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Averting a global catastrophe

Impacts of climate change
on natural and human systems

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Editor's Note

WARNING that global warming may soon reach the point of no return, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, speaking on the eve of the UN climate change conference in Madrid in December, called on member states to stop the 'war against nature'. In encapsulating the heart of our crisis in that single phrase, the UN chief may have done more to direct our attention to the genesis of the problem than many other speakers.

It is important to bear in mind that in historical terms, this attitude to nature is comparatively recent. It probably took hold in the 19th century when the Industrial Revolution took place in Britain, signalling the emergence of a new socioeconomic system, capitalism. Under this new system, nature was viewed as an inexhaustible source of resources waiting to be exploited. It was considered eminently suited to servicing the operations of an economic order which was inherently expansive. But before nature could play this role, it had to be subjugated and conquered, hence the 'war against nature'.

When this attitude to nature spread from the Old World to the New, it found very fertile ground there. The United States was in its origins a settler colony with almost unlimited space and resources. In such an environment, the need to preserve and conserve resources was seen as superfluous: Nature is bountiful and if you have the necessary technologies, there are no limits to what you can wrest from her.

While such attitudes to nature are so deeply ingrained that they will require a long time before they can be finally eliminated, the reality is that there is a climate crisis which requires concrete action now. Every report on the state of the world's climate paints a bleaker picture than the one before it. Even as the Madrid conference was opening, the World Meteorological Organisation released a report stating that the current decade is set to be the hottest on record and that each of the past four decades has been warmer than the one prior to it.

As we edge ever closer to the tipping point or even several tipping points, deep cuts in heat-trapping carbon emissions are required to get the world on track to meet the Paris Agreement target

of limiting global warming to as low as 1.5°C. A new report by the UN Environment Programme contends that there has to be an annual 7.6% cut in emissions for the next 10 years if the 1.5°C goal is to be met.

Implementation of these cuts will in turn need to reflect the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The developed countries, which have historically been the major source of emissions by far, should shoulder the main responsibility for the cuts, and also support the developing countries in making the transition to a low-emissions pathway and adapting to climate change.

In light of this, calls for a declaration of emergency with regard to the climate crisis have to be carefully appraised. When an emergency is declared, all rights and privileges will have to be suspended. In such a situation, the developed countries may argue that the differentiated responsibilities imply privileges granted to the developing countries which will have to be suspended for the duration of the emergency.

In our cover story for this issue, we highlight the intensification of the climate crisis as more evidence mounts of the alarming impacts of global warming. While there may be no consensus on the extent of this deterioration, fears that we may be closer to the tipping point than previously thought have begun to evoke a mood of pessimism that it may be too late to avert a catastrophe. Developing countries which have hitherto borne the brunt of storms, floods and other disturbing weather patterns will be worried that the climate emergency now prevailing will be used as a justification to extract more concessions from them. For the developing countries, future climate talks will indeed be stormy.

— The Editors

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Rome summit takes bold step towards agroecology

Leaders endorse agroecology as one of the cutting-edge innovations we need to help small-scale farmers adapt to climate change.

Timothy A Wise

THE Climate Action Summit at the UN in September was widely considered a disappointment, failing to garner the kinds of government actions needed to address the climate crisis. Sadly, the same can be said for actions on agriculture and climate change, despite a well-publicised commitment of \$790 million ‘to enhance resilience of over 300 million small-scale food producers in the face of mounting climate impacts’.

That is not because the investment isn’t needed. It is, desperately. Small-scale farmers in developing countries are already bearing the brunt of climate change yet they have received little of the promised funding to help them adapt to drought, flooding, heat and other climate changes.

These new initiatives won’t bridge that gap. Just as government actions to date are proving far too weak to address the climate emergency, these agriculture programmes support familiar measures that have thus far failed to help small-scale farmers. Some measures have left them even more vulnerable to climate change.

We need a more decisive shift. Fortunately, government leaders took a major step in that direction in Rome in October at a different summit, the annual meetings of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). They approved an expert report on agroecology, an innovative and cost-effective way to address rising hunger and malnutrition while helping farmers adapt to climate change. A host of recent UN reports calls for just this sort of break.

‘Agroecology is the only solution we have to address the multiple cri-



‘Agroecology allows small-scale producers a dignified life, producing affordable, healthy food in healthy conditions.’

ses we are facing,’ said farmer Aisha Ali Aii Shatou of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) to the government representatives at the summit.

When the solutions are part of the problem

The new \$790 million agriculture initiative is driven by recommendations from the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA), which is co-chaired by Bill Gates, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. Its report, ‘Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience’, has as one of its core initiatives enhancing the resilience of smallholder producers.

Unfortunately, the Commission largely doubles down on the misguided effort to ‘modernise’ agriculture in developing countries by encouraging

farmers to adopt precisely the sorts of fossil-fuel-intensive practices that have made agriculture one of the greatest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. As I saw in researching my book, *Eating Tomorrow*, crop diversity and soil fertility often decline as a result.

In its recommendations, the Commission includes agroecology only as an afterthought, warning that we need to improve ‘the evidence-base for the effectiveness of adopting different agroecological approaches’ – as if we don’t know enough yet to act.

They clearly hadn’t read the new expert report on agroecology and other innovations for sustainable food systems, released 3 July by the CFS’s High Level Panel of Experts. The expert report, two years in the making, is clear on the urgent need for change. ‘Food systems are at a crossroads. Profound transformation is



'Agricultural modernisation' has promoted monocultures, decreased crop and diet diversity, undermined soil fertility, and produced disappointing gains in productivity and farmer incomes.

needed,' the summary begins. It goes on to present a wide range of evidence that such methods have been shown to simultaneously increase soil fertility, diet diversity, and food security for small-scale farmers.

Agroecology promotes just the kinds of soil-building practices that 'agricultural modernisation' often undermines. Multiple food crops are grown in the same field. Compost and manure, not fossil-fuel-based fertiliser, are used to fertilise fields. Biological pest control decreases pesticide use. Researchers work with farmers

to improve the productivity of their seeds rather than replacing them with commercial seeds farmers need to buy every year and douse with fertiliser to make them grow. As the expert report documents, soil fertility increases over time, and so do food security and climate resilience.

Agroecology: a proven response to the failing policies of the present

The growing global interest in agroecology comes in response to the

widespread failures of input-intensive programmes like the Gates-inspired Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Fed by heavy doses of government subsidies for commercial seeds and synthetic fertilisers, AGRA has promoted monocultures of a few staple crops, decreased crop and diet diversity, undermined soil fertility, and produced disappointing gains in productivity and farmer incomes. Global Hunger Index scores remained in the 'serious' to 'alarming' category for 12 of the 13 AGRA countries.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its influential report on 'Climate Change and Land', echoed the urgent need for change and the direction that change should take: '[I]ncreasing the resilience of the food system through agroecology and diversification is an effective way to achieve climate change adaptation...'

Fortunately, in Rome government leaders were forward-looking. Many recognised that business as usual, in the face of climate change, is not an option. They moved beyond the failed policies of the present, endorsing agroecology as the kind of innovation farmers need to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

As AFSA's Shatou told the summit, 'Agroecology allows small-scale producers a dignified life, producing affordable, healthy food in healthy conditions. It eliminates dependence on costly inputs and adopts practices which regenerate seeds and soils while mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.'

The CFS next year will take up the challenge of translating this visionary report into practical policies. ♦

Timothy A Wise directs the Land and Food Rights Program at the US-based Small Planet Institute and is a Senior Researcher at Tufts University's Global Development and Environment Institute. Wise is the author of Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers, and the Battle for the Future of Food (The New Press). He attended the UN Committee on World Food Security summit in Rome on 14-18 October as a civil society delegate.

The above article is reproduced from CommonDreams.org.



The UN Committee on World Food Security met in Rome in October.

Money to burn

As fires rage and consume some of the biggest forests in the world, *Marianne Brooker* draws attention to the role of financial institutions in this inferno.

A VERITABLE A to Z of world finance institutions are enabling the destruction of three of the world's biggest rainforests, research carried out by environmental and anti-corruption NGO Global Witness has revealed.

Among those identified are some of the largest names in global finance – Deutsche Bank, HSBC, Santander and Standard Chartered among them – providing tens of billions of dollars in financing between 2013-19 to companies either directly or indirectly deforesting the largest rainforest regions of the world.

Five of the world's leading investment banks, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Barclays and Morgan Stanley, are also implicated.

Global Witness wrote to each bank and received responses, which are referenced in the full report, 'Money to Burn'.

Six major agribusinesses causing this damage – which these well-known global financial players invest in – produce agricultural commodities like palm oil, beef and rubber.

Global Witness investigated these giant companies over six years (2013-19) operating across the three largest single rainforests on earth – Amazon, Congo Basin and New Guinea – and found that they were backed to the tune of \$44 billion by over 300 investment firms, banks and pension funds headquartered across the globe.

The revelations in the report, which was released in September, came after a summer of international outcry over the burning of the Brazilian Amazon, and fresh from a week of strikes and climate action across the globe.

Studies have shown that forests and other ecosystems could make up more than a third of the total carbon mitigation by 2030 needed to limit global heating to a 2-degree Celsius rise.



Leading financial institutions such as Deutsche Bank have provided tens of billions of dollars in financing between 2013-19 to companies either directly or indirectly deforesting the world's largest rainforests, according to an NGO report.

Rapid breakdown

In 2018 alone an area of primary tropical rainforest the size of Belgium was destroyed. About a quarter of forest loss, or as high as 78% in South-East Asia and 56% in Latin America, was to make way for agricultural commodities, including beef and oil palm.

Ed Davey, head of forest investigations at Global Witness, said: 'The rapid breakdown of our climate is a concern to many – including bank customers – so it's unsurprising that banks and investors proudly trumpet policies on ethical investment and lending, giving the impression they are not pumping money into companies that would fell and burn precious rainforests.'

'But their hypocrisy is clear: the same financial institutions are breaking their own policies at will and in search of profit, make many of their promises barely worth the paper they are printed on.'

'Members of the public will be shocked to know that the bank they have a current account with, that manages their pension fund or invests their retirement nest egg [is] enabling the destruction of the world's most

precious ecosystems.

'\$44 billion is a terrifying sum of money to be ploughing into companies that destroy forests – at a time when we need trees more than ever. These household name banks and iconic investment funds our exposé highlights will be familiar to anyone who has looked at the skyline of Wall Street or Canary Wharf, read a newspaper or opened a current account. But the activity in this report is just the tip of the iceberg.'

Global Witness is calling on the financial sector to take responsibility for the impact of their financing and investments on forests and the climate.

It is also urging policymakers to address the systemic failure of the financial system, and the companies it finances or invests in, to tackle deforestation by introducing regulatory measures, strengthening their existing commitments, and taking meaningful measures to ensure they are implemented effectively. ♦

Marianne Brooker is content editor of The Ecologist, from whose website (theecologist.org) this article is reproduced. It is based on a press release from Global Witness.

Mental health care in Indonesia: short on supply, short on demand

The treatment of mental disorders in Indonesia has long suffered grievously as a result of the stigma attached to them. The institutions to treat such illnesses are under-resourced. All hopes are being placed on the recently elected administration to rectify these shortcomings.

Ade Prastyani

TRADITIONALLY, politicians are guarded about divulging details of personal struggles with mental health. In Indonesia, *aib* – which roughly translates as ‘disgrace’ or ‘shame’ – is a word often thrown about when referring to the stigma that mental illness carries. One is forbidden to disclose their family’s *aib*.

It therefore came as a surprise to me and many other Indonesians when the then-vice governor of Jakarta, Sandiaga Uno, acknowledged that some members of his family – particularly his father, Razif ‘Henk’ Uno – have sought mental health care. This public admission was seen as a positive step towards the destigmatisation of seeking mental health care, which was appreciated by mental health advocates.

More recently, as Prabowo Subianto’s vice-presidential candidate, Sandiaga was able to draw mental health issues into his campaign. Speaking to a crowd of young voters while on the campaign trail in Bandung in March 2019, he raised the issue of youth depression, remarking that:

‘Millennials as a demographic bonus, the assets of our nation, must be taken care of. And the problems of health such as the threat of drugs, and the depressive disorder which occurs in young souls – souls which are now the future of Indonesia – must be overcome. A young soul is a healthy soul. So, we must have the capacity for early detection and management to overcome depressive disorder and drug abuse among youth.’



Human rights abuses, such as shackling, against people living with severe mental disorders are still prevalent in Indonesia.

Unfortunately, the use of a political strategy that includes support for mental health advocacy seems to be isolated to Sandiaga Uno. In the World Health Organisation (WHO)’s definition, the goal of mental health advocacy is ‘to promote the human rights of persons with mental disorders and to reduce stigma and discrimination’. During the 2019 Indonesian general election, the exact opposite took place. The stigmatisation of mental illness and people with mental illness was amplified in political party campaign rhetoric and by hoax-based scare campaigns. Discrimination against people with mental illness was rampant, with senior politicians calling into question their right to vote.

In the election’s aftermath, advocacy for policy change is being complicated by partisan polarisation and religious identity politics. The building blocks of a better mental health care system are there, primarily in the form of Indonesia’s National Health

Insurance (Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional/JKN) system, and the ambitious but largely unimplemented Mental Health Law passed in 2014. Real progress, though, will require the re-elected Jokowi administration to show more political leadership, and commit more resources, if adequate mental health care is to be made available to the many millions of Indonesians who are in need of it.

Mental illness and the politics of fear

During the 2019 election, Indonesians living with mental illness fell victim to ‘post-truth’ politics. The portrayal of people with mental health issues was part of a broader trend in Indonesia of scapegoating which, while still focused on traditional targets such as ethnic Chinese Indonesians and communists, now extends to the exploitation of the mentally ill as fodder for scare campaigns.

In early 2018, rumours spread on

social media that there was a systematic series of lethal assaults – 45 incidents in total – against *ulama*, or Islamic community leaders. The perpetrators, according to the stories, were politically motivated individuals who, when caught, falsely claimed to have a history of severe mental disorders as an alibi.

Yet a police investigation discovered that out of the 45 allegations made viral in the circulating news, only three unrelated violent incidents did occur. All three incidents' victims were indeed local religious leaders, one of whom died. All three attacks also coincidentally involved people with a history of severe mental health problems. A later investigation found that the rumour of a systematic wave of attacks was circulated by Muslim Cyber Army, a notorious social media channel opposed to President Joko Widodo (Jokowi). Muslim Cyber Army members who were linked to the creation and spreading of this and other hoaxes were eventually prosecuted.

