



our planet

The magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme — December 2011

DURBAN

RIO+20

XIE ZHENHUA
GROWING CONSENSUS,
JOINT ACTIONS

OLIVER LETWIN
LET'S LOCK IN
GREEN GROWTH

LISA JACKSON
SUPPORTING SOLUTIONS

CANCUN

POWERING
CLIMATE
SOLUTIONS



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PO Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: (254 20) 762 1234

Fax: (254 20) 762 3927

e-mail: uneppub@unep.org

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Editor : Geoffrey Lean

Coordinator : Mia Turner

Distribution Manager : Mohamed Atani

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Breaking a cycle that increases climate change, costs lives, and harms economic development.

books

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Keeping Track of Our Changing Environment

This publication by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was conceived with the idea of showing how the planet has changed in the twenty years since the first Earth Summit in 1992. The report was produced as part of UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook-5 (GEO-5) series, the UN's most authoritative assessment of the state, trends and outlook of the global environment. The full GEO-5 report will be launched in May 2011.

IEA Training Manual Volume Two: Climate Change Vulnerability and Impact Assessment in Cities

This UNEP report analyzes the results of recent research on climate change, its impact on cities and options for responding. Its primary aim is to foster debate and present methodologies for evaluating the level of vulnerability and the adaptation capacity of urban centres. It also aims to strengthen awareness on possible impacts of climate change, while providing decision makers with a range of instruments to evaluate those impacts. In addition it provides examples of adaptation policies that could be applied by government institutions and other sectors of society.

Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All

This is the 2011 Human Development Report Development by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which argues that environmental sustainability can be most fairly and effectively achieved by addressing health, education, income, and gender disparities together with the need for global action on energy production and ecosystem protection. According to the Report, as the world community prepares for the landmark UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 in Brazil, sustainability must be approached as a matter of basic social justice, for current and future generations alike.

Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2011

By Bloomberg New Energy Finance, Frankfurt School and the UNEP Collaborating Centre for Climate and Sustainable Energy Finance.

Global investment in renewable energy jumped 32 per cent in 2010, to a record US\$211 billion. In addition to this eye-catching record, the investment activity in developing countries increased strongly and it is the first time the developing world has overtaken the richer countries in terms of financial new investment. The Global Trends Report 2011 offers an elaborate analysis of Trends and Issues in the financing of renewable energy.

YouthXChange Climate Change and Lifestyles Guidebook

Published by UNEP and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this booklet aims to promote sustainable lifestyles among young people aged from 15-24 by providing information and tips on topics such as water usage, waste reduction, energy and resource efficiency, travel and transport and responsible shopping and entertainment. By channeling the relevant information related to climate change in a less abstract manner, it seeks to help young people become the advocates and agents of change for sustainable lifestyles around the world.



Carbon Coalitions by Jonas Meckling

Over the past decade, carbon trading has emerged as the industrialized world's primary policy response to global climate change despite considerable controversy. With carbon markets worth US\$144 billion in 2009, carbon trading represents the largest manifestation of the trend toward market-based environmental governance. In Carbon Coalitions, Jonas Meckling, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, presents the first comprehensive study on the rise of carbon trading and the role business played in making this policy a central pillar of global climate governance.

Encyclopedia Of Climate And Weather (2nd Edition)

Stephen H. Schneider, Mastrandrea, Schneider, Michael Mastrandrea, Terry L. Root and Terry L. Root (2011)

For most of history, humans have made every possible effort to accurately foretell the weather, evolving from the use of guesswork, rule of thumb, and signs in the sky to the development of contemporary forecasting techniques drawn from two scientific disciplines, climatology and meteorology. The Encyclopedia of Climate and Weather provides a comprehensive history of this development.



Achim Steiner

UN Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director, UNEP

The gap between scientific reality and political ambition seems to remain firmly in place — and may be widening — as negotiations on how over 190 countries can move forward on climate change in Durban, South Africa. While there are a multitude of encouraging developments — in 2010 for example over US\$210 billion was invested in renewable energies in countries from Germany to China and the United States to Mexico, Kenya and South Africa — these remain too far behind the curve in terms of the size, scale and pace of what is needed to keep the rise in global temperatures beneath 2 degrees Celsius this century.

