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Katowice Climate Change Conference

Fleshing out the implementation of the Paris Agreement

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Double issue

Editor's Note

IT was in the last quarter of the last century that concern about the problem of climate change crystallised into an international issue. It soon became apparent that the issue could best be tackled under the auspices of the United Nations.

The first major step taken to address this issue was the establishment in 1988 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body for providing policymakers with the scientific assessment of the current state of climate change.

This was followed by the emergence in 1992 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change.

The other major development was the adoption in 1997 of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, an international treaty which, under the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', imposed on the developed countries, while exempting the developing countries from, the burden of reducing the carbon emissions responsible for global warming.

Even before the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, the UN had begun convening annual climate change conferences. The first such conference (the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC or COP 1) was held in Berlin in 1995. Despite its strong affirmation on the need for joint action to tackle this problem, it was to take another 20 years before such deliberation and debate finally bore fruit in the form of a truly global climate treaty.

However, the landmark treaty signed in Paris in 2015 does bristle with some serious weaknesses. The Paris Agreement's use of non-binding 'nationally determined contributions' as the means of tackling climate change raises the question of how effective it can be. There are no sanctions for non-compliance.

To top it all, one of the major polluters of the planet – the United States – has since begun the process of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, many developed countries have refused to endorse a fresh round of commitments under the Kyoto Protocol which would be effective until the Paris Agreement's provisions kick in after 2020. They contend, citing the phenomenal economic growth of China in recent years, that the concept of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' can no longer be meaningfully applied.

In the face of the stiffening of the developed countries' positions in the post-Paris period, progress in translating the Paris Agreement into concrete rules has not been easy. This was the most critical task facing the COP 24 meeting that took place on 2-15 December 2018 in Katowice, Poland.

The choice of Katowice as the venue for a UN climate conference was not fortuitous. It is a major coal-mining town and the conference hosts may have wanted to remind the over 20,000 people who attended the conference that the transition to a carbon-free world is no easy walk. It was also a statement by the Polish hosts that, although they were signatories to the Paris Agreement, they were not prepared to close down their coalmines overnight. This is a dilemma facing many other countries endowed with fossil fuel resources and it remains to be seen how, in the face of such intransigence, the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C can be attained.

Nevertheless, after a rocky and fractious two weeks of talks at COP 24, member states managed to find enough common ground to approve a set of rules – called the Katowice Climate Package – for implementing the Paris Agreement, which sets the world's climate policy for years to come.

In our cover story for this issue, we focus on the climate conference held in the Silesian mining town and the Paris Agreement 'rulebook' it produced. While the rich countries have not yet evinced any genuine intention to take the necessary measures to limit global warming within the margin of 1.5°C, the hope is they will wake up to their responsibilities.

– The Editors

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Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/15dec.html)

Michal Kurtyka, President of the UN climate change conference held in Katowice, Poland, in December, leaps in celebration of the adoption of the 'Katowice Climate Package'. However, it remains to be seen whether the compromises that enabled approval of this set of rules for implementing the landmark Paris Agreement will hold. 17

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ECOLOGY

Crude injustice

Six decades on, the resource curse continues to wreak destruction in the Niger Delta.

Orji Sunday

A fisherman from Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta showing oil slick on his palm. The Niger Delta is considered one of the most severely oil-damaged environments in the world.

STANDING by the River Goi, Eric Dooh's face shines with sweat. It is wet season in the Niger Delta's Ogoniland region and the humidity is brutal. The surface of the river shines as well – with a veil of slick crude oil. 'My parents were great farmers,' Dooh says, pointing towards the large swath of land, now overgrown with weeds, by the edge of the river where he once worked with his parents to produce yam, water yam, maize, cassava and groundnuts. 'Whenever the farm was harvested we had enough to eat, sell and store in the barn for another planting season.'

Dooh grew up in Goi – a tiny traditional village in this tidal region, named after the river it is located by. Like most other communities in the 404-square-mile area that the half-a-million-strong Ogoni ethnic group calls home, the residents of Goi were mostly smallholder farmers and fishermen who depended mainly on their immediate environment for subsistence. He recalls life in the village before the Anglo-Dutch oil giant Royal Dutch Shell first discovered oil in the 1950s, roughly 70 miles from his village. Back then 'the land was rich and farmers were never poor,' he says. Apart from their farm, which had been in the family for several generations, Dooh's father, Barrisa Tete Dooh, who used to be Goi's chief, had also set up a small fishery, a poultry farm, a bakery and a vocational training centre in the village. These endeavours employed nearly 80 people.

'I had a lot of hope about life. My father had a lot of investments … But in the early 1980s we started seeing oil on our lands,' he says. 'We did not know what it meant. Nobody complained because the decline in yield was small and slow.'

But as Shell expanded drilling in the region, it became impossible to ignore the growing impact of the frequent oil spills from its network of pipelines that criss-cross the Delta, and corrosive fumes from gas flaring at wellheads. (According to independent records, from 1982 to 1992 alone, 1,626,000 gallons of oil were spilled from Shell's operations in Nigeria.) Eric says birds in the poultry operation started dying, as did the fish in the ponds and rivers.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian government began forcing Delta residents to abandon their land, turning it over to oil companies without consultation and offering negligible compensation. They based this takeover on the Land Use Act adopted in 1979, which gave it full ownership and rights to all Nigerian territory and also declared that eminent domain compensation for seized land would 'be based on the value of the crops on the land at the time of its acquisition, not on the value of the land itself'.

In March 1993, villagers from Goi were among the 300,000 Ogoni who, led by well-known writer and leader Ken Saro-Wiwa, staged a peaceful mass protest against Shell's widespread pollution, forcing it to shut down 30 wells in the area. The protests would spur the Nigerian government to unleash a campaign of appalling violence against the Ogoni, the impact of which resonates in the region to this day. (Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People were tried on a trumped-up murder charge and executed in 1995, causing international outcry.) The Ogoni never allowed Shell to resume drilling in their lands, but many of the company's pipelines still run across their territory. These pipelines often leak or are vandalized, causing oil spills.

In 2004 and 2005, massive oil spills from Shell's Trans-Niger pipeline caught fire, incinerating some 15 hectares of mangrove forest. The fires, which lasted for days, spread into Goi where they burned down farmlands and contaminated fisheries and creeks. In 2007, a new spill occurred, further escalating damage to the waterways and the mangrove.

The village had gradually emptied out by this time. With no fish left in the creeks or fishponds and no land left fit for farming, villagers had no way to make a living. Those who could afford it, like Dooh's family, moved to neighbouring villages that were in a relatively better state, or to Port Harcourt, the capital of River State. Others, who lacked resources, lingered on as long as they could even though it cost them their health. Dooh says many villagers started dying of mysterious coughs, cancers and lung diseases, and suffered blindness and strange illnesses.

In 2009, yet another large spill forced the last remaining families to flee. 'There is only one home and that is Goi, but it is death to stay back,' says Dooh, who now lives in the neighbouring village of Mogho with his wife and four children and earns a living teaching at a secondary school there.

Goi is a ghost village now. The bakery-cum-training centre that was once the pride of the village is now a rundown building with a government-issued signboard outside that reads: 'Prohibition! Contaminated Area. Please Keep Off'. But former residents like Dooh continue to visit the area from time to time, to show reporters and researchers around, or even to try their luck casting a net in the fishponds.

Despite six decades of environmental destruction that set off a cycle of poverty, corruption, citizen's uprisings and violence in the Niger Delta, many locals still hold out hope that they will be able to return to their homes one day. Currently, this hope is pinned on a billion-dollar Ogoniland cleanup project announced by the Nigerian government in 2016. But two years on, as of November 2018, the so-called Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project was yet to kick off.

Oil-damaged Delta

The Niger Delta is the third largest wetland in the world and the largest river delta and mangrove ecosystem in Africa. Spread over 30,000 square miles, the Delta's network of islands, mangroves, freshwater swamps and rainforests, along with the rich coastal waters it merges into, once made it among the most biodiverse regions on Earth. It is home to several International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List species including some endemic or near-endemic animals, such as Home's hinge-back tortoise, the Niger Delta red colobus monkey and the Niger Delta or Heslop's pygmy hippopotamus. It is also home to nearly 30 million people of more than 40 ethnic groups, including the Ogoni, making it one of the most densely populated regions of Nigeria. Sixty percent of the Delta residents are subsistence farmers and fishermen.

Oil was first discovered in the Niger Delta in the small community of Oloibiri in Bayelsa State in 1956 by a joint Shell-British Petroleum operation. (Nigeria was a British protectorate at the time.) Nigeria joined the ranks of oil producers in 1958 when its first oil field in Oloibiri began pumping out 5,100 barrels of oil per day. Soon other international oil companies, including ExxonMobil, Chevron, Elf from France, Agip Group from Italy and the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), joined the fray. Today, the Delta is pockmarked with over 600 oil fields. With some 28.2 billion barrels of crude reserves and a production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day, the Delta's oil makes Nigeria one of the largest oil producers in Africa and the sixth largest in the world. According to NNPC, oil production and export accounts for 90% of Nigeria's gross earnings of $375.8 billion (as of 2017).

But as the fate of Goi shows, this oil money – which has long flowed into the coffers of multinationals and the Nigerian government, but rarely into local Delta communities – has come at a heavy ecological and social cost. More than half a century of poorly regulated extraction has left the Delta's waterways, land, vegetation and air so polluted with crude oil, drilling wastes and noxious gases that the Niger Delta is now considered one of the most severely oil-damaged environments in the world.

In 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released the first (and to date, only) large-scale scientific study of pollution in the Delta. And even that study, which identified 41 sites where oil had entered wells and underground water supplies, focused only on Ogoniland, though many other areas across the vast region have been severely impacted as well. Based on a two-year investigation, the report found widespread soil and water contamination, sometimes more than 40 years after oil was spilled.

Recurrent oil spills – due to leaks during processing, from corroded transport pipelines, poor maintenance of infrastructure, and from vandalism and widespread oil theft known locally as 'bunkering' – are the main drivers of this pollution. While there are no consistent figures available, in 2013 researchers estimated that nearly 546 million gallons of oil spilled into the Niger Delta over five decades, equivalent to nearly 11 million gallons every year, of which only a negligible amount was ever cleaned up. This estimate does not include many other spills that have gone unreported. By comparison, BP's 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which made headlines across the world for months, spilled 2.10 million gallons into the Gulf of Mexico.

The UNEP report said the Ogoniland spills alone would take up to 30 years and $1 billion to clean up. But that assessment is already seven years old, and spills continue to occur at alarming rates in the Delta to this day. A 2018 Amnesty International report shows that two of the largest companies operating in the Delta, Shell and Eni of Italy, reported over 1,800 oil spills in the region between 2011 and 2017. And rising rates of bunkering – which involves breaking into a pipeline, causing oil to spew out under pressure – and 'artisanal' backyard refining by locals to turn the crude into cheap diesel and kerosene have further despoiled an already degraded environment. The refining process leaves a residual toxic sludge that is usually dumped into the creeks. Ac-

There are about 100 continuously burning flares in the Niger Delta. Gas flaring from oil production wells – a cheap method of burning off natural gas – emits greenhouse gases and brings about acid rain.

cidental fires in bunkered areas often incinerate vast areas of forest and mangrove, while the military's tactic of blowing up the informal refineries it finds creates yet more damage.

Stealing crude, however, is now a complex $9 billion business that employs around 26,000 people and involves armed militia, international cartels and payoffs to the security forces, says a report by the Niger Delta Environment and Relief Foundation. The report found that only 20% of the stolen oil goes into local illegal refining; the rest is exported. 'Those who export 80% of the stolen oil are not poor people, they are connected to the political and military establishment as well as the oil bureaucracy,' it notes. According to 2018 estimates, Nigeria loses about 10-15% of its oil, about 200,000 barrels per day, to theft each year.

Meanwhile, gas flaring from production wells – a cheap method of burning off natural gas, which is a byproduct of drilling – spews millions of tons of greenhouse gases into the air and brings about acid rain. Though flaring was made illegal in Nigeria in 1984, there are still about 100 continuously burning flares in the Delta, according to Friends of the Earth Netherlands. Some of these flares have been burning since the 1960s. According to Nigeria's environment ministry, oil companies in Nigeria flare over 313 million standard cubic feet of gas annually, which results in the emission of 16.5 million tons of carbon dioxide. As a result of industry pressure, the federal government has continued to push back the deadline for an end to gas flaring.

Devastating impact

The impact of this hellish pollution has been devastating on wildlife and local communities that can no longer depend on the land to sustain them or even keep them healthy. Alagoa Morris of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria says the loss of arable land and clean water has escalated hunger, deprivation and poverty, and contributed to high rates of disease and physical, mental and social malaise among Delta communities.

In a textbook example of the resource curse, more than 70% of the Delta people live below the poverty line. Less than 50% of the communities here have electricity, running water, clean drinking water, sanitation, or access to healthcare and schools. Per capita income in the Delta is far below the national average of $1,661.41, with nearly half of the population here making between $0.20 and $4 a day.

The pollution has also had acute and long-term effects on human health. Illnesses ranging from skin diseases to asthma to cancer are common. And studies have shown a significant drop in farm yields. The crops that do grow absorb some of the crude oil, and the small number of fish that remain in these oil-slicked waters smell of crude as well. Still, people feed on these crops and fish, and drink the contaminated water, because they have no other alternative.

'Anybody that lives in those deeply polluted Niger Delta communities can be sure that at least 20 years have dropped from their lifespan. The hazard is great,' says Best Ordinoha, professor of community medicine and public health at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Average life expectancy in the Delta is 40 to 43 years, way below the national average of mid-60s.

The unborn and infants haven't been spared either. A 2017 study found that infants born to women who lived within six miles of oil spills were twice as likely to die early, and the ones who survived were more likely to have impaired health. The researchers found that even spills that had happened five years before conception doubled the neonatal mortality rate from 38 deaths to 76 deaths for every 1,000 births.

For Friday Belief of Bodo, one of the largest villages in Ogoniland, these numbers are more than statistics. When the 30-year-old – who makes a living gathering and selling periwinkle snails from the local creeks – got pregnant in 2016, she feared her baby would die. 'There were many other women also in our job who have lost many of their babies that way,' she says. Many of the women, including Belief, who wade through the creeks in search of the snails suffer from various ailments including rashes, itchy eyes, breathing issues, coughs, fevers and severe stomach aches. Concerned about the health of her baby, Belief went to a doctor, who warned her to stay away from the creeks. With several mouths to feed at home, including her older children, that wasn't an option. Even the doctor requires money from you, she says. On 20 April 2017, Belief gave birth to an underweight boy who died within six hours. 'The doctor told me … he could not cope with all I have been inhaling from the creek,' she says, her eyes brimming up.

'I was told by a doctor that a lot of people in the area are dying of oil pollution,' says Hilde Brontsema, communications officer of Friends of the Earth Netherlands, who visited the Delta in September. 'First, because they are drinking polluted water, eating polluted food, and everything is toxic. But it's not just that. It's also because there is no free healthcare and they have no money to buy medicines. So if people fall ill, they just lie at home quietly and hope it will pass.'

Pushback

Since the early 1990s, many Delta communities, especially the Ogoni and the Ijaw, have tried time and again to push back against the exploitation of their land by the government and the oil companies and demand a cleanup of the land and more equitable distribution of oil revenues. These protests, which were at times violent, were brutally suppressed by state security forces. By 2006, these tensions led to armed revolt and the militarisation of nearly the entire region as ethnic militias – loosely grouped together as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta – fought against Nigerian military and police forces.

In 2009, the Nigerian government reached a ceasefire with the militant groups demanding resource control and environmental justice. The peace deal included monthly stipends for some 30,000 former fighters, job training and lucrative security contracts to protect pipelines. But environmental and human rights groups allege that the true aim of the deal was to coopt the young militia leaders. It has had little trickle-down effect and has ended up creating a new class of wealthy young men who have captured the development schemes. Meanwhile, the stipends have turned into an unsustainable cash-for-peace bargain. In 2016, when stipends were not paid for several months due to a recession following a crash in global oil prices, and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari hinted at winding the scheme down, many of the ex-rebels began to reassemble in new groups, such as the Niger Delta Avengers, Red Scorpions and the Niger Delta Greenland Justice Movement, and resumed their attacks on oil installations. The groups scaled back their activities after the government granted arrears and resumed payments.

More than a decade of militancy in the region, though born of the genuine suffering of the people, has done little to improve the lives of the general populace. In fact, the state of the environment as well as that of the people is worse than before. 'It's certainly not a place that's moving forward in a good way,' says Scott Pegg, a politics professor at Indiana University who has been following the Ogoni rights movement for 20 years. 'A lot of kids are being born and have nothing much to look forward to.'

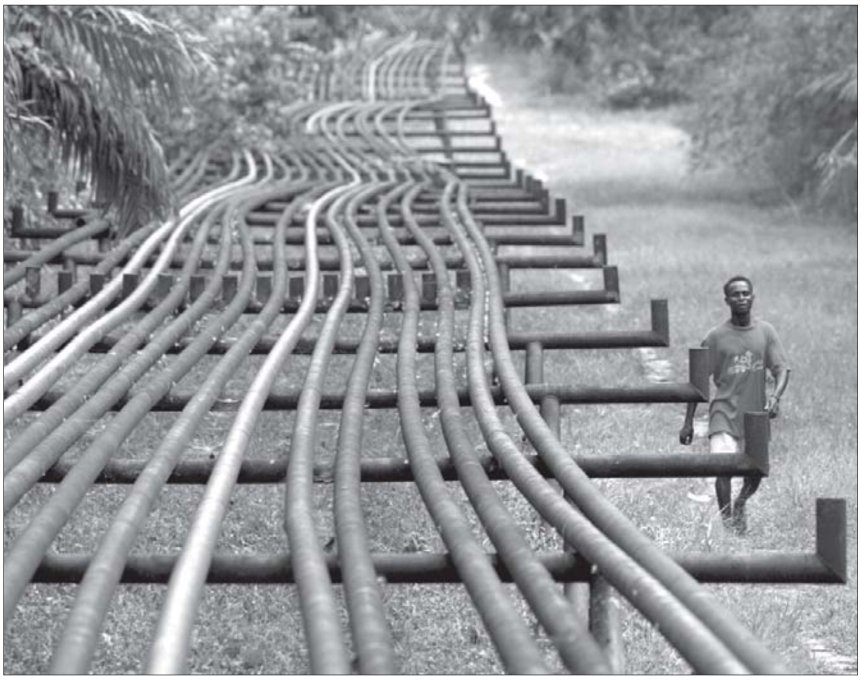
The courts have offered some recourse, but not much. Hundreds of minor cases regarding oil spills and pollution are brought each year in Nigerian courts. More than 1,000 court cases have been filed against Shell alone since the 1980s, since it is the largest oil and gas company in Nigeria. But almost all these cases are either thrown out, settled for small sums or remain stuck in the legal system for years. Even when the courts rule against the companies and order hefty fines, the companies file appeals that can drag on and on, and more often than not, the compensation money never reaches the impacted communities.

Dooh's father took Shell to a Nigerian court in 1997 to demand compensation and a cleanup of Goi's farms and rivers. Much like other cases, that one has been dragging on for 21 years. Meanwhile, the spills got worse and the family business collapsed. In 2012, Dooh's father and three other Ogoni villagers, together with Friends of the Earth Netherlands, filed a separate suit against Shell for the damage caused by the Trans-Niger pipeline spills between 2004 and 2009 at a civil court in The Hague, where the company has its joint global headquarters. A few months later, troubled by blindness, a persistent cough and lung diseases – illnesses that had become common in the region – Dooh's father passed away and Dooh took up his father's role in the appeal.

In January 2013, the court found Shell guilty of causing pollution on the land of one plaintiff, Friday Alfred Akpan, and rejected the demands of the remaining three farmers. Shell appealed this decision, while Friends of the Earth Netherlands and the Nigerians appealed the rejection of the demands of the remaining three farmers. The ruling for Akpan was unique, and Friends of the Earth hopes the case will open the door to more compensation claims against multinational corporations. In December 2015, the appeals court in The Hague rejected Shell's appeal and allowed Friends of the Earth and the four villagers to proceed with their suit.

'The case is starting again in 2019, maybe sometime in April,' says Brontsema of Friends of the Earth Netherlands, explaining that the delays were caused by the deaths of two of the plaintiffs, including Dooh's father, and a report the environmental group was writing about the state of Shell's pipelines in Ogoniland.

Friends of the Earth expects Shell to make its usual argument that most of the spills are caused by sabotage and oil thieves and that cleanups are hindered by violence in the region. 'For us it doesn't really matter if the spills are caused directly by Shell or not,' Brontsema says. 'We think that the fact that the rebels are there is also the fault of the oil industry. If you take away the people's land, if you take away their fish, they have no income anymore. Can you really blame them for doing anything to keep their family alive? We don't approve of vio-



Oil pipelines snaking across a part of the Niger Delta. Nigeria is one of the largest oil producers in Africa and the sixth largest in the world.

lence, but Shell should accept the fact that this is the result of their own doing.'

The case against Shell in The Hague received an additional boost in 2015 when the company accepted liability in a separate lawsuit filed in London in 2011 by 15,000 Ogoni villagers from the Bodo community. That case involved oil spills from the same pipeline that caused over 100,000 barrels of crude oil to spill into Bodo's creeks and surrounding swamps in 2008. Shell agreed to pay the Bodo villagers $83 million to clean up their lands and creeks. After years of delays, the cleanup is currently underway, under the auspices of the internationally recognised Bodo Mediation Initiative (BMI). The Bodo cleanup, however, covers only about four square miles of Ogoniland. A larger, one-billion-dollar Ogoniland-wide cleanup, based on the recommendations of the 2011 UNEP report, was officially launched by President Buhari in 2016 and, after years of delay, was scheduled to begin in August 2018. At the time of writing, it has been pushed back to December, and it isn't clear yet whether work will actually begin then.

The Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in Ogoniland, devised by UN engineers, oil companies and the Nigerian government, and paid for by the shareholders of the Shell Petroleum Development Corporation Joint Venture, will involve mopping oil up from water bodies, building a soil management centre to process and clean tens of thousands of tons of contaminated soil, and replanting mangroves. The project, which will take about three decades to complete, is supposed to serve as a blueprint for remediating other oil-damaged areas in the Delta and to kickstart development in the region by creating a trained cleanup taskforce comprising Ogoni people.

However, implementing the project has proved politically, fiscally and administratively challenging for the Nigerian government. Human and environmental rights groups say that seven years after publication of UNEP's report, very little meaningful progress has been made to improve the situation on the ground. Even the few immediate emergency measures that UNEP had recommended – such as providing clean and safe drinking water for the Ogale people who have been consuming water with benzene at more than 900 times the World Health Organisation guidelines, and conducting a comprehensive medical examination of everyone who has consumed contaminated water – have not yet been implemented.

'It's a large-scale, complicated endeavour,' says Pegg. The delay 'could be because there are many bidders offering very different bids, it could be due to political infighting within Shell or the Nigerian government, or within the communities, or probably all of the above. There are a lot of people who want a piece of the action. More generally, Nigeria is not the easiest environment to do anything in.'

Like many others, Pegg is sceptical that HYPREP will achieve its intended goals. 'I'm relatively confident that some contracts will be awarded and some money will be spent. I think what is extremely highly in question is how good a job [will be] done, and how close to anything like international standards it will be,' he says. 'The political leadership of the Niger Delta are culpable: very selfish, busy expanding their private estates at the expense of the people, communities, region and environment,' adds Morris of Environmental Rights Action.

Back in Goi, Dooh is gearing up for the next round of his legal battle with Shell in The Hague. He says he's fighting not just for his family but for all the people of the Delta.

'Look at me: The son of a wealthy man has now inherited poverty. A job creator turned a job seeker. I find it very difficult sending the kids to school and feeding my family,' he says, standing inside his abandoned bakery, tapping the rusted dough mixer. 'My father fought for this all his life but he died without seeing justice. I have been on this fight after him and I won't lose hope. Even if I die, my children would take up the fight.' ◆

Orji Sunday, who contributes to Al Jazeera, The Guardian *and many other local and international publications, is a Nigeria-based freelance journalist who covers global health, the environment, development and politics. This article was first published in* Earth Island Journal *(Winter 2019).*

Reckless gamble for profit that placed Indian cotton farmers in corporate noose

The dubious performance (failure) of Bt cotton, officially India's only genetically modified (GM) crop, should serve as a warning as the push within the country to adopt GM across a wide range of food crops continues. This article provides an outline of some key reports and papers that have appeared in the last few years on Bt cotton in India.

Colin Todhunter

Genetically modified Bt cotton crops in India have not decreased the need for toxic chemical pesticides as promised.

IN a December 2018 paper in the journal *Current Science*, P C Kesavan and M S Swaminathan cited research findings to support the view that Bt insecticidal cotton has been a failure in India and has not provided livelihood security for mainly resource-poor, small and marginal farmers. This paper was important not just because of its content but also because Swaminathan is considered to be the father of the Green Revolution in India.

The two authors provided evidence that indicates Bt crops are unsustainable and have not decreased the need for toxic chemical pesticides, the reason for these GM crops in the first place.

The authors cited the views of Dr K R Kranthi, former Director of the Central Institute for Cotton Research in Nagpur. Based on his research, he concluded in December 2016: 'Bt-cotton plus higher fertilisers plus increased irrigation also received a protective cover from the seed treatment of neonicotinoid insecticides such as imidacloprid, without which majority of the Bt-cotton hybrids which were susceptible to sucking pests would have yielded far less. It can safely be said that yield increase in India would not have happened with Bt-cotton alone without enhanced fertiliser usage, without increased irrigation, without seed treatment chemicals, and the absence of drought-free decade.'

In effect, levels of insecticide use are now back to the pre-Bt era, as is productivity, due to pest resistance and crop failures.

Following on from this, an April 2018 paper in the journal *Pest Science Management* indicates that the bollworm pest has developed progressive resistance to Bt cotton in India over a seven-year period. The authors conclude: 'High PBW [pink bollworm] larval recovery on Bt-II in conjunction with high LC50 values for Cry1Ac and Cry2Ab in major cotton-growing districts of central and southern India provides evidence of field-evolved resistance in PBW to Bt-I and Bt-II cotton.'

This alongside other problems related to Bt cotton has had disastrous consequences for farmers. In a 2015 paper, Professor Andrew Paul Gutierrez and his colleagues say: 'Bt cotton may be economic in irrigated cotton, whereas costs of Bt seed and insecticide increase the risk of farmer bankruptcy in low-yield rainfed cotton. Inability to use saved seed and inadequate agronomic information trap cotton farmers on biotechnology and insecticide treadmills. Annual suicide rates in rainfed areas are inversely related to farm size and yield, and directly related to increases in Bt cotton adoption (i.e., costs).'