But it was too late. The hoax succeeded in its goal of morally galvanising grassroots Islamic leaders to unite against 'terror' by unknown *aktor intelektual* ['intellectual actor(s)', or mastermind(s)], and had real impact upon vulnerable Indonesians: at the height of the scare, alarmed city officials started enacting raids against people roaming the streets with suspected mental illness.

The vilification continued through sensational campaigning, too. The Islamic party PKS launched a campaign video advertisement that offensively depicted a mentally ill individual stealing a truck and kidnapping a woman. Bagus Utomo, the founder of KPSI (Kelompok Peduli Skizofrenia Indonesia or Indonesian Schizophrenic Care Community), had a big role in starting a subsequent petition calling for a stop to the exploitation of those afflicted by mental illness for electoral purposes. 'In three days, it garnered the support of



Inside the compound of the Soeharto Heerdjan Mental Hospital in Jakarta.

5,000 people online. But after that, it plateaued,' he said, smiling bitterly. 'We became the laughing stock of those we petitioned against. They only apologised, but they did not pull the campaign. Instead, they enjoyed it. The more noise we made, the more viral the video became.'

Commenting on the destructive impact of hoax news against the mental health cause, Bagus Utomo sounded slightly resigned. 'People with mental illnesses are "*sasaran empuk*" [a soft target] for hoax news,' he told me. 'It's just a *gorengan* [cooked up] issue.'

He and other KPSI members were more concerned by how the fear-mongering almost cost Indonesian citizens living with mental illness their right to vote. During the 2019 campaign, the voting rights of people with psychotic disorders were called into question by Gerindra Party's Deputy Chairman, Sufmi Dasco Ahmad, and other top Gerindra members such as Fadli Zon. They claimed that the mentally ill were so gullible and impressionable that doctors and officials might be able to dictate whom they vote for.

Rumours also circulated that the general election commission (KPU) deliberately attempted to taint the pool of voters by registering 'crazy people' (*orang gila*). When KPU Chairman Arief Budiman attempted to clarify, he inadvertently made the situation worse, saying that 'we must differentiate between the crazies and

those with mental disorders. [The ones registered were] not *orang gila* on the streets who don't wear clothes and eat anything off the street.' Arief's statement reflected the poor understanding of mental health issues among Indonesian bureaucrats: not only did he fail to recognise that '*gila*' (crazy) is a derogatory term for psychosis, he further stigmatised the weakest in our society: the neglected, homeless Indonesian citizens struggling with severe mental disorders.

Thankfully, the reaction by national mental health care advocates was swift and strong. Voting booths were eventually set up in private and state-owned mental rehabilitation centres and shelters throughout the country. Having received the all-clear from their physicians, most of the patients got to have a say, too, in how their lives should be governed.

Post-election repercussion for mental health advocates

Even after the election, both religious identity politics and the polarisation of the campaign season have left big challenges for mental health advocates.

In the current culture of Indonesian health-seeking patterns, many Muslim Indonesians – who may interpret mental illnesses to be derived from spiritual and/or metaphysical causal factors – will initially seek out a religious teacher or *ustadz* instead of a doctor, and have them perform a *ruqyah*, a healing ritual that involves the recitation of Quranic verses. Sometimes, patients seek only a *ruqyah* and forgo medical care entirely. Bagus Utomo told me, 'When we wanted to encourage them to seek [medical care] instead, we were accused of being anti-Islam.' Bagus conveyed serious worry over his personal safety due to this label.

KPSI, which is the biggest patient and caregiver support network for mental illness in the country, also fac-

es internal fractures caused by election-related polarisation. Some members were not happy with the role KPSI played in petitioning against PKS' viral video campaign. Among members of the KPSI social media groups, the usually open atmosphere of social media discussions has become perilous, with members tiptoeing around the issue of religious identity.

Amid all of this, the Indonesian media, instead of being part of the solution, has also been clueless in finding a constructive angle from which to discuss mental health in relation to the election. Just as in 2014, in 2019 politicians afflicted by mental illness became the butt of jokes after the election, when the complex condition of depression was reduced into a simple case of *schadenfreude* directed towards failed legislative candidates. None of the major Indonesian media outlets took the opportunity to zero in on the policy issues in mental health care.

Moving forward with mental health advocacy

The stigmatisation and politicisation of mental illness exist alongside the persistent failure of Indonesian governments to deliver adequate mental health care.

Indonesia's mental health problems are significant and multifaceted. First of all, the Indonesian government is still racking up data on the mental health needs of the population. The Indonesian 2018 Basic Health Survey (Riskesdas) conducted by the Ministry of Health estimated that 0.67% of Indonesian households have at least one member with psychotic disorders. Moreover, an estimated 6.1% of the population aged 15 years and older were categorised as having depression. Seeing that even less-severe depression is still correlated with lowered work performance, with a working age population of over 180 million people, such figures are a large problem for Indonesia's ambition to make use of its 'demographic bonus' to boost economic productivity.

Gross human rights abuses against people living with severe mental disorders are still prevalent in Indonesia, of which *pasung*, or shackling, is a part. The international attention attracted by shackling has seen the 'Indonesia Free from Shackles' (Indonesia Bebas Pasung) programme become widespread, bringing in global human rights observers such as Human Rights Watch, international journalists, domestic and global mental health proponents (mostly academics and health professionals), as well as non-governmental and civil society organisations, such as KPSI and KKI (Kelompok Kasih In-sani), to name a couple.

The call for better data on *pasung* has resulted in its being incorporated in the 2013 and 2018 Basic Health Survey as well as the Indonesian Healthy Family Index (Indeks Keluarga Sehat). These Ministry of Health data have revealed an urban-rural disparity in the magnitude of the problem. While 10.7% of those urban households with a member living with psychotic disorders have had one member who has experienced *pasung* in their lifetime, in rural areas the rate is 17.7%. Even then, mental health advocates have low confidence in these figures, because survey respondents often under-report the prevalence of shackling due to stigma, and because of the high occurrence of 're-shackling' of patients who had been temporarily freed.

The widely publicised problem of shackling is symptomatic of the reality that access to quality services for mental health care is still very weak. The 2018 Riskesdas survey shows that while 85% of people living with psychotic disorders have had a history of treatment, only half of them routinely received medication. Meanwhile, for depressive disorder, only 9% of the population group received medication for their conditions.

Inequality in the variety and quality of psychiatric medications between urban and remote areas is a major problem. During a recent visit to Ende in East Nusa Tenggara province, I spoke to Dr Muna Fatma, a dentist and head of the local Health

Office (Dinas Kesehatan), who confirmed this. The city- and district-level procurement of psychiatric medicines is still dependent on central and provincial government stocks. The problem does not lie in the lack of financial capacity, but the limitation for community health centres (Puskesmas) to procure psychiatric medicine through e-catalogue access – which is the only avenue for most forms of procurement by a governmental institution. 'Puskesmas also have capitalisation funds, which can be used for procurement of pharmaceuticals, but the e-catalogue access is locked for them. Meanwhile, public-owned health facilities are not allowed to spend state budget outside of the e-catalogue system.' Those who suffer are the families in remote areas who have a family member living with severe mental illness – whose only reliable access to health care is through the Puskesmas.

This inadequacy in access to care and medication helps perpetuate the mistreatment of people living with mental illness. When a freed *pasung* patient relapses due to poorly medicated psychosis, terrified family members and neighbours, left to their own devices, might re-shackle the patient. Father Avent Saur of KKI, an NGO working on mental health in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, thus insists that people should not view shackling uni-dimensionally as a malevolent act. 'I understand why families would want to shackle their family members,' he said, stressing that a better approach would be to first fortify the access to community-level medical care and pharmaceutical availability under JKN, the national universal health care scheme.

In urban areas resources are also stretched, but for different reasons. Dr Nova Riyanti Yusuf, or Noriyu – a psychiatrist, novelist and parliamentarian from the Democratic Party – told me that in the major urban health facilities, available psychiatric medications are of high quality. 'In the Grogol [Soeharto Heerdjan] Mental Hospital, Jakarta, the medicines stocked there are top of the line!' She then listed down many patented, lat-

est-generation drugs, all available and fully covered by JKN for members who seek care in health facilities in the major cities. She also provided the context that in the rural and remote areas, the problem is not simply procuring the psychiatric medicine, because availability of psychiatric medications should be directly dependent on the prescribing competence of the clinicians in the local health facilities.

However, she added, this ready availability of medication in the urban areas is also going to worsen JKN's ballooning expenditure and thus its deficit. 'In the urban mental health facilities [like Grogol Mental Hospital], each outpatient visit would incur Rp1.5 million in JKN expenditure for a month's worth of medication. Let's say each day there are 100 outpatient visits in the hospital. That's Rp150 million per day, only in one mental hospital!'

The problem of overspending in cities and deficient services elsewhere is true for many health care issues, and is not limited to mental health care. As I wrote on the New Mandala website in February, JKN's pool of funds is currently in a dire state, with continuous deficits, a dependency on state funding, and a lack of participation from Indonesians who are healthy and affluent.

Amid these financial challenges, JKN's coverage of mental health care is actually diminishing. For instance, ever since JKN's commencement, the system's managing agency BPJS Kesehatan ruled out coverage for patients admitted to hospital due to self-harm, including suicide attempts and drug addiction. In December 2018, BPJS Kesehatan extended this exclusion to victims of violence, including domestic violence. Superficially this might be a good decision to save fiscal space, but it is short-sighted and devoid of a comprehension of mental health issues as being multifactorial and developing over long periods of time.

Fixing the mental health care system

The 2019 election was success-

ful in keeping mental health issues an *aib* – a shame – for the nation. However, politicians could take notes from Sandiaga Uno's campaign and learn that supporting mental health advocacy can be a political opportunity. This includes newly elected parliamentarians and members of Jokowi's cabinet: given that Jokowi has declared a focus on human capital development for his second term, addressing mental health issues should be a policy priority.

The problem, however, is that mental health is currently not the populist's issue of choice in Indonesia. This is in contrast to other countries which have established universal health coverage (UHC) schemes for their citizens, such as Australia or the UK, and where mental health care has been a recurring issue in elections.

Bagus Utomo from KPSI realises this, too. He wants KPSI and other mental health activists to focus on building grassroots demand and 'market creation' for mental health care, so that the issue gains political weight for Indonesian voters. Although KPSI still struggles with their meagre financial resources, they are committed to buying advertising space on Facebook to promote their fan page. Democracy, in their eyes, is something to be leveraged for advocacy.

Despite all these challenges, efforts to mainstream mental health issues in Indonesia's public policy still show promising signs. In 2014, the national legislature (DPR) passed the Law on Mental Health, in part due to the domestic and international attention given to *pasung*. Apart from criminalising shackling, the Law mandates the provision of mental health care access at community health centres (Puskesmas) as well as in community-based services beyond the health sector.

But not much has been done beyond the ratification of the Law. Apart from a 2017 Health Minister's Regulation (Permenkes) about the post-shackling management of mental health patients, there is an absence of supporting regulations. Noriyu, the psychiatrist and DPR member, is all too familiar with this problem. A draft

for a Governmental Regulation (RPP) on Mental Health, which would give practical effect to many of the Law's provisions, has been in active discussion ever since the ratification of the Law, but it is yet to be finalised. 'The ball is no longer in the legislators' court,' remarked Noriyu. 'It's in the executive's.' Without new regulations, Indonesia's mental health care governance will remain unchanged.

For a sensible public policy to promote public mental health, Noriyu emphasised the need to pay close attention to the new cabinet appointment for Health Minister and, following that, the head of the Mental Health Directorate within the ministry. 'We need to be aware of whom we're partnering with [when talking about the RPP] on the inside. We need to know what their track record is like ... Have they been part of the public mental health movement? Do they understand policy? ... [If legislators] have sparring partners who don't understand it, that'll make the discussion tough.'

Beyond the administration's policies, however, mental health advocacy should also grow. As a nation, we have to admit our failures in upholding the dignity of our weakest: those afflicted with severe mental illnesses. We have been harming them with our flawed policies. But even more sadly, we harm them more during the elections in which we seek our leaders.

This must change. But change will not come if Indonesian bureaucrats, legislators and journalists keep exploiting the mentally ill, instead of standing up for their human rights, actively removing the stigma attached to them, and using their power to promote sensible mental health policies. ♦

Dr Ade Prastyani (Asty) is a medical doctor who received her medical training at Universitas Indonesia. She completed postgraduate training in medical anthropology at the Australian National University. Her past and present work as an academic and researcher revolves around three major topics, namely primary health care, tobacco control and mental health. The above article is reproduced from the New Mandala website (<https://www.newmandala.org/mental-health-in-indonesia-short-on-supply-short-on-demand>).

The world economy in decline

The global economy is in decline despite the desperate efforts of central bankers to revive it by means of low-interest loans.

Prabhat Patnaik

THE European Central Bank in September pushed its benchmark interest rate to minus 0.5%, which means that if it gives a loan of 100 euros, then it would be paid back only 99.5 euros at the expiry of the loan.

This has started a new trend: in countries like Germany, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and even Greece, the yields on government bonds have been pushed into the negative region. Lenders to these governments, in other words, are willing to pay for holding government bonds. Longer-term bonds typically have higher yields than shorter-term ones, but in Germany now, even the 30-year government bond is offering negative yields.

Since the idea behind the European Central Bank's policy is to have a low-interest-rate regime – which, it is hoped, would cause a larger amount of investment to be undertaken, so that the level of aggregate demand and hence output and employment increase – the interest rate offered to depositors too will have to be lowered.

This would entail, on the whole, a regressive distribution of income, since, taking society as a whole, whatever net lending occurs across classes is from the working and middle classes (including the contributors to pension funds) towards the corporate sector; and this is irrespective of whether any productive investment occurs or not. A reduction in the interest rates therefore entails a net shift in income distribution from the working and middle classes (the creditors) towards the corporate sector (the debtors).

The lowering of interest rates has



The headquarters of the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. The ECB in September pushed its benchmark interest rate to negative territory in a bid to revive economic activity.

now gone to a point where even nominal rates have entered the negative region, a phenomenon that is quite unprecedented in the history of capitalism. It is obvious that in a cash-using economy, there are limits to the extent to which interest rates can be pushed down (unless cash holdings themselves begin to get taxed); this is because if people can hold cash which has a zero interest rate, then they will never hold deposits with banks or with any other financial intermediaries at less than zero rates. And if depositors have to be offered a non-negative rate, then the extent to which lending rates can be pushed down by banks is also limited. But it is a sign of the desperation in the ad-

vanced capitalist economies that interest rates are being pushed down even to negative regions in a bid to revive economic activity.

