

# Outreach Issues

Tuesday May 1, 2007

A daily publication of:  
Stakeholder Forum (SF) & Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN)

## In this issue:

1. A new global deal
2. An emerging recipe for disaster
3. Discussing: Biofuels
4. UN Security Council discusses climate change
5. The ethical dimensions of climate change
6. Women have ENERGY
7. Tuesday's programme

## Outreach Issues is produced by:

Senior Editor:

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Political Editor:

Felix Dodds

Sub Editor:

Nishu Aggarwal

Jennifer Peer

Journalists:

Juan Hoffmaister

Elsabet Samuel

Christopher Kyriacou

Erol Hofmans

Graphic Designer:

Kristine Slyngstad

Editorial Advisor:

Michael Strauss

*Articles reflect the opinions of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SDIN network or Stakeholder Forum.*

'Outreach Issues' is published with financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA); Lebensministerium, Austria; and with the support of WFUNA, the World Federation of UN Associations.

## Key Concerns for NGOs at the CSD: A NEW GLOBAL DEAL

By Jürgen Maier, Citizens United for Renewable Energy and Sustainability

The challenge is clear: keep climate change below 2°C, manage a 50% reduction of global emissions— and 80% in industrial nations. Yet, the gulf between recognizing the need for action and implementation is wide. A meaningful outcome at CSD will provide impetus to bridge this gap and deliver a strong political decision on climate and energy to address these challenges. To achieve this, CSD must make commitments on climate policy, while recognizing different levels of development between nations. Technology arrangements for sustainable energy must be prioritised and immediately developed.

*Three key areas must be addressed to ensure a meaningful outcome at CSD 15:*

### Financing sustainable energy development

Most financial means today are used to safeguard and secure energy for the future are invested in producing more fossil fuels for consumption by industrial and emerging economies.

New initiatives need to be taken on developing 'clean energy' – such clean energy must not include nuclear energy.

Public money from the international financial institutions and UN agencies need to be invested in decentralised energy systems catering to the needs of the developing nations, i.e. energy efficiency and renewables

### Links between the energy debate to the ongoing climate negotiations must be established and agreed upon.

The CSD has the overall responsibility within the UN system for monitoring and developing policy on the sustainable energy-climate nexus.



A review mechanism, similar to that agreed at CSD 13 on water and sanitation, should be established to assess implementation of CSD 15 decisions at CSD 18, i.e in 2010.

The CSD should call for the development of criteria for monitoring progression towards a sustainable energy regime.

### Criteria for bio-energy should be developed

Sustainability criteria are necessary to measure the environmental and social impact of bio-energy.

To make these criteria binding they cannot be imposed unilaterally but need to be discussed and agreed between producer and consumer countries.

CSD is the most suited institution to launch a process to develop criteria on bio-energy, as it is charged with overseeing all three pillars of sustainable development.

## The other side of biofuels

# AN EMERGING RECIPE FOR DISASTER

By Neth Daño and Hira Jhamtani, Third World Network

**Biofuels are seen as THE solution to the world energy crisis and the problem of climate change, and as demand rises, many developing countries see biofuels as a new export commodity. The reality is that the current hype on biofuels is taking a course away from the poor whose already limited access to energy and food is further threatened. This market paradigm is premised on the false belief that biofuels offer a quick technological fix to the global energy crisis.**



As countries that are dependent on fossil fuel imports scramble for cheaper alternative and countries that produce biofuels want to capture the potential market share, the illusion is being fostered that our current unsustainable production and consumption patterns of life can be sustained by clean biofuels instead of expensive and more polluting fossil fuels. The emphasis is on international market demands to fulfill the tremendous demand of industries and the industrialized nations. This development gives rise to some key concerns in developing countries and the rest of the world.

### **Competition for land and agricultural resources**

To produce biofuel in any meaningful quantity, crops for the fuel will have to be cultivated on a large scale, even for non-grain oil crops such as *jatropha* thereby triggering off new competition for agricul-

tural resources, and/or increasing existing competition, mainly for land and water, between food production and biofuel production, thereby further skewing market prices for commodities.

The amount of water required for food production is projected to increase for 60 to 90%, especially if there is no improvement in water productivity. Agriculture is already consuming 93% of the world available fresh water supply, and benefiting from 66% of the world's total water withdrawals. Increased commercial production of biofuels is only going to increase the demand on an already strained resource that is further threatened by the consequences of Climate Change. The World should brace itself for another crisis if biofuel is the choice it promotes to the exclusion of all else.