In a new December 2018 paper, Gutierrez sends a warning to those considering rolling out GM food crops in India: '… recent calls by industry and its clients to extend implementation of the hybrid technology in aubergine (brinjal, eggplant) and mustard and likely other crops in India will only mirror the disastrous implementation of the failed hybrid Bt technology in Indian cotton and will only serve to tighten the economic hybrid technology noose on still more subsistence farmers for the sake of profits.'

He concludes that Bt cotton has placed many resource-poor farmers in a stranglehold. Bt cotton prevents seed saving and farmers must purchase costly seed, which leads to sub-optimal planting densities. Stagnant/low yields have followed, insecticide use has grown and new pests resistant to insecticide/Bt toxins have emerged.

Gutierrez says that leading Indian agronomists have proposed adoption of pure-line high density short-season varieties of rainfed cotton which could more than double current yields and avoid heavy infestations of pink bollworm, thus reducing insecticide use and pesticide disruption. This cotton is not a new technology and predates Bt cotton.

Given what Gutierrez says, it is quite timely that Kesavan and Swaminathan question regulators' failure in India to carry out a socio-economic assessment of GM crops' impacts on resource-poor small and marginal farmers. They call for 'able economists who are familiar with and will prioritise rural livelihoods and the interests of resource-poor small and marginal farmers rather than serve corporate interests and their profits'.

This mirrors the statement by Gutierrez and his colleagues in 2015 that policy makers need holistic analysis before new technologies are implemented in agricultural development.

Naturally, corporations and many pro-GM scientists wish to avoid such things as much as possible. They try to convince policy makers that as long as the science on GM is sound (which it isn't, despite what they proclaim), GM should be rolled out regardless. They regard regulators and regulations as a hindrance that is preventing GM from helping farmers. Deregulating GM is the order of the day.

This is a reckless approach. We need only look at Indian cotton farmers whose lives and livelihoods have been devastated due to the ill-thought-out rollout of Bt technology.

Kesavan and Swaminathan criticise the organisations charged with regulating GM organisms (GMOs) in India for a lack of competency and endemic conflicts of interest and a lack of expertise in GMO risk assessment protocols, including food safety assessment and the assessment of environmental impacts. Many of these issues have been a common thread in five high-level official reports in India that have advised against the commercialisation of GM crops:

- 'Jairam Ramesh Report' imposing an indefinite moratorium on Bt brinjal (February 2010);
- Sopory Committee report (August 2012);
- Parliamentary Standing Committee report on GM crops (August 2012);
- Technical Expert Committee final report (June-July 2013); and
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science & Technology, Environment and Forests report (August 2017).

In her numerous submissions to India's Supreme Court, prominent campaigner Aruna Rodrigues has been scathing. She recently told me: 'It is proven in copious evidence in the Supreme Court in the last 13 years that our regulators are seriously conflicted: they promote GMOs openly, fund them (as with herbicide-tolerant mustard and other public sector GMOs) and then regulate them. Truth is a massive casualty. This is not lightly stated.'

She added that 'failed hybrid Bt cotton in India' has put farmers on a pesticide treadmill as increasing levels of pest resistance become manifest.

Prior to this, in 2017, Rodrigues had said: 'Never has an agri-tech been sold as a "magic bean" to farmers like Bt cotton, with opprobrium attaching to our regulators and ministries of governance who supported and continue to support this technology-castle built on sand, in the absence of evidence and when the hard data said the opposite.'

In the rush to grow these 'magic beans', the area planted under Bt cotton has often displaced vital food crops at a time when India should surely have been looking to achieve food security and self-sufficiency.

Writing in India's *The Statesman* newspaper in 2015, Bharat Dogra drew attention to the knife-edge existence led by the people from whom rich agribusiness corporations profit. Dogra highlighted the case of Babu Lal and his wife Mirdi Bai, who had been traditionally cultivating wheat, maize and millet on their farmland in Rajasthan. Their crops provided food for several months a year to their 10-member family as well as fodder for farm and dairy animals integral to the mixed farming system employed.

Company agents (unspecified – but Monsanto and its subsidiaries dominate the GM cotton industry in India) approached the family with the promise of a lump-sum payment to plant Bt cotton seeds in two of their fields. Lal purchased pesticides to help grow the seeds in the hope of receiving the payment, which never materialised because the company agent said the seeds produced had 'failed' in tests.

The family faced economic ruin, not least because the food harvest was much lower than normal as the best fields and most labour and resources had been devoted to Bt cotton. This resulted in Lal borrowing from private moneylenders at a high interest rate to meet food and fodder needs.

On top of this, the company's agent allegedly started harassing Lal for a payment of about 10,000 rupees in lieu of the fertilisers and pesticides provided to him. Several other tribal farmers in the area also fell into this trap.

The promise of a lump-sum cash payment can be very enticing to poor farmers, and when companies co-opt influential villagers to promote planting of Bt cotton, farmers are reluctant to decline the offer. When production is subsequently declared – solely at the company's discretion, it seems – as having failed, a family becomes indebted.

According to Dogra's article,

there was growing evidence that the trend of experimenting with Bt cotton had disrupted food security in certain areas and introduced various health hazards and damaged soil due to the use of chemical inputs.

Also worth noting is Stone and Flachs's 2017 paper on how certain interests within and beyond India are attempting to break traditional cotton cultivation practices in order to place farmers on yet another corporate treadmill. This time, the aim appears to be to introduce herbicide-tolerant (HT) cotton in India on the back of Bt cotton. The authors indicate just how financially lucrative for corporations the relatively 'undeveloped' herbicide market is in India. HT cotton seeds have now appeared illegally on the market.

Ultimately, as Gutierrez implies, the bottom line is cynical corporate interest and profit – not helping Indian farmers or some high-minded notion about feeding the world. Just ask Babu Lal and thousands like him!

Of course, given the track record of HT crops, it is another disaster in the making for Indian farmers and the environment. This warning has already been made clear by a Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Committee, which regards HT crops as being wholly inappropriate for India.

With various GM crops waiting in the wings, India should continue to adopt a precautionary approach towards GMOs as advocated by Jairam Ramesh and not implement another reckless gamble with farmers' livelihoods, the nation's health and the environment. The then environment minister Ramesh pronounced a moratorium on Bt brinjal in February 2010 founded on what he called 'a cautious, precautionary principle-based approach'. The decision was reached following consultations with, among others, international scientific experts regarding the commercialisation of Bt brinjal. One of those experts, David Andow, had concluded that without any management of resistance evolution, Bt brinjal would fail in 4-12 years.

Isn't such failure what we are now witnessing with Bt cotton? It serves as a timely warning in light of attempts to implement a widespread GMO food crop regime in India. The writing is on the wall. ◆

Colin Todhunter was named in August 2018 by Transcend Media Services as one of 400 Living Peace and Justice Leaders and Models in recognition of his journalism. This article is reproduced from Countercurrents.org.

China, India respond robustly to US paper on 'differentiation'

China and India have offered a robust response to the United States over its attempts to 'differentiate' among developing countries on which of them could avail of special and differential treatment (S&DT) at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

D Ravi Kanth

A meeting in progress at WTO headquarters in Geneva. The US has sought to 'differentiate' among developing countries in the provision of flexibilities under the WTO rules.

IN a joint draft paper, China and India have outlined why no one among the developing countries must be left behind in continuing to avail of S&DT, particularly given the 'development divide' between the developing countries of the South and the developed countries of the North.

Over the last two years, the US has stepped up its multi-pronged assault on central pillars of the WTO multilateral trading system: on the 'most-favoured nation' (MFN) clause, by imposing unilateral and selective import duties; on the Appellate Body in the WTO's dispute settlement system, by blocking the filling of vacancies on the body; and on the multilateral negotiating function based on the principle of consensus, by selectively pushing plurilateral agreements in the areas of services trade and now electronic commerce.

Now the US has, in a paper circulated at the WTO on 16 January, launched its latest attack on the core WTO pillar of S&DT, so as to ensure that the likes of China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia are removed from the S&DT bracket.

In its 45-page paper, the US has called for 'differentiation' among developing countries because of the 'economic tides' and 'great strides' made in the years since 1995 when the WTO was established. The US has claimed that the WTO remains stuck in an outdated construct of 'North-South division, developed and developing countries', that fails to reflect the realities of 2019.

In response to this, China and India have, in their 38-page draft paper, argued that 'there is a huge development divide between the developing and developed Members of the WTO, not only in aspects of economic development level, industrial structure and competitiveness, regional balance, but also in education, social security and the ability to effectively participate in international governance'.

Notwithstanding the significant progress achieved by developing-country members since the creation of the WTO in 1995, China and India said 'the old divides have not been fully bridged or even have been widened, while new divides, such as those in the digital and technological areas, continue to emerge'.

Without naming the US, China and India have argued in their draft paper that 'it is inappropriate, if not inhumane, to measure a member's development level with select gross economic and trade statistics, so as to deny the divide between developing and developed Members, and to request the former to abide by absolute "reciprocity" or superficial "fairness", essentially depriving the developing Members of their right to develop'.

Contrary to the repeated US claims that China's accession to the WTO has made it a powerhouse with huge trade surpluses, 'the WTO rules-based system has helped the growth of trade but has not made it equitable', China and India maintained.

At the WTO and in the global trading system, including at forums such as the G20, the developing countries are confronted by 'capacity constraints' since they lack 'human resources with capable negotiation skills, a well-functioning intra-governmental coordination mechanism, and sufficient social participation in and support to trade negotiations', the joint paper suggested.

Consequently, the developing countries are unable to overcome these deficiencies that 'diminish not only the ability of developing Members to negotiate, but also the efficiency and effectiveness of translating negotiation outcomes into their domestic economic growth'.

It is against this backdrop, China and India argued, that S&DT was made one of the 'cornerstone' principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It was meant to be 'the main instrument for addressing the development divide and capacity constraint of developing Members, to help them achieve growth, expand employment and reduce poverty through trade'.

Moreover, 'the current S&DT provisions in the WTO agreements are rules formulated through negotiations and compromises, not charities granted by developed Members', China and India maintained.

Besides, the S&DT provisions remain only best-endeavour clauses. The developing countries, led by India and South Africa among others, have called for making these provisions effective and binding as part of the implementation issues in the Doha Development Agenda.

However, after agreeing to the implementation issues, the developed countries led by the US and the European Union vehemently opposed discussing any improvements for making S&DT provisions effective.

'In contrast, it is developed Members that have reaped substantial benefits by taking advantage of the "reverse S&DT",' China and India maintained.

Worse still, the developing countries which acceded to the WTO since 1995, including China, had made 'tremendous efforts, significantly contributed to upholding the core values of the WTO including free trade, openness and non-discrimination; supporting the rules-based multilateral trading system; and maintaining a transparent, stable and predictable global trade environment', the joint paper pointed out.

China and India reminded the US that 'the dichotomy of developed and developing Members is frequently used by almost all International Organisations to describe the structure of today's global economy'. The underlying rationale behind the classification methodologies is to demonstrate 'the constraints and thresholds that divide developed and developing Members'. Further, the rationale adopted by the United Nations and various intergovernmental organisations clearly suggests that 'there are structural features behind the UN classification that distinguish countries in terms of their development challenges' and 'these features form the basis on which countries classify themselves and are adapted to the various mandates, functions and statistical work of the International Organisations'.

A soybean farmer in the US state of North Dakota. Per-farmer domestic agricultural subsidies in the US were 70 times those in China, 176 times those in Brazil and 267 times those in India.

In sharp contrast, 'for the WTO, the status of developed and developing Members are reflected in the bargaining process, and incorporated into the final rules themselves'.

Therefore, 'the self-declaration approach has proved to be the most appropriate for the WTO, which best serves the WTO objectives', China and India maintained.

The joint paper said that 'the gap between the developed and developing Members appears to have actually widened over time, instead of getting reduced'.

Arguably, 'the development divide, which was taken note of in mid-1960s in Part IV of the GATT, continues to remain relevant today – perhaps even more relevant'.

'Attempts at ignoring the need for S&DT provisions, or diluting it, [are] fraught with the risk of making future negotiations in the WTO even more difficult than today,' China and India warned.

According to their joint paper, the gap between the developed and developing countries is manifested in two ways. 'First, with reference to an indicator, the difference in value between the developed and developing Members widens over time; and second, even if the difference in value does not widen over time, the gap between the developed and developing Members during a time period is substantial.'

China and India pointed to a number of indicators which suggest that 'the gap between the developed and developing Members has remained substantially high' while 'in many cases the gap has considerably widened'.

'Besides, the essence of development is the human being,' China and India maintained. 'Hence, per capita indicators must be given the top priority when assessing the development level of a country.'

'In WTO agreements, all the indicators used to assess development are based on per capita calculation. For example, in Article 8.2(b)(iii) of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, "income per capita", "household income per capita" and "GDP per capita" are mentioned for the purpose of measuring the economic development of a member.'

The joint paper offered figures of various indicators for the developed and developing countries, particularly China, India, South Africa, Indonesia and Brazil, to bolster its argument that the development divide had widened since 1995.

The joint paper also cited cases of 'reverse S&DT' in the agriculture sector, particularly with regard to subsidy payments in the developed countries. It gave the figures for domestic support per farmer in the US ($60,586), Canada ($16,562), Japan ($10,149), the EU ($6,762), China ($863), Brazil ($345) and India ($227). The per-farmer subsidy in the US was 70 times that in China, 176 times that in Brazil and 267 times that in India.

In a similar vein, China and India revealed that there is a substantial divide between developed and developing countries in the areas of trade in services, intellectual property rights, global value chains and value-added. The developing countries also lag far behind in relation to per capita use of energy, the role of banks in the financial system, research and development capacity, digital divide, company efficiency and benefits from globalisation.

In addition, China and India showed how the developing countries continue to suffer from capacity constraints due to the lack of negotiating capacity at human resource level. From the GATT to the WTO, developed countries have been in a dominant position in the initiation of negotiations, the design of rules, the assertion of rights and even the 'flexible use of rules'. The developing countries, due to lack of resources, are usually short of negotiators (especially experienced ones) and thus unable to achieve their objectives in the negotiations as well as manage negotiation outcomes.

The problem is further compounded because of limited budgetary resources in developing countries. Consequently, it is often the case that negotiating officials are not able to participate in a systematic way, said China and India.

Also, due to the lack of coordinating capacity at institutional level nationally, developing countries usually lack a unified policy across different government departments and have difficulties in fully assessing and accurately analysing the impacts of multilateral trade negotiations on the economic system, and in formulating the national trade negotiation strategies and tactics accordingly.

'In a word, the fact is that, for the multilateral trade negotiations, developed Members are usually "well and proactively prepared", while developing Members often "rush to respond in a reactive manner",' China and India argued. Hence, 'there is a big asymmetry between the two in formulating multilateral trade rules due to the capacity constraint.'

'The formal "de jure" equality cannot mask the "de facto" inequality in reality,' said China and India.

The two countries said that S&DT is an integral part of the WTO agreement.

They pointed out that in 1947, 11 developing members acceded to the GATT based on the same conditions and obligations as developed members. 'To help developing Members better benefit from the multilateral trading system, the concepts of "less than full reciprocity" and "non-reciprocity" gradually emerged during the 1960s, which gave birth to Part IV of the GATT.' In short, 'the issue of development was explicitly addressed in that part for the first time in history'.

Subsequently, the Decision on Differential and More Favourable Treatment, Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries (also known as the Enabling Clause) adopted in 1979 'provided a permanent legal basis for S&DT Clause 12', according to the joint paper.

In 1986, the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations was launched and the S&DT-related content was stated in the Ministerial Declaration. 'However, the negotiation outcomes were far less than expected,' China and India said, citing a prominent expert who observed that 'most of the concessions and commitments have come from developing countries and very few from industrialised countries'.

In 1994, all developing members of the GATT joined the WTO, adopting the results of the Uruguay Round as a single undertaking. But in Article XXXVI:1(c) of the GATT 1994, the Contracting Parties noted that 'there is a wide gap between standards of living in less-developed countries and in other countries'.

Paragraph 3 of the article specified: 'There is need for positive efforts designed to ensure that less-developed contracting parties secure a share in the growth in international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development.'

What could constitute 'positive efforts' was specified in paragraph 8 of the article, which stated: 'The developed contracting parties do not expect reciprocity for commitments made by them in trade negotiations to reduce or remove tariffs and other barriers to the trade of less-developed contracting parties.'

The China-India joint paper also refuted the US argument that 'all rules apply to a few (developed countries)', saying it 'totally ignores the 70 plus year history of GATT/WTO'. The paper offered concrete examples of how reverse S&DT works for the developed countries.

In conclusion, China and India maintained that 'the real threats to the relevance, legitimacy and efficacy of the WTO are raging protectionism and unilateralism, the blockage of Appellate Body member selection process and the impasse of the Doha Development Round, not the self-declared development status of developing Members'.

The two developing countries asserted that 'S&DT is an integral part of the multilateral trading system, and self-declaration appears to be the fairest classification approach in the WTO'.

The battle lines have thus been drawn on the issue of continuation of S&DT for all developing countries. The paper by China and India has revealed the divide between the countries of the North on the one side, and the developing countries in the South on the other. It remains to be seen how the developing countries close ranks to launch a united fight to retain S&DT. ◆

D Ravi Kanth writes for the South-North Development Monitor (SUNS) *published by the Third World Network. This article first appeared in* SUNS *(No. 8846, 14 February 2019).*

Agribusiness is the problem, not the solution

Agribusiness advocates insist that food production must double by 2050 to feed the exponential rise of the global population to 9.7 billion and that high-yielding industrial agriculture is the only answer. *Jomo Kwame Sundaram* questions this claim.

FOR two centuries, all too many discussions about hunger and resource scarcity have been haunted by the ghost of Parson Thomas Malthus. Malthus warned that rising populations would exhaust resources, especially those needed for food production. Exponential population growth would outstrip food output.

Humanity now faces a major challenge as global warming is expected to frustrate the production of enough food as the world population rises to 9.7 billion by 2050. A new book by Timothy Wise, *Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers, and the Battle for the Future of Food* (New Press, 2019), argues that most solutions currently put forward by government, philanthropic and private sector luminaries are misleading.

Signage of agribusiness giant Monsanto displayed at a farm trade exhibition in the US. In Malawi, Monsanto took over the government seed company, favouring its own patented seeds at the expense of productive local varieties.

Malthus's ghost returns

The early 2008 food price crisis has often been wrongly associated with the 2008-09 global financial crisis. The number of hungry in the world was said to have risen to over a billion, feeding a resurgence of neo-Malthusianism.

Agribusiness advocates fed such fears, insisting that food production must double by 2050 and that high-yielding industrial agriculture, under the auspices of agribusiness, is the only solution. In fact, however, the world is mainly fed by hundreds of millions of small-scale, often called family farmers who produce over two-thirds of developing countries' food.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, neither food scarcity nor poor physical access are the main causes of food insecurity and hunger. Instead, Reuters has observed a 'global grain glut', with surplus cereal stocks piling up.

Meanwhile, poor production, processing and storage facilities cause food losses of an average of about a third of developing countries' output. A similar share is believed lost in rich countries due to wasteful food storage, marketing and consumption behaviour.

Nevertheless, despite grain abundance, the 2018 State of Food Insecurity report – by the Rome-based United Nations food agencies led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) – reported rising chronic and severe hunger or undernourishment involving more than 800 million.

Political, philanthropic and corporate leaders have promised to help struggling African and other countries grow more food by offering to improve farming practices. New seed and other technologies would modernise those left behind.

But producing more food, by itself, does not enable the hungry to eat. Thus, agribusiness and its philanthropic promoters are often the problem, not the solution, in feeding the world.

Family farmers lack power

Eating Tomorrow addresses related questions such as: Why doesn't rising global food production feed the hungry? How can we 'feed the world' of rising populations and unsustainable pressure on land, water and other natural resources that farmers need to grow food?

Drawing on five years of extensive fieldwork in Southern Africa, Mexico, India and the US Midwest, Wise concludes that the problem is essentially one of power. He shows how powerful business interests influence government food and agricultural policies to favour large farms.


Family farmers grow most of the world's food.

This is typically at the expense of 'family' farmers, who grow most of the world's food, but also involves putting consumers and others at risk, e.g., due to agrochemical use. His many examples detail not only the many problems small-scale farmers face, but also their typically constructive responses despite lack of support, if not worse, from most governments:

• In Mexico, trade liberalisation following the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) swamped the country with cheap, subsidised US maize and pork, accelerating migration from the countryside. Apparently, this was actively encouraged by transnational pork producers employing 'undocumented' and ununionised Mexican workers willing to accept low wages and poor working conditions.

• In Malawi, large government subsidies encouraged farmers to buy commercial fertilisers and seeds from US agribusinesses such as Monsanto (now Bayer-owned), but to little effect, as their productivity and food security stagnated or even deteriorated. Meanwhile, Monsanto took over the government seed company, favouring its own patented seeds at the expense of productive local varieties, while a former senior Monsanto official co-authored the national seed policy that threatens to criminalise farmers who save, exchange and sell seeds instead!

• In Zambia, greater use of seeds and fertilisers from agribusiness tripled maize production without reducing the country's very high rates of poverty and malnutrition. Meanwhile, as the government provides 250,000-acre 'farm blocks' to foreign investors, family farmers struggle for title to farm land.

• In Mozambique too, the government gives away vast tracts of farm land to foreign investors. Meanwhile, women-led cooperatives successfully run their own native maize seed banks.

• The US state of Iowa promotes vast monocultures of maize and soybean to feed hogs and bioethanol production rather than 'feed the world'.

• A large Mexican farmer cooperative launched an 'agro-ecological revolution', while the old government kept trying to legalise Monsanto's controversial genetically modified (GM) maize. Farmers have thus far halted the Monsanto plan, arguing that GM corn threatens the rich diversity of native Mexican varieties.

Eating better

Much of the research for the book was done in 2014-15, when Barack Obama was US president, although the narrative begins with developments and policies following the 2008 food price crisis, during George W Bush's last year in the White House. The book tells a story of US big business' influence on policies enabling more aggressive transnational expansion.

Yet, Wise remains optimistic, emphasising that the world can feed the hungry, many of whom are family farmers. Despite the challenges they face, many family farmers are finding innovative and effective ways to grow more and better food. Hungry farmers are nourishing their life-giving soils using more ecologically sound practices to plant a diversity of native crops, instead of using costly chemicals for export-oriented monocultures. Wise advocates support for farmers' efforts to improve their soil, output and well-being.

Unfortunately, most national governments and international institutions still favour large-scale, high-input, industrial agriculture, neglecting more sustainable solutions offered by family farmers and the need to improve the well-being of poor farmers.

Undoubtedly, many new agricultural techniques offer the prospect of improving the welfare of farmers, not only by increasing productivity and output, but also by limiting costs, using scarce resources more effectively, and reducing the drudgery of farm work.

But the world must recognise that farming may no longer be viable for many who face land, water and other resource constraints, unless they get better access to such resources. Meanwhile, malnutrition of various types affects well over two billion people in the world, and industrial agriculture contributes about 30% of greenhouse gas emissions.

Going forward, it will be important to ensure affordable, healthy and nutritious food supplies for all, mindful not only of food and water safety, but also of various pollution threats. A related challenge will be to enhance dietary diversity affordably to overcome micronutrient deficiencies and diet-related non-communicable diseases for all. – *IPS* ◆

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor, was United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought.

5G: The battle for the future

The meteoric rise of Huawei, a Chinese telecommunications company which has outstripped its competitors in the 5G network race, has set alarm bells ringing in Washington. Alleging that Huawei is not a truly private company and its 5G technology can be used for espionage, Washington has used the full force of its legal system to cripple it.

Humberto Campodonico

TELECOMMUNICATIONS networks are changing again. First we had the analogue first generation of mobile technology or 1G, then the digital 2G followed by 3G, which achieved speeds of several megabits per second. With the current 4G, you can reach several gigabits per second.

Now here comes 5G, which will not only be 1,000 times faster than 4G (that's right: 1,000 times) but also open new fronts in the fight for digital hegemony in the 21st century. Telecommunication companies of the major world powers are geared up for battle, with all the weapons they have at hand.

The advent of 5G mobile technology will open new fronts in the fight for digital hegemony in the 21st century.

The 5G network allows for millisecond latency and gigabit speeds for the masses, in addition to opening up 'a new mine of raw material more precious than gold: data from countless machines chattering incessantly among them, apart from human consumers'. The point of having 5G is not to stream movies better, but to enable new applications that make use of instantaneous, zero-error connectivity, such as remote surgery, precision manufacture by robots and driverless cars.[1]

Meanwhile Huawei, a Chinese private company, has been overtaking the competition in the telecommunication sector. In 2011, Samsung and Apple sold 100 million cellphones each; Huawei sold only 20 million. In 2018, Samsung sold 220 million and the surprise is that Apple and Huawei were now tied at 150 million each.[2] Significantly, in 2018 Huawei became the world's largest provider of telecoms equipment in general, reportedly having the most advanced 5G equipment available.[3]

Many analysts say that, in this field, Huawei not only is 'nearing' the technological frontier (reaching the vanguard platoon of countries), but has already surpassed them. Now the other telecom companies have to catch up with Huawei.

This has been sounding alarms for some time in the United States, which has begun exerting pressure on other countries to opt against using Huawei's 5G equipment. According to reports, the 'Five Eyes' network of intelligence agencies from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have declared Huawei non grata and are lobbying countries, especially Europeans, to adopt the same policy.[4]

The central argument is that the possessor and operator of 5G technology can spy on the countries that adopt it, at both the government and citizen level. In addition, it could hack cybernetic systems, intervene in elections and, if necessary, put the entire system 'out of service'.

This position has supporters and detractors. Huawei says it is a private company and the Chinese government has nothing to do with it. Critics say that in China nothing is done without the approval of the Communist Party and that the risk is always present.

This battle went beyond the confines of commercial competition when, in December, Canada, at the request of the US, arrested Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Huawei and daughter of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei. Meng has been charged by US authorities with violating US sanctions against Iran.

The administration of US President Donald Trump also argues that Huawei – and Chinese companies in general – have been able to advance on the back of 'bad practices' and by forcing US companies that invest in China to 'share' their technology. Independently of the validity of the allegations about Chinese behaviour, this bashing also points to what

In 2018 Huawei became the world's largest provider of telecoms equipment in general, reportedly having the most advanced 5G equipment available.

Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei: 'If the lights go out in the West, the East will still shine.'

French economist Robert Boyer described as the West's unjustified 'self-sufficiency pride': *it is not possible for 'others' to be better than us.*

Duncan Clark, founder of BDA, a Beijing-based technology consultancy, is quoted by the *Financial Times* as saying: '[Huawei] crashed the party of vendors and operators, those golf club relationships. They did that by moving faster and offering good quality stuff cheaper. And in that process, they have been throwing a light on the inefficiencies of the US economy, and posing systemic challenges to US tech businesses.'[5]

And why not? As an article in *The New York Times* put it: 'Many critics focus on the weaknesses of the Chinese system – the emphasis on tests and memorisation, the political constraints, the discrimination against rural students. But mainland China now produces more graduates in science and engineering every year than the United States, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan combined. In cities like Shanghai, Chinese schoolchildren outperform peers around the world.'[6]

The United States political elite believed that by bringing China into the ambit of the West-shaped rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), at some point its economic and political situation would 'make it fall'. That has not happened. They look at the world through ideological blinders and they are wrong. There are economic models, different from the neoliberal ones, where the mix between state and market can prevail.