Bluntness of monetary policy

The need for such negative interest rates would not arise if governments could adopt fiscal measures for stimulating activity. But since international finance capital is opposed to fiscal deficits (the countries of the European Union have a fiscal deficit limit of 3% of GDP) and does not naturally approve of taxing capitalists (taxing workers and spending the proceeds would not help in expanding aggregate demand), fiscal measures are ruled out. Hence monetary policy remains the only instrument for stimulating aggregate demand.

This helplessness and desperation is evident in India too, where there have been five rounds of interest rate cuts

by the Reserve Bank of India till now, but to no effect. When the government finally decided to adopt some fiscal measures, all it did was to offer corporate tax concessions, which would actually be counter-productive. To the extent that such concessions are financed by a corresponding enhancement of taxes on the working people (or a reduction of transfers towards them), they would shrink rather than expand aggregate demand.

Ironically, even in Europe and elsewhere, the complete bluntness of the monetary policy instrument is being amply demonstrated. Even the *Financial Times* (14 October) is now talking of the global economy having entered a period of 'synchronised

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stagnation', 'with weak growth in some countries and no growth or a mild contraction in others'.

This bluntness of the monetary policy instrument arises from the fact that corporate investment is essentially interest-rate-insensitive: net investment occurs in response to the expected growth of the market, and if the market is expected to remain stagnant, then no amount of lowering of the interest rate, and hence of the cost of finance for the corporate sector, will bring forth an iota of net investment.

Of course monetary authorities may believe that lower interest rates would help in a different way, via the generation of asset-price bubbles. Such a bubble, to the extent that it makes the holders of the concerned asset feel wealthier (until the bubble collapses), may induce larger expenditure on conspicuous consumption, and thereby stimulate aggregate demand.

But this is a dicey proposition; besides, if at all there is some increase in conspicuous consumption via the wealth effect, it takes time. What is more, after 2008 the asset-price-bubble route for stimulating the level of activity in the real economy – which in any case is a reprehensible route compared with other ways of stimulating activity such as larger government spending on welfare schemes – has also lost its effectiveness as a stimulant.

It is not surprising in this context that the so-called 'headline economic indicators' have now slipped to their lowest levels since the spring of 2006. Considering the fact that in the interim, i.e., between those years and now, the world economy has continued to experience sluggish growth, the current fears of stagnation and recession are symptomatic of a protracted crisis of the system. In fact, the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s new managing director admitted in a speech in October that 'in 2019 we expect slower growth in nearly 90% of the world'. What is particularly striking is that even a country like Germany, which previously appeared to have escaped the crisis, is also facing the prospects of



A steel plant in Germany. The German economy, which previously appeared to have escaped the crisis, is also now facing a slowdown.

a recession now.

Bourgeois commentators adduce specific factors like the trade conflict between the US and China to explain the current slowdown. These, according to them, have dented the 'animal spirits' of the capitalists, adversely affecting their desire to invest in productive assets and hence precipitating the slowdown. An *Economic Times* report, for example, talks of the current situation being characterised by 'falling economic confidence'.

But such explanations, which see the crisis essentially as episodic, rather than structural and hence protracted, miss two vital points. Firstly, ever since 2008, the growth rate of the world economy has slowed down quite substantially; in fact, what has been happening in the world's largest economy, the US, has been aptly described by the analogy of a ball bouncing along the floor. Secondly, the trade tensions between the US and China are themselves a reflection of this protracted crisis of world capitalism. Donald Trump's aggressive protectionism is a means of enlarging the level of activity in the US, through an actual reduction in imports into the US as well as through pressurising other countries into providing greater market access to US goods.

The root of the current crisis lies not in the obstreperousness of a Donald Trump that precipitated the trade war with China and thereby led to 'falling economic confidence'. It

lies in the nature of neoliberal capitalism itself which has unleashed powerful income-inequalising tendencies. These tendencies have a contractionary effect on the level of aggregate demand both in the world economy as well as within particular countries. This contractionary effect had been kept in check in the period before 2008 because of a series of powerful asset-price bubbles within the US. With their collapse, however, the basic tendency towards an over-production crisis within neoliberal capitalism has revealed itself.

Since any such crisis affects high-cost producers first, countries like the US and the eurozone were its first victims, with countries in East and South Asia, to which outsourcing of activities had occurred from the advanced capitalist world because of their low wages, appearing initially to withstand it. But the very continuance of the crisis, and Trump's 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policy, have finally caught up with these Asian countries as well, because of which we are now in the process of moving towards a truly worldwide recession. This would start a whole new era of intense class struggles and powerful social transformations. ♦

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Both US and China losers in ongoing trade war, says study

A recent UNCTAD paper on the US-China trade war has made a preliminary assessment that both sides have sustained losses. However, a number of countries, notably Taiwan, Mexico and the European Union, have profitted from the resulting trade diversion effects.

Kanaga Raja

TARIFFS being imposed by the United States on China are economically hurting both countries, with US losses largely related to higher prices for its consumers, while China's losses are related to significant export losses, a new study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) says.

According to the study, 'Trade and trade diversion effects of United States tariffs on China', US tariffs on China have resulted in a decline in imports of tariffed products by about 25% in the first half of 2019.

While substantial, this figure also shows the competitiveness of Chinese firms, which, despite the substantial tariffs, were still able to maintain 75% of their exports to the United States.

The paper quantified the trade diversion effects for the first half of 2019 to be about \$21 billion, saying that these have brought substantial benefits to Taiwan Province of China, Mexico, the European Union and Vietnam.

The paper found that the hardest-hit sectors have been office machinery and communication equipment, with a total reduction of US imports from China in the order of about \$15 billion for the first half of 2019. Trade diversion effects in these sectors have been below average possibly because of lack of supply capacity outside China, said the paper.

'The results of the study serve as a global warning. A lose-lose trade war is not only harming the main contenders, it also compromises the stability of the global economy and future growth,' said Pamela Coke



A port in China's Jiangsu province. US tariffs have resulted in a strong decline in US imports from China.

Hamilton, Director of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities. 'We hope a potential trade agreement between the US and China can de-escalate trade tensions,' she added.

At a media briefing on 5 November, Alessandro Nicita, an economist at the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities and lead author of the paper, said the aim of the study was to provide some insights vis-a-vis three questions: (i) what sector has been hit the most in the trade war in relation to the US tariffs imposed on China; (ii) who is paying for these tariffs; and (iii) who has benefited from the trade diversion.

Asked whether US President Donald Trump has succeeded in bringing jobs back to the US, which was his goal in initiating the trade war with China, Nicita said he did not think so, mainly due to the trade diversion effects. 'So if you really want to bring back manufacturing jobs, bilateral tariffs [are] not really a good or the best instrument' because other

countries will replace China, he said.

According to the UNCTAD paper, economists generally agree that increases in bilateral trade costs, such as those resulting from the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, will result in lower trade, higher prices for consumers, and trade diversion effects.

By using recent import data from the US Census Bureau, the paper found empirical evidence for these arguments.

Adopting a simple identification strategy which relies on measuring differences in outcomes between goods that have been subject to additional tariffs versus goods that have not, and controlling for detailed sectoral specific effects, the paper found substantial evidence that US tariffs have resulted in a strong decline in US imports from China.

It also found that such a decline was partly replaced by a surge in US imports from elsewhere.

The analysis found implicit evidence that the cost of the tariffs has been generally passed down to US

consumers. However, it also found some indication that Chinese firms may have only recently started to react to the tariffs by reducing their export prices, thus absorbing part of the cost of the tariffs (about 8 percentage points).

However, the limited evidence found in this study would need to be substantiated by further data once it becomes available, said the paper.

Though the paper does not examine the impact of the most recent phase of the trade war, it warned that the escalation in the summer of 2019 is likely to have added to the existing losses.

The analysis in the paper also did not consider the impact of Chinese tariffs on US imports, but the qualitative results are most likely to be analogous: higher prices for Chinese consumers and losses for US exporters.

Background to trade war

According to the paper, over the course of 2018, the US administration started implementing a series of trade measures aimed at curtailing imports, first targeting specific products (steel, aluminium, solar panels and washing machines) and then specifically targeting imports from China.

The first phase of the US-China trade confrontation occurred in the early summer of 2018 when the US and China raised tariffs on about \$50 billion of each other's goods.

The impossibility of finding common ground to resolve the issues of trade balances and intellectual property rights resulted in the further deterioration of the US-China trade relationship. The US administration introduced additional tariffs in September 2018 to cover \$200 billion of Chinese imports, to which China retaliated by imposing tariffs on imports from the US worth an additional \$60 billion.

While these tariffs were initially due to rise from 10% to 25% in January 2019, in early December 2018 the parties agreed to hold off any retaliatory actions until March 2019. This truce held until June 2019 when the

US went ahead with the planned increase in tariffs from 10% to 25%, to which China responded by raising the tariffs on a subset of the products which were already subject to tariffs.

The retaliation further escalated in September 2019 when the US imposed 15% tariffs on a large subset of the remaining \$300 billion of imports from China not yet subject to tariffs. Further escalation is expected to take place in December 2019.

Impact of US tariffs on China

The UNCTAD paper analysed the impact of the two initial phases of the trade war. Phase one covered the products for which US tariffs were initially raised in July 2018. Phase two covered the products for which US tariffs were initially raised at the end of September 2018.

Phase one involved about \$60 billion worth of imports from China, comprising about 1,100 HS 8-digit codes. Phase two covered about \$200 billion worth of imports from China, comprising about 6,000 HS 8-digit codes.

The US tariff schedule comprises close to 11,000 HS8 tariff codes; thus phases one and two collectively covered about two-thirds of US HS8 lines.

The UNCTAD analysis makes use of data from the first quarter of 2017 to the second quarter of 2019. The paper noted that in 2018, the US imported from China about \$550 billion worth of goods, \$255 billion of which was in the first half of 2018. By comparison, the value of US imports from China in the first half of 2019 was less than \$230 billion, corresponding to a decline of about 10%.

Chinese exports to the US started to decline soon after the imposition of tariffs, especially for those products covered under phase one. For the products covered under phase two, the effects started to be evident from the first quarter of 2019.

By comparison, imports of goods not subject to tariffs have been relatively more stable and increased during the second quarter of 2019. According to the paper, one possible reason for such an increase is US importers stockpiling due to the possibility

of additional tariffs on the remaining products (which indeed happened in September 2019). Another possible explanation is that Chinese exporters were trying to maintain profit margins by increasing exports of non-tariffed goods. Another possibility relates to mis-invoicing products to avoid the tariffs.

According to the paper, office machinery has been the hardest-hit sector in the trade war. In this category, the imports of products subject to additional tariffs dropped by 65%. For other sectors, such as agri-food, communication equipment, and precision instruments, trade in the tariffed goods fell by more than 30%.

The paper found that one consequence of the US bilateral tariffs on China has been to increase US imports from elsewhere. The overall trade diversion effects observed in data for the first half of 2019 amount to about \$21 billion.

To put this figure in context, one needs to consider that the observed US imports from China in goods under the list of products of phases one and two accounted for about \$130 billion in the first half of 2018, but only about \$95 billion in the first half of 2019, resulting in a decline in US imports from China of \$35 billion (or about 25%), said the paper.

Therefore, of the \$35 billion import loss, \$21 billion (or about 63%) has been replaced by imports originating from other countries, while the remainder of \$14 billion was lost due to lower demand in the US and/or not enough capacity from the rest of the world.

The paper also noted that despite the tariffs, China has been able to preserve almost 75% of its trade in the products affected by the tariffs.

Taiwan Province of China was the largest beneficiary of the trade diversion effects of the US tariffs on China, accounting for additional exports to the US of almost \$4.2 billion in the first half of 2019. These were largely related to an increase in exports of office machinery and communication equipment.

Mexico's increase in exports to the US due to the tariffs on China was quantified at about \$3.5 billion, mostly in the agri-food, transport equip-

ment and electrical machinery sectors.

The European Union benefited by trade diversion effects of about \$2.7 billion, largely due to increases in exports in the machineries sectors.

Vietnam's benefits accounted for about \$2.6 billion and were mostly concentrated in communication equipment and furniture.

Trade diversion effects in favour of the Republic of Korea, Canada and India were smaller but still substantial (between \$0.9 and \$1.5 billion).

The remainder of the trade diversion effects was largely to the advantage of other South-East Asian countries (\$1.7 billion). The rest of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world were only marginally able to benefit from trade diversion effects.

The paper underlined that office machinery has been the hardest-hit sector in the trade war, with US imports from China falling by almost \$10 billion in the first half of 2019. Trade diversion effects for this sector are quantified at about \$4.5 billion, most of which to the advantage of Taiwan Province of China.

This leaves about \$5.5 billion of trade losses, said the paper. 'Given the magnitude of the decline in United States imports from China, and the world market dominance of Chinese firms in this sector, the fact that other countries were not able to supply for the loss of imports from China is not a surprising outcome,' it added.

Communication equipment and furniture are two other sectors where the increase in imports from other countries was not sufficient to replace the decline in US imports from China. In these two sectors, Vietnamese exporters benefited the most.

Trade diversion effects in the machinery sectors have been more diverse, with a substantial share of the increase in US imports coming not only from the East Asian region. For these sectors, Mexico and the European Union were the major beneficiaries of the trade diversion effects, as well as Japan, said the paper. ♦

Kanaga Raja is Editor of the South-North Development Monitor (SUNS), which is published by the Third World Network. This article originally appeared in SUNS (No. 9014, 7 November 2019).

The Malaysian Economy

Structures and Dependence

by *Martin Khor*

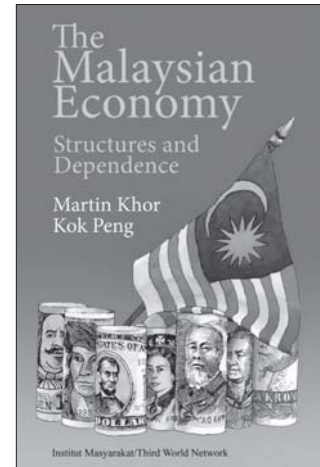
THIS book provides an analysis of the structures of the Malayan and the Malaysian economies using the perspective of dependence.

