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ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. This issue is produced co-operatively by Climate Action Network groups attending COP15 in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Gigatonne gap!

Whether countries can agree to limit emissions sufficiently to allow the world to keep warming well below 2°C is surely the most critical Copenhagen outcome. So it is timely to look at what is on the table so far, and to hold it up against what the science requires.

Over the last few days, three independent studies have set out to do just that. They all conclude that we are currently off track – although they reach differing conclusions on how big the gap is.

On Sunday, Nicholas Stern and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) came out with what, on the face of it, seems like great news. UNEP declared that here at Copenhagen, countries “may be closer than some observers realise to agreeing the emission cuts required to give the world a reasonable chance of avoiding global warming of more than 2°C.”

ECO is delighted that Lord Stern and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner are adding an optimistic note to the negotiations, and are also convinced that a fair, ambitious and binding deal is within reach. But optimism also needs to be balanced by hard-headed realism.

First, the study’s benchmark is to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to 44 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020, down from today’s levels of around 47 Gt. But this gives at best a 50% chance of staying below 2°C – it is like playing Russian roulette with three bullets in the gun.

Lord Stern’s team reckons that if the high end of all the offers on the table from both industrialised and developing countries were to be delivered, global emissions would stand at around 46 Gt in 2020. This implies that even according to Lord Stern’s estimates, there is still a gap of 2 Gt that needs to be bridged.

However, two other credible studies paint a much less rosy picture. An updated assessment by McKinsey for Project Catalyst reckons that current pledges add up to at best 49 Gt (with the bulk of the reductions coming from developing countries). And another new report by Ecofys and Potsdam Institute says that the world is headed for warming of well over 3°C by 2100.

The differing views are perhaps not surprising – among other things defining “business as usual” is a tricky business. But perhaps the most relevant and sobering finding is that neither Project Catalyst nor Potsdam/Ecofys see any sign of a peak in emissions before 2020. Only yesterday, IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri said in CoP15’s opening plenary that global emissions must peak no later than 2015.

But even if Lord Stern is right – and *ECO* would dearly like to believe him – it would be a mistake to assume that his headline figures are in any way in the bag, or that they can be taken at face value. The Stern assessment assumes that negotiators make dramatic progress on two other areas – delivering new finance and closing down loopholes.

On finance, Lord Stern is clear that substantial finance and other support is needed to ensure

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From Russia with love

An intriguing article entitled “Present from Russia” appeared yesterday in the respected Russian financial newspaper, *Vedomosti*. It described how Russia was preparing a Christmas present for the world – the renunciation of its large surplus of assigned amount units.

“This will be our ecological present to the world,” stated a source within the Russian delegation. (The article, in Russian, can be found at <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/article/2009/12/07/220647>)

Subsequently, Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Administration denied this report. But it leaves one thinking – such a move could potentially strengthen actual Annex I targets by 4-6% percentage points. After all, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force thanks to Russia.

So what is going on behind the scenes
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“Hey, don’t start evolving. Our species hasn’t managed to wipe itself out yet.”

By courtesy of Phil Somerville [www.somervillecartoons.com]

False fast start

Never has *ECO* seen such enthusiasm from industrialised countries (especially the umbrellas), on the LCA plenary floor, to get out of the starting blocks and support developing countries to take climate action with 'fast start' finance. Such eagerness to move down the track got *ECO* very excited.

But on closer inspection, our excitement was dashed. *ECO* looked again and saw that the track drops off a cliff after a few metres.

Climate finance certainly needs to get moving fast, and 'fast start' finance sounds very stirring and athletic. But this is not just a race for sprinters, it's a marathon!

In 2007, the Bali Action Plan (BAP) endorsed by all Parties launched a comprehensive process "to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012." According to the BAP there is no funding now without funding later.

As December 18 draws ever closer, *ECO* knows world leaders must leave Copenhagen prepared to run with something more than fast start finance. And it now seems clear that industrialised countries are thinking of taking shortcuts across the track by using already committed aid money for climate finance, taking a deeper bite into precarious aid budgets.

ECO warns industrialised country leaders that repackaged aid is not, and will not be a substitute for predictable, additional and adequate finance over both the near and long run.