### **Rising food prices**

An increased demand for any commodity is going to push up its price. The world is beginning to feel the impact of massive demand for biofuels on food prices. In Mexico, for example, the expanding cropland planted to yellow corn for ethanol, exported to the US, has reduced the supply of white corn for tortillas. The high cost of white corn and tortillas, the food staple of poor Mexicans, is causing social unrest in Mexico, prodding the

government to declare a ceiling on the price of tortilla.

For the world's poorest people, many rising grain prices can quickly become life threatening, as local carbohydrate and protein sources for people are diverted to the energy market. High costs of feedstock will drive small livestock and poultry raisers out of business, depriving millions of poor families of their livelihood and nutrition sources.

### **Food security under threat**

As the biofuel engine is revving up, world food security become increasingly threatened. The belief that the world is producing twice the daily food requirement of its current population may not hold true for long, with biofuels as a voracious competitor. With dismal food distribution systems and the highly unequal access to food, the world's poor are bound to suffer most from the consequences of massive production of biofuels.

### **Bioenergy balance**

Ironically, industrial-scale production of biofuels would still depend on fossil fuel to keep the processing plants working and to keep the trucks and tankers running to transport the end products to the market. In the most pessimistic analysis, whatever savings in greenhouse gas emission resulting from the shift to biofuels may even be offset by the increased use of fossil fuel for industrial-scale biofuel production.

### Increased dependence on fossil-based agricultural inputs

The commercial production of biofuel based on intensive, industrial monoculture systems is projected to increase the use of fossil fuel-based agricultural inputs such as inorganic fertilizers and chemical pesticides, with the associated problems of water and soil pollution. Industrial corn requires high levels of chemical nitrogen fertilizer and the herbicide atrazine, while soybeans require massive amounts of non-selective herbicides that upsets soil ecology and produce "superweeds". Intensive production and monocultures result in massive topsoil erosion and surface and groundwater pollution from pesticides and fertilizer runoff.

### Genetically modified crops

The hype over biofuels has presented a lucrative opportunity for the promotion of GM crops which are now being touted to accelerate and increase biofuel crops whether in the form of food crops or GM trees. Presently, 52 percent of corn, 89 percent of soy, and 50 percent of

canola in the US is GMO, much of it are already being used for biofuel production. The expansion of biofuels with GM grain and oil crops can potentially contaminate domestic and world food supply, as shown by numerous examples of GM crops not intended for human consumption ending up in the food chain beyond the country where actual contamination took place. Likewise GM trees modified to grow faster and grown for biofuels pose potential environmental risks, which have not been properly assessed.

### Deforestation

Oil palm plantations have been associated with forest and land fires which, over the last 20 years, have led to serious damages in terms of biodiversity erosion,

serious ecological degradation and recurring transboundary haze that endanger human health, and result in economic losses. While the problem of forest fires have yet to be solved, the increasing demand on oil palm from Europe for use as biofuel has created another pressure on Indonesia's forests, for instance. Deforestation continues to threaten the survival of indigenous peoples, forest dwellers and the rural poor who depend on the forests for their food, medication, livelihood and cultural identity.

### WHO BENEFITS?

Without a fundamental shift in paradigm, a mere technological fix would potentially aggravate the inequity between the rich and the poor. A transition to biofuels based on market fundamentalism will fail

to increase the poor's access to energy. Rather, it will merely repeat the world's experience with fossil fuel energy where subsidies, market mechanisms and corporate control over technology have led to highly unequal access to

energy, distorted prices, cartelized operations and environmental problems.

For economic reasons, poor farmers may be pressured to grow crops for biofuels than for food, while not having access to energy. This would merely repeat the numerous stories of large-scale hydropower plants displacing communities for the sake of providing energy to industries and cities while leaving poor villages in the same areas without electricity.

Adopting biofuels as a technology fix would definitely not make the poor less marginalized and disempowered. A meaningful shift to biofuels, or any renewable energy source for that matter, would require a paradigm shift in energy

and in production and consumption patterns. Provided there is a paradigm shift, biofuels have the potential to make a real contribution at the community level, based on the sustainable use of local resources, promotion of local energy efficiency and empowerment of communities in managing energy production and consumption. Packets of experiences on this have shown that community-based biofuel production, such as the *jatropha* project in Mali, can directly benefit the poor by increasing their access to an affordable and clean energy source as well as provide off-farm rural livelihood to farmers, especially women. The concept of energy sovereignty should be promoted. Only then can biofuel become a source of reliable, accessible, affordable and sustainable energy for the poor majority.