Finally, it is also worth taking into account the words of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei. In a February 2019 interview with the BBC, he said: 'The world cannot leave us because we are more advanced. If the lights go out in the West, the East will still shine. And if the North goes dark, there is still the South. America doesn't represent the world. America only represents a portion of the world.'[7]

The battle over 5G technology is not only a battle between companies. It involves countries and their particular interests in this time of evolving hegemonic power. Let us not forget this. ◆

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Notes

1 '5G, strategic edge, not just telecom', 2 August 2018, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-editorials/5g-strategic-edge-not-just-telecom/

2 'Huawei "crashes party" to become largest telecoms kit supplier', 5 December 2018, https://www.ft.com/content/7f37b73c-f962-11e8-8b7c-6fa24bd5409c

3 'From launch in 2020, we forecast that Chinese 5G connections will scale rapidly over time, to reach 428 million by 2025.' Source: GSMA Intelligence, China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), 2017, '5G in China: Outlook and regional comparisons', https://www.gsmaintelligence.com/research/?file=67a750f6114580b86045a6a0f9587ea0&download

4 "'Five Eyes" spy chiefs agreed to contain Huawei's global reach at meeting in July: Report', 16 December 2018, https://gizmodo.com/five-eyes-spy-chiefs-agreed-to-contain-huaweis-global-r-1831131906

5 'Huawei "crashes party" to become largest telecoms kit supplier', op. cit.

6 'The land that failed to fail', 18 November 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/18/world/asia/china-rules.html

7 https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47274679

UN climate change conference ushers in 'Katowice Climate Package'

The annual UN climate talks, held in the Polish mining town of Katowice in December, had as the main agenda item the drawing up of the rules for the implementation of the Paris climate treaty. Although the negotiations proved acrimonious, in the end they succeeded in producing these rules, which have now been dubbed the 'Katowice Climate Package'.

Meena Raman and Evelyn Teh

AFTER the momentous adoption of the Paris Agreement (PA) in 2015, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)'s 24th session (known as COP 24), held in the coal city of Katowice, Poland, on 2-15 December, set another milestone in climate negotiations with the approval of the rules for the implementation of the PA, dubbed the 'Katowice Climate Package'.

Once the PA was ratified and entered into force in record time in 2016, the clock began to tick for governments to agree on the rules for implementation by COP 24, under what was known as the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP).

These rules, among other matters, spell out the guidelines for governments on what information to provide when they communicate their intended climate actions, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs); what they will report on in the implementation of these contributions, including on the financial and technology resources provided to developing countries; and how these actions will be reviewed at the international level.

The package of decisions adopted also includes guidelines that relate to:

• the process for establishing new targets on finance by 2025, from the current target of mobilising $100 billion per year from 2020 to support developing countries;

• the conduct of the global stocktake in 2023 to assess the collective progress of governments in achieving the goals of the PA; and

• the assessment of progress on the development and transfer of technology.

The drawing up of these rules in the three years leading up to COP 24 had been mired in a battle of interpretation between developed and developing countries over the agreement reached in Paris.

Developing countries viewed developed countries as trying to undermine the fine and delicate balance reached in Paris in respect of their respective obligations under the PA, through the push by the latter for guidelines and processes that were mitigation-centric and that diluted differences between developed and developing countries on how the rules are to be applied; the developed countries' refusal to acknowledge their historical responsibility for climate change; and their resistance to having processes in place for enhancing financial and technology support to developing countries in meeting their NDCs.

This deep North-South political divide over the years was somehow bridged with some compromises during the final hours of COP 24, after almost two weeks of gruelling technical and political negotiations among governments and behind-the-scenes diplomacy under the leadership of the COP 24 President Michal Kurtyka, the Secretary of State for the Polish Ministry of Environment. (For further details on the areas of divergences and the final decisions adopted, see the article 'The key decisions on the Paris Agreement implementation rules' in this issue.)

The decisions under the PAWP were finally delivered on 15 December (except for guidelines on cooperative approaches relating to the use of markets and non-market approaches) in what was the most significant outcome of COP 24. The adoption of the decision was greeted with cheers of jubilation in the plenary hall and a giant leap of joy by Kurtyka. However, when the government representatives delivered their statements, the reactions were somewhat mixed.

The Group of 77 and China, which represented the developing world, in its assessment of the overall package of decisions, said that it 'did not see a level of balance', as it saw 'a mitigation regime in the making, with urgent adaptation needs relegated to second-class status'. It also expressed fear that the regime ignores the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR) between developed and developing countries.

On the other hand, developed countries such as the European Union and the Umbrella Group (which includes the United States) were more upbeat, stressing that clear guidance is now in place on the information to be provided for their future actions, with a robust framework that would allow Parties to track progress of their actions. (For more on this, see the article 'Decisions for implementation of Paris Agreement adopted' in this issue.)

On the decisions on finance, a senior developing-country negotiator involved in the process told the Third World Network that 'there were wins and there were losses for developing countries', but was of the view that 'developing countries got more wins than losses'. (For more, see the article 'Important finance decisions adopted at climate talks' in this issue.)

While there was relief in the conference hall that the Paris Agreement rulebook had been finally agreed to, there was much frustration among developing countries and many civil society groups at the inability of developed countries in particular to urgently raise their mitigation targets (as the NDCs only take effect from 2021 onwards).

Notably, the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol (KP) has yet to be ratified and enter into force, hence the lack of a second commitment period (2CP) for emission reductions by developed countries which are Parties to the KP.

Governments had agreed in 2012 for the 2CP to ensure that developed countries would cut emissions by at least 18% below 1990 levels by 2020, and that they would revisit their commitments by 2014 with a view to increasing their ambition. This was the political understanding reached that allowed for negotiations that eventually led to the PA.

However, just before COP 24 began, only 122 Parties, including the European Union, had ratified the Doha Amendment, when 144 Parties are required for the amendment to enter into force. Developed countries such as Canada, Japan and Russia have not ratified and the US is not a party to the KP. In addition, no developed country has revised or raised its pre-2020 mitigation targets, thus reneging on their 2012 promise.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Emissions Gap Report released prior to the COP showed that 'current commitments expressed in the NDCs [for emission cuts from 2021 to 2030] are inadequate to bridge the emissions gap in 2030', and that 'technically, it is still possible to bridge the gap to ensure global warming stays well below 2°C and 1.5°C, but if NDC ambitions are not increased before 2030, exceeding the 1.5°C goal can no longer be avoided'.

Key developing countries such as China and India made clear that the gap in mitigation ambition of developed countries in the pre-2020 period must not be passed on to developing countries in the post-2020 timeframe of the PA, adding that this was the responsibility of developed countries.

In a stocktake session on pre-2020 actions during the Katowice climate talks, Xie Zhenhua, China's Special Representative for Climate Change Affairs, said that governments were 'still a long way before achieving our [climate] objectives', and added that the emissions gap (created by developed countries) should not be shifted to the post-2020 period.

Ravi Prasad from the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change expressed similar sentiments and stressed that many reports – including a recent special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C – indicate 'significant gaps in pre-2020 action even amounting to up to 40-50% and called for emissions reductions by about 25-40% by developed countries in this period'. The Indian delegate asserted further that 'any emissions gap which was part of the pre-2020 period must be carried over and fulfilled in the post-2020 period and countries which were responsible for them must take that responsibility'.

With nothing to show especially on the part of developed countries in raising their pre-2020 emission reduction targets, the COP 24 decision could only underscore the urgent need for the entry into force of the Doha Amendment and emphasised that 'enhanced pre-2020 ambition can lay a solid foundation for enhanced post-2020 ambition'. Another stocktake on pre-2020 implementation and ambition will take place at the next COP, which is expected to be held in Santiago, Chile, this year.

Meanwhile, world media coverage of the Katowice talks was mainly on how governments could not welcome the IPCC's 1.5°C special report, given objections raised by the US, Russia, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The US said explicitly that it could not endorse the findings of the report.

In the decision adopted in the final hours, the COP only managed to 'welcome the timely completion' of the special report.

Several groups of countries, especially from the Alliance of Small Island States, highlighted important findings of the special report during the course of the COP, including that 'impacts at 1.5°C, such as on global sea level rise, biodiversity and ecosystems, ocean temperature, and adaptation needs, will be lower compared to 2°C'. The report also states that 'limiting global warming requires limiting the total cumulative global anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) since the preindustrial period, i.e. staying within a total carbon budget'.

The UN Secretary-General's initiative to convene a Climate Summit in 2019 (to be held in September) was also welcomed by governments at COP 24, whose decision calls on Parties 'to participate in the Summit and to demonstrate, through such participation, their enhanced ambition in addressing climate change'.

Whether governments, especially in the developed world, will indeed step up to more ambition remains to be seen, despite the sounding of alarm bells through scientific reports and rising incidences of heatwaves, forest fires, droughts and extreme weather events around the globe.

As pointed out by well-known nature broadcaster Sir David Attenborough at the opening ceremony of the COP, 'time is running out' and decision-makers have to act now, by making the tough decisions and sacrifices to help make the changes the world needs – 'the continuation of our civilisations and the natural world' is in the hands of world leaders. ◆

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COVER

Decisions for implementation of Paris Agreement adopted

Decisions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA) were adopted as a package by the Conference of the Parties meeting as the Parties to the PA (CMA) late on 15 December, a day later than initially scheduled for the closure of the United Nations climate change conference in Katowice. *Meena Raman* reports.

THE decisions for the PA implementation, known as the PA work programme (PAWP), had been forwarded to the CMA by the 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24), which had been conducting the work on the PAWP under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the PA and the Subsidiary Bodies of the Convention.

In its assessment of the overall PAWP package of decisions, the developing-country Group of 77 and China said that it 'did not see a level of balance', as it saw 'a mitigation regime in the making, with urgent adaptation needs relegated to second-class status'. It also expressed fear that the regime ignores the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR) between developed and developing countries.

The Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) grouping expressed 'disappointment that developed countries resisted any attempt to include equity as a holistic consideration in the global stocktake (GST), which would form the basis for enhancing action'. (Article 14.1 of the PA stipulates that the GST – which is an assessment of the collective progress of Parties towards achieving the purpose of the Agreement and its long-term goals, and is to take place in 2023 – has to be carried out in light of equity.)

India also made a statement expressing its reservation that the decision on the GST did not operationalise equity and was not in accordance with the mandate and relevant provisions of the PA, adding that 'equity must be considered and be part of the input, the technical assessment as well as the output, including its considerations throughout the GST process'.

Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/15dec.html)

Heads of delegation at the UN climate change conference in Katowice pose on the podium to celebrate the adoption of the Katowice Climate Package on 15 December.

Developed countries on the other hand, such as the European Union and the Umbrella Group, in welcoming the PAWP decisions, stressed that clear guidance is now in place to Parties on the information to be provided for their future actions, as well as a robust transparency framework that would allow Parties to track progress of their actions.

In the decision on the information to be provided for the nationally determined contributions (NDCs), Parties are required to provide the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding (CTU) in relation to their second and subsequent NDCs. (Parties have already provided their information for the first set of NDCs, which will take effect from 2020 to 2025 or 2030, depending on the duration of their NDCs.) The decision also states that the guidance on information necessary for CTU is without prejudice to the inclusion of components other than mitigation. This is viewed by developing countries as a major win on the scope of NDCs, which not only relate to mitigation contributions but may include an adaptation component, along with the means of implementation necessary.

In the transparency framework decision, flexibility is provided for developing countries that need it in the light of their capacities and this is to be self-determined. This includes flexibilities in the scope, frequency and level of reporting, and in the scope of the review that is to be undertaken.

As regards the decision on finance, on the ex ante information to be provided on the projected levels of public financial resources to developing countries under Article 9.5, developed countries are requested to provide the information starting in 2020. On setting a new collective quantified goal on finance, Parties agreed to initiate in November 2020 deliberations on the goal from a floor of $100 billion per year. Developed countries were reluctant to make progress on the finance issues until they had a clearer view of where developing countries stood on the other matters related to the PAWP, especially on NDCs and the transparency framework.

Apart from the PAWP decisions, the COP decision (1/CP.24) also includes decisions on the following matters: high-level ministerial dialogue on climate finance; implementation and ambition (covering the pre-2020 and post-2020 timeframes); the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 1.5ºC Special Report; the Talanoa Dialogue; and the UN Climate Summit in 2019.

Parties had been expecting clean texts of the draft decisions to become available on 13 December under the authority of COP 24 President, Michal Kurtyka. However, given the divergent positions on various matters, the COP President continued to consult groups of Parties behind closed doors, similar to the process adopted in Paris, in order to arrive at compromises.

Delegates waited patiently throughout 14 December for the clean texts, but none arrived until the morning of 15 December. The closing plenary was finally convened at around 9 pm on 15 December and went on till close to midnight.

COP and CMA plenary

Kurtyka, in his opening remarks at the COP 24 plenary, said that the 'night was long and it took a day to put together the PAWP [decisions]' and that this was a 'big responsibility'.

Prior to the forwarding of the decisions to the CMA for adoption, the COP paid tribute to Bernarditas Mueller, a veteran climate change negotiator from the Philippines who had passed away on 14 December. The COP 24 President said that Ditas, as she was popularly known, was a 'pillar of climate change negotiations, with her passion, kindness, friendly disposition and mentorship of all', and that she would be remembered with profound admiration. Delegates rose to observe a minute of silence in her honour. Kurtyka also informed delegates that the book of condolences would be sent to her family.

(At a eulogy session held throughout the day on 15 December, numerous delegates from developing and developed countries alike paid emotional tribute to the 'giant', 'champion' and 'mentor', with so many unable to control their grief and tears in what was a very moving gathering. They also signed the book of condolences.)

In paving the way for the adoption of the PAWP decisions, Kurtyka said that it had been a 'long road' with delegates working for three years on the 'package', on which it had not been easy to find agreement, given the specifics and technical details. He said that the COP Presidency did its best to listen to Parties and to leave no one behind, in what was a 'hard and daunting' task. He described the deal as being 'in fragile balance' and that 'all Parties had to give and gain', adding that the 'overall interest of all was balanced in a fair manner'.

When the COP President invited Parties to adopt decision 1/CP.24, which includes the PAWP package of decisions, India requested the floor and there was pin-drop silence at the plenary, with delegates wondering what was about to happen.

India said that it had reservations as regards the decision on the global stocktake but that, in a 'constructive spirit to ensure the process moves forward', it would express its reservations later (after the decisions were gavelled).

The COP then adopted the decision to forward the PAWP package of decisions to the CMA for consideration and adoption. The COP was then suspended for the convening of the CMA. At the CMA, the PAWP package was adopted to applause and a standing ovation, with Kurtyka, who also served as President of the CMA, calling it a 'historic moment'.

The UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa then read out a message from the UN Secretary-General, who said that a 'solid roadmap for climate action' had been put in place, adding that the science had shown the need for enhanced ambition and that 'ambition will be in the centre of the UN Summit to be held [in 2019]' and that Parties had 'a duty to reach for more'.

Closing statements of Parties

At the joint closing plenary of the COP, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) and the CMA, groups of Parties expressed their views.

Speaking for the G77 and China, Egypt expressed congratulations for the tireless efforts of the COP Presidency in helping to overcome the obstacles at the talks. It said that the Group was happy with the outcome. However, in assessing the overall package, it did not see a level of balance. It said the group saw a mitigation regime in the making, with urgent adaptation needs relegated to second-class status.

It also expressed fear that the regime ignores the principle of CBDR between developed and developing countries. It underscored the importance of CBDR and equity in implementing the outcomes of the decisions, and that given the different capacities between developed and developing countries, differences could not be glossed over. It also said that developing countries would do their fair share of the lifting and that they would show ambition but that this was not a zero-sum game and all should benefit. It also hoped that a path could be found for the well-being of the planet.

In remembering Madame Ditas, the G77 spokesman, Egyptian Ambassador Wael Aboulmagd, described her as a genuinely compassionate and

'The cumulative historical emissions of developed countries with historically one-sixth of the world's population account for more than three-fourths of the carbon dioxide emissions.'

caring friend and a mentor to many, and said that the world had lost a devoted warrior who fought for future generations, leaving a legacy of love and compassion.

Speaking for the LMDC, Malaysia underlined the principle of equity and CBDR: 'It is crucial to recall why developed countries are developed and we are developing. Historically, the largest share of the carbon/emissions space has been used by developed countries in Western Europe and North America as they industrialised, fuelled by the use of fossil fuel – and their economies prospered. This was the genesis of climate change. Developing countries are also entitled to develop and grow sustainably. For this, the remaining carbon space must be shared equitably. This is the premise of the Convention and its progeny, the PA. We owe this to the poor and vulnerable who are paying – sometimes with their lives – in our parts of the world. This is why equity assumes a major and central role in meeting the climate change challenges. This is why equity must be operationalised, and meaningfully.'

Said the LMDC further, 'The cumulative historical emissions of developed countries with historically one-sixth of the world's population account for more than three-fourths of the carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. The developing world accounted for one-fourth of CO_2 emissions with historically five-sixths of the world's population. Therein lies the inequity of ignoring the historical cumulative emissions in the GST when requiring countries to plan their ambitions. Else you put an unequal burden on us for what developed countries are responsible for.'

The LMDC expressed 'disappointment that developed countries resisted any attempt to include equity as a holistic consideration in the GST, which would form the basis for enhancing action'. Regardless, it said that 'it is our understanding that equity must be considered in the GST: the input, the technical assessment and the output. This is how equity is operationalised to fulfil the mandate in Article 14.1 of the PA'. It also added that it was a matter of public record which was disclosed in Paris that the pre-2020 pledges of developing countries as well as their NDCs were more ambitious than those of the developed countries.

Malaysia said that the LMDC, although pained by some of the provisions (in the decisions), will work constructively to move forward in a spirit of compromise and in interpreting the decision in the context of preserving its fundamental elements and ethos.

Referring to the passing of Madame Ditas, the LMDC said that she was one of the Convention's founders and its greatest stalwarts; in the meetings leading up to the adoption of the PA in 2015, she had been ailing, but this did not stop her from participating in the process, lending her expertise to the G77 and particularly the LMDC. 'Even as she approached her final hour and could no longer hold and read the messages, she asked her daughter to read to her the reports of our present proceedings, daily,' said the LMDC spokesperson.

Malaysia recalled her comments made almost a decade ago where she had said that 'There is so much at stake. Get it right, and the world has the chance to both halt catastrophic climate change and find a better path to develop. Get it wrong and all the injustices and disadvantages that developing countries now face will be magnified 1,000 times in the coming years.'

In conclusion, the LMDC said that 'we hear reports that the city where this agreement was born is experiencing extraordinary turbulence [in reference to the "yellow vest" riots on the streets of Paris]. If we get it right, we insulate the PA from any such impact'.

Ethiopia, speaking for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), said that 'science is not up for negotiation' and welcomed the IPCC Special Report. It said that there is a good basis for all Parties to implement the PA but regretted that work on Article 6 (on cooperative approaches, including market mechanisms) could not be completed as this could incentivise more ambitious NDCs. (The Article 6 negotiations could not be finalised in Katowice due to differences between Parties on the details of the mechanisms.)

The Maldives, speaking for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that Madame Ditas 'was a giant in this process and a tireless champion for climate justice and developing countries' and that 'she will be missed greatly by our small islands family'.

On the decisions adopted, it said the texts reflected 'balance', and though AOSIS was not fully satisfied, it recognised that 'compromises needed to be made to move forward'. On the IPCC Special Report, it said that it 'represents the best available science on climate change and the findings are unsettling, to say the least. Unless we dramatically change how the world generates and consumes energy in about the next decade, the opportunity to hold global warming to 1.5°C may irretrievably slip away'. It expressed disappointment that Parties were unable to agree to welcome the report and its findings.

On ambition, AOSIS urged leaders to build on the progress made during the Talanoa Dialogue, 'by exploring how existing solutions can provide avenues for them to immediately ramp up climate action'. It was also pleased to see 'binding language' in the PAWP decision on the need to provide information for CTU with a clear focus on mitigation. It was however concerned that the review of information would only be in 2028, and believed that this was too late.

On finance, it said that climate change is already fast outpacing our ability to respond and we will keep falling behind unless developed countries deliver on the commitments they made in Paris, adding that real progress on adaptation demands scaling up finance, commensurate with the increasingly severe challenges we face.

It also saw progress on 'loss and damage', particularly the explicit language in transparency and the GST, stating further that real support to address it still needs to be delivered soon.

Speaking on behalf of the African Group, Gabon, in acknowledging the Katowice outcome on the PAWP, called for commitments to be shown on the flow of adequate and enhanced provision of the means of implementation on finance, technology transfer and capacity building for developing countries to unlock the potential to combat climate change and enable adaptation efforts.

India, speaking for the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), said it was happy that the guidelines for the implementation of the PA have been formulated. It also recalled its commitment to the principles of equity and CBDR and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) in the light of different national circumstances to ensure climate justice to the poor and vulnerable people across the globe. It added that the COP decisions rightly signify the importance of enhanced pre-2020 action and welcomed the conclusion of the Talanoa Dialogue and remained certain that its spirit will continue to inspire in future. The BASIC countries also underscored they have chosen a path of progress and non-regression in climate actions.

India, in its national capacity, presented its reservation on the PAWP outcome as follows: 'Article 14.1 of the PA mandates that the GST process has to be conducted in the light of equity and best available science. The decision paragraph in its current form does not operationalise equity and is not in accordance with the mandate and relevant provisions of the PA. Equity must be considered and be part of the input, the technical assessment as well as the output, including its considerations throughout the GST process. Reference of Article 2 in its entirety in the paragraph 6(b) of this decision is an essential requirement for operationalising equity.'

Saudi Arabia, speaking for the Arab Group, said that it was committed to the PA in the context of the CBDR principle and in furthering sustainable development. It said that it had many concerns with the outcome but demonstrated flexibility in arriving at the decisions.

On behalf of the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC), Colombia underscored the importance of the intense technical work done to enable the implementation of the PA.

China said that great flexibility was demonstrated to arrive at the PAWP, which was comprehensive, balanced and robust, consistent with the principle of CBDR-RC in the light of national circumstances. This, it said, was a victory for multilateralism.

The European Union (EU) said that the target for limiting temperature rise under the PA was still within reach and that Parties were heading in the right direction. It said that the Talanoa Dialogue provided the first political opportunity to take stock of the global progress and that there was strong evidence that financial flows were shifting to the low-emissions economy.

On the PAWP, which it called the 'rulebook', the EU said that a universal transparency framework was now in place, where Parties improve and progress over time and communicate clear and comparable terms in their actions. It said that the decisions preserved the notion of 'contemporary differentiation', recognising the economic and social evolution of Parties. The results of the GST could be considered as a central innovation and feature of the PA which ensures progression over time, the EU said, noting that all the current NDCs fell well short (of what was needed to limit temperature rise).

Switzerland, speaking for the Environmental Integrity Group, welcomed the encompassing 'rulebook' which it said managed to secure details and robust guidance for collective and national actions. It noted that some rules were legally binding while others were less so, and regretted that the work on Article 6 could not be completed, rendering the 'package' incomplete.

Australia, on behalf of the Umbrella Group, welcomed the decisions adopted, which it said brought the PA 'to life', adding that it provided clear guidance to Parties on the information to be provided for future actions and accounting guidance for their targets. It also highlighted the robust transparency framework that would allow Parties to track progress of their actions. The decisions on the means of implementation provided a strong basis to support the implementation of the PA, it said further, welcoming the GST to secure strong climate actions.

The Philippines, in a tribute to Madame Ditas, recalled that she was a prime mover of the Convention and was referred to as the 'dragon lady' and 'lioness of developing countries', loved by many and feared by some as she spoke for climate justice and mentored negotiators. It said that the world had lost a great citizen and asked that she be honoured by making the Convention and the PA work for all humanity. ◆

The key decisions on the Paris Agreement implementation rules

At Katowice, the familiar North-South divide resurfaced with regard to the rules for implementation of the Paris Agreement. The following article provides a brief analysis of some of the key decisions of the conference and the fights that went on prior to their adoption.

Meena Raman

FOLLOWING the adoption of the Paris Agreement (PA) in 2015 and its ratification the following year, developed and developing countries had been engaged in a battle of interpretation over the rules for implementation of the agreement.

This battle finally got settled in Katowice, Poland, with the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties meeting as the Parties to the PA (CMA) on 15 December.

COP 24 President Michal Kurtyka *(pic)* described the Katowice decisions as being 'in fragile balance' and 'all Parties had to give and gain'.

The decisions under the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) covered such issues as nationally determined contributions (NDCs) (addressed in Article 4 of the PA); adaptation (Article 7); finance (Article 9); technology transfer (Article 10); transparency framework (Article 13); global stocktake (GST) (Article 14); facilitating implementation and compliance (Article 15); and some finance-related decisions. The work on Article 6 relating to cooperative approaches (which include market mechanisms and non-market approaches) could not be completed owing to divergences among Parties on many technical and substantive issues; work on this will continue in 2019.

The 24th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 24) in Katowice also adopted several important decisions on finance which are relevant to the PA.

Below is a brief analysis on some of the key decisions and the fights that went on prior to their adoption. (For an analysis of the finance-related decisions adopted by the CMA and the COP, see the article 'Important finance decisions adopted at climate talks' in this issue.)

Nationally determined contributions

The heart of the PA is the obligation in Article 4 that states that 'Each Party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve.' The Article goes on to state that 'Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions.'

Article 4.8 of the PA provides that 'all Parties shall provide the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding' (CTU) in communicating their NDCs.

The mandate from Paris was for Parties to agree on the guidance for the information to be provided to facilitate CTU of the NDCs. Parties were also required to agree on the guidance on 'features' as well as the guidance on accounting of their NDCs.

Features of NDCs

One issue that arose was over the guidance on 'features' of NDCs, which revolved around what the features ought to be, which features were reflected in the PA and whether new features could be agreed to beyond the PA. A related matter was the scope of NDCs, as regards what the features of the contributions are. During the course of negotiations, the only feature that saw consensus among Parties was that an NDC is 'nationally determined'.

In the decision that was finally adopted, Parties noted that 'features of NDCs are outlined in the relevant provisions of the PA', and also decided to 'continue consideration of further guidance on features' of NDCs in 2024. The can has therefore been kicked down the road for another battle on the features of NDCs in 2024.