It analyses the structures of dependence in colonial Malaya established by the British during the colonial era, in foreign ownership of key sectors, in trade, finance, the public sector and technology. Estimates are provided on the amounts of surpluses transferred out of colonised Malaya under British rule.

The book then examines the post-colonial situation, as continuity as well as changes took place after Independence. It provides details on and changes in ownership and control of the Malaysian economy, and in trade, finance and technology-related issues. Methods by which economic surpluses have been

transferred out of the economy and the large amounts are meticulously described.

The framework used in this book distinguishes it from other works on the performance and transformation of the Malaysian economy. The present economy has many elements of the structures and dynamics described. This book is thus essential reading for those interested in knowing how the Malaysian economy was shaped in the colonial and post-colonial periods, and many of the features that characterise the present economy.



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Ecuador: IMF austerity programme sparks off protests and strikes

Ecuador has recently turned to the IMF for financial assistance to overcome its economic crisis. The results were predictable: the IMF's Extended Fund Facility has benefitted banks and powerful economic groups at the expense of the middle and working classes. *Wilma Salgado* explains.

ECUADOR has been going through an intense period of protests and strikes by social movements triggered by the government's decision to raise fuel prices. This policy was implemented in the context of an agreement signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in February 2019, which caused the economy to fall into a recession, leading to a loss of jobs and increase in poverty. Meanwhile large firms and powerful economic groups have benefited enormously.

Ecuadoran President Lenín Moreno has been cutting government spending since signing the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) agreement with the IMF. This policy has benefited multinational corporations, the banks and, in general, powerful economic groups at the expense of the middle and working classes, who are being pushed towards poverty and extreme poverty. Moreno subsequently reached an agreement with indigenous groups to cancel the decision to scrap fuel subsidies that sparked the protests, but the spirit of the movement also represents much more.

In the context of the IMF negotiations, the administration issued a law called the 'Organic Law to Foster Productivity, Attract Investment, and Create Jobs, Stability, and a Balanced Budget', which has been in force since August 2018. The law brought neoliberalism back to the country by instituting a policy to reduce the budget deficit and national debt, which have now become the top priorities.

On the day the Law entered into force, the private sector owed the government almost \$4.3 billion in unpaid



Protests and strikes erupted in Ecuador in response to the government's decision to raise fuel prices.

income tax alone – not counting interest. This figure is higher than the total credit granted by the IMF. The IMF loan is for \$4.2 billion and will be paid in instalments if the country is deemed to be complying with the IMF conditions.

The list of big winners from the new policy is topped by fossil fuel corporations, offshore phone companies, private banks and construction giant Odebrecht. Alex Bravo, the former manager of Petroecuador, who is known to still have accounts in offshore tax havens even though he is in prison, would also have over \$2 million in debt forgiven. We should also remember the acts of corruption associated with Odebrecht operations, for which Ecuadoran beneficiaries and accomplices have yet to stand trial. This stands in stark contrast with how this was handled in other countries, such as Peru.

Once these debts were partially

collected, the Servicio de Rentas Internas (SRI, the government tax authority) reported that \$1.25 billion had been taken in. However, it did not explain what happened with the remaining \$3 billion, which is twice the amount that the government estimates it will save from the fuel subsidies it eliminated as of 1 October 2019 – \$1.3 billion.

The total amount of debt collected by other public entities included in the aforementioned law is not known, nor is there any information on how much the many tax exemptions included in the law cost the government. There has been an utter lack of transparency in both the approval of the law and its true scope.

The legislature passed this law without requesting even the basic information outlined above. It did so with the votes of Alianza País – the movement started by former President Rafael Correa, with only the votes of

the Moreno supporters in the Assembly after the defection of all of Correa's supporters – and the Social Christian Party.

While the most powerful economic interests in the country have been enjoying debt reduction and tax exemptions, the current administration has been punishing the middle and working classes by cutting government spending under the agreement signed with the IMF.

Poor hit hardest

The Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policy gives details about 'the public policy programme for the next three years', which includes targets for reducing the fiscal deficit and national debt. These are much more drastic than the targets the IMF set for Argentina.

In order to reduce the debt burden and budget deficit, under its agreement with the IMF, the government has been cutting spending by laying off government workers, eliminating subsidies and drastically cutting programmes.

The last package announced by President Moreno on 1 October 2019 included the elimination of gasoline and diesel subsidies, causing gasoline prices to go up by 24% while premium diesel went up by 119%. In addition to the elimination of these fuel subsidies, the announced package included a broad array of measures such as tariff reductions, tax cuts and compensation cuts to government employees.

Elimination of the fuel subsidies is what hit the poor the hardest. We Ecuadorans have already been impacted by a stagnant economy and competition from imported goods, especially from neighbouring Colombia and Peru whose currencies have been devalued in recent months. The border provinces, particularly El Carchi on the border with Colombia, have been clamouring for government relief from a deep economic crisis, even



Ecuadoran President Lenin Moreno with then IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde. Moreno's administration has been cutting government spending since signing a loan agreement with the IMF.

resorting to ad hoc measures sometimes.

People's reaction to the IMF austerity package was immediate, particularly in the organised social movements: transport workers, the indigenous movement, workers' organisations and social movements in general.

The IMF agreement also includes the privatisation of certain state-run businesses, the opening of markets with Ecuador joining the Pacific Alliance, labour reform to make employment more precarious, tax reform and financial deregulation.

Meanwhile, government spending on agricultural development in the first half of 2019 was a paltry \$53 million – just a fraction of the \$422 million the financial system collects for every 1% of interest it charges customers. This is surprising given that the agricultural sector is such an important source of employment, accounting for 28.3% of jobs in the country.

Ecuador is in dire need of far-reaching financial reforms, including drastic cuts in interest rates – rates which everywhere else in the world go down when there is a need to stimulate the economy and boost production.

The policies the government has implemented under the IMF agreement have brought the economy to a standstill. The IMF itself predicts a 0.5% reduction in gross domestic

product (GDP) this year. Unemployment has continued to rise, with only 37.9% of the economically active population having adequate employment. The poverty rate has risen from 35.3% of the population in December 2014 to 43.8% in June 2019, meaning two million more people have fallen into poverty, for a total of 7.6 million Ecuadorans living in poverty out of a total population of 17.3 million. Meanwhile, the IMF policies are still geared towards serving the interests of creditor countries.

The policies adopted under IMF austerity packages do not resolve fiscal crises. Rather, they heighten them, forcing privatisations and the opening of the economy to foreign capital. Meanwhile, the structural problems in the countries concerned grow worse. The labour market becomes precarious, poverty and extreme poverty rise, wealth continues to concentrate, and the economy de-industrialises and reverts to raw material production. This encourages mining and fossil fuel extraction – extractivism – with its multiple harmful impacts on the environment, and leads to a deterioration of the living conditions of the people.

The main demand of the people in the streets was the repeal of the decree that raised fuel prices. Before finally agreeing to concede to this demand, the government responded by digging in its heels and declaring a state of emergency. It suspended rights and Constitutional guarantees for 30 days, stepped up repression and accused indigenous people of acts of vandalism, which the indigenous leaders say were actually perpetrated by pro-government infiltrators. ♦

Wilma Salgado holds a doctorate in economics and is an economic analyst. She has previously held such positions as Minister of Finance, Manager of the Deposit Guaranty Agency, Professor at the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, and staff economist at the Central Bank of Ecuador. She writes a column for the journal Ecuador Debate. The above article is reproduced from nacla.org, the website of the North American Congress on Latin America.

Corporate power: A David and Goliath struggle for the 21st century

This article focusses on transnational corporations (TNCs) as global actors, the structures and mechanisms that grant them impunity for wrongdoing, and the deepening and widespread popular resistance to TNC extractivism and destruction



The annual revenues of ExxonMobil are larger than the gross domestic product of many countries.

**Brid Brennan and
Gonzalo Berrón**

of the planet.

TRANSNATIONAL corporations (TNCs) have accumulated tremendous economic and political power in recent decades. Today TNCs play a vastly outsized and largely unwelcome role in the formation of the hegemonic narratives that shape our political and economic lives. As nation states' capacities to defend the public interest have been eroded, corporate power has fewer and fewer checks on its excesses and almost no accountability for wrongdoing.

The causes of this surge in TNC power are multiple. This article will focus on TNCs as global actors, the structures and mechanisms that grant them impunity for wrongdoing, and the deepening and widespread popu-

lar resistance to TNC extractivism and destruction of the planet. The article will describe some of the geopolitical dimensions of TNC power, notably the European Union's role as a guardian of this power. It will also briefly discuss the multiple strategies of resistance to this asymmetry of power – TNCs vs the State and vs the People – and will explain the key battleground at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the drive to create a 'legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights', which is entering a crucial negotiating phase.¹

What is corporate power?

Chilean President Salvador Allende's speech at the UN General Assembly in December 1972 de-

scribed how huge 'transnational' corporations were waging war against sovereign states and were 'not accountable to or regulated by any parliament or institution representing the collective interest ... In a word, the entire political structure of the world is being undermined'. His words, referring to destabilising and interventionist activities by large US corporate interests, were an early acknowledgement of the threat posed by recent incarnations of corporate power.²

Less than a year later, Allende was deposed in a CIA-supported coup and replaced by the brutal dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Chile was involuntarily reshaped as the laboratory for neoliberal corporate rule and power.

Decades of destructive and predatory operations of TNCs on all continents have been well documented: from mineral and oil extraction, land and ocean grabs, and deforestation to takeovers of public services and high-risk financial speculation. During this time, US and European (and increasingly Brazilian, Russian, Indian, Chinese and South African) TNCs have maintained and safeguarded dominance over the resources of the Global South.³

Business has largely continued as usual for the big banks in the time since the global financial crisis. TNC crimes have persisted and justice remains out of reach. A far-from-exhaustive list includes: Rana Plaza, Bangladesh; destruction around the Doce River in Brazil; the Marikana massacre of 36 miners at the Lonmin platinum mine in South Africa; bru-



A demonstration by survivors of the Union Carbide gas tragedy in Bhopal, India. Affected communities have been the first line of defence of human rights and the environment in response to TNC activities.

tal attacks on the communities of Standing Rock, US; the role of European arms corporations in fuelling the wars in the Middle East, and the increasing role of privatised military and security corporations in the securitisation of the EU's border regime and the detention of migrant and refugee peoples.⁴

How does corporate power work?

The Global Redesign Initiative (GRI) launched by the Davos World Economic Forum⁵ is just one example of a concerted effort to put TNCs and other private interests at the heart of political and multilateral processes, underpinned by the belief that deregulation, privatisation and competition endless growth is the only framework for any economy, even at the cost of peoples, workers and environmental rights (often referred to as neoliberalism).

And even as financial crises drew wide attention to the power of financial and other corporations (e.g., in the agriculture and commodities sector), less scrutinised were the ways in which national and international law have been skewed in favour of capital and transnational corporations. As Juan Hernandez Zubizarreta wrote, 'the reinterpretation of legislation in favour of capital and transnational corporations and the regulatory asymmetry this causes vis-

a-vis the rights of the unprotected majorities are undermining the rule of law, the separation of powers and the very essence of democracy'.⁶

The development of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the proliferation of free trade agreements (FTAs) and international and bilateral investment agreements in recent decades have ushered in an era of global corporate rule. Many of these agreements also carry the now notorious investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which allows corporations to use international arbitration courts to sue nation states for alleged discriminatory policies, for perceived loss of profits or for adjustments to contracts. The financial penalties involved can be catastrophic for many states.⁷

Hard protection for corporate interests gives TNCs greater powers than many states, compounding the wealth disparity – the annual revenues of Walmart, Shell and ExxonMobil, for example, are larger than the gross domestic product of countries such as Austria, South Africa and Venezuela.⁸

Corporations have also gained immense leverage through the policies of the global financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Similarly, immense tax breaks and elaborate mechanisms that facilitate tax avoidance and tax evasion have worked to TNCs' advantage. Overall,

current data suggest global annual tax losses of \$500 billion or more, representing over 20% of corporate tax revenues.⁹

Corporate economic and political power has also expanded and consolidated through processes of mergers and acquisitions. The mega-mergers of Bayer-Monsanto, China National Chemical Corporation (ChemChina)-Syngenta and DuPont-Dow grant three corporations virtual control of global seeds and agrochemicals.¹⁰

The EU – between corporate power and corporate capture

The asymmetrical nature of corporate power is rarely more visible than in the institutions and practices of the EU, where it is manifested in the corporate capture of policymaking; in the widespread 'revolving doors' practice where EU and other government officials take up high-level corporate functions on leaving office; in the easy and regular access to EU officials enjoyed by corporate leaders and lobbyists; and in the intense lobbying activities of TNCs at both EU and national levels. There is deep resistance to implementing a compulsory lobby register. This preferencing of corporate interests is also reflected in the EU's defence of European corporations around the world, and in its aggressive push for far-reaching trade and investment agreements that favour corporate interests.

Powerful associations represent corporate interests in the EU, sometimes on a sectoral basis (e.g., European Services Forum) and sometimes multisectorally (e.g., Round Table of Industrialists or Business Europe). These corporate forums, with their concentration of economic power, also leverage political power and influence as they have easy access to EU officials and policymakers at the EU and national levels. EU member states end up acting as conduits for corporate interests through the European institutions (the Council of the European Union, the European Council, the EU's Committee structure), as

documented in a recent report by Corporate Europe Observatory.¹¹

Like the US, the EU has been hostile to recent initiatives for binding regulations on TNCs, undermining its claims to be a defender and proponent of human rights and the public interest. On the floor of the UN Human Rights Council, the EU has staunchly defended corporate interests in the context of recent work towards a binding treaty on TNCs and human rights. The EU's spokesperson uses language and messaging that parallels the ideas of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the International Organisation of Employers. The individual member states have remained remarkably quiet since the vote in 2014 that led to the current process towards a treaty on TNCs and human rights, when every European member state on the UNHRC voted against the process. The EU's positioning at the UNHRC is described in *The EU and the Corporate Impunity Nexus*, a report by the European Network of Corporate Observatories.¹²

In her book *Shadow Sovereigns*, Susan George describes the opaque but politically powerful modus operandi of TNCs and corporate capture as we see in the EU: 'It's not just their size, their enormous wealth and their assets that makes the TNCs dangerous to democracy. It is also their concentration and cohesion, their cooperation and capacity to influence, infiltrate and in some areas virtually replace governments.'¹³

Why is corporate power a problem?