To avoid a false start here in Copenhagen, kick start finance must be accompanied by a legally binding agreement on the scale, sources, governance and additionality of long-term finance. And the finish line must be at \$195 billion a year to stay below 2°C. Otherwise, those industrialised country leaders should get ready to run for the warming hills.

Annex I targets trickery

Industrialised countries have come to Copenhagen with a plan to weaken their national targets through LULUCF loopholes. They spurn the idea that they should have to account for increased emissions from forest management.

Instead of accounting for increased emissions from a historical level, as is done for all other sectors, industrialised countries are saying they will not account for emission increases as long as they are planned, i.e. business-as-usual.

This is like saying countries will not account for emissions from new coal-fired power plants as long as their construction is 'business-as-usual.'

Australia, Canada and New Zealand have explicitly expressed their intent to increase forest harvest and therefore emissions. Many European countries may be doing the same, but the EU – at this crucial moment – has failed to even describe what they are calling 'business-as-usual,' undermining the transparency of LULUCF negotiations. Japan is addicted to the credits it gets from the current forest management rules and so has artificially created the same outcome here, even though its forest sink is declining. The end-result is that an amount of emissions roughly equal to half of the total Kyoto emissions reduction target for the first commitment period will not be accounted for.

Some countries have proposed to account for actual changes in emissions. Norway and Russia have both proposed 1990 as a base year to account for actual changes in emissions. However, both benefit from this choice and would earn credits.

ECO sees only one possible leader in this mess. Switzerland appears to be the only Party that has not proposed an optimal baseline for itself, forecasting a net increase in emissions that it will actually account for. It is a sad statement that such a fundamental gesture in a climate agreement must be taken as leadership.

– From Russia with love, from front page –
in Russia? Does the Russian delegation have a present up its sleeve – further icing on the Copenhagen layer cake being prepared here? Were they just not quite ready to unwrap the largest environmental gift in history? Perhaps the Russian delegation could clarify?

ECO would be delighted to publish the clarification.

FOSSIL OF THE DAY AWARD

Climate Action Network (CAN) launched its highly-popular "Fossil of the Day" awards ceremony yesterday on the opening day of the climate negotiations. The awards are given to the country or countries doing the most to obstruct progress in the global climate talks.

First Place – Industrialised Countries

Industrialised countries ("Annex I" countries, in climate-ese) won first place for coming to Copenhagen with a profound deficit of ambition for cutting carbon emissions and keeping warming well below 2°C.

Second Place – Sweden, Finland and Austria

These countries roared into the fossil leader board for backing a devious EU proposal to cook the books by not fully accounting for emissions from forest management.

Third Place - Canada

Canada earned its first fossil for Environment Minister Jim Prentice's proclamation that his nation "won't be swayed" by Copenhagen "hype." And yet, if there is a country on the face of this planet that so desperately needs to be swayed, it is Canada.

Fossil awards are presented daily in a Hollywood-style glittering ceremony at 6 p.m. at the exhibition area of the Bella Centre. Take the time to be razzled and dazzled daily. For full citations, go to www.fossiloftheday.org

– Gigatonne gap, from front page –
that developing countries can realise, or go beyond, their proposed emission reductions. So far, industrialised countries' performance in coming forward with secure, predictable and additional finance has been pitiful.

The story on loopholes is also troubling. Lord Stern assumes that all surplus emission allowances from the first Kyoto commitment period are removed from the system. But there is no sign yet of an agreement on whether, or how, this could be done. Lord Stern also assumes that LULUCF rules with environmental integrity can be agreed – but the reality is that industrialised countries are pushing ahead with a pick 'n mix approach to LULUCF accounting. Taken together, these loopholes could drive real global emissions back up by several gigatonnes.

Last but not least, Lord Stern also assumes that all offset credits represent real, additional emission reductions – and that systems can be put in place to avoid double counting of offsets. Again, a serious dose of realism is in order.

The true gap to a "well below" 2°C deal can be closed here in Copenhagen – but let us not be under any illusion about how much work needs to be done.

Southern voices

Climate Action Network will host a side event entitled **Stronger Southern Voice** on Tuesday, December 8 from 18.15-19.45 at the Niels Bohr Meeting Room.