Two further issues that saw divergences between developed and developing countries were on: (i) how differentiation would be reflected between developed and developing countries in relation to the guidance on the information for CTU, given the different nature of their NDCs; and (ii) the scope of the NDCs (whether it is only about mitigation contributions or if it also includes adaptation efforts, as well as the means of implementation related to finance, technology transfer and capacity-building especially for developing countries to implement their climate actions).

The president of the 2015 Paris climate conference, Laurent Fabius, declaring the Paris Agreement adopted. Developed and developing countries had since been engaged in a battle of interpretation over the rules for implementation of the agreement.

Differentiation

Led by the United States, developed countries were not prepared to reflect differentiation among developed and developing countries in the guidance to be developed on NDCs, which was the preferred option of a large bloc of developing countries led especially by the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC).

In relation to information to facilitate CTU of Parties' NDCs, the view of developed countries was that all Parties would provide information on a certain set of elements. In contrast, the LMDC and some other developing countries were of the view that developed countries would provide a certain set of information, while developing countries could choose the information to be provided as appropriate to them.

The position of the Umbrella Group, of which the US is a member, was that such a bifurcated approach between developed and developing countries was inconsistent with the PA and would 'hinder rather than build trust among Parties'. They stressed that the information to be provided cannot be differentiated between one set of rules for developed countries and another for developing countries.

In the decision adopted, in paragraph 10, it was agreed that 'in communicating their second and subsequent NDCs, Parties shall provide the information necessary for CTU contained in annex I *as applicable to their NDCs*' (emphasis added). Parties were also 'strongly encourage[d]' to 'provide this information in relation to their first NDC, including when communicating or updating it by 2020'.

The decision (in paragraph 8) also recalls Article 4.4 of the PA which differentiates the type of mitigation efforts between developed and developing countries, and 'provides that developed country Parties should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets, and that developing country Parties should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts and are encouraged to move over time towards economy wide emission reduction or limitation targets in the light of different national circumstances'.

Hence, the information to be provided will be 'as applicable' to the different nature of the NDCs between developed and developing countries.

Annex I of the decision deals with information primarily relevant to a mitigation contribution and covers, among others, matters that relate to quantifiable information on the reference point (including, as appropriate, a base year); how the Party's preparation of its NDC has been informed by the outcomes of the GST; and how a Party considers that its NDC is fair, including reflecting on equity.

The issue of the scope of NDCs is addressed below.

It is also important to note that the information guidance for CTU is mandatory for the second and subsequent NDCs. Most NDCs of Parties, with the exception of the US and Marshall Islands, are for a 10-year time frame from 2021-30. Hence, the guidance for most countries will apply to NDCs from 2031 onwards.

Scope of NDCs

On the scope of NDCs, developed countries, during the negotiations, were of the view that Article 4 of the PA only referred to mitigation actions, while some developing countries, including the LMDC, held that NDCs as defined under Article 3 encompass the full scope of contributions, which includes adaptation and the means of implementation, and are not limited to mitigation only. This had been the subject of a fierce battle in Paris which led to a final compromise in an ambiguously worded Article 4.

Developed countries in Katowice continued to resist reference to Article 3 in the operative part of the NDC decision as pushed for by the LMDC. In the decision adopted, Article 3 is recalled in the preamble.

It is also important to note that in the overarching COP 24 decision, paragraph 3 reaffirms that 'in the context of NDCs … all Parties are to undertake ambitious efforts defined in' the various articles of the PA which include mitigation, adaptation and the means of implementation, and as reflected in Article 3 of the PA.

The full scope of NDCs is also reflected in paragraph 11 of the NDC decision, which states as follows in relation to the information to be provided: 'Emphasises that the guidance on information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding is without prejudice to the inclusion of components other than mitigation in a nationally determined contribution, notes that Parties may provide other information when submitting their nationally determined contributions, and in particular that, as provided in Article 7.11 … an adaptation communication referred to in Article 7.10 … may be submitted as a component of or in conjunction with a nationally determined contribution as referred to in Article 4.2…, and also notes the further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication…'

Since an NDC is nationally determined, apart from providing information on the mitigation efforts, Parties can also include an adaptation component, and for developing countries, the reference to 'other information' can also include their finance, technology transfer and capacity-building needs.

As regards the accounting guidance for NDCs, the decision in paragraph 16 provides that 'in accounting for anthropogenic emissions and removals corresponding to their NDCs, … Parties shall account for their NDCs in accordance with the guidance contained in annex II'.

This accounting guidance is mitigation-related and Annex II contains various items, including an explanation of why any categories of emissions or removals are excluded from being accounted for by a Party.

Common time frames

Another issue that saw wrangling related to the matter of the common time frame for NDCs. Developed countries preferred the option of having a common time frame for all NDCs, while some developing countries were of the view that countries should have the flexibility of deciding whether to have a five- or ten-year time frame.

In the decision adopted, it was decided that Parties 'shall apply common time frames to their NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward'. The decision also requests the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) to continue consideration of the issue of common time frames at its June session in 2019, with a view to making a recommendation to the CMA.

Transparency framework

Article 13.1 of the PA provides that 'in order to build mutual trust and confidence and to promote effective implementation, an enhanced transparency framework [ETF] for action and support, with built-in flexibility which takes into account Parties' different capacities and builds upon collective experience is hereby established'.

Article 13.2 provides that 'The transparency framework shall provide flexibility in the implementation of the provisions of this Article to those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities,' and that 'The modalities, procedures and guidelines [MPGs] … shall reflect such flexibility.'

During the negotiations, concerns were expressed by developing countries that the proposed transparency guidelines enhance the obligations of developing countries, with no enhancement of the same by developed countries. Some developing countries were of the view that there cannot be common reporting guidelines for both developed and developing countries in relation to their climate actions as they have different capacities.

Developing countries also wanted stronger rules on reporting and review in relation to the provision of the means of implementation by developed countries, while this was resisted by developed countries.

While developed countries were prepared to accommodate 'flexibilities' for developing countries that need them, they insisted that the flexibilities have to be 'bounded', i.e., cannot be without restrictions. Developing countries, on the other hand, opposed such restrictions or limitations and argued that it is up to them to nationally determine the flexibilities needed, without a top-down imposition of who can and who cannot have those flexibilities.

Another issue was when the existing transparency system under the UNFCCC would be superseded by the new MPGs of the ETF.

In Katowice, the MPGs for the ETF were adopted and are contained in a lengthy annex which comprises the following chapters:

• Chapter I covers the purpose of the framework; guiding principles; flexibility to those developing countries that need it; facilitating improved reporting and transparency over time; and reporting format.

• Chapter II covers, among other matters, the 'national inventory report of emissions and removals'.

• Chapter III covers information necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving NDCs under Article 4.

• Chapter IV covers information related to adaptation, including loss and damage.

• Chapter V covers information on financial, technology development and transfer and capacity-building support provided and mobilised by developed countries.

• Chapter VI covers information on the support needed and received by developing countries.

• Chapter VII covers technical expert review, including about what the technical expert review teams can do and cannot do.

• Chapter VIII covers the facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress (FMCP).

It was also decided that Parties shall submit their first biennial transparency report (BTR) and national inventory report, in accordance with the MPGs, at the latest by 31 December 2024. This replaces the current biennial reports (BRs) for developed countries and biennial update reports (BURs) for developing countries under the UNFCCC.

Parties agreed that the BTRs, the

technical expert review and the FMCP prepared and conducted in accordance with the MPGs shall replace the BRs, BURs, the international assessment and review (for developed countries) and international consultation and analysis (for developing countries), following the submissions of the final BRs/BURs, which is 2022/2024 respectively.

Flexibilities to developing countries

Although the ETF is common for both developed and developing countries after 2024, flexibilities are accorded to developing countries in relation to the reporting and review. The flexibilities for developing countries can be viewed as operationalising differentiation.

Paragraph 5 provides that 'These MPGs specify the flexibility that is available to those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities…, reflecting flexibility, including in the scope, frequency and level of detail of reporting, and in the scope of the review…'.

According to paragraph 6, 'The application of flexibility provided for in the provisions of these MPGs for those developing country Parties that need it in the light of their capacities *is to be self-determined*. The developing country Party shall clearly indicate the provision to which flexibility is applied…, and provide self-determined estimated time frames for improvements in relation to those capacity constraints' (emphasis added). Further, that paragraph states further that 'when a developing country Party applies flexibility provided for in these MPGs, the technical expert review teams shall not review the Party's determination to apply such flexibility or whether the Party possesses the capacity to implement that specific provision without flexibility.'

Transparency of support

In relation to transparency of support, developed countries 'shall' provide information listed in Chapter V of the MPGs, including 'an indication of what new and additional financial resources have been provided, and how it has been determined that such resources are new and additional'. Also required is information on 'how the information provided reflects a progression from previous levels in the provision and mobilisation of finance under the PA'.

This is a clear win for developing countries, as they have lamented that the financial information provided by developed countries in their reports is not clear on what is new and additional over and above official development assistance.

The wrangling between developed and developing countries in relation to what they should report as reflected in the MPGs took place in the discussions on Article 9.7, which has now been incorporated in Chapter V of the MPGs.

Global stocktake: Attempts to sideline issue of equity

The PA stipulates that the global stocktake (GST), which is an assessment of the collective progress of Parties towards achieving the purpose of the PA and its long-term goals and will take place in 2023, has to be carried out in light of equity.

There was agreement among developing countries, led by the G77 and China, that the guidance to operationalise equity needs to be designed in the modalities of the GST.

Developing countries also called for equity to be captured in the decision not just as an overarching but also as a cross-cutting issue in all the elements of the GST. They also proposed having several indicators to measure equity, such as historical responsibility, equitable access to sustainable development and carbon space etc. However, developed countries from the Umbrella Group were strongly opposed to this approach. The US in fact wanted a reference to the term 'equity' only in the preamble of the decision.

Paragraph 2 of the decision on the GST provides that '*equity* and the best available science will be considered in a Party-driven and cross-cutting manner, throughout the global stocktake' (emphasis added).

Parties also agreed in paragraph 3 that the GST 'will consist of the following components: (a) Information collection and preparation…; (b) Technical assessment…; (c) Consideration of outputs, focusing on discussing the implications of the findings of the technical assessment with a view to achieving the outcome of the GST of informing Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support, in accordance with relevant provisions of the PA, as well as in enhancing international cooperation for climate action'.

In the final decision adopted, on the 'sources of input' for the GST, the proposals of the G77 and China on operationalising 'equity' through information on 'equitable access to sustainable development, historical responsibilities, development gaps between North and South, sustainable development, including Sustainable Development Goals, and leadership by developed countries in achieving low-emission and climate resilient development' were not considered and were replaced with the following: 'Fairness considerations, including equity, as communicated by Parties in their NDCs' [see paragraph 36(h)].

However, there are references to equity in the decision where in the technical assessment, 'equity considerations and the best available science' are to be taken into account (see paragraph 27), and also in the provision that the 'co-facilitators of the technical dialogue will summarise its outputs in summary reports, taking into account equity and the best available science' (see paragraph 31).

Given the US opposition to 'equity', the fact that the term appears in several parts of the GST decision is significant and will mean that developing countries will continue their fight in the future work to ensure that the full understanding of equity is taken on board in the GST process and outcomes.

Overall, in view of the above, the decisions arrived at were, as expressed by the COP 24 President Michal Kurtyka, 'in fragile balance' and 'all Parties had to give and gain'. ◆

Important finance decisions adopted at climate talks

The Katowice UN climate change conference also adopted several important decisions on finance. The article below presents highlights of the decisions adopted, along with some of the contentious issues raised.

Indrajit Bose and
Meena Raman

Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/10dec.html)

A high-level ministerial dialogue on finance was held on 10 December during the climate talks in Katowice.

A HOST of decisions on finance-related matters were adopted on 15 December at the 24th session of the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP 24) as well as the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) in Katowice.

Nearly all the finance issues were the subject of contention between developed and developing countries, with developed countries reluctant to make progress on them until they had a clearer view of the final package of decisions under the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP). Developed countries wanted to assess where developing countries stood on other matters of the PAWP, especially as regards decisions on nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and the transparency framework, before making progress on the finance matters.

Speaking to the Third World Network about the finance decisions adopted in Katowice, a senior developing-country negotiator said 'there were wins and there were losses for developing countries', adding that 'this is the nature of negotiations'. However, on the whole, according to the negotiator, 'developing countries got more wins than losses in the finance-related decisions'.

The decisions adopted included items related to the PAWP such as: the identification of ex ante information to be provided by developed countries in accordance with Article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement (PA); ex post information on financial support provided and mobilised under Article 9.7 of the PA; setting a new collective quantified goal on finance; and the future of the Adaptation Fund.

There were also several decisions on finance matters adopted under the COP, including on: matters related to the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF); guidance of the COP to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and long-term finance (LTF).

This article presents highlights of the decisions adopted, along with some of the contentious issues raised.

Finance issues under the PAWP

Information to be provided under Article 9.5 of the PA

Article 9.5 mandates developed countries to biennially communicate ex ante information on the projected levels of public financial resources to developing countries.

Since the start of negotiations in 2017, developed countries had refused to be drawn into a discussion on 'modalities' for the communication of such information under Article 9.5, which was a key demand from developing countries led by the African Group, the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) and the Arab Group. Discussions on the issue remained deadlocked, with developed countries refusing to go beyond discussing the types of information or how the information would be useful to developing countries.

In what some called a 'breakthrough' during a meeting of heads of delegation at COP 24, developed countries relented somewhat and agreed to discuss some 'procedural aspects' in relation to the information to be provided.

Even then, the developed countries wanted to restrict the scope of the procedural aspects to when the information would be communicated and where it would be housed. Developing countries wanted a process to assess the information as well.

The decision adopted reflects the timing of the communication; where the information will be housed (which would be a dedicated online portal on the UNFCCC website); a synthesis of the information to feed into the global stocktake (GST) in 2023; the conduct of biennial in-session workshops and high-level ministerial dialogue as well as the consideration of the compilations and syntheses of the information by the CMA.

The types of information to be provided are contained in an annex. Prior to the adoption of the decision, there was huge resistance from developed countries to indicating what 'new and additional' resources would be provided, but this is now clearly required by the decision.

Some developing countries were unhappy with the reference to 'providers of climate finance' in the annex in relation to 'information on the factors that providers of climate finance look for in evaluating proposals, in order to help to inform developing countries', as they viewed the term to be too general and not confined to developed countries which had the obligation under the PA to provide climate finance.

Developed countries also insisted that 'other Parties providing resources' be required to provide the information on the projected levels of public financial resources to be provided to developing countries. In the decision adopted, 'other Parties providing resources' are 'encouraged' to do so, while developed countries are mandatorily required to provide ('shall biennially communicate') the information as per Article 9.5.

In the decision adopted, Parties recognised the 'importance of predictability and clarity of information on financial support for the implementation of the PA' and reiterated that developed countries 'shall biennially communicate indicative quantitative and qualitative information', including 'projected levels of public financial resources to be provided' to developing countries (paragraphs 1 and 2 of the decision).

The Katowice conference adopted a host of decisions on finance-related matters, including with regard to the Green Climate Fund.

In paragraph 4, developed countries are requested to submit the information 'as specified in the annex, starting in 2020'. The annex lists the types of information to be provided, including information on:

• projected levels of public financial resources to be provided to developing countries, as available;

• indicative quantitative and qualitative information on programmes, including projected levels, channels and instruments, as available;

• policies and priorities, including regions and geography, recipient countries, beneficiaries, targeted groups, sectors and gender responsiveness;

• purposes and types of support: mitigation, adaptation, cross-cutting activities, technology transfer and capacity-building;

• factors that providers of climate finance look for in evaluating proposals, in order to help to inform developing countries;

• an indication of new and additional resources to be provided, and how Parties determine such resources as new and additional;

• relevant methodologies and assumptions;

• challenges and barriers;

• how Parties are aiming to ensure a balance between adaptation and mitigation, taking into account the country-driven strategies and the needs and priorities of developing country Parties;

• how financial support effectively addresses the needs and priorities of developing country Parties and supports country-driven strategies;

• efforts to integrate climate change considerations, including resilience, into their development support; and

• how support to be provided to developing country Parties enhances their capacities.

The decision in paragraph 6 requests the secretariat 'to establish a dedicated online portal for posting and recording the biennial communications'. The secretariat (in paragraph 7) is also requested 'to prepare a compilation and synthesis of the information included in the biennial communications … starting in 2021 … with a view to informing the global stocktake'. The secretariat has also been requested 'to organise biennial in-session workshops beginning the year after the submission of the first biennial communications and to prepare a summary report on each workshop' (paragraph 8).

It was also decided that Parties will 'consider the compilation and syntheses' of the information contained in the biennial communications and 'the summary report on the in-session workshops' starting in November 2021 (see paragraph 9). Parties also decided 'to convene a biennial high-level ministerial dialogue on climate finance beginning in 2021, to be informed, inter alia, by the summary reports on the in-session workshops' (paragraph 10). In paragraph

11, Parties also requested the 'President of the CMA to summarise the deliberations of the [high-level ministerial] dialogue … for consideration by the CMA at its succeeding session'.

The CMA is also invited to 'consider the compilations and syntheses and the summary reports on the in-session workshops' (paragraph 12). Parties decided also 'to consider updating the types of information contained in the annex … in 2023 on the basis of the experiences and lessons learned' (paragraph 13).

Information to be provided under Article 9.7 of the PA

Under Article 9.7 of the PA, developed countries are required 'to provide transparent and consistent information on support for developing country Parties provided and mobilised through public interventions biennially in accordance with the modalities, procedures and guidelines' (MPGs) under the transparency framework in Article 13 of the PA.

During the negotiations, developing countries wanted information on how the support provided and mobilised represented a progression from previous levels provided to developing countries, including on how the finance provided is new and additional. They also wanted the reporting to include information on the grant equivalency of the financial instruments used and the loan repayments by developing countries, in order to ensure that this was not counted as climate finance. Developed countries however were opposed to these demands.

Long and protracted discussions ensued and eventually, the developing-country demands on information on progression, what is new and additional and the grant equivalence of the instruments used were in the decision as part of reporting arrangements under the transparency framework. What they did not manage to get is information on the loan repayments by developing countries.

During the negotiations, developed countries introduced new terms such as 'reporting Parties' in the draft texts, as a replacement for 'developed country Parties' and 'developing country Parties'. This was vehemently objected to by developing countries which said that there was no basis for using such terms, as the PA had clear obligations for developed countries to report information on the finance provided and it only encouraged other Parties that provide support to provide such information.

The outcome of the discussions under Article 9.7 was incorporated into the MPGs adopted under the transparency framework under Article 13 of the PA.

In the decision adopted, in paragraph 118, it is stated clearly that 'Developed country Parties shall provide the information … in accordance with the MPGs contained in this chapter. Other Parties that provide support should provide such information and, in doing so, are encouraged to use the MPGs contained in this chapter'.

The MPGs comprise information on:

• national circumstances and institutional arrangements relevant to reporting on the provision and mobilisation of support;

• underlying assumptions, definitions and methodologies, as applicable, used to identify

• financial support provided and mobilised.

On underlying assumptions, definitions and methodologies, the information required includes: (financial) instruments (e.g., grant, concessional loan, non-concessional loan etc.) and funding sources reported, including how a Party has determined finance to be concessional and/or official development assistance, including by using information such as grant equivalency, institution and/or instrument-based approaches; how double counting among multiple Parties involved in the provision of support was avoided; an indication of what new and additional financial resources have been provided, and how it has been determined that such resources are new and additional; and how the information provided reflects a progression from previous levels in the provision and mobilisation of finance under the PA, among others.

New collective quantified goal on finance

Discussions on the new collective goal on finance were difficult. Developing countries wanted a process on setting a new collective quantified goal on finance that takes into account their needs and priorities from a floor of $100 billion per year, as mandated by a decision agreed to in Paris in 2015. The Paris decision mandated that the goal be set prior to 2025 by the CMA.

Developed countries led by the US, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Norway, Switzerland and Australia refused to determine a process for setting a new collective goal on finance, claiming that it was too early to deal with this. They were also opposed to any mention of 'needs and priorities' of developing countries.

In the decision adopted, Parties agreed to initiate in November 2020 'deliberations on setting a new collective quantified goal from a floor of $100 billion per year, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency of implementation and taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries' (paragraph 1). Parties also agreed to consider in their deliberations 'the aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development' (paragraph 2).

Adaptation Fund

In relation to the Adaptation Fund (AF), the contentious issues were mainly on the timing of when the Fund would serve the PA; whether the AF would serve exclusively the PA or both the PA and the Kyoto Protocol (KP) at the same time; and the sources of funding for the AF.

Developing countries wanted the AF to start serving the PA as soon as possible. Developed countries were of the view that the AF could not serve both the KP and the PA at the same time. In relation to sources of funding for the AF, developed countries wanted 'innovative' sources of funding, which some developing countries were opposed to. Developing countries also did not want to change the governance structure of the AF Board, while the developed countries were in favour of doing so. (The AF serves the KP at present and the AF Board comprises 16 members and 16 alternates representing Parties to the KP.)

In the decision adopted, it was decided under the CMA that the AF shall serve the PA from 1 January 2019, subject to the decision by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the KP (CMP) on this.

On the sources of funding, Parties agreed that 'a variety of voluntary public and private sources' besides 'the share of proceeds from the Article 6.4 mechanism of the PA' would finance the AF. (Article 6.4 of the PA refers to a mechanism to promote mitigation and support sustainable development.)

In the decision adopted by the CMP, it was decided that the AF 'shall exclusively serve the PA and shall no longer serve the KP once the share of proceeds under Article 6.4 of the PA becomes available'. Parties also decided that the AF 'shall continue to receive the share of proceeds, if available, from activities under … the KP'.

It was also decided that both developing and developed countries which are Party to the Paris Agreement are eligible for membership on the AF Board, and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) was requested to consider the matter in June 2019.

Decisions adopted under the COP

Standing Committee on Finance

Several issues surfaced during the discussions on the SCF. These included how to reflect the summary and recommendations of the 2018 'Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows' (BA) in the decision.

One of the functions of the SCF of the UNFCCC is to assist the COP with measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of support provided to developing countries. As part of this function, one of the activities the SCF undertakes is preparation of a BA. A BA comprises a summary and recommendations, and a technical report. While the technical report is prepared by external consultants, the summary and recommendations are prepared by SCF members.

The adoption of the summary and recommendations itself had been riddled with difficulties. Discussions on the summary and recommendations saw divergences at the 19th meeting of the SCF in October 2018 following a proposal from the US for a footnote that read: 'The usage of certain terms [e.g. developed, developing, South-South] herein does not imply consensus on the meaning of these terms amongst nor prejudice the views of Parties.' There could be no agreement among the committee members to reflect the footnote, and even though several attempts were made to resolve the matter, the US did not agree on the mention of developed and developing countries in the summary and recommendations. Following the 19th meeting, the impasse was resolved inter-sessionally. According to sources, the US and other developed countries insisted on the use of the term 'climate finance providers' instead of developed and developing countries.

Besides these, the 2018 BA also states that trends in climate finance point to increasing flows towards beneficiary countries, while outlining the challenges and limitations in the making of the BA. These include the lack of an agreed definition of climate finance, data uncertainty and data gaps, making data difficult to compare.

In Katowice, when developed countries wanted to selectively introduce some of the findings into the decision text, developing countries objected to it, and recalled the challenges and limitations of the report. In the decision adopted, Parties welcomed 'with appreciation' the BA and annexed the summary and recommendations of the report to the decision (see paragraph 3).

Also at issue was the matter of giving a mandate to the SCF to work on needs assessment of developing countries, which the developed countries were opposed to.

Another issue was over references to Article 2.1(c) of the PA, which refers to making 'finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development'. Developing countries did not want a selective reference to only a part of Article 2 and were of the view that the entire Article 2 should be reflected, as it makes clear that the PA is 'about enhancing the implementation of the Convention … in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty' (Article 2.1) and that the PA 'will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances' (Article 2.2).

The decision adopted in Katowice encourages the SCF 'to take into account the best available science in future biennial assessment and overviews of climate finance flows' and requests the SCF to use in the BA 'the established terminology in the provisions of the Convention and the PA in relation to climate finance, where applicable'. (This is to ensure that no new terminologies are used that depart from the Convention and the PA.) (See paragraphs 4 and 5.)

Parties also welcomed the decision of the SCF to host its 2019 forum on 'climate finance and sustainable cities' (see paragraph 9).

The decision also requested the SCF 'to map, every four years, as part of its biennial assessment and overview of climate finance flows, the available information relevant to Article 2.1(c), of the PA, including its reference to Article 9 thereof' (see paragraph 10). This can be seen as a compromise accommodating both developed- and developing-country demands. Article 9 refers to the provision of support by developed countries to developing countries, while Article 2.1(c) refers to 'finance flows'.

The SCF was also requested 'to prepare, every four years, a report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the PA, for consideration by the COP … and CMA' starting in November 2020 (see paragraph 13).

The SCF is also encouraged 'to provide input into the technical paper of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with climate change impacts on the sources of financial support' (see paragraph 11). The provision of financial resources for loss and damage has been a demand of many developing countries, especially from the small island developing states, while developed countries, especially the US, are opposed to advancing discussions on this matter.

Guidance by the COP to the Green Climate Fund

The decision adopted in Katowice urges the GCF Board 'to address the remaining policy gaps, including on … policies relating to the approval of funding proposals, including project and programme eligibility and selection criteria, incremental costs, co-financing, concessionality…; review of the accreditation framework…' (see paragraph 3).

In paragraph 4, it urges the GCF Board 'to continue its consideration of procedures for adopting decisions in the event that all efforts at reaching consensus have been exhausted…'. (Decision-making in the absence of consensus has been a sticky issue in the GCF and despite several attempts, the Board has not been able to adopt a decision on the issue. The Board has in particular not been able to agree on a voting mechanism. The issue was discussed at the 21st meeting of the Board in Bahrain in October 2018.)

The decision in paragraph 5 welcomes 'the launching of the first formal replenishment process and the Board's decisions on the inputs and processes related to the Fund's replenishment, which take into account the needs of developing countries'. Developed countries were against any references to the 'needs of developing countries' in the text during the discussions in Katowice.

Guidance by the COP to the Global Environment Facility

During the closing plenary of COP 24, when the proposed decision on the guidance to the GEF was put up for adoption by the COP Presidency, the US raised an objection and wanted amendments to paragraph 7 of the decision, which initially read as follows: 'Requests the GEF, in fulfilling its mandate to ensure access to its resources by all eligible developing country Parties, to support these developing countries in fulfilling their commitments under the Convention.'

According to the US, the paragraph was 'outside the mandate of guidance as established in the memorandum of understanding between the COP and the GEF'. The US proposed the following amendment: 'Requests the GEF, as appropriate, to ensure that its policies and procedures related to the consideration and review of funding proposals be duly followed in an efficient manner.' The decision was adopted with the said amendment.