The reorientation of national and international law to favour capital and TNCs has compounded power asymmetries, undermining the rule of law and the primary role of the state in the protection of human rights, and allowing corporations to operate free from regulatory control and with almost total impunity.

Throughout the past four decades, TNCs' activities have deeply and destructively affected countries and peoples all over the world, as



A session of the Permanent People's Tribunal on TNCs in Southern Africa. The tribunal's judgement on mining and land grabs in Southern Africa culminated in a demand for binding regulations on TNCs.

documented in the cases submitted to the Permanent People's Tribunal in sessions on European TNCs in Latin America (2006-10) and on TNCs in mining and land grabs in Southern Africa (2016-18).¹⁴

At the same time, resistance, particularly from the communities affected by TNC activities, has grown and there have been significant initiatives to address violations of human rights and increasing corporate impunity.

Within the UN, the Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) was established in 1975, and sought to establish a framework of accountability for TNCs in relation to human rights. But the UNCTC was closed down in 1993 by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the insistence of the US. UN efforts resumed when Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the Global Compact with TNCs at the January 1999 World Economic Forum. But without hard rules, the Global Compact's self-regulation framework and voluntary guidelines have failed to stop corporate impunity.

Work on another self-regulation framework was initiated in July 2005, when Annan appointed John Ruggie as Special Representative to address the widening gap between the rule of law and the daily operations of TNCs. Ruggie's work resulted in the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) endorsed by the UNHRC in 2011. The EU and its member states have pushed hard to implement the UNGPs. But as evidence from all over

the world – including Europe – demonstrates, the UNGPs are failing to address the core of the problem. Their failings are obvious; voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not an adequate approach to tackle the current scale of corporate crime and impunity.¹⁵

Challenges to corporate power?

The communities affected by the operations of TNCs are central to efforts to address the asymmetry of corporate power versus states and citizens, and in launching a campaign for a binding treaty on TNCs and human rights. The campaign was established as the Global Campaign to Reclaim People's Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity (often referred to simply as the Global Campaign) – a convergence of affected communities, social movements and diverse sectors, 250 internationally¹⁶ – in 2012, with further broad support mobilised jointly with the Treaty Alliance, which was set up in 2014.

From the 1970s onwards, affected communities have been the first line of defence of human rights and the environment in response to TNC activities. Iconic cases of resistance are those relating to Union Carbide in Bhopal, India; Rana Plaza, Bangladesh; Chevron-Texaco in the Ecuadorian Amazon; Shell in the Niger Delta region (Ogoniland), Nigeria; Lonmin in Marikana, South Africa;

and most recently, Vale in Mariana and Brumadinho, Brazil.

The Global Campaign arose in the context of resistance campaigns of social mobilisation and protest against the mega-institutions of corporate power and neoliberal globalisation: the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank.

Several binding legal and juridical initiatives are being established in various parts of the world to address the power of corporations in specific countries. Some are already in place, such as the Binding Law on Due Diligence in France and the Right to Say No legislation (based on the principle of free prior informed consent) which has been given juridical status in a recent ruling by the High Court of South Africa.¹⁷

The UNGPs and voluntary self-regulation for TNCs have proved unfit for purpose and have been roundly rejected by affected communities. Instead, affected communities are insisting that new international, legally binding rules for TNCs and human rights are urgent, necessary and possible.¹⁸

What next?

Given the failure of corporate self-regulation and corporate social responsibility to rein in the power and impunity of TNCs, some UN member states are again working towards binding regulation. Ecuador, with the support of South Africa, submitted a resolution to the UNHRC in June 2014. This historic resolution was narrowly carried,¹⁹ and led to the creation of an open-ended intergovernmental working group (OEIGWG) mandated 'to put in place a legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights'.²⁰

In the intervening years, the preparatory work on the treaty brought three key groups to the floor of the UNHRC: the member states; social movements and affected communities; and corporate representatives such as the International Chamber of Commerce and the International Or-

ganisation of Employers.

The process towards the treaty has advanced significantly in the relatively short time since 2014. In October 2018, the chair of the working group, Ecuadorian Ambassador Luis Gallegos, presented a 'zero draft' of the treaty, paving the way for substantive negotiations. Ninety-six member states participated in the fourth session of the working group.

Parliamentarians have also mobilised at national and international levels. Some 350 legislators from the Global South and Europe have signed on to the Global Interparliamentary Network in support of a binding treaty and are active at national level urging governments to engage constructively and proactively in the process of negotiation.

The convergence of movements and networks in the Global Campaign is engaged in sustained activities at national and regional levels. When the UN working group meets in Geneva each year, the Global Campaign engages in a Week of Peoples' Mobilisation, with work both inside the UN buildings and outside to raise awareness of the process and to engage with the public, media and policymakers. This strategy has been crucial in ensuring the treaty process has remained on track and progressed to negotiation stage.

The Global Campaign, in broad consultation with affected communities, movements and experts from across the world, has also developed and submitted its own proposal for a treaty. This proposal text, 'Treaty on Transnational Corporations and their Supply Chains with regard to Human Rights' (2017), advocates for a robust and ambitious treaty that includes: direct binding obligations on TNCs; extraterritorial obligations of states; primacy of human rights over trade and investment agreements and the conditionalities of the international financial and trade institutions (e.g., the IMF, World Bank and WTO); state cooperation on the operations of TNCs along their entire supply chains; an international tribunal on TNCs and human rights; and mechanisms of enforcement and the rights

of affected communities.²¹

The treaty process will continue to face challenges. The global rise of authoritarianism and the rollback of democratic processes and displacement of democratic governments, as in Latin America and Asia, will likely have negative consequences. The EU member states will continue to threaten to withdraw from the process.

But movements will also continue to engage in shaping the content of the treaty. The Global Campaign, together with the Treaty Alliance, are working to ensure governments actively engage in the fifth session of the working group in October 2019, to keep pressure up for a robust treaty that will deal effectively with the impunity of TNCs and provide access to justice for affected communities.

Nobody underestimates the challenges that lie ahead. Neither governments nor people's movements have been here before. Preparing and realising any treaty is a colossal undertaking – but a treaty that addresses the concentrated power of TNCs with respect to their obligations on human rights is probably among the most challenging.

Transnational corporate power is formidable. Their influence casts a long shadow. Sustained political will and active participation and courage from governments will be crucial to turning back the juggernaut of megacorporate power and establishing a new international legal regime that gives primacy to human rights over corporate profit and corporate crime.

And this time, an organised movement, determined and global, will be a key factor in shifting the balance of forces and moving governments forward in this historic moment. ♦

This article is reproduced from the website of the Transnational Institute (TNI, www.tni.org), an international research and advocacy institute committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable planet.

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for the Philippines and, most recently, *RE-SPECT*, a Europe-wide anti-racist network for migrant domestic workers.

Gonzalo Berrón, TNI Associate Fellow, has played a leading role in coordinating Latin American movements resisting corporate 'free trade agreements'. He has been an integral part of ongoing discussions with civil society and progressive governments on building an alternative, just regional trade and financial architecture in Latin America. He worked as Coordinator of the Secretariat of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, and was until recently with the International Office of Central Única dos Trabalhadores – CUT (Unique Workers' Center), Brazil. Though Argentinian, he has been based in Brazil for many years.

Notes

1. The open-ended intergovernmental working group (OEIGWG) mandated at the UNHRC in June 2014 'to develop a legally binding instrument on TNCs and other business enterprises with respect to human rights' will further advance negotiations on the draft treaty text in its fifth session in October in Geneva.
2. In his address to the UN General Assembly in December 1972, President Allende highlighted, among others, the destabilising and interventionist activities carried out by the Kennecott Copper Corporation and the International Telephone & Telegraph Corporation (ITT). See <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/12/05/archives/allende-at-un-charges-assault-by-us-interests-chilean-president.html>
3. In what is a relatively recent development, big corporations (such as Vale in Brazil extending its reach to Mozambique) or similar corporations from the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries are repeating similar patterns of human rights violations and other corporate abuses – as has been well documented in the People's Permanent Tribunal (PPT) session on TNCs in Southern Africa. See <http://aidc.org.za/3rd-session-peoples-permanent-tribunal/>
4. This is documented in the Transnational Institute series on *Border Wars* (<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/border-wars>) and in the testimonies provided to the PPT on 'the violations with impunity of the human rights of migrant and refugee people' (<http://transnationalmigrantplatform.net/migrantppt/>).
5. Gleckman, H. (2018). *Multistakeholder Governance and Democracy: A Global Challenge*. Routledge, London, pp. 52-78. See also, by the same author, *Readers' Guide: Global Redesign Initiative* (2012). Boston Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts, Boston (available from <https://www.umb.edu/gri>).
6. Hernandez Zubizarreta, J. (2015). 'The new Global Corporate Law', in *State of Power 2015*. Transnational Institute, Amsterdam. <http://www.tni.org/stateofpower2015>
7. Olivet, C., Müller, B. and Ghiotto, L. (2017). *ISDS in Numbers*. Transnational Institute, Amsterdam. Corporations and investors have won 70% of the cases brought against Latin American and Caribbean countries – resulting in these states paying foreign companies \$20.6 billion, which could cover Bolivia's budget for health and education for four years.
8. Transnational Institute (ed.) (2014). *State of Power 2014: Exposing the Davos Class*. Transnational Institute, Amsterdam.
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12. European Network of Corporate Observatories (ENCO) (2018). *The EU and the Corporate Impunity Nexus: Building the UN Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights*. Published by Amis de la Terre France, CETIM, Observatoire des multinationales, OMAL and the Transnational Institute (TNI). https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/the_eu_and_corporate_impunity_nexus.pdf
13. George, S. (2015). *Shadow Sovereigns: How Global Corporations Are Seizing Power*. Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 18.
14. Both the PPT judgements on European corporations in Latin America (46 cases) and on mining and land grabs in Southern Africa (16 cases) culminated in a demand for binding regulations on TNCs. Available at: <http://www.enlazandoalternativas.org/IMG/pdf/TPP-verdict.pdf> and at http://aidc.org.za/download/ppt_2018/List-of-Cases-presented-in-previous-PPT-Hearings.pdf
15. Ozden, M. (2018). 'Transnational corporations and human rights: What is at stake in the United Nations debate over the Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights'. <http://www.cetim.ch/legacy/en/documents/bro2-stn-A4-an.pdf>
16. International Call to Action (2012). <https://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/call-to-international-action/>
17. The Xolobeni community and the Amadiba Crisis Committee defending their territory against titanium mining on the east coast of South Africa won a historic judgement in the Pretoria High Court on 22 November 2018 upholding their right to say no to mining. <http://aidc.org.za/magnificent-victory-for-the-right-to-say-no-to-mining/>
18. <https://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/call-to-international-action/>
19. The vote at the UNHRC was carried by 20 votes in favour, 14 against and 13 abstentions. In favour were: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, South Africa, Venezuela and Vietnam. Against: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Korea, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States. Abstaining: Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Gabon, Kuwait, Maldives, Mexico, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone and the United Arab Emirates.
20. Resolution 26/9 establishing the OEIGWG, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/082/52/PDF/G1408252.pdf?OpenElement>
21. Treaty on Transnational Corporations and their Supply Chains with regard to Human Rights (October 2017). Proposal from the Global Campaign to Reclaim People's Sovereignty, Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity. <https://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/binding-treaty-un-process/>

Building resilience in a time of climate change

Meena Raman warns that the days of 'business as usual' are over and that we will have to confront the problem of climate change squarely by building up climate resilience.

AS is well evident by now, we are facing a climate emergency.

The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit temperature rise to well below 2°C compared with pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.

The fact is that the planet's average surface temperature has increased by 1°C since pre-industrial times over 100 years ago. This change has been driven largely by increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere.

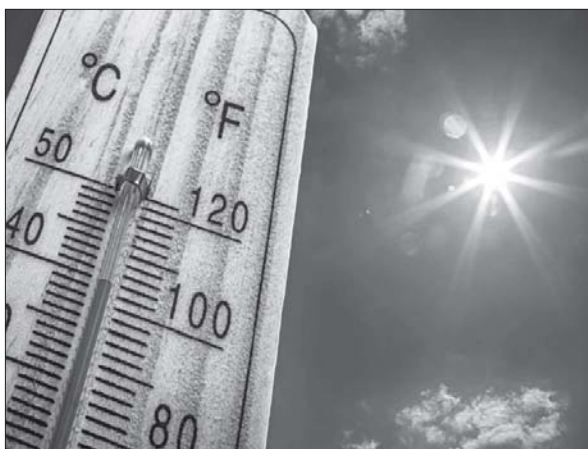
A 1°C rise does not seem like much. Yet, we are already witnessing dramatic changes in the climate, such as rainfall intensities which have not been heard of before, as well as extreme weather events which are unprecedented, including category 5 hurricanes most recently experienced in the Bahamas and Japan, with devastating consequences.

Most of the warming has occurred in the past 35 years, with the warmest years on record taking place since 2010.

A recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if emissions continue to increase at the current rate. Some have even predicted that the 1.5°C level will be breached much sooner rather than later.

It has been estimated that the emission cuts that countries have pledged to undertake from 2021 onwards to 2030 under the Paris Agreement process will take us on a path to

Meena Raman



The past decade has seen the warmest years on record.

a 3-4°C world. Such a scenario is indeed frightening and catastrophic in terms of the climate change impacts we will be witnessing. The world will not be the same as we know it now!

In a study published in October and reported by CNN,¹ researchers estimate (as a result of new advances in elevation modelling technology) that nearly three times as many people in coastal areas are at risk from flooding than previously thought.

The researchers from Climate Central (a US-based non-profit institution) predict that over the next three decades, hundreds of millions of people worldwide are at risk of losing their homes as entire cities sink under rising seas.

According to the study, global sea levels are expected to rise between 2-7 feet (0.6-2.1 metres) – and possibly more – over the course of the 21st century.

As many as 150 million people are currently living on land that will be below the high-tide line by 2050, three times more than previously

thought.² By 2100, land that is home to 200 million people could sit permanently below the high-tide line, rendering those coastal areas all but unliveable.

Asia is one of the regions most vulnerable to rising sea levels. Without enough sea defences, entire coastal cities could be wiped out in some places. It is reported that some 70% of the people at risk of yearly floods and permanent inundation are in eight Asian countries: China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Japan.