Durban may not yield a definitive and decisive new climate agreement, but it cannot suffer stalemate if social progress, economic growth and environmental sustainability are simultaneously to be realized. Among the many achievements of the UN climate convention meeting in Cancun, Mexico, last year was the confirmation that the negotiations remain at the centre of the international community's response, rather than drifting into the segmentation and segregation after the 2009 Copenhagen summit. This is the foundation upon which Durban needs to build — and from which to move forward on several achievable fronts.

In Durban everything remains on the table, including forwarding Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and the conservation and sustainable management of forests, known as REDD+.

Over a dozen countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Panama, are at advanced stages for participation in REDD+. Deforestation currently accounts for around 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. Paying developing countries to conserve rather than clear forests can thus play a central role in combating climate change and delivering multiple Green Economy benefits, including improving water supplies, conserving biodiversity such as the iconic orangutan, stabilising soils and creating green jobs in natural resource management.

Norway — which supports the UN REDD programme, of which UNEP is a member — is providing US\$1 billion to Indonesia and a similar sum to Brazil. In Indonesia it has already triggered a moratorium on clearing new tropical forests for palm oil plantations.

There are opportunities for South Africa here too. Clearly the host of COP17 is not a vast tropically forested country. But there is real potential for planting and replanting trees and shrubs on degraded land in areas such as Kwai Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape, providing financial incentives to landowners and state-owned areas in terms of improved management and livelihood opportunities for local people.

By some estimates there is some 1.2 million hectares of degraded land in the Eastern Cape alone. What might that be worth if just 10 per cent of that area was reforested and restored with carbon prices at US\$10 a tonne of carbon dioxide? The amount of carbon sequestered or taken up by these growing trees and shrubs — estimated at 350 ton per hectare, or perhaps even higher under wetter conditions, could be worth seven million Rand a year. Over 30 years this might grow to around 200 million Rand, though it would be somewhat diminished by such transaction costs as the cost of the trees and monitoring, reporting and verification of the projects.

Durban also needs to move forward on launching the Green Climate Fund to assist developing nations to combat climate change and provide options on how to generate the agreed climate finance of US\$100 billion per year by 2020. In addition, Governments must deliver tangible progress towards operationalizing in 2012 the new technology and adaptation mechanisms agreed in Cancun. And last but not least Durban needs to put on place a process for anchoring the emission-reduction pledges made in Copenhagen and Cancun and for moving steadily to close the gap between current ambitions and what is needed to keep temperature increases below two degrees. These moves would send strong signals to Rio+20 in June next year — 20 years after the Earth Summit of 1992 that set the course of contemporary sustainable development, including combating climate change.

Action to combat climate change and the transition to a Green Economy are happening literally everywhere. The challenge for Durban and for Rio+20 is to find ways of scaling-up and accelerating what is already underway — and of decoupling economic growth from resource use — while learning to recognise that addressing global warming and general environmental change is as much an opportunity as a challenge and can refocus and realize social progress for the many, not just the few.



Growing consensus, joint actions



XIE ZHENHUA
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Vice Chairman,
National Development
and Reform Commission,
PRC

People representing governments, NGOs, media and other relevant stakeholders are gathering in the beautiful city of Durban for the COP17/CMP7 United Nations negotiations on climate change. After years of endless efforts — and in adherence to the UN framework and the principle of consensus — governments agreed on establishing the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, forming the basis for the international legal form and institutions of global cooperation in addressing climate change. The Bali Roadmap set up a process to enable full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention and the Protocol. Last year, the Cancun Conference took a successful step in implementing the Roadmap and the international community now has expectations of achieving positive outcomes in Durban.

The Durban Conference should continue to follow the two-track approach to make progress in the implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, which should be governed by the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and be conducted in an open, transparent, inclusive and party-driven process. Pursuant to the mandate of the Bali Roadmap, the conference should, on the one hand, implement the consensus reached in the Cancun Conference and define the detailed arrangements for such issues as finance, technology transfer and adaptation — and, on the other hand, continue the negotiation on unsolved issues left from Cancun and further develop a comprehensive and balanced outcome.