The US objection caught many developing countries off-guard. Clearly, the US intention is to limit some developing countries in having access to the GEF's resources.

Further, the decision in paragraph 3 recognised 'with concern the decrease in allocation to the climate change focal area … compared with the sixth replenishment' of the GEF, and urged 'all Parties that have not made pledges for the seventh replenishment of the Global Environment Facility to do so as soon as possible'. (At the seventh replenishment meeting of the GEF, of the total of \$4.1 billion pledged, only \$3.3 billion is actually new funding, an aggregate 37% decrease compared with the GEF's sixth replenishment.)

Long-term finance

In the decision adopted on the matter, developed countries were urged 'to continue their efforts to channel a substantial share of public climate funds to adaptation activities and to strive to achieve a greater balance between finance for mitigation and for adaptation, recognising the importance of adaptation finance and the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation' (see paragraph 4).

Parties also decided in paragraph 9 that 'the in-session workshops on long-term climate finance in 2019 and 2020 will focus on (a) the effectiveness of climate finance, including the results and impacts of finance provided and mobilised; (b) the provision of financial and technical support to developing country Parties for their adaptation and mitigation actions in relation to holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2ºC above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5ºC above pre-industrial levels'.

It was also decided, in paragraph 13, that the 'fourth biennial high-level ministerial dialogue on climate finance, to be convened in 2020 … will be informed by the reports on the in-session workshops on long-term climate finance and the 2020 Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows'.

(A high-level ministerial dialogue on finance was held on 10 December during the climate talks in Katowice. Developing countries underscored the need for clarity and predictability on the sources of climate finance for decision-makers to ensure that climate considerations are mainstreamed into national development plans and policies.)

The finance decisions in Katowice are indeed critical in advancing further progress in ensuring adequate and predictable climate finance for developing countries in the coming years. ◆

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The importance of equity and finance for more climate ambition

Finance has always been a contentious issue at climate change talks, with developed countries failing to deliver on their commitments. Speakers at a side-event at Katowice highlighted the linkage between finance and climate ambition, stressing that developing countries will only dare commit themselves to greater emission cuts when they are assured that the monies pledged will come through. *Prerna Bomzan* reports.

'EQUITY is the gateway to climate ambition,' was the key message reiterated by developing-country negotiators and civil society at a side-event organised by the Third World Network (TWN) and the South Centre on 4 December during the climate talks in Katowice.

The side-event, which had an attendance of around 150, was moderated by Vicente Yu with panel members comprising Zaheer Fakir of South Africa, who is the G77 and China's coordinator on finance issues; Walter Schuldt of Ecuador, who was the preceding Chair of the G77 and China; Ravi Prasad, the Chief Negotiator and Joint Secretary from the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change; and Meena Raman of Malaysia, who is TWN's Climate Change Programme Coordinator.

Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/15dec.html)

Ravi Prasad, Chief Negotiator and Joint Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Speaking at a side-event in the Katowice conference, Prasad said climate action and support should be based on the realities faced by developing countries.

Fakir emphasised that it was important to understand the current state of play on finance in the climate negotiations. He gave an elaborate insight into the difference between finance pledges and what actually materialises, citing the example of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), where $10 billion was initially pledged but only about $7 billion has actually materialised, with a $2 billion shortfall due to the United States not meeting its pledge and another $1 billion being lost not merely in foreign exchange fluctuations but also due to the nature of pledges being made in grants, loans, capital and promissory notes.

Fakir added that in the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the allocation of funds for climate change had been reduced by 40%, and this was in an era where enhancing ambition was being talked about. In relation to the financial instruments, Fakir explained that in the past, the multilateral financing was mostly grant-based, while today, it was mostly concessional finance in the form of loans, and this shaped not only the nature and kind of projects but also the type of countries that would be eligible to undertake those projects. He added further that concessional loans, even if the interest rates were low, were still debts and more and more developing countries were being asked to take on debt instruments to implement climate action.

Fakir also pointed out that in the past, all developing countries had access to financing, while now, new eligibility criteria are being adopted unilaterally by some developed countries which are looking at the income levels of countries. Middle-income countries, he said, are viewed as not being eligible for grants but only loans.

Another serious problem that has arisen, said Fakir, is the questioning of projects as to whether they are adaptation projects or development-related. There is also the shifting of the burden to the private sector for providing finance when developed countries clearly have the obligation to do so, he stressed further.

The G77 finance coordinator said

that in view of this, when one looks at Article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement (PA) (which provides for ex ante information on public financial resources from developed countries), the issue is really about knowing what finance is available to stimulate developing countries to undertake more ambition on the assumption that money will be received. Reporting of ex ante information on finance is also very important for better planning of actions, said Fakir further.

He added that in essence, the PA did not lead to additional money for developing countries as the decision adopted shifted the goal of mobilising $100 billion by 2020 by another five years to 2025. By 2025, a new long-term goal on finance is expected to be reached but there is no discussion on how that new goal would come about, he said; even the initial $100 billion goal was decided by a few heads of state, with no analysis of the needs of developing countries.

Fakir clarified the difference between the terms ‘mobilisation’ and ‘provision’ of finance. He explained that in the GEF, for every $1 provided by developed countries, developing countries have to provide co-financing with a ratio of 7:1, and that for a middle-income country, the ratio is 12:1, which is expected to apply to all developing countries in the future. It is therefore important, said Fakir, to read the fine print in negotiations where developed countries only provide a small portion of the resources while a much larger amount is reported as having been mobilised.

Fakir concluded that in the current negotiations, there has been a reluctance on the part of developed countries to discuss the process of determining the new long-term goal on finance by 2025, or how to guide the replenishment of the GCF, the issue being whether it should be based only on what developed countries can provide or on the needs of developing countries.

Schuldt began his presentation by expressing commitment to the common goal and common vision to address the global threat of climate change and to finalise the work that began in 2015 with the PA, referring to the PA Work Programme which was expected to be adopted in Katowice.

He also called for more ambition in the delivery of finance, emphasising that finance was one of the core elements that had to be finalised in Katowice given both the unfulfilled pre-2020 commitments by developed countries as well as fresh commitments for the implementation of the PA. Schuldt expressed concern that ‘new narratives’ were coming from developed countries about ‘financial flows and the enabling environment’ as if it would begin only from 2020 onwards under the PA, despite current unfulfilled commitments in finance to developing countries. He lamented that some developed countries could not agree to a simple decision for the Adaptation Fund (AF) to serve the PA and were pushing proposals to change the existing governance of the Fund so that donor countries could make decisions over how funds could be accessed.

Schuldt also touched upon another key aspect of the negotiations on ‘transparency of action’ taken by both developed and developing countries, which he said was significantly related to equity. He said that developing countries were already reporting through different tools their climate actions, and that adding more details and complexity to the existing rules of reporting without sufficient finance and capacity building would be burdensome for developing countries.

He also stressed that the final agreement in Katowice should have a clear relationship with local communities and indigenous peoples as well as human rights, but was concerned that there were attempts to sideline them, which was contrary to a just transition as well as the broader concept of climate justice.

Prasad gave an elaboration of how Parties are looking at equity differently. He said that some are articulating equity in terms of the process by saying that adequate participation from developing countries is a manifestation of equity. There are others who are looking at equity in terms of outcomes: if developed countries are sharing greater responsibilities than developing countries, then it is the outcomes and actions which represent an equitable kind of end result in the process. Then there is the aspect of equity in terms of the outcome for individuals in different parts of the world, especially looking at per capita emissions and different consumption patterns. So, equity means different things to different people, and therefore, it is important in this process to talk in the same language and understand the same thing, Prasad said, emphasising equity-oriented outcomes in terms of actions and results for individuals.

The Indian delegate also drew attention to different studies highlighting correlations between energy consumption and growth, and correlations between the human development index and development, emphasising that the focus of countries which are not yet developed is therefore on trying to achieve those goals, which are essential for them to provide basic amenities to their citizens. Hence, whatever climate action or support is being discussed in the UNFCCC process needs to be based on these realities being faced by developing countries, he said.

He added that equitable actions would translate as greater actions by developed countries in terms of both mitigation and the provision of support. On the other hand, when looking at what developing countries are required to do, they have to also address the issues of sustainable development, poverty eradication, provision of energy access, health for all and all limiting factors that they want to overcome. It is in this context that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) has been anchored in both the Convention and the PA, he emphasised further.

Prasad said that there has been a lack of ambition and undermining of equity by developed countries when looking at the pre-2020 period, since there was a requirement for them to enhance their ambition both on mitigation as well as on support to developing countries. He stressed on the historical emissions and historical responsibility of developed countries which translate into a historical debt owed by developed countries. He also said that developing countries are doing their share in terms of increasing ambition with regard to their nationally appropriate mitigation actions in the pre-2020 period as well as their nationally determined contributions which are no less ambitious than those of any developed country. He said that this is therefore the context to realise the concept of equity.

He concluded that all pre-2020 commitments by developed countries must be completed by 2023 by carrying them forward because any pre-2020 gap will be a burden for the rest of the world. He also stressed that the raising of ambition is for the here and now and cannot be delayed for the PA to kick in late in 2021.

Raman said equity was central to climate ambition, recalling its long history from when the Convention was born in 1992 premised upon the fundamental principle of equity and CBDR. Parties have a common responsibility for addressing climate change but how it is to be done needs to be differentiated between the developed and developing countries, given that the former became rich in an unconstrained carbon world, with historical emissions since the industrial revolution and the huge consumption of natural resources since then.

She stressed that the CBDR principle was heavily negotiated in Paris and was finally anchored in Article 2.2 of the PA. However, attempts were being made by developed countries to water it down by changing to a principle of common and shared responsibility, thus diluting the difference between the developed and developing countries. This was unacceptable, she said, since both worlds were not at the same starting point.

Raman said that an ambitious and equitable outcome in Katowice must be premised upon climate justice as defined by CBDR and equity, and expressed deep concern about attempts by developed countries to shift responsibilities to the developing countries, which she said were immoral and unethical. ◆

Prerna Bomzan is a researcher with the Third World Network.

COVER

COP 24: An Indigenous Peoples' view

Indigenous Peoples from around the world, including tribal nations and organisations whose traditional lands are within the current boundaries of the United States, participated in the Katowice climate change conference. *Andrea Carmen,* who wrote the following piece, attended the conference as Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council.

Andrea Carmen/www.culturalsurvival.org

Indigenous Peoples and State representatives at COP 24 celebrate agreement on the final text regarding the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

'I FEAR for my future. I fear for my community.' These words were spoken by Ryan Schaefer, a 17-year-old from the Dene Nation in Canada, during the first meeting of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus at COP 24. He shared the reality of diminishing traditional food and water sources and disturbing weather changes that are affecting his Peoples.

'Indigenous youth of the world stand before you today to affirm that we share his fears for our future,' stated the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change opening plenary statement at COP 24, presented on 2 December by Ruth Kaviok from the National Inuit Youth Council of Canada.

It was close to midnight on 15 December when the President's gavel came down for a final time, concluding two weeks of intense debate at the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 24) in Katowice, Poland.

Indigenous Peoples from around the world, including Tribal Nations and organisations whose traditional lands are within the current political boundaries of the United States, participated. Except for a few Indigenous representatives who were credentialled by States, most were designated as 'observers' in this UN process, which is led and controlled by the 'State Parties', the 195 countries that signed on to the Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 at COP 21. Despite this power imbalance within the UNFCCC (and, by and large, the entire UN system), the over 100 Indigenous delegates representing all regions of the world stood united to insist on formal participation in this process that impacts us so directly and to ensure that our rights and traditional knowledge are respected in national and global efforts to combat climate change.

In Katowice the Indigenous Peoples Caucus at the UNFCCC, known as the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), met in a weekend preparatory meeting, and met at least once a day during the COP to discuss strategies and reaffirm our collective positions in the face of new developments and State proposals.

Indigenous Peoples began the session by calling on States to meet their commitments to reduce emissions and reverse their fatal addiction to fossil fuel energy development, which is the primary source of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. The IIPFCC opening statement referenced the recent UN study which reported that emissions increased in the last year with a projected 3°C rise at the current rate, which will mean 2 to 3 times higher in the Arctic. The statement admonished the States for their lack of real action: 'Having committed to the Paris Agreement but ignoring the actions it demands is a failure of all States.'

The most significant and positive victory for Indigenous Peoples at COP 24 was the formal establishment of the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) to develop a workplan for the 'Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform'. The Platform is intended to strengthen and exchange traditional knowledge for mitigating and adapting to climate change, based on operative paragraph 135 of the Paris Agreement. Difficult issues under debate over the past three years and up until the final negotiating session in Katowice included equal participation between States and Indigenous Peoples in the FWG; protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge in this process; the definition and identity of 'Local Communities'; and the concerns of some States that their 'territorial integrity' might somehow be impacted in these discussions regarding traditional knowledge and climate change.

Throughout the negotiations, Indigenous Peoples, accompanied by key State allies, held firm on the core issues of rights protection and equal participation. The final resolution adopted unanimously by the COP 24 plenary on 8 December reflected this unwavering commitment, emphasising, 'in its entirety, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of the implementation of the functions of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform involving Indigenous Peoples'. It also established the FWG with an equal number of Indigenous and State representatives, sev-

Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/11dec.html)

Demonstration by Indigenous Peoples' representatives at COP 24 calling for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to be included in the Paris Agreement rulebook.

en each. Additional places will be held open for the future participation of 'Local Communities' when they are better defined and decide to become engaged.

In an historic advance for Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in decision making as affirmed in Article 18 of the UN Declaration, this is the first time that a UN body will provide for direct and equal participation, contrasting with how Indigenous Peoples' participation has been organised in other UN bodies. For example, final selection of the eight Indigenous experts on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is done by the President of the UN Economic and Social Council. Likewise, the members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can be nominated by Indigenous Peoples but are selected by the President of the UN Human Rights Council.

After the adoption of the resolution, many State representatives made statements recognising the historic advance this decision represented. For example, Majid Shafiepour from Iran, Vice President of the COP and Co-facilitator of the COP's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), welcomed the adoption and recognised the hard work it took to reach an agreement between the State Parties and Indigenous Peoples.

'You have set an example of partnership through this process, working together in intense negotiations, overcoming many challenges and difficulties over the last three years to find common ground and successful conclusion at this COP,' Shafiepour said.

The FWG will begin its work in 2019. Priorities will include development of a workplan and structure for the Platform, adoption of rights safeguards to protect traditional knowledge and practices, and development of a budget to ensure support for the participation of Indigenous traditional knowledge holders and practitioners if they so choose. At least one activity for the Platform itself is planned for 2019. Possible discussion themes proposed by Indigenous Peoples include oceans, land and water, food sovereignty and forests reflecting key eco- and knowledge systems impacted by climate change.

Despite the mood of celebration for Indigenous Peoples at COP 24 after the adoption of the Platform decision, there were some serious disappointments as well. Another key priority for Indigenous Peoples was the inclusion of human rights and rights of indigenous peoples in the 'Paris rulebook' which had to be adopted at COP 24 to determine the framework and guidelines for implementing the Paris Agreement. Unlike with the negotiating sessions that were held throughout the first week for States and Indigenous Peoples to engage on the Platform decision text, Indigenous Peoples had very little opportunity to participate directly in the development of the rulebook.

Strategy meetings and side discussions were held with human rights organisations, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and States during the sessions to discuss how to pressure States to include strong human and Indigenous rights language. But the rulebook was finally adopted by consensus with seven references using the terms 'Indigenous' or 'Indigenous Peoples' (including a footnote recognising the adoption of the new Platform) but making no specific references to human rights or the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Disappointingly, several references to human rights in the President's draft going into the COP were removed in the negotiations that took place among the States during the COP. The final adopted text called on States to develop and report on their 'Voluntary National Contributions' to reduce climate change with the input of Indigenous Peoples 'as appropriate', far weaker than assurance of full and effective participation as called for by Indigenous Peoples.

Frank Ettawageshik from Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians in Michigan represented the National Congress of American Indians at COP 24. He expressed the mixed reactions of Indigenous Peoples regarding the outcomes. 'We are gratified that an important milestone was reached in the formation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform and we express our appreciation to Indigenous Peoples and States from all the regions who worked so hard for this achievement,' Ettawageshik said.

'It is especially important that Indigenous Peoples from each region, using their own procedures, will select their representative on the Facilitative Work Group which will draw up the work plan for the Platform. But we are extremely disappointed that the commitment in the Paris Agreement Preamble that in all climate actions, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and human rights generally are to be respected and promoted, got lost in the adoption of the Paris rulebook in Katowice. The references to rights were consciously removed. This shows that we still have a lot of work to do … to explain the importance of a rights-based approach for addressing climate change. We will continue to raise these issues at COP 25 in Chile, and beyond.'

IPCC report

Indigenous Peoples, especially those from the US, took note that the United States government delegation was highly engaged in the discussions and decision-making at COP 24, despite the US President's declaration in 2017 that the US intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

Although the US was supportive during the Platform negotiations, they were one of only four States that took the floor during the final plenary of the first week to oppose acknowledging the dire warning of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 'Global Warming of 1.5ºC' report and its call for immediate, decisive action by States to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The IPCC had been invited by the Paris decision to issue a report on the effects of a 1.5ºC increase in global temperatures over pre-industrial levels. It released its report in October 2018, confirming the critical need to maintain the strongest commitment to the Paris Agreement's aims of limiting global warming to well below 2ºC and pursuing efforts towards 1.5ºC. The report detailed the devastating effects an increase would have on ecosystems, health, food security and the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples around the world.

Most States agreed that the COP should adopt language 'welcoming' the report as a basis for global climate action. However, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait stated their firm opposition to this, preferring to merely 'take note' of the report. The language finally agreed upon was 'expresses its appreciation and gratitude' to the IPCC for providing the report. Many States took the floor to express their outrage at the US and the other States that refused to acknowledge the urgency of taking dramatic action to bring the rate of global warming under control. Indigenous Peoples also restated their firm support for a 1.5ºC maximum goal in their closing statement to the plenary.

In the Indigenous Peoples Caucus closing plenary statement, Michael Charles, a youth delegate from the Dine' Nation in the US, began by introducing himself traditionally in the Dine' language. 'We are deeply disappointed to see the language of human rights missing from the outcome of the rulebook text,' Charles said, addressing both the advances and shortfalls of COP 24. 'We believe that a rights-based approach is necessary to guide an implementation that protects us. This text is incomplete without human rights, and specifically Indigenous rights. We do appreciate the commitment of the parties, the SBSTA chair, and the UNFCCC Secretariat to the operationalisation of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. We will now embark on a process to breathe life into the Platform using our resilience, knowledge and rights with equal representation between States and Indigenous Peoples.' ◆

With thanks to Kim Gottschalk (Native American Rights Fund) and Frank Ettawageshik (National Congress of American Indians) for their assistance in the development of this article, and to all the members of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus at COP 24 for their dedication, hard work and commitment to their Peoples, future generations and Mother Earth.

Andrea Carmen is Executive Director of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). Since 2010, she has been one of two members from the North America region on the Indigenous Peoples Global Steering Committee for the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change which coordinates Indigenous Peoples' work at the UNFCCC. She attended COP 24 as a representative of IITC. The above article is reproduced from the Cultural Survival website (www.culturalsurvival.org).

Remembering a champion of climate justice

As the Katowice climate talks were ongoing, news came through that veteran climate negotiator Bernarditas Mueller had passed away in Geneva on 14 December 2018. Mueller, or Ditas as she was fondly known, had represented her country the Philippines and developing countries in various capacities in the UN climate negotiations over the years. The following is the text of a eulogy delivered at her funeral on 21 December by *Vice Yu* of the South Centre, the intergovernmental developing-country think-tank where Ditas had served as Special Adviser on Climate Change.

Bernarditas Mueller, or fondly known as Ditas.

THANK you, Vera, Mr. Mueller, for inviting me to be here to represent Ditas's other family, her climate change family, and to say a few words about that aspect of her life.

Ditas was well known and well loved in the climate change negotiations. She will be deeply missed; yet her spirit, strength, determination and commitment continue to live on in those of us, like myself, that had the fortune to have been taught by and to have learnt from her and her work.

Many of us met Ditas in the course of our work in the climate change negotiations. I remember the first time I sat down with her at the South Centre to learn about the Convention 11 years ago … what was supposed to be a one-hour meeting in the beginning of the afternoon stretched to the entire afternoon! Even after that, since then, I have continued to learn from her.

If there is one lesson about climate change and international cooperation that was at the heart of what Ditas taught us, it is that we are all interdependent, and that such interdependence carries with it common but differentiated responsibilities for our actions.

But let me now read out to you how others in our climate change family knew and loved Ditas:

Ditas was always very proud of having been, for a very long time, the voice of the Philippines in the climate change negotiations. She was also very happy to have also had the privilege and honour of representing other developing countries like Bolivia and Sudan in the climate change negotiations.

In the Philippines' official closing statement on 15 December at the climate change conference in Poland, the Philippines said this of Ditas:

'Ditas was once described by *The Guardian* in an article as the dragon lady of the climate negotiations. For others, she was the fearless warrior for developing countries. But we were always awed by this magnificent woman, dressed in the colours of Europe and Asia, pulling everywhere her roll-on luggage full of COP decisions, recalling every article of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, always speaking impeccable and grammatically correct English. Above all, we remember her passion for people and planet, for climate justice. We remember Ditas for her generosity, especially in mentoring young Filipino and developing country negotiators. With her passing the Philippines has lost a dear colleague, developing countries lost a champion of their interests, and the world lost a great citizen.'

Another colleague, Martin Khor of Malaysia, who had taken Ditas on as our special adviser on climate change when he was the Executive Director of the South Centre, wrote of Ditas:

'Never have we known someone so totally deeply committed, indeed so fully in love with the Convention, with its faithful interpretation and implementation, with the rights and interests of the developing countries that she came to symbolise so much, for the climate, for Mother Earth and for the people of the world, South or North, East or West, old or young.

'Those are her finest legacies to us … the formidable spirit of defending the Convention and what is right, the spirit of taking part despite difficulties and pain, the generosity of sharing, the love for her friends. And in the climate change negotiations, the need for developing countries to unite positions and to put text on the table.'

Photo by IISD/Kiara Worth (enb.iisd.org/climate/cop24/enb/15dec.html)

COP 24 delegates remembering Ditas after learning of her passing.

What motivated Ditas to be so passionate and committed to the climate change negotiations?

Ditas once said, in an article in *The Guardian* nine years ago, that climate change is the most complex and satisfying of all the diplomacy she has done because there is so much at stake. Get it right, she said, and the world has the chance to both halt catastrophic climate change and find a better path to develop. Get it wrong and all the injustices and disadvantages that developing countries now face will be magnified 1,000 times in the coming years. She said that 'I am not working for developing countries but for our children's children and what we will leave the world.'

Clearly, Ditas not only loved the negotiations and regaled us with stories of negotiations past; she even more so loved her family, and would regale us with stories of the antics and affection of her grandchildren. For her, her work in the climate negotiations was all about leaving behind a better world for her grandchildren to grow up in.

I think the words of Omar El Arini of Egypt, another of Ditas's contemporaries and who worked hand in hand with her in creating the Green Climate Fund several years ago, can speak for us all:

'The legacy left to the world by the ancient Egyptians was the idea of the immortality of the soul. Ditas's soul will be immortalised in the so many whose spirits she revived, whose courage she inspired and whose self-esteem and dignity she personified.

'Indeed, if Mother Earth were to be renamed, the new name would be Ditas; if it were to have a future, the path to it must be Ditas's path, armed with encyclopaedic knowledge of issues and indefatigable determination, iron will manifested with exemplary integrity, zeal for justice and enduring compassion for the poor, and indomitable faith in the sanctity of humanity.

'Ditas has been, and always will be, a tributary of the River of Light, which in the words of the poet Gibran Khalil Gibran "flows from eternity to eternity". May she illuminate the darkness of our world. We belong to God, and into His fold is our final return.'

As we say our goodbyes to Ditas and she returns to the fold of God, permit me to share with you this poem from Zaheer Fakir from South Africa, with whom Ditas worked on climate finance issues and who was a Chair of the Green Climate Fund Board:

In Loving Memory of Our Ditas!

You never said you were leaving us
You never said goodbye
You were gone before we knew it
And only God knew why

A million times we needed you
A million times we'll cry
If love alone could save you
You would never have died

In life we all loved you dearly
In death we love you still
In our hearts you hold a place
That no one could ever fill.

It breaks our heart to lose you
But you did not go alone
A part of us goes with you
The day God took you home.

Goodbye Ditas. Amen. ◆

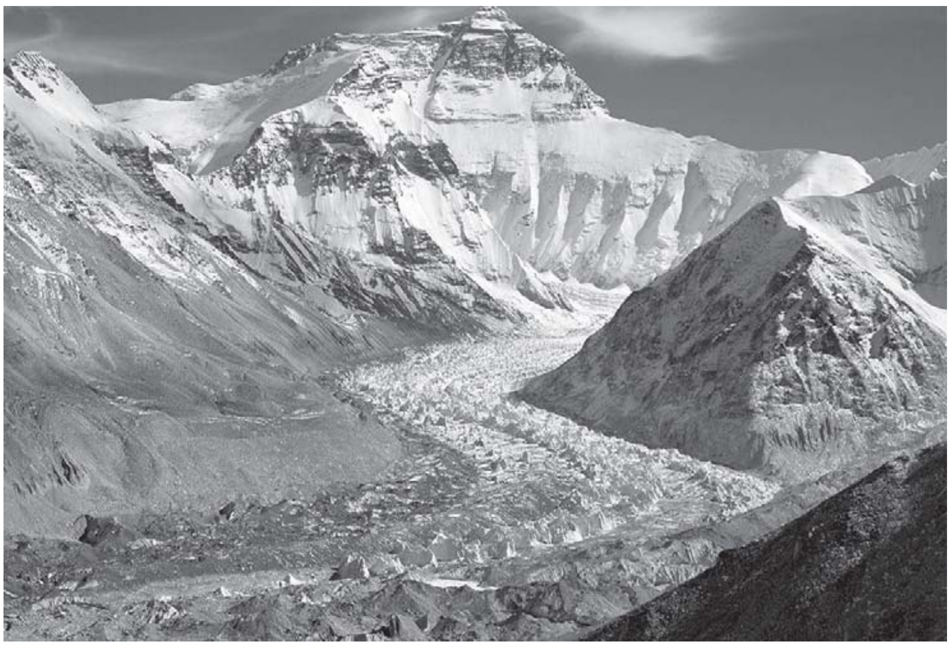
'With her passing the Philippines has lost a dear colleague, developing countries lost a champion of their interests, and the world lost a great citizen.'

Landmark report on Himalayan mountains raises dire climate change warnings

A new report on the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, which forms the origin of 10 major river basins and sustains the livelihood of 240 million people, warns that global warming will have detrimental effects on the timing and magnitude of streamflows and hence water supplies in the region. *Prerna Bomzan* elaborates.