These are astonishing predictions, arising from the increasing rates of melting of major ice sheets such as from Greenland and the Antarctic.

According to the IPCC, Greenland is melting the fastest, and has lost more than 275 gigatons of mass on average per year between 2006 and 2015, while the even larger Antarctic ice sheet has had its mass loss tripled between 2007 and 2016 compared with the previous 10 years.

There is enough warning that coastal communities worldwide must prepare themselves for much more difficult futures than may be currently anticipated.

Yet, what is most startling is the apparent lack of sufficient preparedness in many cities and countries around the world in addressing these possible climate impacts.

According to another study,³ more than two in three cities around the world are already noticing the effects of climate change, from more heatwaves to worsening flooding, but few have effective plans in place to



The recent Hurricane Dorian left a trail of destruction in the Bahamas. Extreme weather events have been occurring with greater frequency.

deal with the threats.

Apparently, budget restrictions are a key reason cities say they are failing to act, particularly on long-term threats. Five hundred and thirty cities around the world (with a population of 517 million people) reported on the climate hazards they face to the London-based Carbon Disclosure Project, but just under half said they had done a vulnerability assessment on their climate risks.

Clearly, all this shows that we are not planning or preparing adequately or at all for the current and impending climate impacts.

Many questions arise in this regard.

Are our policy-makers and planners at all levels of government, including the architects and engineers, sufficiently aware of the current and impending impacts of climate change?

Are we planning for the future threats and disasters?

Even if there is some awareness about what the latest science is telling us, are policies, plans and measures being put in place to secure the future of our communities and countries from these climate risks and impacts?

Clearly, the time for 'business-as-usual' approaches or token measures is over. We can no longer ignore what the science is telling us. We have to sound the alarm bells even louder and

adapt (if possible) to the 'new normal' of climate change impacts. We have to also be ready to face situations where adaptation is no longer possible.

However, there are grave concerns that many communities and countries are not planning for the future risks.

We see the promotion of massive 'business-as-usual' infrastructure projects of highways, tunnels, reclamation works and building construction, with little or no regard for climate change risks and impacts. There does not seem to be enough consideration given to whether such projects contribute to or actually undermine climate resilience.

One country where the challenges of climate risks and impacts are already being taken on board at the highest level of government is Singapore. The Singaporean Prime Minister himself talked about climate change risks for the island state in his most recent National Day speech. It has been estimated that it would cost S\$100 billion or more to protect the island state against rising sea levels, and measures are being undertaken with a long-term perspective.

Surely, other countries should also be embarking on investing in adaptation plans and measures that build climate resilience. International funds such as the United Nations' Green Climate Fund have resources

to help developing countries cope with the climate challenge.

Clearly, all over the world, there has to be a reset button in the way we do things to secure our futures in a climate-changing world. We have to begin to relook at everything we do from a climate change lens. Otherwise, we will be making wrong investments that will not be sustainable in the long run, and which would be a colossal waste of scarce public resources.

Urgent adaptation plans that include ecosystem-based approaches are needed to ensure buildings, infrastructure and coastal areas are resilient to storms and increased rain, can withstand floods and sea level rise, etc. Forest and soil conservation measures, including the protection of watersheds and rivers to prevent and mitigate against floods, turning urban areas into 'sponge cities', and the strengthening of coastlines through mangrove forest protection and rehabilitation, are all vital parts of the plan. More comprehensive measures are also needed in dealing with droughts, heatwaves, water shortages, impacts on agriculture and health, extreme weather and disasters.

Clearly, a lot needs to be done. There is an urgent need to adapt, build climate resilience and address loss and damage resulting from climate change, in order to bring about a better and safer world. ♦

Meena Raman is Coordinator of the Climate Change Programme at the Third World Network. The above is an edited version of her opening remarks delivered at a public forum on 'Climate Change Impacts: How Prepared Are We?' held in Penang, Malaysia, on 2 November 2019.

Notes

- ¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/10/30/world/rising-sea-cities-study-intl-hnk-scli-sci/index.html>
- ² <https://opinion.inquirer.net/124941/asia-vulnerable-to-rising-sea-levels>
- ³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-cities-climate-change/as-climate-impacts-hit-cities-are-still-struggling-to-prepare-researchers-warn-idUSKBN1X10QI>

Earth nears irreversible tipping points

On the eve of a UN climate conference in Madrid, seven distinguished climate scientists have sounded the alarm that the risks of irreversible climate change are so great that they warrant the declaration of a state of planetary emergency.

Tim Radford

ON the eve of a global climate summit in Madrid, seven distinguished climate scientists have issued an urgent warning of approaching planetary tipping points: within a few years, they say, humankind could enter a state of potentially catastrophic climate change on a new 'hothouse' Earth.

They warn that dramatic changes to planetary stability may already be happening in nine vulnerable ecosystems. As these changes happen, they could reinforce each other and at the same time amplify planetary temperature rise, commit the oceans to inexorable sea level rise of around 10 metres, and threaten the existence of human civilisations.

Their warning is issued in a commentary in the journal *Nature*. Their conclusions are not – and perhaps cannot be – confirmed by direct evidence or the consensus of other scientists. They present an opinion, not a set of facts that can be scrutinised and challenged or endorsed by their peers.

And the seven researchers recognise that although such changes are happening at speed, some of the consequences of those changes will follow more slowly. Their point is that the risks of irreversible change are too great not to act – and to act now.

Happening now

But the fact that they have chosen to issue such an alarm at all is a measure of the concern raised by the rapid retreat of the Arctic ice, the steady loss of the Greenland ice cap, the damage to the boreal forests, the thaw of the polar permafrost, the slowing of a great ocean current, the loss of tropical corals, and the col-

lapse of ice sheets in East and West Antarctica.

Each of these happenings – and many more – was identified more than a decade ago as a potential 'tipping point': an irreversible change that would amplify global heating and trigger a cascade of other climate changes.

'Now we see evidence that over half of them have been activated,' said Tim Lenton of the University of Exeter, UK. 'The growing threat of rapid, irreversible changes means it is no longer responsible to wait and see.'

'It is no longer responsible to wait and see.'

The idea of a climate tipping point – a threshold beyond which dramatic climate change would be irreversible – is an old one. Two decades ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change examined the idea and proposed that, were the planet to warm by 5°C above the long-term average for most of human history, then it could tip into a new climate regime.

But in the last few decades, carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have gone from around 280 parts per million to more than 400 ppm, and global average temperatures have risen by more than 1°C. And the rate of change, driven by profligate use of fossil fuels that deposit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, has been alarming.

'It is not only human pressures on Earth that continue rising to unprecedented levels. It is also that, as science advances, we must admit that we have underestimated the risks of unleashing irreversible changes, where the planet self-amplifies global warming. This is what we are seeing already at 1°C global warming,' said Johan Rockström, who directs the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, and who is another signatory.

'Scientifically, this provides strong evidence for declaring a state of planetary emergency, to unleash world action that accelerates the path towards a world that can continue evolving on a stable planet.'

Inadequate pledges

In 2015, at a climate summit in Paris, 195 nations promised to contain planetary heating to 'well below' 2°C, and ideally to 1.5°C, by 2100. But the *Nature* signatories point out that even if the pledges those nations made are implemented – a 'big if', they warn – then they will ensure only that the world is committed to at least 3°C warming.

The scientists believe there is still time to act – but their dangerous tipping points are now dangerously close.

The arguments go like this. In West Antarctica, ice may already be retreating beyond the 'grounding line' where ice, ocean and bedrock meet. If so, then the rest of the West Antarctic ice sheet could collapse, and sea levels could rise by three metres.

New evidence suggests the East Antarctic ice sheet could be similarly unstable, and precipitate further sea

level rise of up to four metres. Hundreds of millions are already at risk from coastal flooding.

The Greenland ice sheet is melting at an accelerating rate, and once past a critical threshold could lose enough water to raise sea levels by seven metres. Even a 1.5°C warming might condemn Greenland to irreversible melting – and on present form, the world could warm by 1.5°C by 2030.

‘Thus we might have already committed future generations to living with sea level rises of around 10m over thousands of years. But the timescale is still under our control,’ the authors warn.

They also warn that a ‘staggering 99% of tropical corals’ could be lost if the planet heats by even 2°C – at a profound cost to both marine sea life and human economies.

They say 17% of the Amazon rainforest has been lost since 1970: a loss of somewhere between 20% and 40% could tip the entire rainforest into a destabilised state, increasingly at risk from drought and fire.

In the boreal forests of northern Asia, Europe and Canada, insect outbreaks, fire and dieback could turn some regions into sources of more carbon, rather than sinks that soak up the extra carbon dioxide.

Permafrost thaw could release ever-greater volumes of stored methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent, over a century, than carbon dioxide, and so on. The dangers multiply, and each one amplifies planetary heating.

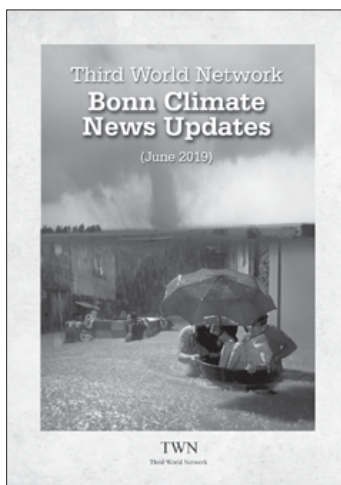
‘If damaging tipping cascades can occur and a global tipping point cannot be ruled out, then this is an existential threat to civilisation,’ the authors warn.

‘The stability and resilience of our planet is in peril. International action – not just words – must reflect this.’ – *Climate News Network* ♦

Tim Radford, a founding editor of Climate News Network, worked for The Guardian for 32 years, for most of that time as science editor. He has been covering climate change since 1988.

Bonn Climate News Updates

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This is a collection of 11 articles prepared by the Third World Network for and during the recent United Nations Climate Change Talks – the fiftieth sessions of the two subsidiary bodies under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 50) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 50) – in Bonn, Germany from 17 to 27 June 2019.

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Climate crisis rages as UN talks open

As the UN climate talks open against a backdrop of alarming reports that millions of people, largely from the Third World, stand to lose their homes and wherewithal due to climate change impacts, *Meena Raman* explains what we can expect from this conference.

AMIDST continuing protests in Chile, the annual climate talks under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), originally scheduled to take place in Santiago, will now kick off in Madrid, Spain, on 2-13 December, with the Chilean Minister of Environment, Carolina Schmidt, presiding over the talks.

Governments attending the 25th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 25), the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 15) and the second session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 2), will meet along with the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), to consider and decide on various issues, including a few unfinished items as well as further work dealing with the implementation of the Paris Agreement (PA), following the decisions adopted at last year's UN climate conference in Katowice, Poland.

Some of this work already began at the June 2019 intersessional meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies held in Bonn, Germany. In Madrid, Parties will continue to negotiate in order to adopt the final conclusions and decisions.

Backdrop of the talks

The Madrid talks are taking place against the backdrop of great turbulence on the planet, with recent extreme events of ravaging forest fires in California and Australia due to unusually high temperatures, very dry



Youth and climate change activists are taking to the streets demanding greater urgency and more action from their governments.

weather and strong winds, and historic floods in Venice with exceptional high tides. This year also witnessed major cyclones and floods which devastated many parts of the world including in Mozambique, the Bahamas, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Iran and South Africa.

The most recent Special Reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as well as articles in scientific journals continue to sound the alarm bells and dire warnings of exacerbated climate change impacts. (See the following articles in this issue on the IPCC Special Reports on land and on the ocean and cryosphere.)

New findings by researchers from the US-based non-profit Climate Central predict that over the next three decades, hundreds of millions of people worldwide are at risk of losing their homes as entire cities sink under rising seas.

It can be expected that these reports and events will feature prominently in the speeches of delegates in

the Madrid talks, especially those from developing countries which are already suffering, who will be calling for more effective action and support to address such adverse impacts.

Regrettably, the 2019 Emissions Gap Report (EGP) of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), released in November, paints a very bleak picture, pointing out that 'greenhouse gas emissions have risen 1.5 per cent per year over the last decade. Emissions in 2018, including from land-use changes such as deforestation, hit a new high of 55.3 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent'.

The report reveals that in order to limit temperature rise to 2°C as targeted by the Paris Agreement, annual emissions in 2030 need to be 15 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent lower than implied by current unconditional Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) pledged by countries under the Agreement. The PA further calls for efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C; to achieve this, emissions need to be 32 gigatonnes low-

er, according to the EGP.

‘On an annual basis, this means cuts in emissions of 7.6 per cent per year from 2020 to 2030 to meet the 1.5°C goal and 2.7 per cent per year for the 2°C goal,’ states the EGP. ‘To deliver on these cuts, the levels of ambition in the NDCs must increase at least fivefold for the 1.5°C goal and threefold for the 2°C.’

It is noteworthy that the EGP is focused on the NDCs under the PA, which will only begin to be implemented from 2021 onwards and with a majority of the pledges with a 10-year timeframe. There is no focus on what developed countries in particular were supposed to do in the pre-2020 timeframe under the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the pledges under the Convention (via the 2010 Cancun decision) or the emissions gap in the pre-2020 timeframe, which will certainly be highlighted by many developing countries in Madrid.

As emissions rise, and with a perception that governments are not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis, anger and frustration are mounting, especially among the youth and climate change activists as they continue to take to the streets demanding greater urgency and more action from their governments.

Their eyes will be on the Madrid talks with the hope that Northern governments in particular will act responsibly in doing more to cut their emissions and assist Southern governments to make a quick transition to a low-emissions path while they address adaptation, build climate resilience and tackle loss and damage.

Meanwhile, on 4 November, United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the US had begun the process to withdraw from the PA; its withdrawal will take effect one year from the delivery of the withdrawal notification to the UN (i.e., on 3 November 2020).

The announcement was nothing new, as US President Donald Trump had already made known in 2017 the intention to withdraw. Of concern, however, is that despite its impending withdrawal, the US will continue to negotiate as a major player in the



Adopted at the UN climate conference in Doha in 2012 (*pic*), the Doha Amendment, which gives effect to the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol, has yet to come into force.

UN climate talks, frequently calling the shots as was visible at COP 23 (in 2017) and COP 24 (in 2018), and leading its allies in the developed world to accommodate its concerns, often at the expense of developing-country interests.