*“Firstly, the conference
should determine
the emission reduction
arrangement for the
developed countries
that are Parties to
the Kyoto Protocol under
its second period:
such a decision is
the most crucial task,
absolutely critical
for the conference’s success.”*

With genuine concern, we hope that outcomes in three aspects can be achieved in Durban. Firstly, the conference should determine the emission reduction arrangement for the developed countries that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol under its second commitment period. Such a decision is the most crucial task, absolutely critical for the success of the conference. Secondly, it should decide on the arrangements for developed countries that are not Parties to the Kyoto Protocol to undertake comparable emission reduction commitments under the Convention in terms of nature, magnitude and compliance procedures. And thirdly, the conference should further discuss and operationalise relevant mechanisms for adaptation, finance, technology transfer and measurement reporting and verification capacity-building — as well as arrangements on MRV and transparency which differentiate developed and developing countries. Under such circumstances, developing countries should, under the framework of sustainable development, carry out appropriate mitigation actions with financial and technological assistance from developed ones.

China has always given great attention to climate change and prioritised combating it as one of the grand and consistent strategies for its economic and social development. As a developing country, China faces arduous tasks of developing the economy, eradicating poverty, realizing industrialization and urbanization, and improving people’s livelihoods. Despite these

demanding tasks, however, China has been, is and always will be active in taking practical actions to address climate change.

China reduced its energy consumption per unit of GDP by 19.1 per cent during the 11th Five-Year Plan period. It has also pledged to fulfill a goal of reducing its economy’s carbon intensity by 40 to 45 per cent by 2020 compared to 2005 level. To realize this goal, China has set a series of binding domestic targets in its 12th Five-Year Plan, including reducing energy consumption and CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP by 16 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, from 2010 levels by 2015, and raising the non-fossil fuel share of primary energy up to 11.4 per cent.

China has also introduced measures to fulfill these targets, such as: intensifying accountability; optimizing industrial and energy structures; implementing pilot projects; enhancing energy saving and low carbon management; promoting the circular economy; encouraging research, development, dissemination and application of low carbon

technologies; perfecting relevant economic policy; expanding low carbon pilot projects; and improving relevant institutions and mechanisms. These policies and actions demonstrate the Chinese government’s devotion to combating climate change and its dedication to accelerating its green low-carbon development.

Climate change is indeed one of the most crucial humanitarian challenges of our time, given its wide array of impacts on, and interactions with the well-being of all people and with development in all nation states. What we have achieved so far was hard-earned, and to reach an effective solution to combat climate challenge in future remains a difficult task. While calling for joint efforts of all countries, there is a need to take into consideration the different historical responsibilities, capabilities and national development process of each of them.

For the best interests of human beings, we gather side-by-side to strengthen the current outcomes, realise our promises, establish mutual political trust and reach a new consensus with the aim of enhancing cooperation to advance the comprehensive, effective and sustained implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, implement the Bali Roadmap and the Cancun Agreement, and boost a comprehensive, balanced and positive outcome in Durban. China is willing to work together with the international community to protect our planet and create a better future.



OLIVER LETWIN
Minister for
Government Policy, UK.

The 1992 Rio Earth summit marked a momentous step forward in international cooperation on social and environmental issues. Twenty years on, we are faced with increasing pressures on the global economy, the global environment and the world's poorest people. There could not be a better time for the world to lock in its commitment to sustainable development — and the Durban climate negotiations this winter and the Rio+20 conference, twenty years after the summit, next summer, provide the opportunity to do so.

At a time of short-term economic instability — when developed economies are struggling to return to growth, when the emerging economies are still growing rapidly, and when developing economies are desperately seeking to eradicate poverty — the global economy also faces a continuing long-term threat from the twin effects of climate change and the unsustainable use of natural resources. Unless substantial action is taken to remedy these twin long-term threats, we may emerge from the present economic instability only to find ourselves confronted by another and ultimately even more serious set of problems. So Durban and Rio+20 must give a concerted push to more sustainable, low carbon, resource-efficient and climate-resilient development.



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