A LANDMARK assessment report on the Hindu Kush Himalaya mountains released in February contains gravely alarming findings.

The report, entitled *The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People*, covers the eight countries in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.



Glacier volumes in the Hindu Kush Himalaya mountains are projected to decline by up to 90% through the 21st century.

The assessment report is the first flagship publication of the Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP), an initiative coordinated by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a regional intergovernmental organisation of the eight HKH countries based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

According to the report, the HKH is regarded as 'a critically important geo-ecological asset' and forms the origin of 10 major river basins (Amu Darya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Tarim, Yangtze, Yellow River). The region provides ecosystem services that directly sustain the livelihoods of 240 million people in the mountains and hills. Its resources directly and indirectly benefit almost 1.9 billion people living in the 10 river basins, with more than 3 billion people dependent on food produced in the river basins.

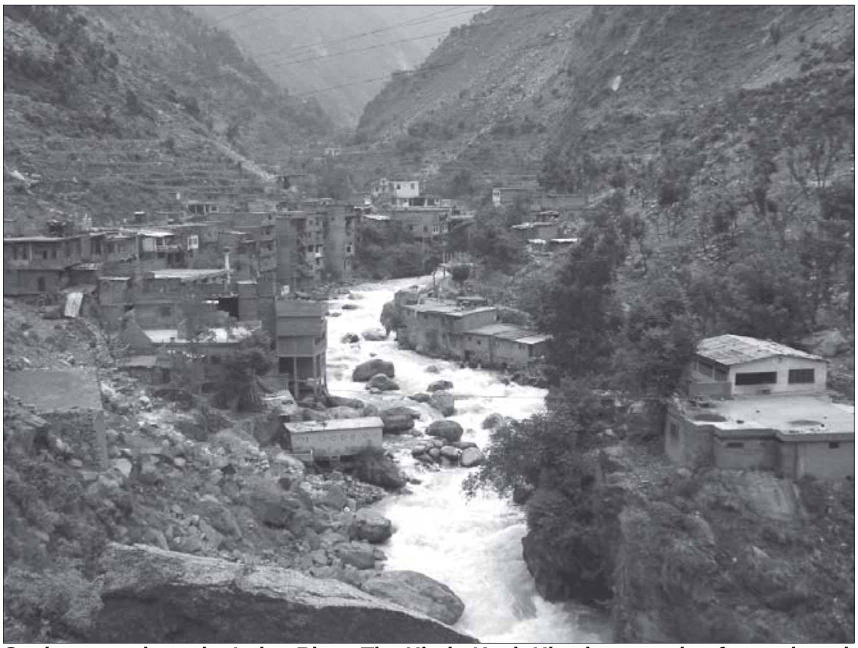
Significant warming

The report warns of significant warming in the region – greater than the global average – with a projected temperature change of 2.5 ± 1.5°C for the moderate scenario, and 5.5 ± 1.5°C for the more extreme scenario, by the end of the century.

It reveals that 'glacier volumes are projected to decline by up to 90% through the 21st century', and states that 'even if warming can be limited to the ambitious target of 1.5°C, volume losses of more than one-third are projected for extended HKH glaciers, with more than half of glacier ice lost in the eastern Himalaya'.

It states further that the observed and projected changes in the cryosphere (snow, ice and permafrost) – a key freshwater resource – will have detrimental effect on the timing and magnitude of streamflows and hence water supply in the region. The massive decline in glacier volumes is a result of decreased snowfall, increased snowline elevations and longer melt seasons.

'More than half the basins in the extended HKH are expected to have reduced glacier melt contributions by 2100,' which would mean a direct bearing on both the ecology and economy of the region as 'industry, agriculture and hydroelectric power gen-


ICIMOD

Settlements along the Indus River. The Hindu Kush Himalayan region forms the origin of the Indus and nine other major river basins.

eration rely on timely and sufficient delivery of water in major river systems', says the report.

The impacts of climate change are recognised in the majority of the key findings, such as increased biodiversity loss, food and nutrition insecurity, rural-to-urban migration, and vulnerability of mountain livelihoods and, ultimately, of mountain sustainability in the HKH region.

The report reveals that 'changes in the cryospheric system may also pose challenges for disaster risk reduction in the extended HKH region', given the projected higher risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). Of 8,790 glacial lakes covering a total of 801.83 sq km in the HKH, 203 lakes are potentially dangerous in terms of posing a future GLOF threat.

With regard to the estimated cost of adaptation to climate change, the assessment says the region would require \$3.2 billion to \$4.6 billion per year by 2030, increasing to \$5.5 billion to \$7.8 billion per year by 2050.

The extended HKH region defined by the comprehensive study covers the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau-Pamir mountains as well as the Tien Shan ranges. The region is the largest area of permanent ice cover outside of the North and South Poles and is thus often referred to as the 'Third Pole'. It is home to four global biodiversity hotspots, 330 important bird areas and hundreds of mountain peaks over 6,000 m.

The per capita fossil fuel CO2 emission from the HKH is one-sixth of the global average, but the region 'immensely suffers from the impact of climate change', underlines the report.

'The HKH is sensitive to climate change – air pollutants originating within and near the HKH amplify the effects of greenhouse gases and accelerate the melting of the cryosphere through deposition of black carbon and dust, the circulation of the monsoon, and the distribution of rainfall over Asia.'

Important knowledge source

The assessment report aims to: (i) establish the global significance of the HKH; (ii) reduce scientific uncertainty on various mountain issues; (iii) lay out practical and up-to-date solutions and offer new insights for development of this region; (iv) value and conserve existing ecosystems, cultures, societies, knowledge and distinctive HKH solutions that are important to the rest of the world; (v) address contemporary policy questions; and (vi) influence policy processes with robust evidence for sustainable mountain development.

'Global assessments and programmes like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) can now benefit from an important knowledge source about this region,' writes ICIMOD Director General David Molden in the report's foreword.

The report states: 'In spite of the vast expanse of mountains and their importance in the world, as a unique and exclusive land form, they have been largely ignored within better known environmental assessments such as the IPCC and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. In those assessments, mountains are not examined in detail: scientific knowledge is scattered and traditional indigenous knowledge systems are mostly absent. This assessment intends to fill these gaps and provide information for improved decision making in and for the HKH.'

The assessment, which 'focuses on various drivers of change all of which are influenced by impacts of climate change', states that 'mountain people and ecosystems tend to experience change more rapidly and with greater intensity. Mountain regions are no longer isolated from globalisation. The HKH's biodiverse resources, rich indigenous knowledge systems, and enormous reservoirs of water provide vibrancy to the region and beyond. Understanding how these features may change over time is extremely important.'

The report comprises 16 chapters that consider status, trends and scenarios on environmental, economic and social systems of the HKH region, and comes up with recommendations that build into key policy messages.

More than 300 researchers, practitioners, experts and policy makers were engaged for this assessment.

The report is available at https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-319-92288-1.pdf ◆

Reclaiming control of Indonesia's oceans

Indonesia, a country with more than 17,500 islands straddling two oceans, is confronted with the problems of the ocean fast becoming neoliberalism's last frontier. Indonesian activists are helping to build a global movement to resist the financialisation and privatisation of the world's oceans.

Salena Tramel

Small-scale fishers in Indonesia. 'Policies on marine issues cannot be addressed in the absence of fishing communities who have direct linkages to the ocean.'

INDONESIA, the largest archipelago in the world, holds some stunning coastal and deep-water resources. For a country with more than 17,500 islands straddling two oceans, the sea is not only a way of life, but also a source of it.

Fisheries account for a significant part of Indonesia's trillion-dollar economy, the largest in South-East Asia. More than 30% of global maritime trade finds its way through the Strait of Malacca, which is among the busiest of international shipping lanes. Tourist havens are seemingly everywhere, from the palm-fringed beaches of Bali to the abundant shallow-water reefs of the Coral Triangle.

Managing marine ecosystems is therefore an unsurprising priority for the vast number of actors that have a stake in Indonesia's coastal economy. At once unexplored and overexploited, the oceans represent neoliberal development's final frontier. The twin processes of ocean acidification and global warming, and related international political responses further complicate matters.

New analysis was recently published in the journal *Science* indicating that oceans are heating up 40% faster than a United Nations panel of experts predicted in a study carried out five years ago. The study further concluded that in 2018, seawater temperatures reached an all-time high and were expected to escalate further in the coming years. These studies mirror those on land, where combined data from the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) show that the five hottest years ever have occurred in the 2010s.

For many, marine ecosystem management, fisheries management and climate change mitigation strategy are embodied in a redoubled commitment to the blue economy – the idea that the financialisation of oceans can reap economic profit and save the environment at once.

But what kind of development does the blue economy seek, and for whom? In Indonesia, small-scale fishers and their communities are holding fast to various manifestations of traditional knowledge that they see as key to ensuring the survival of the seas and of future generations.

The Indonesian islands have long been at the forefront of oceanic policy and development discourse, in large part because of their sheer number and strategic location. One such high-level process held recently was the Our Ocean conference, which took place in late October in Bali. The meeting brought together a large number of powerful actors to debate some of the most pressing oceanic issues: climate change, fisheries, the blue economy, pollution, maritime security and marine protected areas.

As is the case in many top decision-making spaces, representatives of governments, corporations and intergovernmental institutions were given a seat at the table. Notably absent, however, were those closest to the sea – fishers.

Marthin Hadiwinata, Chief Executive of the Indonesia Traditional Fisherfolk's Union (KNTI), said: 'Policies on marine issues cannot be addressed in the absence of fishing communities who have direct linkages to the ocean.'

Hadiwinata explained that the issue of marine pollution, for instance, most deeply affects people living around the coastal areas and small islands. 'Rather than inviting fishers to share their solutions,' he added, 'companies who are involved in mining and other forms of extractive industry that dump their waste into the sea are regarded as corporate partners in cleaning up dirty waters.'

Blue Carbon

Likewise, climate change mitigation and adaptation projects often turn to the problems that caused the environmental crisis in the first place as a way of responding to it. Take, for example, Blue Carbon, where, as with other carbon sequestration programmes such as REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation), polluters are allowed to continue their practices so long as they purchase 'offsets' in ecosystems elsewhere.

Most often, the burden falls on the shoulders of peasant and indigenous rural working communities, converting their crops and gathering spaces into monocultures such as industrial tree plantations.

Blue Carbon applies this logic to mangrove, coral and seagrass ecosystems, while small-scale fishers who work in these areas are treated as nuisances and prohibited from future access to their fishing grounds.

Blue Carbon has been championed in high-level policy spaces such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes, as well as through 'big green' organisations like The Nature Conservancy. It is currently being pioneered in Indonesia.

Indonesian social movements and grassroots organisations have long been in the business of carefully protecting the islands' cornucopia of natural resources. In the rapidly evolving marine sector, fishers are forced to be quick on their feet when putting their solutions on the national agenda.

KNTI, the small-scale fishers' movement that is present in nearly all of Indonesia's 34 provinces, is playing a leadership role in turning the tide of both discourse and policy towards justice and sovereignty for fishers. This task is done at scale, targeting national and transnational political dynamics.

When word of the Our Ocean conference and its lack of grassroots representation reached KNTI's members, they were quick to clap back by organising their own participatory meeting: the Ocean's People Conference. Unlike its 'official' counterpart, the parallel meeting reflected the diversity of Indonesia's small-scale fisheries sector.

The gathering strategically took place in Jakarta – not just to make it more accessible, but also to shed light on marine mega-projects encroaching on the busy capital. The most notorious of these has been a land reclamation project supported by Indonesia's former colonisers, the Dutch.

This project has been centred on protecting Jakarta from floods by installing a network of fake islands and a giant seawall in Jakarta Bay. While the Governor of Jakarta finally revoked some of the permits necessary to complete the project – thanks, in large part, to a strategic battle fought at the hands of social movements like KNTI – much of the damage has been done.

Ipah Saripah, a fishworker from North Jakarta, explained that the reclamation issue has profoundly impacted her family's livelihood. 'Even though the reclamation stopped, they've already constructed four islands,' she said, 'and that development is right in the middle of our fishing areas.'

'We have been bribed, intimidated, displaced and even tortured to make way for this reclamation,' she added.

Saripah and other activists from the fishing communities feel that big reclamation projects like the one stalled in Jakarta Bay serve as a blueprint for coastal development in Indonesia. Similar mega-projects are being rolled out in other parts of the country, and they are woven together with the common thread of replacing traditional fishing practices with profit-seeking industries backed by big Asian and European capital.

That's what the Ocean's People Conference and related gatherings of people's movements are attempting to shut down. Ibu Rofi'ah, a representative of a peasant organisation in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia's southernmost province, said: 'We are not looking for money, but for means to spread our knowledge.'

Ibu Rofi'ah travelled to Jakarta to explain how she played a leadership role when her community put an end to an iron-mining operation. Today she is working with fisheries cooperatives that find themselves in standoffs with corporations in the mining and tourism sectors.

Members of KNTI recognise that their struggles reflect those of fishing communities elsewhere. To this end, the movement is an active member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), a transnational social justice movement dedicated to serving the unique needs of fishers and fishworkers.

Since the issues affecting fishers have become increasingly entangled – for instance, when climate change adaptation policies meet big capital – WFFP has doubled down on its attack strategies to protect the communities it represents.

A key part of that is actively promoting the Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines, which is the only comprehensive global governance instrument intended to protect fishers and traditional fisheries. KNTI has been doing this work across Indonesia, and making its demands global through social movement gatherings and even United Nations processes.

Marthin Hadiwinata said: 'Here in Indonesia, we are pushing the government to immediately recognise and protect fishers' rights. And at the same time, we are building the global movement to resist financialisation and privatisation of the world's oceans.' ◆

Salena Tramel is a journalist and PhD researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, where her work is centred on the intersections of resource grabs, climate change mitigation, and the intertwining of (trans)national agrarian/social justice movements. This article is reproduced from the Ecologist website (theecologist.org).

COVER

Climate change in Africa: Is my house on fire?

A South African writer reflects on some of the problems of combatting climate change in Africa.

Sindi-Leigh McBride

SIXTEEN-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg first grabbed the local spotlight in August 2018 after skipping school to stage 'school strikes for the climate', protesting in front of the Swedish parliament. Global attention followed in December after a fiery speech at COP 24, the UN climate talks in Poland, and peaked at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January.

Her speech in Davos proclaimed, 'Our house is on fire,' silencing a room of global leaders as she demanded that economists tackle global warming by panicking, stressing that 'the climate crisis has never once been treated as a crisis'. The evidence of this crisis, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is that we are less than 12 years away from being able to undo environmental mistakes.

Much of the research on climate change in Africa is conducted and funded by non-Africans.

According to Thunberg, 'no other current challenge can match the importance of establishing a wide, public awareness and understanding of our rapidly disappearing carbon budget, that should and must become our new global currency and the very heart of our future and present economics.'

That is quite an economically sophisticated assertion and had me scurrying to suss out the situation in my own country South Africa's economic planning for climate change.

The South African government recently introduced new legislation in response to the rapid climate risks heightened by large emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs). The Carbon Tax Act becomes effective on 1 June 2019, applies over and above the corporate income tax, and imposes a carbon tax on entities emitting GHGs above a permissible limit. The bill isn't perfect, but it is a start.

When I mentioned the Carbon Tax Act to South African comedian Loyiso Gola, he replied, 'McBride, does the state even have the capacity to enforce something like this?' I was pleased to inform him of a landmark ruling, dubbed 'SA's first climate change court case'. In summary, in 2017 Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (ELA) successfully challenged the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and Thabametsi Power Company after Thabametsi had been selected as one of two 'preferred bidders' in the first bidding round of the government's plan to support the construction of several privately owned coal-fired power stations, known as the Coal Baseload Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (CBIPPPP). ELA challenged the 'environmental authorisation' given to Thabametsi by the DEA allowing the company to build a power station without adequately considering the climate change impacts that this project will have.

This was the first time South Africa's courts have had to decide on a case like this, and the implications are promising. For one, proper consideration of GHG emissions and other environmental risks (like impacts on scarce water resources) is becoming entrenched. The ruling has already led to closer scrutiny of the CBIPPPP specifications, subsequently revealed to be GHG emission-inefficient. In other words, meaningful reduction of GHG emissions by these new power plants is largely unfeasible.

I wouldn't have been paying attention to any of this before spotting Thunberg's speech on social media. As striking as her passionate call to stop GHG emissions was her request for everyone with insight into this crisis to 'speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be'. A quick inventory revealed that my own insights seemed sorely sparse, and that's when my journalistic jaunt to learn about climate change began in earnest.

I now know that last year the DEA published a document outlining the national position on climate change. In the same month, two South African activists won a prestigious environmental honour for exposing the government's 'secret and corrupt' nuclear energy deal. Makoma Lekalakala (director of ELA) and Liz McDaid (from the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute) were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for their work uncovering the state's unlawful nuclear energy deal with Russia. The prize is awarded every year to six individuals spanning six continents for their grassroots environmental activism.

I also know that, like many issues in South Africa, environmental activism is beleaguered by race relations. This is explained by the 'green ceiling' or lack of transformation and workforce diversity in mainstream environmental organisations; and common misconceptions about environmental activism as a 'whites-only issue' since black South Africans champion issues like labour conditions and socio-economic equality in more demonstrative ways. The polarisation of environmental and social activism in South Africa is an interesting prism for reflecting on the difficulty of balancing tangible solutions (social justice) with relatively esoteric goals (mitigating against scientific estimates on more complicated spatio-temporal scales).

Surprisingly though, what I can't get a handle on is climate change in the rest of Africa. I know that developing regions dependent on rain-fed agriculture and coastal livelihoods are disproportionately vulnerable, so references to Africa as contributing least to but affected most by climate change have become a spurious truism.

What I didn't know was that research into climate change in Africa is skewed towards countries that: a) are former British colonies, b) have stronger protections for civil liberties, and c) have more stable political institutions. In a perfect example of the 'streetlight effect' – a drunk loses his keys in the park but looks for them under a streetlight because that's where it's easier to see – international scholars are going to the countries that are most convenient for them to visit and study. As a result, as much is known about Kenya and South Africa (combined population: 99 million) as 29 other African countries (combined population: 280 million). This is explained by underfunded African education systems resulting in African climate change research being conducted and funded by non-Africans, vulnerable to the biases of those researchers and their funding agencies.

Proposed solutions include funders pursuing grant proposals in non-Anglophone African countries and those that are less politically open; or funding English translations of African academic outputs. One article asks, 'What if we talk about this hurtling climate devastation just to share the burden of that heavy knowledge?' In this regard, the importance of indigenous activism on climate change in Africa cannot be stressed enough: their projects and advocacy should be integrated into academia, activism and news media to better inform public discourse.

Despite being increasingly recognised as a critical issue in human history, climate change is paradoxically difficult for us to communicate. Generating conversations that suggest urgency and inspire change is not an easy task, beleaguered as we are by emotions that we are only now formulating into words. Like the emerging condition of eco-anxiety, defined as the dread that attends 'watching the slow and seemingly irrevocable impacts of climate change unfold, and worrying about the future for oneself, children, and later generations'.

This is surely the visceral vein that Thunberg wants to needle: some of us, in our safe spaces and temperate climates, are fortunate to enjoy the (temporary) luxury of contemplating climate change intellectually without confronting it materially. But 'climate change can seem abstract even in the middle of a hurricane'. Fully confronting the immensity of it demands a total package of emotion evocation – apprehension, sorrow, shock, rage, compassion … and panic. Not tear-your-hair-out panic, but a perspective change for new experiments in pragmatism. Like a recent interplanetary assessment of possible outcomes for our planet under different scenarios,[1] which treats the climate crisis like the wars on cancer or poverty – less environmental wrong to be set right, more emerging source of risk in need of lifelong commitment girded by both urgency and patience.

Less galactically, but no less important or innovative, the BBC has issued formal guidance on how to report on climate change. That one of the world's largest and most respected news organisations is clarifying its stance, and expecting its journalists to stick to it, is not nothing. For many, journalists included, how climate-related events are interpreted and prioritised is influenced by a complex combination of beliefs and worldviews, personal experience and place, whether marine or mountain, urban or desert. Some people fear climate change, some deny it, some don't know what to believe and many don't want to talk about it at all. Understanding how social identities like race, class and gender shape climate change communication, as well as the different strategies used in climate change action, is increasingly important.

For instance, research into youth dissent as expressed through climate activism suggests three types of activism: dutiful, disruptive and dangerous dissent. Not all forms of dissent are equally challenging to the status quo and not all can be interpreted in a positive light. Some dissent arises from failed expectations and frustration and, without constructive outlets, is at risk of moving towards withdrawal, inaction or angry violence, in turn directed against other marginalised people, like migrants fleeing environmental degradation.

I understand now that what Thunberg referred to as 'a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people' is worse than a drought, flood or heatwave. It's not treating climate change like wildfire, and casually burning down the house in the process. ◆

Sindi-Leigh McBride is a researcher and writer based in Johannesburg, South Africa. This article is reproduced from TowardFreedom.org.

Notes

1. See Adam Frank, 'How do aliens solve climate change?', *The Atlantic*, 30 May 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/05/how-do-aliens-solve-climate-change/561479/

When the vessel is sinking

Climate change has become an undeniable truth and if the earth is, figuratively speaking, like a sinking vessel, it is because we have not paid any attention to any of the recommendations made during the last decade, says a former Director-General of UNESCO.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

Melting Arctic ice. Climate change has been recognised as one of the global threats that need to be dealt with before it is too late.

SUDDENLY– said Leonardo da Vinci – there are no poor and rich, no young and old, no white and black on board ... only a bunch of passengers toiling, working together to survive, to avoid a shipwreck.

This is the advice we should convey today through all media so that the 'peoples' become aware of the situation humanity is facing for the first time in history. In recent years a series of global threats have been recognised as potentially irreversible processes that need to be confronted and dealt with on time before it is too late.

Climate change has become an undeniable truth. The Arctic Ocean has nearly disappeared and the Antarctic is starting to crack. We have not succeeded in our effort to reduce the emissions of 'greenhouse' gases, and the habitability of Earth is experiencing a consistent deterioration. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – wisely established by the United Nations General Assembly in October 2015 'to transform our world' – has not been carried out because it is not efficiently supported by big countries, and citizens are under the pressure of the gigantic media power that makes them confused and turns them into impassive spectators instead of responsible actors.

Neoliberalism, stubbornly led by the United States Republican Party, has weakened the nation-state and replaced the democratic multilateralism of the United Nations with the governance of a few plutocratic, oligarchic groups (G6, G7, G8, G20) responsible for the current drift that has placed GDP and international trade in the forefront... together with President Trump's discretionary power which no one dares confront.

The most disturbing consequence is the way supremacism, racism, fanaticism and dogmatism are sprouting everywhere, without anyone seeming to recall what happened in 1933 and 1939. The vast majority of citizens are stunned and obsessed supporters of football teams, and are only concerned with their immediate past and their present life. Their demands – which are mainly based on the mistakes made by those who have ruled on one side and another – would be reasonable in less pressing situations, but they do not realise that today the young and future generations are the only ones who deserve our attention if we want to keep the world afloat and bequeath these generations a dignified life.

Despite the fact that there is reason to dream and fight for new ways of governance, that we are about to conquer at last what always seemed an impossible quest, the only true thing is that the time has come to join our hands and voices, instead of breaking up; the time has come for an efficient multilateralism on a planetary scale; the time for genuine democracy. Otherwise devastation will be the irremediable consequence.

The time has come for the mass media to convey accurate information about the Earth's sustainability and to alert the world, and to keep away from ill-meaning commercial and political news that urges them to do the opposite.

The time has come for major financial corporations to become aware that it is their historical responsibility, in situations of no return, to promote and encourage awareness instead of favouring confusion and overacting.

For peoples – 'We the peoples', as we were so wisely referred to at the beginning of the UN Charter – to take control, now that we are aware of what is going on and we can freely express ourselves, now that we have become men and women of a common destiny.

The vessel is sinking because we have not paid attention to any of the recommendations made during the last decades. As in da Vinci's tale, it is now essential and urgent for all of us to react, because we are all concerned; otherwise we will not succeed in our intent of keeping safe in all its fullness the mystery of human existence. 'Everything is still possible … but who will do it if not all of us?' said Miquel Martí i Pol.

I quote, because reading them was a crucial experience for me, the lines of José Ángel Valente's poem 'On the present time':

I am writing from a wrecked vessel,
I am writing about the latitude of pain,
about everything we have destroyed
above all within ourselves...
I am writing in the midst of the night,
in the midst of the roar of the hungry and the dead,
with the perspective of a hand that becomes a gloomy fist
...with the eyes of infinitely dead children
...with the pain of a tree with wounded roots...
But I also write in the midst of life,
with its powerful cry
...with the voice of the suffering crowd...
I am writing, my brother, about a time to come.

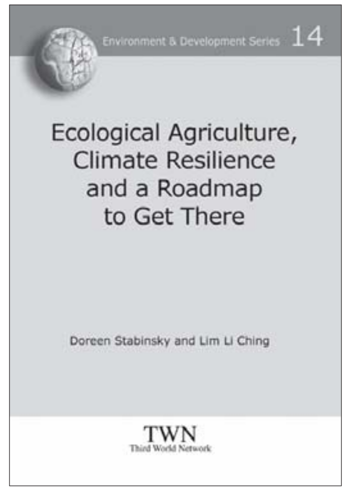
Let's find inspiration in Leonardo da Vinci, Miquel Martí i Pol and José Ángel Valente, and let's abandon all hostile attitudes against an adequate and peaceful navigation. In the new age, what will prevail will not be the power of force but rather the power of reason, not weapons but words, not herd instinct but the capacity of each human being to create, to think and to take his own decisions.

If we manage to keep the ship afloat with all passengers, humanity will have the opportunity to usher in a new era. ◆

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, a Spanish scientist, scholar, politician, diplomat and poet, is Chairman of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace. He served as Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) from 1987 to 1999. The above is reproduced from his blog (federicomayor-eng.blogspot.com).

Ecological Agriculture, Climate Resilience and a Roadmap to Get There

Doreen Stabinsky and Lim Li Ching



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THE phenomenon of climate change poses a serious threat to agricultural production and, therefore, to the lives and livelihoods of the hundreds of millions who are dependent on agriculture. Adaptation to the increased variability in weather patterns requires the adoption of ecological farming practices which are climate-resilient as well as productive.

This paper looks at how ecological agriculture, by building healthy soils, cultivating biological diversity and improving water harvesting and management, can strengthen farmers' capacity to adapt to climate change. Accordingly, the authors call for a reorientation of policy, funding and research priorities from the dominant industrial agriculture model to ecological agriculture. At the same time, recourse to carbon markets to finance adaptation efforts through trade in soil carbon credits is rejected as an unsustainable, wrong-headed approach to meeting the climate challenge.