To prevent another catastrophe, developing countries should make a careful, considered analysis of the pitfalls involved instead of simply jumping on board the biofuels bandwagon. Governments which are genuinely concerned about tackling the global energy crisis should avoid putting too much effort and their limited resources into one technological fix. Rather they should look into all local, clean energy sources such as wind, solar, hydropower and biogas from waste, mainly through community-based production to increase the poor's access to energy and provide livelihood opportunities for the rural poor, especially women. Energy self-sufficiency must be the underlying paradigm of any energy technological development.

A meaningful shift to biofuels, or any renewable energy source for that matter, would require a paradigm shift in energy and in production and consumption patterns.



*Jatropha seeds*

# Discussing: Biofuels

**On Monday, Outreach Issues journalists, Juan Hofmeister and Chris Kyriacou, met with Ms. Claudia Vieira Santos, from the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, and Mr. Antonio Perez, from the Mexican Ministry of Energy, to discuss their national experiences with biofuels. This is a synopsis of the discussions.**

## **Brazil: “Biofuels are for here and for now”**

Ms. Vieira Santos stated that for Brazil biofuels currently provide the most cost effective option for diversifying the energy mix, as existing alternatives, such as hydrogen, are expensive high-end technologies. She highlighted how Brazil was leading by example. After phasing out all subsidies on ethanol production in the late 1990s, flex-fuel cars, which can run on any combination of petrol or ethanol, are today the norm in Brazil— providing a free market choice between pure ethanol and ethanol and petrol mixes. Brazil’s policy is that biofuels are an excellent way to provide greater access to energy to remote areas and wealth to the rural poor, and need not only work in Brazil. As even regular vehicles can run on a fuel mix of up to 10% ethanol, a level which would result in significant emissions reductions, Brazil wants to highlight at CSD15 that ‘biofuels are for here and for now’.

When asked if the production of biofuels threatens food security, Ms. Santos’ response was that in Brazil, over a 15 year period, market prices for sugar cane had not demonstrated any direct link with ethanol production. Ms. Santos also insisted that this was not at the expense of previously uncultivated land, pointing out that deforestation in Brazil has decreased by 52% in the past three years, a period over which there has been a surge in the production of biofuels. Ms. Santos highlighted that the

biggest obstacle is agricultural subsidies in developed countries. As the world’s biggest exporter of ethanol, totalling 3.6 billion litres in 2006, Brazil is keen to establish a world energy market for ethanol with consistent standards on quality.

Questioned on whether such a global market should conform to social environmental standards, Ms. Santos insisted that such standards should not apply as there are no existing standards in the global fossil fuel market. Ms. Santos stressed repeatedly that biofuels are no panacea. They are a complement to the existing fossil fuel regime, and not a replacement technology.

## **Mexico: Promoting biofuels to overcome oil dependency**

Similarly, Mr. Perez argued for further support and deployment of biofuels as a way to combat dependency on fossil fuels and promote poverty eradication. He noted that last week Mexico approved legislation to promote biofuels through inter-ministerial planning and other incentives. In addition, Mexico plans to build refineries and pipelines to export ethanol from sugarcane, sweet potato, and jatropha in the future. Mexico, like Brazil, believes that corn should be left out of the biofuels portfolio— Mr. Perez said that corn, the staple food of millions of Mexicans, should not have to compete with fuel demand.

After the prices of corn skyrocketed last January, due to price speculation based

on white corn demand in the USA, Mr. Perez claimed that Mexico is taking the necessary steps to avoid future market shocks to food supply.

Noting that sugarcane is a ‘more or less’ basic part of the Mexican diet, Mr. Perez said that through adequate planning, –planning already promoted through the new Mexican biofuels legislation and potentially with new technologies— Mexico can overcome oil dependency and promote economic development.



# UN Security Council Discusses Climate Change

By Jennifer Peer

The United Nations Security Council recently held its first-ever debate on the impact of climate change on security. Called by the United Kingdom, the meeting aimed to examine the relationship between energy, security and climate. The debate featured interventions from more than 50 delegations, representing imperiled island nations and industrialized greenhouse gas emitters alike. While some speakers praised the initiative, and called for the United Nations to urgently consider convening a global summit on the issue, there were reservations from developing countries who considered climate change to be a socio-economic development issue to be dealt with by the more widely representative General Assembly.



Since 1999 the Security Council has addressed human security threats and challenges caused by violence and poverty. The debate on climate change and security follows the launch on 6 April 2007 of the report of the Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that highlighted the severe impacts climate change will have during this century on humankind, especially on the poor.

The session was chaired by British Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett. She said that recent scientific evidence reinforced, or even exceeded, worst fears about climate change. She emphasised that climate change is a security issue, though not a matter of narrow national security -- it is about "our collective security in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world".