Given the above issues, the Madrid talks will not be easy, and its outcomes will be keenly watched and debated. We set out below some of the key subjects to be discussed at the two-week meetings.

Stocktake on pre-2020 implementation and ambition

Developing countries had insisted at COP 23 that there be a stocktake of the commitments and actions by Parties under the Convention and the KP in the pre-2020 timeframe. In Madrid, a stocktake on pre-2020 implementation and ambition will take place in two segments: one is a technical session on 4 December, and the other on 10 December during the high-level segment which will involve ministers.

Developing countries are expected to highlight that the Doha Amendment, which gives effect to the second commitment period under the KP (2CP, from 2013 to 2020), has yet to come into force, given the lack of political will by major developed countries including Japan, Russia and

Canada. As of October this year, only 134 Parties have ratified the Doha Amendment, short of the 10 more countries required for it to enter into force.

Governments had agreed to the Doha Amendment in 2012, and for developed-country Parties to the KP to undertake aggregate emission cuts that would be at least 18% below 1990 levels under the 2CP, and to revisit their emission reduction commitments by the end of 2014, with a view to increasing their ambition. These key decisions led to developing countries agreeing to negotiations for what is now the PA, where all countries have emission reduction obligations.

This issue of the status of the Doha Amendment is on the CMP agenda, and developing countries can be expected to voice their unhappiness over the reneging on the decisions taken by developed countries.

At the June session in Bonn, the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) grouping said that developed countries must act expeditiously and responsibly to close the pre-2020 implementation gaps so that there is no transfer of burden to developing countries in the post-2020 period.

Another implementation gap that can be expected to be highlighted in Madrid is that on finance. At the June session, the African Group reminded

developed countries not to forget their commitments on the mobilisation of finance of \$100 billion per year by 2020.

In Madrid, developing countries are bound to stress that their finance needs are far from being met in order for them to implement their climate actions. References will be made to the October meeting held in Paris this year of contributors to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which saw 28 countries pledge resources to replenish the Fund for an amount of \$9.7 billion for the period 2020-23, which falls short of the initial resource mobilisation target of \$10.2 billion.

With only one more year to go on the implementation of pre-2020 commitments, whether the stocktake will be more than just a talkshop (as was the case in the past) remains to be seen.

Scope of the periodic review

Related to the issue of the implementation of pre-2020 commitments is another item on the agenda of the Subsidiary Bodies, known as the 'scope of the periodic review'.

Developing countries have been insisting on a review of the overall progress and implementation of actions of Parties in the pre-2020 period under the Convention and the KP, while developed countries have been opposing the need for a review, arguing that a mechanism is already in place under the global stocktake (GST) of the PA. (The GST is a review of the collective progress of Parties in meeting the goals of the PA, which will take place in 2023.) Developing countries have made clear that the GST will focus on the collective progress of Parties in implementing the PA in the post-2020 timeframe while a review of the pre-2020 implementation is necessary.

No agreement was possible on this issue at the June session, and Parties agreed to consider the matter further at the session in Madrid, where intense wrangling is to be expected between developed and developing countries.

Loss and damage – review of the Warsaw International Mechanism

An important agenda item under the Subsidiary Bodies is the review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with climate change impacts (WIM).

The WIM was established at COP 19 in 2013 in Warsaw, Poland, to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow-onset events. The implementation of the functions of the Loss and Damage Mechanism is guided by the Executive Committee, which currently acts under the guidance of the COP.

The Subsidiary Bodies at the June talks agreed on the terms of reference for the WIM review, which will now be undertaken in Madrid.

Given the spate of extreme weather events and the adverse impacts countries are already facing, and the recent reports from the IPCC, developing countries are expected to underscore the importance of the WIM and the need for its enhancement so that it will be effective and meaningful in responding to their needs. This includes the highly controversial aspect of facilitating and enhancing financial support to developing countries to avert, minimise and address loss and damage. Developed countries can be expected to oppose any new financial arrangements in this regard.

A separate but related matter regarding the WIM is over its governance. At issue is whether the WIM should be exclusively under the authority and guidance of the CMA (Parties to the PA) or whether it should also continue to be governed by the COP (Parties to the Convention) as well.

Developed countries take the view that given Article 8(2) of the PA, the WIM should be governed by the CMA, while developing countries wish the WIM to be under both the COP and the CMA, as they do not want the mandate and scope of the WIM to be limited.

Key to resolving the governance issue will be the outcome of the WIM review itself. Whether Parties can reach a conclusion on the governance of the WIM in Madrid remains to be seen.

Article 6 of the PA

Article 6 of the PA generally deals with what is known as cooperative approaches among Parties, which include the use of market and non-market mechanisms. Parties had initially agreed that rules for the implementation of the mechanisms would be adopted last year. However, negotiations in this area have proved difficult, contentious and complex, with Parties having different understandings on how the mechanisms are to be implemented. Hence, the rules to be applied in the implementation of Article 6 were not part of the package of decisions adopted in Katowice last year, and remain an unfinished agenda item to be completed in Madrid.

Under Article 6(1), it was agreed that Parties can 'choose to pursue voluntary cooperation in the implementation of their nationally-determined contributions (NDCs) to allow for higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions and to promote sustainable development and environmental integrity'.

Article 6(2) of the PA allows Parties to engage 'on a voluntary basis in cooperative approaches that involve the use of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs)' towards their NDCs, that promote sustainable development, ensure environmental integrity, transparency and avoid double-counting.

The reference to ITMOs has opened the door for the establishment of an international carbon market, despite years of lack of consensus on this among Parties in the negotiations under the COP.

The European Union (EU) has been a major proponent of this, along with Japan and other members of the Umbrella Group of countries, while countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela, among others, have strongly

resisted such mechanisms, primarily because they allow for offsets, i.e., where developed countries can transfer their mitigation actions to be undertaken by developing countries by paying for them, with the consequent emission reductions in developing countries counted as the emission reductions of developed countries.

There have also been concerns over the environmental integrity of the carbon markets and whether they will genuinely lead to overall reductions in emissions, with some developing countries such as the LMDC calling for limits on the use of market-based mechanisms in realising NDCs, especially in the context of the PA where developing countries also have obligations to undertake emission reductions.

A contentious issue is whether ITMOs can be used for purposes other than achieving the NDCs, such as the global market-mechanism scheme under the International Civil Aviation Organisation, known as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), which is not under the UNFCCC. Developed countries can be expected to support the recognition of CORSIA, with developing countries being opposed to this.

Also at issue is whether there can be a share of proceeds from the use of ITMOs that goes towards resourcing the Adaptation Fund (AF). The PA is silent on the matter, while there is an express provision for the Article 6(4) mechanism (see below) to contribute a share of proceeds to the AF. Developing countries led by the African Group and the Alliance of Small Island States have been calling for a share of proceeds to come from both the ITMOs and the Article 6(4) mechanism, while developed countries such as the EU, the US and Japan are against this.

Under Article 6(4), another mechanism has been agreed to in order to 'contribute to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and support sustainable development'. Some Parties view this mechanism as an expansion of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the KP.

Brazil has been a major proponent of this 'sustainable development mechanism'.

Whether and how the certified emission reduction credits (CERs) obtained under the CDM in the pre-2020 timeframe are to be treated under the PA is another major issue.

Article 6(8) of the PA deals with non-market approaches and states that 'Parties recognise the importance of integrated, holistic and balanced non-market approaches being available to Parties to assist in the implementation of their NDCs ... including through, inter alia, mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity-building, as appropriate...'. Further, the SBSTA was mandated to undertake a work programme to consider how to enhance linkages and create synergy between, inter alia, mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer and capacity-building and how to facilitate the implementation and coordination of non-market approaches. Some developing countries, led primarily by Bolivia, were major proponents of the non-market approaches, as a counter to the market-based approaches.

There will certainly be a push to ensure a balanced outcome in relation to the mechanisms under Article 6. A major challenge for developing countries is to arrive at cooperative approaches which are able to reflect the diversity of NDCs and account for future cooperative arrangements, and which will also ensure environmental integrity and prevent the double-counting of actions by Parties involved in these mechanisms.

At the June session, draft decision texts were developed on all the Article 6 items. According to Paul Watkinson, the SBSTA Chair (who has prepared a reflections note for the session), these texts contain a number of 'unresolved issues' which are 'still high'.

What decisions will finally be agreed to will be a major preoccupation in Madrid. Some Parties are expected to propose general guidance on Article 6, with the more technical issues being dealt with in the following years.

Finance issues

There are several important matters related to finance on the COP agenda. Among them are the following:

- *Long-term finance*

At COP 24, 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'.

It was also decided that '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 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels'.

An in-session workshop on long-term finance was organised during the June session and the secretariat has prepared a summary report on the workshop for the consideration of Parties. A note by the COP 24 President on the third biennial high-level ministerial dialogue on climate finance held in Katowice has also been made available. Parties are expected to consider these reports in their discussions.

Developed countries have traditionally opposed the continuity of discussions on long-term finance beyond 2020, given that this is a process under the Convention (as the PA deals with the post-2020 timeframe), while developing countries will be expected to emphasise the fact that the issue of long-term finance does not end in 2020, especially in the context of the decision adopted last year in Ka-

towice on initiating, in November 2020, deliberations on setting a new collective goal on finance from a floor of \$100 billion.

• *Adaptation Fund*

Last year, the CMA decided that the AF shall serve the PA effective 1 January 2019. The SBI was tasked with considering the membership of the AF Board, which will comprise members from developed and developing countries which are Party to the PA.

At the June session this year, consultations did not result in any conclusions following divergences among developed and developing countries, with developed countries wanting to change the composition of the AF Board. In this regard, during the June session, the African Group in particular expressed regret over the stance of developed countries. Parties will continue consideration of this matter at COP 25.

• *Matters related to the GCF and Global Environment Facility (GEF)*

Both the GCF and the GEF submit annual reports to the COP. The Parties are expected to provide guidance to these entities, so that they are accountable to the COP.

One major issue that developing countries are expected to stress is the eligibility of all developing countries to access finance from the GCF and the GEF (which are operating entities of the financial mechanism of the COP as well as the CMA). The US in particular has been trying to limit the access of some developing countries, such as Iran, China and Palestine, to the resources from these entities.

Enhanced transparency framework

Under Article 13(1) of the PA, Parties agreed to the establishment of an enhanced transparency framework (ETF) for action and support, with built-in flexibility which takes into account developing-country Parties'

different capacities.

In Katowice, the rules for the ETF were adopted, which provide comprehensive requirements regarding the information that must be reported by Parties in relation to their NDC implementation and how this information would be considered. It was also decided that Parties shall submit their first biennial transparency report and national inventory report, in accordance with the rules, at the latest by 31 December 2024. Parties had also agreed that the biennial transparency reports, the technical expert review and the facilitative multilateral consideration of progress be prepared and conducted in accordance with the rules.

The CMA requested the SBSTA to undertake further technical work on a number of issues in relation to how the information to be reported and reviewed should be organised and presented, and how programmes for the training of experts taking part in reviews should be elaborated. The task of the SBSTA is to produce the operational tools for Parties to be able to implement the agreed ETF, which comprises common reporting tables and common tabular formats.

A key issue in developing these common reporting tables and formats would be on how the flexibility provided to developing countries that need it could be reflected in the different outlines and made operational effectively.

Forum on response measures

The impacts of implementation of response measures are understood as the effects arising from the implementation of mitigation policies and actions taken by Parties under the Convention, the KP and the PA, and how these mitigation policies/actions could have impacts on countries, particularly developing countries, including cross-border impacts. COP 17 (in 2011) established a forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures.

Decisions were adopted in Katowice to relaunch the work of the

forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures (forum). The decisions identified four areas for the work programme, viz.: (a) economic diversification and transformation; (b) just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs; (c) assessing and analysing the impacts of the implementation of response measures; and (d) facilitating the development of tools and methodologies to assess the impacts of the implementation of response measures.

The decisions also provided for the creation of the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures (KCI) to support the work programme of the forum. The KCI had its first meeting in June this year and will hold its second meeting in Madrid. The report of the KCI and any recommendations made will be considered by the forum, which will then forward any conclusions to the COP, the CMP and the CMA for adoption.

In June, the forum began to develop a six-year work plan. However, opposition from developed countries prevented the work plan from being finalised. In Madrid, agreement has to be reached on the work plan so that the forum can start its work.

NDCs – common timeframes

In Katowice, it was agreed that Parties 'shall apply common timeframes to their NDCs to be implemented from 2031 onward'. The SBI was tasked with considering this matter in June, which it did, and a draft decision with several options will be further discussed at the Madrid session.

This issue was the subject of intense negotiations in Katowice, with developed countries pushing for a common timeframe for the NDCs of all Parties, while some developing countries were of the view that countries should have the flexibility to decide whether to have a five-year or 10-year timeframe. ◆

New IPCC report on climate change and land adopted by governments

A new report prepared by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that extreme weather and climate events may lead to increased displacement of peoples, disrupted food chains, threatened livelihoods and exacerbated stresses for conflict.

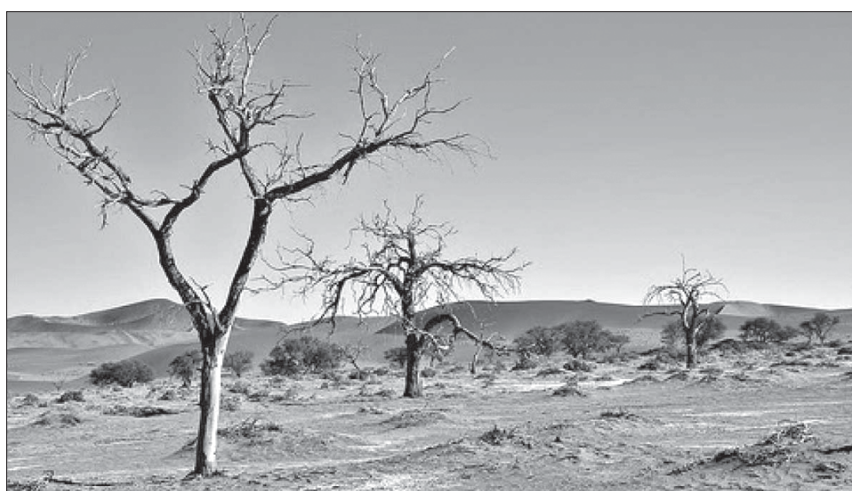
Indrajit Bose

MEMBER governments of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) adopted the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems (also called the Land Report) and the underlying assessment report on 7 August in Geneva at the 50th Session of the IPCC.