Instead, facing the vagaries of climate change demands a concerted effort by governments, multilateral agencies, researchers and farmers to support the transition to ecological agriculture. Towards this end, this paper outlines a roadmap of measures for promoting truly climate-resilient farming systems.

The war on Venezuela is built on lies

A war has been declared on Venezuela, of which the truth is 'too difficult' to report, says award-winning journalist *John Pilger*.

TRAVELLING with Hugo Chavez, I soon understood the threat of Venezuela. At a farming cooperative in Lara state, people waited patiently and with good humour in the heat. Jugs of water and melon juice were passed around. A guitar was played; a woman, Katarina, stood and sang with a husky contralto.

'What did her words say?' I asked.

'That we are proud,' was the reply.

The applause for her merged with the arrival of Chavez. Under one arm he carried a satchel bursting with books. He wore his big red shirt and greeted people by name, stopping to listen. What struck me was his capacity to listen.

The then Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez greeting supporters. Chavez was electorally the most popular head of state in the Western Hemisphere, probably in the world.

But now he read. For almost two hours he read into the microphone from the stack of books beside him: Orwell, Dickens, Tolstoy, Zola, Hemingway, Chomsky, Neruda: a page here, a line or two there. People clapped and whistled as he moved from author to author.

Then farmers took the microphone and told him what they knew, and what they needed; one ancient face, carved it seemed from a nearby banyan, made a long, critical speech on the subject of irrigation; Chavez took notes.

Wine is grown here, a dark Syrah type grape. 'John, John, come up here,' said El Presidente, having watched me fall asleep in the heat and the depths of *Oliver Twist*.

'He likes red wine,' Chavez told the cheering, whistling audience, and presented me with a bottle of '*vino de la gente*' (the people's wine). My few words in bad Spanish brought whistles and laughter.

Watching Chavez with *la gente* made sense of a man who promised, on coming to power, that his every move would be subject to the will of the people. In eight years, Chavez won eight elections and referendums: a world record. He was electorally the most popular head of state in the Western Hemisphere, probably in the world.

Every major chavista reform was voted on, notably a new constitution of which 71% of the people approved each of the 396 articles that enshrined unheard-of freedoms, such as Article 123, which for the first time recognised the human rights of mixed-race and black people, of whom Chavez was one.

One of his tutorials on the road quoted a feminist writer: 'Love and solidarity are the same.' His audiences understood this well and expressed themselves with dignity, seldom with deference. Ordinary people regarded Chavez and his government as their first champions: as theirs.

This was especially true of the indigenous, mestizos and Afro-Venezuelans, who had been held in historic contempt by Chavez's immediate predecessors and by those who today live far from the barrios, in the mansions and penthouses of East Caracas, who commute to Miami where their banks are and who regard themselves as 'white'. They are the powerful core of what the media calls 'the opposition'.

When I met this class, in suburbs called Country Club, in homes appointed with low chandeliers and bad portraits, I recognised them. They could be white South Africans, the petite bourgeoisie of Constantia and Sandton, pillars of the cruelties of apartheid.

Cartoonists in the Venezuelan press, most of which are owned by an oligarchy and oppose the government, portrayed Chavez as an ape. A radio host referred to 'the monkey'. In the private universities, the verbal currency of the children of the well-off is often racist abuse of those whose shacks are just visible through the pollution.

Although identity politics are all

the rage in the pages of liberal newspapers in the West, race and class are two words almost never uttered in the mendacious 'coverage' of Washington's latest, most naked attempt to grab the world's greatest source of oil and reclaim its 'backyard'.

For all the chavistas' faults – such as allowing the Venezuelan economy to become hostage to the fortunes of oil and never seriously challenging big capital and corruption – they brought social justice and pride to millions of people and they did it with unprecedented democracy.

'Of the 92 elections that we've monitored,' said former US President Jimmy Carter, whose Carter Centre is a respected monitor of elections around the world, 'I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world.' By way of contrast, said Carter, the US election system, with its emphasis on campaign money, 'is one of the worst'.

In extending the franchise to a parallel people's state of communal authority, based in the poorest barrios, Chavez described Venezuelan democracy as 'our version of Rousseau's idea of popular sovereignty'.

In Barrio La Linea, seated in her tiny kitchen, Beatrice Balazo told me her children were the first generation of the poor to attend a full day's school and be given a hot meal and to learn music, art and dance. 'I have seen their confidence blossom like flowers,' she said.

In Barrio La Vega, I listened to a nurse, Mariella Machado, a black woman of 45 with a wicked laugh, address an urban land council on subjects ranging from homelessness to illegal war. That day, they were launching Mision Madres de Barrio, a programme aimed at poverty among single mothers. Under the constitution, women have the right to be paid as carers, and can borrow from a special women's bank. Now the poorest housewives get the equivalent of $200 a month.

In a room lit by a single fluorescent tube, I met Ana Lucia Ferandez, aged 86, and Mavis Mendez, aged 95. A mere 33-year-old, Sonia Alvarez, had come with her two children.

A graduate of Venezuela's Mision Robinson literacy programme shows her certificate. The programme was designed for adults and teenagers previously denied an education because of poverty.

Once, none of them could read and write; now they were studying mathematics. For the first time in its history, Venezuela has almost 100% literacy.

This is the work of Mision Robinson, which was designed for adults and teenagers previously denied an education because of poverty. Mision Ribas gives everyone the opportunity of a secondary education, called a *bachillerato*. (The names Robinson and Ribas refer to Venezuelan independence leaders from the 19th century.)

In her 95 years, Mavis Mendez had seen a parade of governments, mostly vassals of Washington, preside over the theft of billions of dollars in oil spoils, much of it flown to Miami. 'We didn't matter in a human sense,' she told me. 'We lived and died without real education and running water, and food we couldn't afford. When we fell ill, the weakest died. Now I can read and write my name and so much more; and whatever the rich and the media say, we have planted the seeds of true democracy and I have the joy of seeing it happen.'

In 2002, during a Washington-backed coup, Mavis's sons and daughters and grandchildren and great-grandchildren joined hundreds of thousands who swept down from the barrios on the hillsides and demanded the army remain loyal to Chavez.

'The people rescued me,' Chavez told me. 'They did it with the media against me, preventing even the basic facts of what happened. For popular democracy in heroic action, I suggest you look no further.'

Since Chavez's death in 2013, his successor Nicolas Maduro has shed his derisory label in the Western press as a 'former bus driver' and become Saddam Hussein incarnate. His media abuse is ridiculous. On his watch, the slide in the price of oil has caused hyperinflation and played havoc with prices in a society that imports almost all its food; yet, as the journalist and filmmaker Pablo Navarrete reported in February, Venezuela is not the catastrophe it has been painted as. 'There is food everywhere,' he wrote. 'I have filmed lots of videos of food in markets [all over Caracas] ... it's Friday night and the restaurants are full.'

In 2018, Maduro was re-elected President. A section of the opposition boycotted the election, a tactic tried against Chavez. The boycott failed: 9,389,056 people voted; 16 parties participated and six candidates stood for the presidency. Maduro won 6,248,864 votes, or 67.84%.

On election day, I spoke to one of the 150 foreign election observers. 'It was entirely fair,' he said. 'There was no fraud; none of the lurid media

Nicolas Maduro was re-elected President in 2018. Despite a boycott by a section of the opposition, more than 9 million Venezuelans voted and six candidates stood for the presidency, which was won by Maduro with over two-thirds of the votes.

claims stood up. Zero. Amazing really.'

Like a page from Alice's tea party, the Trump administration has presented Juan Guaido, a pop-up creation of the CIA-front National Endowment for Democracy, as the 'legitimate President of Venezuela'. Unheard of by 81% of the Venezuelan people, according to *The Nation*, Guaido has been elected by no one.

Maduro is 'illegitimate', says Trump (who won the US presidency with three million fewer votes than his opponent); a 'dictator', says demonstrably unhinged vice-president Mike Pence; and an oil trophy-in-waiting, says 'national security' adviser John Bolton (who when I interviewed him in 2003 said, 'Hey, are you a communist, maybe even Labour?').

As his 'special envoy to Venezuela' (coup master), Trump has appointed a convicted felon, Elliot Abrams, whose intrigues in the service of Presidents Reagan and George W Bush helped produce the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s and plunge Central America into years of blood-soaked misery.

Putting Lewis Carroll aside, these 'crazies' belong in newsreels from the 1930s. And yet their lies about Venezuela have been taken up with enthusiasm by those paid to keep the record straight.

On Britain's Channel 4 News, Jon Snow bellowed at the Labour MP Chris Williamson, 'Look, you and Mr Corbyn are in a very nasty corner [on Venezuela]!' When Williamson tried to explain why threatening a sovereign country was wrong, Snow cut him off. 'You've had a good go!'

In 2006, Channel 4 News effectively accused Chavez of plotting to make nuclear weapons with Iran: a fantasy. The then Washington correspondent, Jonathan Rugman, allowed a war criminal, Donald Rumsfeld, to liken Chavez to Hitler, unchallenged.

Researchers at the University of the West of England studied the BBC's reporting of Venezuela over a 10-year period. They looked at 304 reports and found that only three of these referred to any of the positive policies of the government. For the BBC, Venezuela's democratic record, human rights legislation, food programmes, healthcare initiatives and poverty reduction did not happen. The greatest literacy programme in human history did not happen, just as the millions who march in support of Maduro and in memory of Chavez do not exist.

When asked why she filmed only an opposition march, the BBC reporter Orla Guerin tweeted that it was 'too difficult' to be on two marches in one day.

A war has been declared on Venezuela, of which the truth is 'too difficult' to report.

It is too difficult to report the collapse of oil prices since 2014 as largely the result of criminal machinations by Wall Street. It is too difficult to report the blocking of Venezuela's access to the US-dominated international financial system as sabotage. It is too difficult to report Washington's 'sanctions' against Venezuela – which have caused the loss of at least $6 billion in Venezuela's revenue since 2017, including $2 billion worth of imported medicines – as illegal, or the Bank of England's refusal to return Venezuela's gold reserves as an act of piracy.

The former United Nations Special Rapporteur, Alfred de Zayas, has likened this to a 'medieval siege' designed 'to bring countries to their knees'. It is a criminal assault, he says. It is similar to that faced by Salvador Allende in 1970 when President Richard Nixon and his equivalent of John Bolton, Henry Kissinger, set out to 'make the economy [of Chile] scream'. The long dark night of Pinochet followed.

The Guardian correspondent Tom Phillips has tweeted a picture of a cap on which the words in Spanish mean in local slang: 'Make Venezuela fucking cool again.' The reporter as clown may be the final stage of much of mainstream journalism's degeneration.

Should the CIA stooge Guaido and his white supremacists grab power, it will be the 68th overthrow of a sovereign government by the United States, most of them democracies. A firesale of Venezuela's utilities and mineral wealth will surely follow, along with the theft of the country's oil, as outlined by John Bolton.

Under the last Washington-controlled government in Caracas, poverty reached historic proportions. There was no healthcare for those who could not pay. There was no universal education; Mavis Mendez, and millions like her, could not read or write. How cool is that, Tom? ◆

John Pilger is a journalist and documentary filmmaker. This article is reproduced from his website JohnPilger.com.

Former UN rapporteur: US sanctions against Venezuela causing economic and humanitarian crisis

A former United Nations rapporteur has criticised the US for engaging in 'economic warfare' against Venezuela, which he claimed was the real reason for the economic and humanitarian crisis facing the country.

Rights expert and former UN rapporteur Alfred de Zayas.

ALFRED de Zayas, who last year became the first UN rapporteur to visit Venezuela for 21 years, also suggested in his recently published UN report that US sanctions on the country are illegal and could amount to 'crimes against humanity' under international law.

De Zayas, an American lawyer, writer, historian and former secretary of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), presented his Venezuela report to the HRC in September.

In the report, de Zayas recommended, among other actions, that the International Criminal Court investigate economic sanctions against Venezuela as possible crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute.

In the report conclusions, de Zayas, who is an expert in the fields of human rights and international law, went on to say the solution to the Venezuelan crisis lay in 'good faith negotiations between the Government and the opposition, an end to the economic war, and the lifting of sanctions'.

The US-imposed sanctions against Venezuela began in 2015 under President Barack Obama and have intensified under Donald Trump. The sanctions prohibit dealing in currencies and stop US-based companies or people from buying and selling new debt issued by the state-run oil body PDVSA or the government.

In his report, de Zayas said modern-day economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns. 'Twenty-first century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees.'

Since 2015 around 1.9 million people have fled Venezuela and inflation has reached 60,324%.

'Twenty-first century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees.'

Speaking to *The Independent* (UK) in January, de Zayas also suggested his research into the causes of the country's economic crisis has so far largely been ignored. 'When I come and I say the emigration is partly attributable to the economic war waged against Venezuela and is partly attributable to the sanctions, people don't like to hear that. They just want the simple narrative that socialism failed and it failed the Venezuelan people,' he told *The Independent*.

De Zayas went on to suggest that the sanctions are part of a US effort to overthrow the Venezuelan government and install a friendlier regime.

'I've seen that happen in the Human Rights Council, how the United States twists arms and convinces countries to vote the way they want them to vote, or there will be economic consequences, and these things are not reflected in the press,' he told *The Independent*.

Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world and other abundant natural resources including gold, bauxite and coltan.

'If you crush this government and you bring in a neoliberal government that is going to privatise everything and is going to sell out, a lot of transnational corporations stand to gain enormous profits and the United States is driven by the transnational corporations,' the former UN special rapporteur told *The Independent*.

'The business of the United States is business. And that's what the United States is interested in. And they can't [currently] do business with Venezuela.'

In his report, de Zayas expressed concern that those calling the situation a 'humanitarian crisis' are being 'weaponised' to discredit the government and make violent overthrow more 'palatable'.

Amnesty, for example, have said the government of President Nicolas Maduro is responsible for 'the worst human rights crisis in the country's history'.

'There is nothing more undemocratic than a coup d'état and nothing more corrosive to the rule of law and to international stability when foreign governments meddle in the internal affairs of other states,' de Zayas told *The Independent*.

'Only the Venezuelans have a right to decide, not the United States, not the United Kingdom ... What is urgent is to help the Venezuelan people through international solidarity – genuine humanitarian aid and a lifting of the financial blockade so that Venezuela can buy and sell like any other country in the world – the problems can be solved with good faith and common sense.'

De Zayas is one of the signatories of an open letter, along with Noam Chomsky and some 70 other academics and experts, condemning what they described as a US-backed coup attempt against the Venezuelan government. – *Digital Desk*, Irish Examiner *(www.irishexaminer.com, 28 January 2019)* ◆

Western media fall in lockstep for cheap Venezuela aid PR stunt

The Western media, says *Adam Johnson*, has slavishly echoed the US narrative on the situation in Venezuela which has portrayed President Maduro as a heartless dictator blocking aid for his starving people.

THE Trump administration's now completely overt effort to overthrow Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro had a very successful public relations move in early February, as major Western media outlets uniformly echoed its simplistic, pre-packaged claim that the Venezuelan government was heartlessly withholding foreign aid:

• 'Tensions Rise as Venezuela Blocks Border Bridge in Standoff Over Aid' (CNN, 7 February)

• 'Maduro Blocks Critical Aid Sent to Venezuela' (CNN, 7 February)

• 'Aid Arrives at Venezuela Border as US Demands Maduro Let It In' (ABC News, 7 February)

• 'Venezuela Crisis: Pompeo Demands Aid Corridor Opened' (BBC, 7 February)

• 'The US Says Maduro Is Blocking Aid to Starving People. The Venezuelan Says His People Aren't Beggars.' (*Washington Post*, 8 February)

• 'Humanitarian Aid Arrives for Venezuela – But Maduro Blocks It' (NPR, 8 February)

All of the above articles – and scores more like them – repeated the same script: Maduro was blocking aid from the US 'out of refusal to relinquish power', preferring to starve 'his own people' rather than feed them. It's a simple case of good and evil – of a tyrannical, paranoid dictator not letting in aid to feed a starving population.

Except three pieces of key context are missing. Context that, when presented to a neutral observer, would severely undermine the cartoonish narrative being advanced by US media:

(1) Both the Red Cross and the United Nations warned the US not to engage in this aid PR stunt.

(2) The bridge in question is a visual metaphor contrived by the Trump administration of little practical relevance.

(3) The person in charge of US operations in Venezuela has a history of using aid as a cover to deliver weapons to right-wing mercenaries.

Boxes of aid from the US stored in a warehouse in Colombia near the border with Venezuela. The UN has warned against using aid 'as a pawn' in Venezuela.

PR stunt

(1) Not only has the international aid community not asked for the 'aid', both the International Red Cross and the UN had in the first week of February warned the US to not engage in these types of PR stunts. The transparent cynicism of these efforts was preemptively warned about by the groups actually charged with keeping starving people fed, as *Washington Post* contributor Vincent Bevins pointed out, drawing attention to the following news reports:

• 'Red Cross Warns US About Risks of Sending Aid to Venezuela' (*PBS NewsHour*, 1 February): 'The International Committee of the Red Cross has warned the United States about the risks of delivering humanitarian aid to Venezuela without the approval of security forces loyal to President Nicolas Maduro…'

• 'UN Warns Against Politicizing Humanitarian Aid in Venezuela' (Reuters, 6 February): 'The United Nations warned on Wednesday against using aid as a pawn in Venezuela after the United States sent food and medicine to the country's border and accused President Nicolas Maduro of blocking its delivery with trucks and shipping containers…'

Indeed, as Bevins also noted, the Red Cross has long been working with local authorities inside Venezuela to deliver relief, and in early February doubled its budget to do so. We have ample evidence the Maduro government is more than willing to work with international aid when it's offered in good faith, not when it's a thinly veiled mechanism to spur civil war and contrive PR victories for those seeking to overthrow the government.

It's not just Maduro – as the Western media are presenting it – who opposes the US aid convoy; it's the UN and the Red Cross. Why do none of the above reports note this rather key piece of information, instead giving the reader the impression it's only the stance of a sadistic, power-hungry madman?

(2) Despite dozens of media outlets giving the impression (and sometimes explicitly saying) that the Venezuelan government shut down an otherwise functioning pathway into the country, the bridge in question hasn't been open for years.

It's true the Venezuelan government appears to have placed an oil tanker and cargo containers on the bridge to prevent incursion from the Colombian side, but the other barriers, as writer and software developer Jason Emery noted, have been in place since at least 2016. According to *La Opinion* (5 February), after its initial construction in 2015, the bridge has never been open to traffic. How can Maduro, as the BBC suggested, 'reopen' a bridge that was never open?

The reality is BBC and other Western media were just going along with the narrative pushed by US Senator Marco Rubio and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, not bothering to check if their primary visual narrative was based on a bad-faith, context-free PR stunt.

This point is a relatively superficial one, but in a long-term PR battle to win over Western liberals for further military escalation, the superficial matters a lot. Rubio and the Trump administration cooked up a gimmicky visual metaphor, and almost every outlet uncritically passed it along, often making factually inaccurate assumptions along the way – assumptions the Trump State Department and CIA coordinating the effort knew very well they would make.

(3) The Venezuelan government has an entirely rational reason to suspect the US would use humanitarian aid as a cover to smuggle in weapons to foment armed conflict: The person running quarterback for Trump on the current Venezuela operation, Elliott Abrams, literally did just that 30 years ago.

US special envoy for Venezuela Elliott Abrams *(pic)* **has a history of using aid convoys as a cover to smuggle in arms to right-wing militias.**

From the first two paragraphs (emphasis added) of a 1987 AP/*New York Times* article 'Abrams Denies Wrongdoing in Shipping Arms to Contras' (17 August 1987 – h/t Kevin Gosztola):

'Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams has defended his role in *authorizing the shipment of weapons on a humanitarian aid flight to Nicaraguan rebels*, saying the operation was "strictly by the book".'

'Mr. Abrams spoke at a news conference Saturday in response to statements by Robert Duemling, former head of the State Department's Nicaraguan humanitarian assistance office, who said he had *twice ordered planes to shuttle weapons for the Contras on aid planes at Mr. Abrams' direction* in early 1986.'

It's literally the same person. It's not that Maduro is vaguely paranoid the US, in general, would dust off its 1980s Contra-backing Cold War playbook, or some unspecified assumption about a higher-up or two at the State Department. It's literally the exact same person in charge of the operation whom we know – with 100% certainty, because he admitted to it – has a history of using aid convoys as a cover to smuggle in arms to right-wing militias.

It's all playing out right now, in real time. The same actors, the same tricks, the same patently disingenuous concern for the starving poor. And the US media is stripping it of all this essential context, presenting these radical regime-change operators as bleeding-heart humanitarians.

The same US media outlets that have expressly fundraised and run ad campaigns on their image as anti-Trump truth-tellers have mysteriously taken at face value everything the Trump White House and its neoconservative allies have said in their campaign to overthrow the government of Venezuela. The self-aggrandising 'factchecking' brigade that emerged to confront the Trump administration is suddenly non-existent as the same administration rolls out a transparent, cynical PR strategy to delegitimise a Latin American government it's trying to overthrow. ◆

Adam Johnson is a contributing analyst for FAIR.org, from which this article is reproduced. FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) is a US-based progressive media watchdog group.

ICJ urges UK to end rule over Chagos Islands

Britain suffered a humiliating drubbing in February when the World Court rejected its claim to the Chagos Islands and called on it to 'decolonise' the islands.

Brett Wilkins

THE United Nations' highest court on 25 February called Britain's claim of sovereignty over the Chagos Islands 'illegal' and urged London to 'decolonise' the remote archipelago – which is home to one of the most important US overseas military bases – by returning the islands to Mauritius.

In a 13-1 vote, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, Netherlands, issued an advisory opinion declaring that the Chagos Islands were not lawfully separated from the former British colony of Mauritius, which was forced to give up the islands in 1965 in exchange for independence. ICJ President Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf said the 'unlawful' separation had not been based on a 'free and genuine expression of the people concerned' and was therefore a 'wrongful act'.

'The United Kingdom is under an obligation to bring an end to its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible, thereby allowing Mauritius to complete the decolonisation of its territory,' Yusuf asserted.

The ICJ agreed with Mauritius' submission, which argued it had been coerced into giving up the islands. Such an act is a violation of UN Resolution 1514, which prohibits the breakup of colonies before independence. The only judge who dissented from the court's main opinion was Joan E Donoghue of the United States.

'This is a historic moment for Mauritius and all its people, including the Chagossians who were unconscionably removed from their homeland and prevented from returning for the last half century,' Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said after the decision. 'Our territorial integrity will now be made complete, and when that occurs, the Chagossians and their descendants will finally be able to return home.'

The British Foreign Office responded by noting the ICJ action was 'an advisory opinion, not a judgment', and that it would 'carefully' consider its contents. London calls the remote archipelago the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). It paid Mauritius, which gained independence in 1968, over £4 million, or nearly $90 million today, for islands which include the Diego Garcia atoll.

Today Diego Garcia is one of the largest and most important US military bases in the world. Dozens of US warships along with thousands of troops and support staff are stationed there, and the base is crucial to US operations in the Middle East. However, until the late 1960s Diego Garcia was home to around 1,500 Chagossians, a Creole-speaking people who lived peacefully in the paradisiacal archipelago with their beloved dogs.

The John F Kennedy and Lyndon B Johnson administrations secretly convinced Britain to grant exclusive control over the atoll, 'without local inhabitants', to the US. American documents refer to 'sweeping' and 'sanitising' the island, while a top British official privately wrote that 'we must surely be very tough about this ... there will be no indigenous population except seagulls'. One British diplomatic cable at the time referred to Chagossians as 'Tarzans'.

The island's residents were tricked, scared or forced into leaving. When a contingent of US Marines arrived, they told the Chagossians they would be bombed or shot if they didn't go. In a bid to hasten the evacuation, the islanders' dogs were rounded up and gassed to death with exhaust fumes from US military vehicles before being burned in front of grieving and terrified children. Chagossians were allowed to take a single suitcase each before being herded onto cargo ships, never to return home again.

Most Chagossians were dumped, initially without any compensation, a thousand miles away in the island nation of Mauritius, where they were treated as second-class citizens and where many ended up living lives of abject poverty and heartbreak in the slums of the capital, Port Louis. There, they learned the meaning of debt, unemployment, drugs and prostitution. It wasn't long before suicides and child deaths took a heavy toll on the refugees. Meanwhile, and without any apparent sense of irony, the US military called its new Halliburton-built base on Diego Garcia Camp Justice.

The expulsion of an entire people from its homeland was not reported to the US Congress or the American people. Britain lied, claiming 'there is nothing in our files about a population and an evacuation'.

To this day, Chagossians are fighting for the right to return to their homeland. They've been unsuccessful despite two British High Court rulings declaring their removal illegal. Most will likely die without ever seeing home again.

'Back home was paradise,' 81-year-old Samynaden Rosemond, who was 36 when he was forced from Diego Garcia, told the BBC in Port Louis last year. 'If I die here my spirit will be everywhere; it wouldn't be happy. But if I die there, I will be in peace.'◆

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Mass protests in Haiti, like France's Yellow Vests, threaten modern oligarchic structure

As Haitians throughout the country seethe with rage over President Jovenel Moise's blatant corruption, gross mismanagement and numerous scandals, the neo-Duvalier era in Haiti that has largely been orchestrated by the US is now in danger of finally falling apart.

Whitney Webb

THROUGHOUT recent Latin American history, it is hard to find a country that has been as thoroughly manipulated and plundered by the United States as Haiti has. After over a century of US intervention – from the 19-year-long US military occupation that began in 1915 to the 2010 election rigged by the Hillary Clinton-run State Department – Haiti has become the ultimate neoliberal experiment that has forced its people to live in conditions so horrible that rivers of sewage often run through the city streets.

Even Haiti's own president, Jovenel Moise – who has presided over the most recent phase of US-backed plunder – recently called the entire country a 'latrine'.

Yet – much as in 1791, when Haiti was the site of the first successful slave revolt in the Americas – today the people of Haiti seem to have finally had enough of being slaves in all but name and are taking to the streets en masse in an effort to end the rule of the Haitian Bald-Headed Party (PHTK), the US-backed political party with close ties to the Clintons.

Thousands of Haitians have marched through the country's capital of Port-au-Prince and other major cities, calling for Moise's ouster for corruption and gross economic mismanagement in recent years, much of which can be traced directly back to the 2010 earthquake and the subsequent US-UN 'relief' effort that led to rigged elections, caused a deadly cholera outbreak and sought to turn the entire country into one massive sweatshop for American clothing companies.

More specifically, Moise has ignited popular ire after being implicated in the embezzlement of a $4 billion loan given to the Haitian government to develop the country via Venezuela's PetroCaribe programme, and for his failure to combat the double-digit inflation that has further impoverished the Caribbean nation.