Calling for a "long-term global response" to deal with climate change, along with unified efforts involving the Security Council, Member States and

other international bodies, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that projected climate changes could not only have serious environmental, social and economic implications, but implications for peace and security, as well. "This is especially true in vulnerable regions that face multiple stresses at the same time -- pre-existing conflict, poverty and unequal access to resources, weak institutions, food insecurity and incidence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS," he said.

China's representative was among those who argued that the Council is not the proper forum for a debate on climate change. "The developing countries believe that the Security Council has neither the professional competence in handling climate change -- nor is it the right decision-making place for extensive participation leading up to widely acceptable proposals," he said. The representative of Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, agreed, saying that the Council's primary duty was to maintain international peace and security. He expressed concern over the ever-increasing encroachment of the Security Council on the roles and responsibilities of the other main organs of the United Nations.

Alternatively, Papua New Guinea's representative, speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, said that the im-

pact of climate change on small islands was no less threatening than the dangers guns and bombs posed to large nations. He noted that Pacific island countries are likely to face massive displacements of people, similar to population flows sparked by conflict, and that the impact on identity and social cohesion are likely to cause as much resentment, hatred and alienation as any refugee crisis. "The Security Council, charged with protecting human rights and the integrity and security of States, is the paramount international forum available to us," he said. The Forum did not expect the Council to get involved in Climate Change Convention negotiations, but did expect the body to keep the issue of climate change under continuous review, ensuring that all countries contribute to solving the problem and that those efforts were commensurate with their resources and capacities.

In a tone of conciliation, Singapore's speaker said that while it was obvious that there was some discomfort about the venue and nature of the debate, it was equally obvious that climate change is 'the' global environmental challenge. Noting their paucity of resources, he said that developing countries would be the hardest hit and called upon countries to "view our procedural disagreements against this backdrop".

# The Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change

By Taraneh Ashraf, Bahá'í International Community

**For one of the first side events of CSD-15, six panellists spoke to a packed room about the ethical dimensions of climate change. Despite media attention, the ethical questions and principles underlying the issue have not realised due consideration.**



Tahrih Naylor, the Bahá'í International Community's UN representative who chaired the event, expressed the Bahá'ís' interest in "supporting a continuing discourse that will include scientific, policy, and religious perspectives on the ethical dimensions of climate change."

H.E. Mr. Enele Sopoaga, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the UN, opened the session. He noted that a strong message coming from several important reports on climate change was that the future will be catastrophic for all countries if the international community fails to act. For islands such as his, scenarios for the future include "total extinction." Inaction, he said, is contrary to the precautionary principle, agreed to 15 years ago in Rio. He cited a moral obligation to help small island states, and LDCs, to rise above the blaming game, political and economic considerations and make climate change a priority comparable to Security Council action on AIDS.

Mr. Om Pradhan, UN-OHRLS noted that the science about climate change was settled; what is lacking is political will. The IPCC reports made it clear

who bears responsibility and who will be most affected. The developed countries need to take responsibility for mitigation and assist with national adaptation programs by providing resources, technology, and capacity building for developing countries.

Don Brown, of the Collaborate Program on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change, Rock Ethics Institute, argued that the ethical dimensions of climate change are complex. He talked about not discussing ethics in an abstract way, but applying ethics and ethical analysis to the policy questions we now face to transform the nature of negotiations about responsibility, legal norms, and both soft and hard law.

Dr. Arthur Dahl, former Deputy Assistant Director of UNEP, stated that "We are not just talking about climate and energy, but the future of civilization. The climate crisis represents the greatest market failure in the history of the planet. We have to go to the level of values and ethics, including the examining of values underlying the economic system. Religion has a role in becoming a source of unity, to acknowledge our common humanity and build a sense of global solidarity. There is a

need for education for sustainable development and a more altruistic economics. We need to actively look for sources of unity, with the support of NGOs, that allow us to rise above our narrow interests and develop the trust and ethical foundations to work together, build agreements, and meet the challenges ahead."

Tony Barnston of Columbia University, noted that it takes humans years to adjust to 'inconvenient discoveries', citing cigarette smoking and prolonged exposure to the sun as two examples. A more urgent change is needed to stem greenhouse gas emissions.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster, of GreenFaith stressed that the various religions agree on the moral crisis that faces us. He said that humans have the power to disrupt God's natural order by violating boundaries set for behaviour. As in the Nazi era, this is an important moment in history. He closed by calling on people to seek out the ethical implications in climate issues, recognizing it as a moral imperative to understand the "meaning of this hour."

