, 09 Nov 2008

* Powering down energy and natural resource throughputs in society. As long as energy throughputs remain at current levels, conservation of natural resources is impossible.

* Conservation of natural capital is vital for the survival of human society and can only be done along with addressing issues related to equity, and vice versa.

* Ensuring that all people have equal: i) access to energy and other natural resources, ii) consumption levels of energy and other natural resources, iii) participation levels in decision making over all issues related to energy and natural resources, in such a manner that the eco-footprint for earth as a whole, and its various geographic regions, do not exceed their bio-capacities.

This perforce people recovering their control over their stolen environments. GDP/GNP can no longer be used as a development milestone and a suitable development milestone will have to be fashioned out and accepted.

The above can only be achieved if global thinking shifts from "gain maximization for a few people" to "risk minimization for all of life". Implicit within the latter is the acceptance of three equities: a) between people, b) between generations, c) between species. If equity between species is accepted, it challenges the very definition of "economic value" as we understand it today. The currently anthropocentric political and sociological structures must also become bio-centric.

The roadmap to do all this is yet uncharted. There isn't adequate public will or time left to make the shift before catastrophic events predicted to happen with peak oil and climate change tear apart the fabric of society as we know it. Some are already talking of survival strategies in a post-industrial stone age.

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The Meaning of Resistance in Peru

While climate jargon-fuelled meetings happen at the global level, examples of local resistance can remind us what dealing with climate change is really about. The indigenous peoples' struggle in Peru against the colonisation of their lands by polluting industries is one such example.

For over two months, Peru's indigenous peoples have been holding an indefinite strike demanding the abolition of legislative decrees that threatened to undermine their land and water rights. The Peruvian government introduced these laws in line with the free trade agreement it had signed with the United States. It was done without prior consultation with the indigenous communities, as required by the 169 International Labour Organisation Convention, to which Peru is a signatory. The new laws mean opening more rainforest to private corporations, a move which the government has said was in the 'national interest'. Such labelling was an excuse for its violent military reaction against the indigenous protestors in the past weeks. The government, however, did not count on the strength of the resistance of the indigenous peoples.

When people think of the Amazon, they think of Brazil, but more than half of Peru's territory is covered by the Amazon rainforest --home to 65 ethnic groups, 14 linguistic families and diverse ways of living. The Amazon boasts the greatest biological diversity in the world. It generates an estimated 20 per cent of the world's fresh water. It is crucial for maintaining the climate as it regulates atmospheric gases and stabilises rainfall, it protects against desertification and serves numerous other ecological functions.

And yet, in the last four years, the area designated for oil and gas concessions has increased from about 15 percent to 70 per cent . In April 2009, PeruPetro, the country's national oil-licensing agency, signed contracts with international oil companies for 15 Amazonian 'blocks' of land.

Peru is just one of many countries now in conflict with its indigenous people over natural resources. Different parts of Africa, Latin America, Asia and North America are also experiencing intensified conflicts over land rights and access to natural resources - which may mark the Rubincon for a model of unsustainable extractive capitalism for the benefit of few.

Ironically, the global climate negotiations are threatening the indigenous peoples' way of life, by seeking to expand the carbon market and to make the rainforest part of this market-based scheme. The fact that many indigenous peoples have no titles to the land they have lived on for centuries, makes them an easy target and vulnerable to displacement. This not only threatens their rights and the Amazon itself, but also means that the last vestiges of an ancient way of living in harmony with nature is being destroyed.

It is worth defending not least for helping the world understand what is involved in moving to a non-carbon economy.

- A fight to save the Amazon rainforest, Joanna Cabello, TNI, 19 June 2009

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