President Moise has thus far responded to the protests much like the president of Haiti's former colonial ruler, France, where Emmanuel Macron has sought to disperse the Yellow Vest popular protest movement with police violence. Similarly, Moise has ordered police to shoot tear gas and live ammunition into crowds of unarmed protesters, killing at least four people, including a 14-year-old boy who was not even a part of the protests, and injuring scores more.

Despite the violent response from the Moise-led government, protesters have continued to come out in force, even stoning Moise's personal home on 9 February. That same day, Moise declared that he would 'clean the streets' of every protester by 11 February. Yet the mass protests continued through that day, when police were seen standing down in Carrefour (a suburb of Port-au-Prince), no longer willing to fire on protesters. In a video of the incident shared on social media, one female protester yells that 'the police are afraid'. Late in the afternoon of 11 February, local reports asserted that PHTK ruling elite were evacuated via helicopter from the wealthy enclave of Petionville to the Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport, apparently planning to flee the country – at least temporarily. Other reports stated that at least one police officer had been shot during demonstrations that turned violent and saw several businesses looted. Local media the following day reported high turnout for protests in several cities.

The international response to the protests in Haiti has been limited, with the UN warning Haitian protesters on 10 February that 'in a democracy change must come through the ballot box, and not through violence'. This unintentionally ironic statement ignores the documented meddling of the United States in massaging vote totals and other manipulative tactics in the last two presidential elections. This, combined with the fact that the US has kidnapped and overthrown Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a left-leaning populist politician, each time he won an election – first in 1991 and then in 2004 – has greatly reduced Haitians' faith in their 'democracy'.

The US knows something about election meddling

Since he came to power in February 2017, Moise's policies have resulted in several mass protests — including last July, when protesters forced Moise's government to abandon a planned hike in fuel prices; and last November, when protesters demanded Moise's ouster for the embezzlement of PetroCaribe funds. With so many protests in such a short span of time, the anger among the Haitian population at this unpopular president is pungent and will likely prove difficult to placate this time.

A large part of Moise's unpopularity is likely related to the fact that he was never popularly elected to begin with. The 2016 election that Moise allegedly won was disorganised and had turnout so dismal that Moise, the 'winner', received only around 600,000 votes out of a national population of over 11 million. Prominent Haitian politicians called the election an 'electoral coup'.

In addition, that election was overseen by Ken Merten, former Obama administration ambassador to Haiti and then Obama's Haiti Special Coordinator, and was wracked by accusations of vote-buying and -stealing and other fraudulent activities. Merten's involvement is particularly nefarious given that he oversaw the previous Haiti election (2010) where the US State Department had altered the vote count.

If that were not enough, in addition to the election fraud, Moise was widely believed to have been ineligible for office soon after having been 'elected', after it was revealed that he had laundered money through his personal bank account and was tied to a drug-trafficking operation.

Ultimately, Moise's unpopular rule is the continuation of that of his predecessor, Michel Martelly, who chose Moise – then a political neophyte – as his successor. Martelly's rise to power was similar to Moise's but even more fraudulent. In the 2010 election that saw Martelly 'win', the Hillary Clinton-run State Department changed the vote totals in order to place Martelly in a runoff election for which he hadn't in fact qualified. When the previous Haitian government resisted, Clinton herself travelled to Haiti and threatened to withdraw all US aid from Haiti if Martelly did not replace the second runoff candidate, Jude Celestin.

After coming to power, it took little time for observers to realise why the US, particularly the Clinton-led State Department, had chosen Martelly. Not only was Martelly an avid supporter of neoliberal policies that impoverished his people, he also supported the outright theft of Haitian land by wealthy foreign corporations to create so-called 'free trade zones', and brokered a deal with the Clintons to release Americans who had been arrested for child trafficking.

Furthermore, Martelly also helped squander much of the foreign aid that did make it into Haiti, cementing his reputation as notoriously corrupt, although most of that aid never even made it to Haiti and instead remained in the hands of corrupt foreign contractors.

In addition, Martelly was also a supporter of the Duvalier family – which ruled Haiti with an iron fist during the dictatorships of 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and his son 'Baby Doc'. Indeed, when 'Baby Doc' Duvalier returned from exile in France to attend a Haitian government ceremony, Martelly – along with Bill Clinton, who was also in attendance – rose to greet him.

Martelly's government included several officials who were connected to the Duvalier dictatorship, including his prime minister, Garry Conille, whose father held a cabinet position in the dictatorship. In addition, Conille served with Bill Clinton on the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission and had previously worked as a development manager for the United Nations before receiving his prominent position in the government installed by both the US and the UN.

Thus, Haiti under Martelly and Moise has been little different in practice from the Duvalier era. Indeed, as Amy Wilentz noted in a 2014 article in *The Nation*, '[the Duvalier] political toolbox – authoritarianism, trumped up elections, distrust of free speech, corruption of the forces of order, and no justice — are the methods by which Haiti's ruler [Martelly] still controls the country'. With Moise serving as the new face of PHTK and Martelly's chosen successor, this neo-Duvalier era in Haiti that has largely been orchestrated by the US is now in danger of falling apart.

Haiti puts the neo-colonial oligarchy on edge

If the movement to oust the US-backed and illegally installed rulers of Haiti is successful, it could easily send shockwaves through the power structures of the United States and its client states, much as the Haitian revolution did to the colonial powers two centuries ago. Indeed, the Haitian revolution instilled fear in European colonial masters throughout the Americas and the world and inspired countless slave revolts in the United States alone. Today, it still serves as a reminder that the most repressed class of a society can rise up to declare their equality and independence – and win. Perhaps that is why the current oligarchical system has invested so much in robbing Haitians of their economic and political power.

Though today is unlike the late 18th century in the sense that those at the bottom of the rung are no longer called 'slaves' and those at the top are no longer called 'masters' and 'kings', the record inequality that now exists throughout the world, the US included, has recreated in today's power structures an ethos eerily similar to that of the feudal-colonial systems of centuries past.

As both Haiti and France have become the new epicentres of popular unrest against predatory elites, much as they were two centuries ago, it is time to see both of these current movements as part of the same struggle for basic human dignity in an era of neocolonialism, imperialism and global oligarchy. ◆

Whitney Webb is a staff writer for MintPress News – from which this article is reproduced (www.mintpressnews.com/protests-in-haiti-like-frances-yellow-vests-threaten-oligarchic-structure/255009/) – and has contributed to several other independent, alternative outlets. Her work has appeared on sites such as Global Research, the Ron Paul Institute and 21st Century Wire among others. She also makes guest appearances to discuss politics on radio and television.

HUMAN RIGHTS

‘Disaster’ as Indian Supreme Court orders eviction of millions of tribespeople

A recent order by the Indian Supreme Court for the eviction of some 8 million forest dwellers is a veritable death sentence on them, say activists.

More than 8 million tribal and other forest-dwelling people in India have been ordered to be evicted from their ancestral lands.

INDIA’S Supreme Court has ordered the eviction of up to over 8 million tribal and other forest-dwelling people, in what campaigners have described as ‘an unprecedented disaster’ and ‘the biggest mass eviction in the name of conservation, ever’.

The ruling is in response to requests by Indian conservation groups to declare invalid the Forest Rights Act, which gives forest-dwelling people rights to their ancestral lands, including in protected areas. The groups had also demanded that where tribespeople had tried and failed to secure their rights under the Act, they should be evicted.

The groups reportedly include Wildlife First, Wildlife Trust of India, the Nature Conservation Society, the Tiger Research and Conservation Trust and the Bombay Natural History Society.

In an extraordinary move, the national government failed to appear in court to defend the tribespeople’s rights, and the court therefore ruled in favour of the evictions, which it decreed should be completed by 27 July.

The order affects more than 1.1 million households, with experts estimating this could mean more than 8 million individuals will now be evicted – and the number is likely to rise, as some states have not provided details as to how many will be affected.

Stephen Corry, Director of Survival International, a global tribal peoples’ rights organisation, said:

> ‘This judgement is a death sentence for millions of tribal people in India, land theft on an epic scale, and a monumental injustice.
>
> ‘It will lead to wholesale misery, impoverishment, disease and death, an urgent humanitarian crisis, and it will do nothing to save the forests which these tribespeople have protected for generations.
>
> ‘Will the big conservation organisations like WWF and WCS condemn this ruling and pledge to fight it, or will they be complicit in the biggest mass eviction in the name of conservation, ever?’ – *Survival International (21 February 2019, www.survivalinternational.org)*◆

The Indian Supreme Court building in New Delhi.

5.5 million women build their wall

On New Year's Day, 5.5 million women in the Indian state of Kerala – one in three women in the state – took to the streets to protest against an entry ban on women between 10-50 into a well-known temple. *Vijay Prashad* explains the background to what must be one of the largest mobilisations of women in the world.

ON 1 January, 5.5 million women in the Indian state of Kerala (population: 35 million) built a 386-mile wall with their bodies. They stood from one end to the other of this long state in south-western India. The women gathered at 4 pm and took a vow to defend the renaissance traditions of their state and to work towards women's empowerment. It is not an exaggeration to say that this was one of the largest mobilisations of women in the world for women's rights. It was certainly larger than the historic Women's March in Washington, DC in 2017.

The Women's Wall in Kerala on 1 January was one of the largest mobilisations of women in the world for women's rights.

Kerala's government is run by the Communists. It is not easy for a left-wing government to operate in a state within the Indian union. The central government in New Delhi has little desire to assist Kerala, which suffered a cataclysmic flood last year. No assistance with the budgetary burdens of relief and reconstruction, and no help with financing for infrastructure and welfare services.

The Communist government has a wide-ranging agenda that runs from its Green Kerala Mission – a project for stewardship of the state's beautiful environment – to its fight for women's emancipation. The Left Democratic Front government believes that dignity is as crucial a goal as economic rights, and that it is centrally important to fight against everyday humiliation to build a truly just society.

Over the course of the left's government in Kerala, it has pushed ahead the agenda against everyday humiliation. For instance, in 2017, the government provided free sanitary pads for young women in school. The logic was that during their periods, young women who could not afford sanitary pads avoided school. Prejudices against menstruation had become a barrier to equal education. The government called this project 'She Pad', which benefited students and teachers. Pinarayi Vijayan, the Chief Minister of Kerala, said of the effort, 'Menstrual hygiene is every girl's right. The government is hoping that initiatives like this will help our girls to lead a life of confidence.'

This was not a fight only to enter a temple, but a fight principally for women's emancipation.

A hundred miles north of Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram sits a temple for Ayyappan, a celibate god. Women between the ages of 10 and 50 had not been permitted into the temple due to a belief that the celibate god would not be able to tolerate women who menstruate. The Indian Supreme Court took notice of this and, in September 2018, declared that the temple must allow all women to enter. The Left Democratic Front government agreed with the courts. But the temple authorities, and the far-right groups in the state, disagreed. When women tried to enter the temple, the priests blocked them, assisted by the far right. The situation was at a deadlock.

Chief Minister Vijayan called upon progressive organisations across the state to start mobilising the citizens towards the building of a Women's Wall (Vanitha Mathil) on 1 January. The energy in the state was electric. Women gathered at hundreds of mass meetings across the state. They recognised immediately that this was not a fight only to enter a temple, but this was a fight principally for women's emancipation, for the right of women, as Vijayan had said, 'to lead a life of confidence'.

The public meetings in Novem-

Participants at a rally called by Hindu organisations on 2 January after two women entered the Sabarimala temple that had previously been closed to women between the ages of 10 and 50.

ber and December galvanised the opposition to the far right, arguing that women have every right to enter public spaces, including religious buildings. January began in anticipation. Women had been organised by districts and knew where to go. Women of all ages and backgrounds, from schoolteachers to members of the fishing community, began to line up around 3 pm. After taking an oath, they marched through their towns and cities. They exuded joy and confidence, a freedom that should warm the hearts of sensitive people.

Strikingly, the media outside India paid little attention to this historic event. Press coverage in the United States was nearly absent. Internationalism in our time is such a façade, with so little care to amplify the bravery of people around the world. When the Women's March took place in Washington, DC, newspapers in Kerala reported it in detail. The favour was not returned. Silence was the answer.

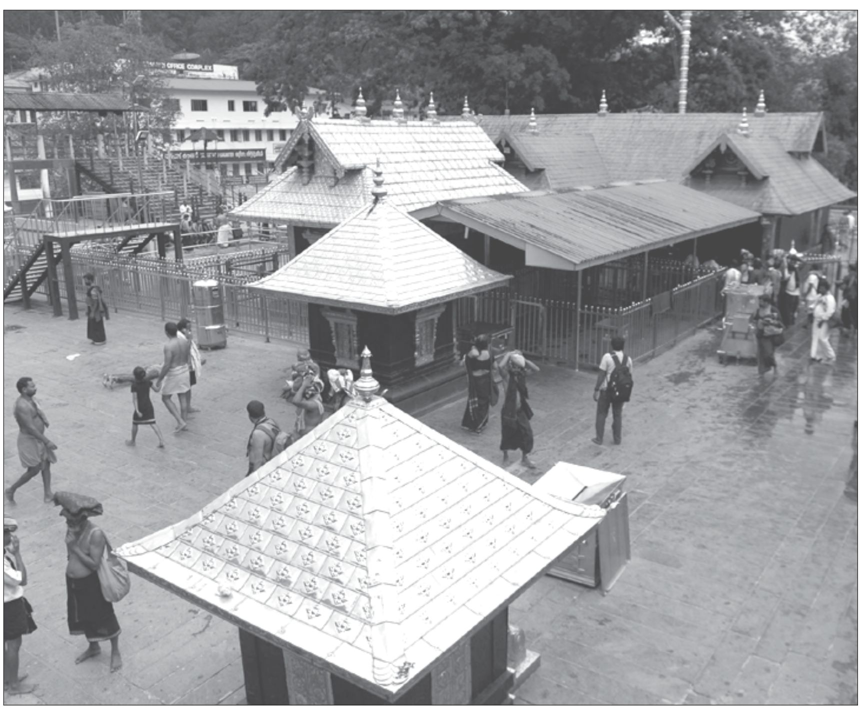
Two days after the Women's Wall, the right wing in Kerala went on a rampage. Their members attacked the leaders on the left and threw bombs at government buildings. Over 700 people – mostly men on the far right – were arrested that day.

Walking down a main shopping street in Thiruvananthapuram, I see visible signs of the far right's attack. On one side of the street are posters and signs of left organisations torn and broken during the day of rampage by the far right. On the other side of the street, far-right supporters sit on a hunger strike.

Even liberals have taken the side of the far right. One liberal politician said that while he favoured women's rights, he also favoured the temple's rights. But the temple has no rights, nor does tradition. As Gandhi wrote almost a hundred years ago, 'If I can't swim in tradition, I'll sink in it.' Neither the temple nor tradition trumps the rights of women to live with confidence. If a tradition is discriminatory, it deserves to be set aside.

There are no half-measures in this debate in Kerala. The mood is that one must not walk away from one's principles.

Five and a half million women in Kerala – one in three women in the state – took to the streets to champion the emancipation of women. What brought them to join the Women's Wall was that the Left Democratic Front government took a clear position, a principled position: that menstruation should not be used as a penalty against women's full participation in society. Clarity defines the struggle. It is a lesson worth learning around the world. ◆



The Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

Vijay Prashad is the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. His most recent book is Strongmen. *The above article is reproduced from the* Daily Hampshire Gazette *(9 January 2019).*

VIEWPOINT

Why transformation of the global food system is an imperative

The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health brings together more than 30 world-leading scientists from across the globe to reach a scientific consensus on a healthy and sustainable diet. The Commission concluded that feeding a growing population of 10 billion people by 2050 with a healthy and sustainable diet will be impossible without transforming eating habits, improving food production and reducing food waste.

Policies to encourage people to choose healthy diets are needed.

TRANSFORMATION of the global food system is urgently needed as more than three billion people are malnourished (including people who are undernourished and overnourished) and food production is exceeding planetary boundaries - driving climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution due to over-application of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilisers, and unsustainable changes in water and land use.

These findings are from the EAT-Lancet Commission, which provides the first scientific targets for a healthy diet from a sustainable food production system that operates within planetary boundaries for food. The Commission's report, released in January, promotes diets consisting of a variety of plant-based foods, with low amounts of animal-based foods, refined grains, highly processed foods and added sugars, and with unsaturated rather than saturated fats.

The Commission is a three-year project by the Oslo-based EAT nonprofit organisation and *The Lancet* medical journal that brings together 37 experts from 16 countries with expertise in health, nutrition, environmental sustainability, food systems, economics and political governance.

Human diets inextricably link health and environmental sustainability, and have the potential to nurture both. However, current diets are pushing the Earth beyond its planetary boundaries, while causing ill health. This puts both people and the planet at risk. Providing healthy diets from sustainable food systems is an immediate challenge as the population continues to grow – projected to reach 10 billion people by 2050 – and get wealthier (with the expectation of higher consumption of animal-based foods).

To meet this challenge, dietary changes must be combined with improved food production and reduced food waste. The authors stress that unprecedented global collaboration and commitment will be needed, alongside immediate changes such as refocussing agriculture to produce varied nutrient-rich crops, and increased governance of land and ocean use.

'The food we eat and how we produce it determines the health of people and the planet, and we are currently getting this seriously wrong,' says one of the Commission authors, Professor Tim Lang from City, University of London, UK. 'We need a significant overhaul, changing the global food system on a scale not seen before in ways appropriate to each country's circumstances. While this is uncharted policy territory and these problems are not easily fixed, this goal is within reach and there are opportunities to adapt international, local and business policies. The scientific targets we have devised for a healthy, sustainable diet are an important foundation which will underpin and drive this change.'

Scientific targets for a healthy diet


An unhealthy diet contributes to premature death and disease.

Despite increased food production contributing to improved life expectancy and reductions in hunger, infant and child mortality rates, and global poverty over the past 50 years, these benefits are now being offset by global shifts towards unhealthy diets high in calories, sugar, refined starches and animal-based foods and low in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and fish.

The authors argue that the lack of scientific targets for a healthy diet have hindered efforts to transform the food system. Based on the best available evidence, the Commission proposes a dietary pattern that meets nutritional requirements, promotes health, and allows the world to stay within planetary boundaries.

Compared with current diets, global adoption of the new recommendations by 2050 will require global consumption of foods such as red meat and sugar to decrease by more than 50%, while consumption of nuts, fruits, vegetables and legumes must increase more than two-fold. Global targets will need to be applied locally – for example, countries in North America eat almost 6.5 times the recommended amount of red meat, while countries in South Asia eat only half the recommended amount. All countries are eating more starchy vegetables (potatoes and cassava) than recommended, with intakes ranging from 1.5 times above the recommendation in South Asia to 7.5 times in sub-Saharan Africa.

'The world's diets must change dramatically. More than 800 million people have insufficient food, while many more consume an unhealthy diet that contributes to premature death and disease,' says co-lead Commissioner Dr Walter Willett, Harvard University, USA. 'To be healthy, diets must have an appropriate calorie intake and consist of a variety of plant-based foods, low amounts of animal-based foods, unsaturated rather than saturated fats, and few refined grains, highly processed foods and added sugars. The food group intake ranges that we suggest allow flexibility to accommodate various food types, agricultural systems, cultural traditions and individual dietary preferences – including numerous omnivore, vegetarian and vegan diets.'

The authors estimate that widespread adoption of such a diet would improve intakes of most nutrients – increasing intake of healthy mono and polyunsaturated fatty acids and reducing consumption of unhealthy saturated fats. It would also increase essential micronutrient intake (such as iron, zinc, folate and vitamin A, as well as calcium in low-income countries), except for vitamin B12 where supplementation or fortification might be necessary in some circumstances.

They also modelled the potential effects of global adoption of the diet on deaths from diet-related diseases. Three models each showed major health benefits, suggesting that adopting the new diet globally could avert between 10.9-11.6 million premature deaths per year – reducing adult deaths by between 19-23.6%.

The authors highlight that evidence about diet, human health and environmental sustainability is continually evolving and includes uncertainty, so they include ranges in their estimates, but are confident of the overall picture. Lang says: 'While major transformations to the food system occurred in China, Brazil, Vietnam, and Finland in the 20th century, and illustrate that diets can change rapidly, humanity has never aimed to change the food system this radically at such speed or scale. People might warn of unintended consequences or argue that the case for action is premature, however, the evidence is sufficient and strong enough to warrant action, and any delay will increase the likelihood of not achieving crucial health and climate goals.'

Food sustainability

Since the mid-1950s, the pace and scale of environmental change has grown exponentially. Food production is the largest source of environmental degradation. To be sustainable, food production must occur within food-related planetary boundaries for climate change, biodiversity loss, land and water use, as well as for nitrogen and phosphorus cycles. However, production must also be sustainably intensified to meet the global population's growing food demands.

This will require decarbonising agricultural production by eliminating the use of fossil fuels and land use change losses of CO2 in agriculture. In addition, zero loss of biodiversity, net zero expansion of agricultural land into natural ecosystems, and drastic improvements in fertiliser and water use efficiencies are needed.

The authors estimate the minimum, unavoidable emissions of greenhouse gases if we are to provide healthy food for 10 billion people by 2050. They conclude that non-CO2 greenhouse gas emissions of methane and nitrous oxide will remain between 4.7-5.4 gigatonnes in 2050, with current emissions already at an estimated 5.2 gigatonnes in 2010. This suggests that the decarbonisation of the world energy system must progress faster than anticipated, to accommodate the need to healthily feed humans without further damaging the planet.

Phosphorus use must also be reduced (from 17.9 to between 6-16 teragrams), as must biodiversity loss (from 100 to between 1-80 extinctions per million species each year).

Based on their estimates, current levels of nitrogen, land and water use may be within the projected 2050 boundary (from 131.8 teragrams in 2010 to between 65-140 in 2050, from 12.6 M km^2 in 2010 vs 11-15 M km^2 in 2050, and from 1.8 M km^3 in 2010 vs 1-4 M km^3, respectively) but continued efforts will be required to sustain these levels. The boundary estimates are subject to uncertainty and will require continuous update and refinement.

Using these boundary targets, the authors modelled various scenarios to develop a sustainable food system and deliver healthy diets by 2050. To stay within planetary boundaries, a combination of major dietary change, improved food production through enhanced agriculture and technology changes, and reduced food waste during production and at the point of consumption will be needed, and no single measure is enough to stay within all of the limits.

'Designing and operationalising sustainable food systems that can deliver healthy diets for a growing and wealthier world population presents a formidable challenge. Nothing less than a new global agricultural revolution. The good news is that it is not only doable, we have increasing evidence that it can be achieved through sustainable intensification that benefits both farmer, consumer and planet,' says co-lead Commissioner Professor Johan Rockström, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Sweden and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany.

'Humanity now poses a threat to the stability of the planet. Sustainability of the food system must therefore be defined from a planetary perspective. Five key environmental processes regulate the state of the planet. Our definition of sustainable food production requires that we use no additional land, safeguard existing biodiversity, reduce consumptive water use and manage water responsibly, substantially reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, produce zero carbon dioxide emissions, and cause no further increase in methane and nitrous oxide emissions. There is no silver bullet for combatting harmful food production practices, but by defining and quantifying a safe operating space for food systems, diets can be identified that will nurture human health and support environmental sustainability,' Rockström continues.

Transforming the global food system

The Commission proposes five strategies to adjust what people eat and how it is produced.

Firstly, policies to encourage people to choose healthy diets are needed, including improving availability and accessibility to healthy food through improved logistics and storage, increased food security, and policies that promote buying from sustainable sources. Alongside advertising restrictions and education campaigns, affordability is also crucial, and food prices must reflect production and environmental costs. As this may increase costs to consumers, social protection for vulnerable groups may be required to avoid continued poor nutrition in low-income groups.

Strategies to refocus agriculture from producing high volumes of crops to producing varied nutrient-rich crops are needed. Currently, small and medium farms supply more than 50% of the essential nutrients in the global food supply. Global agriculture policies should incentivise producers to grow nutritious, plant-based foods, develop programmes that support diverse production systems, and increase research funding for ways to increase nutrition and sustainability. In some contexts, animal farming is important to nutrition and the ecosystem and the benefits and risks of animal farming should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Sustainably intensifying agriculture will also be key, and must take into account local conditions to help apply appropriate agricultural practices and generate sustainable, high-quality crops.

Equally, effective governance of land and ocean use will be important to preserve natural ecosystems and ensure continued food supplies. This could be achieved through protecting intact natural areas on land (potentially through incentives), prohibiting land clearing, restoring degraded land, removing harmful fishing subsidies, and closing at least 10% of marine areas to fishing (including the high seas to create fish banks).

Lastly, food waste must be at least halved. The majority of food waste occurs in low- and middle-income countries during food production due to poor harvest planning, lack of access to markets preventing produce from being sold, and lack of infrastructure to store and process foods. Improved investment in technology and education for farmers is needed. Food waste is also an issue in high-income countries, where it is primarily caused by consumers and can be resolved through campaigns to improve shopping habits, help understand 'best before' and 'use by' dates, and improve food storage, preparation, portion sizes and use of leftovers.

Dr Richard Horton, Editor-in-Chief at *The Lancet*, says: 'Poor nutrition is a key driver and risk factor for disease. However, there has been a global failure to address this. It is everyone's and no one's problem.'

He continues: 'The transformation that this Commission calls for is not superficial or simple, and requires a focus on complex systems, incentives and regulations, with communities and governments at multiple levels having a part to play in redefining how we eat. Our connection with nature holds the answer, and if we can eat in a way that works for our planet as well as our bodies, the natural balance of the planet's resources will be restored. The very nature that is disappearing holds the key to human and planetary survival.' – The Lancet *press release (16 January 2019)* ◆

For more information on the EAT-Lancet Commission, visit www.thelancet.com/commissions/EAT.

N Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) was an Indian social reformer, philosopher and poet of Malayalam literature. Honoured in 1922 as a 'Mahkavi' (Great Poet) by Madras University, he died tragically two years later when the boat in which he was travelling in his native Kerala capsized.

The dove orchid

Kumaran Asan

How enchanting
This sweet fragrance
That radiates in the cool breeze
And puts all other scents to shame.

A bright spray of flowers
Beams above the leaves dark green as beetles.
They look like bubbles in a row
That rise in a pond where the tortoise breathes.

Is this a white crystal vial
That opens, breathing fresh and sweet?
Or can this be a new shell that opens
Revealing the faultless pearl within?

What an exquisite work of art
Is this new-blown flower!
Skilful craftsman working on ivory
Carve nothing like this
A master indeed art thou, oh Lord.

Ah, how did this bird
Pure, delicate, lovely
Come within this flower?
Mysterious are the ways of God
Is this bird born within the flower,
Or is it a shadow or the eyes' delusion?

Unruffled is this bird
Lost in silent meditation.
Among the birds
Some are incarnations,
So the seers say.

Of the meaning and end of this world
Little I know, and I am exhausted searching.
O sacred bird, if ever you understand
Will you in kindness tell me too?

Translated from the Malayalam by Sugathakumari