There was a lively discussion after the presentation. Many questions centered on economics, and the panellists clarified that the ethics underlying cost-benefit analysis and market mechanisms need to be examined and questioned. Brown concluded the panellist responses, saying that at the upcoming conference in Bali, countries can no longer be dogmatic in their behaviour.

The session concluded with a deeper understanding and renewed commitment to raise the ethical dimensions of climate change in our discussions at the CSD and beyond.

# Women Have ENERGY

By Jessica Hartline

With the CSD 15 underway, Women's groups have emerged as a strong voice within the international community. A consensus has been reached, in preparation for CSD 15, on key policy action for mainstreaming gender within the thematic cluster issues: Energy for Sustainable Development, Indoor Air pollution, Climate Change, Industrial Development, and Inter-linkages and cross cutting issues. Women's groups will continue to strengthen their capacity as a major group while promoting more effective participation in energy policy-making, decision-making, and program implementation by addressing the following policy objectives:

## **Energy for Sustainable Development**

- Mainstream gender approaches that increase the full involvement and repre-

sentation of women within the energy sector policies, programs, and plans.

- Prioritizing investments in energy infrastructure and institution that directly benefit women.

## **Indoor Air Pollution**

- Integrate indoor air pollution reduction strategies into national development and poverty reduction strategy plans that emphasize women's health and access to clean cooking fuels and heating technologies.

## **Climate Change**

- Conduct impact analysis to identify gender specific needs and protection measure related to climate change adaptation and mitigation while involving women in all aspects of climate change policy

## **Industrial Development**

- Strengthen employment and entrepreneur opportunities for women by investing in the capacity building and providing innovative financing mechanisms for income generating activities and businesses.
- Assess large scale industries and new technologies.

## **Inter-linkages and cross cutting issues**

- Ensuring that gender concerns are addressed in planning, implementation and monitoring of all activities for energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/ atmosphere, and climate change.

Paul the polar bear is looking for a holiday...



# TUESDAY'S PROGRAMME

## PARTNERSHIPS FAIR

10:00 - 6:00 Neck Area  
Asia-Pacific Environmental Innovation Strategy Project  
Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC)  
World Nuclear University  
International Solar Energy Society

## LEARNING CENTRE

10:00 - 1:00 Conf. Room B  
Atelier de sensibilisation et d'information sur les stratégies nationale de développement durable (NSDS Workshop - in French)

3:00 - 6:00 Conf. Room B  
Innovative Energy Financing

## SIDE EVENTS

1:15 - 2:45 Conf. Room B  
National Sustainable Development Strategies in a post conflict context - experience from Serbia

1:15 - 2:45 Conf. Room 2  
CSD Implementation Strategies for Pacific Small Island States

1:15 - 2:45 Conf. Room 7  
Building a Diverse Work Force for a Sustainable Energy Future

6:15 - 7:45 Conf. Room 7  
A Study on Gender Equality as a Prerequisite for Sustainable Development

6:15 - 7:45 Conf. Room 4  
Energy Efficiency: Making the Biggest Opportunity the Highest Priority

## CSD RELATED EVENTS

1:15 - 2:45 Delegates Dining Room 6  
Sustainable use of BIO-Fuels Managing the Up and the Downside

2:00 - 3:00 Library Training Room (L-270C)  
Sustainable Development: How to Find UN information

## MAJOR GROUPS MEETINGS

8:30 - 9:00 Conf. Room C  
Local Authorities

9:00 - 10:00 Conf. Room C  
NGOs informational meeting

10:00 - 12:00 Conf. Room C  
General briefing for NGOs on International Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development Governance in the context of UN reform.  
Cosponsored by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), ANPED Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Stakeholder Forum (SF) and the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Development (FBOMS).

12:00 - 1:00 Conf. Room C  
Education

1:00 - 2:00 Conf. Room C  
Energy

2:00 - 3:00 Conf. Room C  
Women

2:00 - 3:00 Conf. Room C  
Indigenous People

3:00 - 4:00 DPI/NGO Resource Center  
(By Library Exit)  
Peace Caucus

4:00 - 5:00 Conf. Room C  
Youth and Children

5:00 - 6:00 Conf. Room C  
Workers and Trade Unions

6:00 - 8:00 Conf. Room C  
NGOs policy strategy meeting

Outreach Issues is a new and improved civil society newsletter produced by Stakeholder Forum and the SDIN Group. Bringing together the best of the two previous CSD conference dailies, Outreach and Taking Issue, Outreach Issues aims to "report with an attitude, from the global scene of sustainability."