The IPCC meeting, which was initially scheduled to end on 6 August after it began on 2 August, spilled over to the next day, after five days of intense negotiations over the key messages from the report. The SPM was negotiated line-by-line among governments and authors of the report.

The SPM comprises four sections: (i) 'People, land and climate in a warming world'; (ii) 'Adaptation and mitigation response options'; (iii) 'Enabling response options'; and (iv) 'Action in the near-term'.

Under the section on 'People, land and climate in a warming world', the SPM highlights that since the 'pre-industrial period, the land surface air temperature has risen nearly twice as much as the global average temperature'. 'Climate change, including increases in frequency and intensity of extremes, has adversely impacted food security and terrestrial ecosystems as well as contributed to deser-



Climate change has contributed to desertification and land degradation in many regions.

tification and land degradation in many regions,' the SPM states.

The SPM also states that in 2015, about 500 million people lived within areas which experienced desertification between the 1980s and 2000s and that the highest numbers of people affected were in South and East Asia, the Sahara region including North Africa, and the Middle East including the Arabian Peninsula.

The SPM adds that 'warming has resulted in an increased frequency, intensity and duration of heat-related events, including heat waves in most land regions', and that 'frequency and intensity of droughts has increased in some regions (including the Mediterranean, West Asia, many parts of South America, much of Africa, and north-eastern Asia) and there has been an increase in the intensity of heavy precipitation events at a global scale'.

The report also states that climate

change has affected food security due to warming, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of some extreme events, and that the stability of food supply is projected to decrease as the magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events that disrupt food chains increase.

The report states that climate change can 'amplify environmentally induced migration both within countries and across borders, reflecting multiple drivers of mobility and available adaptation measures'. The report warns that 'extreme weather and climate or slow-onset events may lead to increased displacement, disrupted food chains, threatened livelihoods, and contribute to exacerbated stresses for conflict'.

Under the section on 'Adaptation and mitigation response options', the SPM states that 'many land-related responses that contribute to climate

change adaptation and mitigation can also combat desertification and land degradation and enhance food security. The potential for land-related responses and the relative emphasis on adaptation and mitigation is context specific, including the adaptive capacities of communities and regions. While land-related response options can make important contributions to adaptation and mitigation, there are some barriers to adaptation and limits to their contribution to global mitigation’.

The SPM states that while some response options have immediate impact, others take decades to deliver measurable results. ‘Examples of response options with immediate impacts include the conservation of high-carbon ecosystems such as peatlands, wetlands, rangelands, mangroves and forests. Examples that provide multiple ecosystem services and functions, but take more time to deliver, include afforestation and reforestation as well as the restoration of high-carbon ecosystems, agroforestry, and the reclamation of degraded soils,’ the SPM says.

It adds that ecosystem-based adaptation can promote nature conservation while alleviating poverty and provide co-benefits by removing greenhouse gases and protecting livelihoods, while there are limits to the deployment of land-based mitigation measures such as bioenergy crops or afforestation. ‘Widespread use at the scale of several millions of km² globally could increase risks for desertification, land degradation, food security and sustainable development,’ the report states.

In relation to solutions that help adapt to and mitigate climate change, the report states that while solutions contributing to combating desertification are site- and regionally specific, these ‘include inter alia: water harvesting and micro-irrigation, restoring degraded lands using drought-resilient ecologically appropriate plants; agroforestry and other agroecological and ecosystem-based adaptation practices’.

The report also states that the ‘reduction of food loss and waste can

lower GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions and contribute to adaptation through reduction in the land area needed for food production. During 2010-2016, global food loss and waste contributed 8-10% of total anthropogenic GHG emissions. Currently, 25-30% of total food produced is lost or wasted’.

In the section on ‘Enabling response options’, the SPM states that ‘policies that operate across the food system, including those that reduce food loss and waste and influence dietary choices, enable more sustainable land-use management, enhanced food security and low emissions trajectories. Such policies can contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation, reduce land degradation, desertification and poverty as well as improve public health. The adoption of sustainable land management and poverty eradication can be enabled by improving access to markets, securing land tenure, factoring environmental costs into food, making payments for ecosystem services, and enhancing local and community collective action.’

It is also stated that ‘insecure land tenure affects the ability of people, communities ... to make changes to land that can advance adaptation and mitigation’ and could result in increased vulnerability and decreased adaptive capacity. The SPM also refers to indigenous and local knowledge and says that agricultural practices that include such knowledge can ‘contribute to overcoming the combined challenges of climate change, food security, biodiversity conservation, and combating desertification and land degradation’.

Also, the SPM says that policies such as financial transfers, health and education spending, and subsidised credit could help address land rights and barriers to women’s participation in sustainable land management.

Under the section on ‘Action in the near-term’, the SPM states that ‘rapid reductions in anthropogenic GHG emissions across all sectors following ambitious mitigation pathways reduce negative impacts of climate change on land ecosystems and

food systems. Delaying climate mitigation and adaptation responses across sectors would lead to increasingly negative impacts on land and reduce the prospect of sustainable development.’

‘Acting now may avert or reduce risks and losses, and generate benefits to society. Prompt action on climate mitigation and adaptation aligned with sustainable land management and sustainable development depending on the region could reduce the risk to millions of people from climate extremes, desertification, land degradation and food and livelihood insecurity,’ the report states.

The other highlights, called headline statements, of the SPM include the following:

‘Land provides the principal basis for human livelihoods and well-being including the supply of food, freshwater and multiple other ecosystem services, as well as biodiversity. Human use directly affects more than 70% (likely 69-76%) of the global, ice-free land surface. Land also plays an important role in the climate system.’

‘Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) activities accounted for around 13% of CO₂, 44% of methane (CH₄), and 82% of nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions from human activities globally during 2007-2016, representing 23% of total net anthropogenic emissions of GHGs. The natural response of land to human-induced environmental change caused a net sink of around 11.2 GtCO₂ yr⁻¹ during 2007-2016 (equivalent to 29% of total CO₂ emissions); the persistence of the sink is uncertain due to climate change. If emissions associated with pre- and post-production activities in the global food system are included, the emissions are estimated to be 21-37% of total net anthropogenic GHG emissions.’

‘Changes in land conditions, either from land-use or climate change, affect global and regional climate. At the regional scale, changing land conditions can reduce or accentuate warming and affect the intensity, frequency and duration of extreme events. The magnitude and direction

of these changes vary with location and season.'

'Climate change creates additional stresses on land, exacerbating existing risks to livelihoods, biodiversity, human and ecosystem health, infrastructure, and food systems. Increasing impacts on land are projected under all future GHG emission scenarios. Some regions will face higher risks, while some regions will face risks previously not anticipated. Cascading risks with impacts on multiple systems and sectors also vary across regions.'

'The level of risk posed by climate change depends both on the level of warming and on how population, consumption, production, technological development, and land management patterns evolve. Pathways with higher demand for food, feed, and water, more resource-intensive consumption and production, and more limited technological improvements in agriculture yields result in higher risks from water scarcity in drylands, land degradation, and food insecurity.'

'Most of the response options assessed contribute positively to sustainable development and other societal goals. Many response options can be applied without competing for land and have the potential to provide multiple co-benefits. A further set of response options has the potential to reduce demand for land, thereby enhancing the potential for other response options to deliver across each of climate change adaptation and mitigation, combating desertification and land degradation, and enhancing food security.'

'Although most response options can be applied without competing for available land, some can increase demand for land conversion. At the deployment scale of several GtCO₂yr⁻¹, this increased demand for land conversion could lead to adverse side-effects for adaptation, desertification, land degradation and food security. If applied on a limited share of total land and integrated into sustainably managed landscapes, there will be fewer adverse side-effects and some positive co-benefits can be realised.'

'Many activities for combating desertification can contribute to climate change adaptation with mitigation co-benefits, as well as to halting biodiversity loss with sustainable development co-benefits to society. Avoiding, reducing and reversing desertification would enhance soil fertility, increase carbon storage in soils and biomass, while benefitting agricultural productivity and food security. Preventing desertification is preferable to attempting to restore degraded land due to the potential for residual risks and maladaptive outcomes.'

'Sustainable land management, including sustainable forest management, can prevent and reduce land degradation, maintain land productivity, and sometimes reverse the adverse impacts of climate change on land degradation. It can also contribute to mitigation and adaptation. Reducing and reversing land degradation, at scales from individual farms to entire watersheds, can provide cost effective, immediate, and long-term benefits to communities and support several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with co-benefits for adaptation and mitigation. Even with implementation of sustainable land management, limits to adaptation can be exceeded in some situations.'

'Response options throughout the food system, from production to consumption, including food loss and waste, can be deployed and scaled up to advance adaptation and mitigation. The total technical mitigation potential from crop and livestock activities, and agroforestry is estimated as 2.3-9.6 GtCO₂e.yr⁻¹ by 2050. The total technical mitigation potential of dietary changes is estimated as 0.7-8 GtCO₂e.yr⁻¹ by 2050.'

'Future land use depends, in part, on the desired climate outcome and the portfolio of response options deployed. All assessed modelled pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C or well below 2°C require land-based mitigation and land-use change, with most including different combinations of reforestation, afforestation, reduced deforestation, and bioenergy. A small number of modelled pathways achieve 1.5°C with reduced land

conversion and, thus, reduced consequences for desertification, land degradation, and food security.'

'Appropriate design of policies, institutions and governance systems at all scales can contribute to land-related adaptation and mitigation while facilitating the pursuit of climate-adaptive development pathways. Mutually supportive climate and land policies have the potential to save resources, amplify social resilience, support ecological restoration, and foster engagement and collaboration between multiple stakeholders.'

'Acknowledging co-benefits and trade-offs when designing land and food policies can overcome barriers to implementation. Strengthened multilevel, hybrid and cross-sectoral governance, as well as policies developed and adopted in an iterative, coherent, adaptive and flexible manner can maximise co-benefits and minimise trade-offs, given that land management decisions are made from farm level to national scales, and both climate and land policies often range across multiple sectors, departments and agencies.'

'The effectiveness of decision-making and governance is enhanced by the involvement of local stakeholders (particularly those most vulnerable to climate change including indigenous peoples and local communities, women, and the poor and marginalised) in the selection, evaluation, implementation and monitoring of policy instruments for land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation. Integration across sectors and scales increases the chance of maximising co-benefits and minimising trade-offs.'

'Actions can be taken in the near-term, based on existing knowledge, to address desertification, land degradation and food security while supporting longer-term responses that enable adaptation and mitigation to climate change. These include actions to build individual and institutional capacity, accelerate knowledge transfer, enhance technology transfer and deployment, enable financial mechanisms, implement early warning sys-

tems, undertake risk management and address gaps in implementation and upscaling.'

'Near-term action to address climate change adaptation and mitigation, desertification, land degradation and food security can bring social, ecological, economic and development co-benefits. Co-benefits can contribute to poverty eradication and more resilient livelihoods for those who are vulnerable.'

In the line-by-line negotiations of the SPM, intense exchanges among governments took place and several difficult issues had to be resolved through contact groups and 'huddles', which took long hours to reach consensus.

Some of the contentious issues included defining a global food system, importance of adaptation in agriculture for developing countries, importance of poverty eradication and ensuring food security in mitigation measures, the lack of land-urban interaction in the report, and representation of population growth and per capita consumption.

Among the governments which often intervened were India, Bolivia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, France, Germany, the European Union and Norway. (See following article.)

Following the adoption of the report, the United States made a statement at the closing plenary of the session, saying that its acceptance of the report did not imply that the US 'endorses' the findings or the contents of the report since there had been no line-by-line negotiations of the report. In relation to the SPM, the US said that since the underlying content was not subject to agreement, the approval of the SPM should not be understood as 'endorsement' of the report's key findings.

The Land Report is one of three special reports that the IPCC has prepared during its current sixth assessment cycle. The special report on 1.5°C global warming was released in October 2018, and the special report on the ocean and cryosphere in September 2019 (see the article 'IPCC report warns of ocean warming and dire impacts' in this issue). ♦

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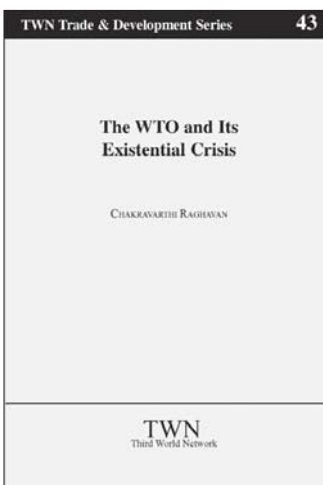
The WTO and Its Existential Crisis

by *Chakravarthi Raghavan*

THE multilateral trading system centred in the World Trade Organization (WTO) faces no less than an existential threat stemming from the United States' blocking of new appointments to the WTO's Appellate Body (AB) – a standstill which could effectively paralyze the entire mechanism for resolving trade disputes between countries.

While the US stance has been seen as a means to force through a reshaping of the WTO in Washington's own interests, it has also cast a spotlight on longstanding flaws in the WTO dispute settlement system. As this paper points out, dispute panels and the AB have in several cases been perceived as unduly altering the balance of WTO member states' rights and obligations, often to the detriment of developing countries.

The priority now, asserts the paper, is to 'call the US bluff' and address the AB impasse at the highest political decision-making level of the WTO. Separately, a review of the WTO dispute settlement regime, which is long overdue, should be undertaken in order to ensure that the system enshrines principles of natural justice.



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IPCC land report: Contentious issues raised and resolved

Several contentious issues arose prior to the adoption of the IPCC's Summary for Policymakers (SPM) of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land. The SPM was adopted in Geneva on 7 August after a hectic week of negotiations on a line-by-line basis, between authors of the report and governments.

Indrajit Bose

SPEAKING to the Third World Network, a developing-country negotiator said that the agriculture sector in developing countries had been under real attack in the SPM in terms of being negatively cast as a source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with grave implications for food security and the poor in developing countries. The negotiator told TWN that the SPM in this regard was considerably amended in the approved version and the importance of agriculture from the lens of adaptation was stressed.

The contentious issues which arose included texts on 'population and consumption' without any reflection of differentiation between regions; the approach to the 'global food system'; the lack of exploration of the link between 'urbanisation and land' in the report; focusing on mitigation over adaptation, thereby undermining food security; exceeding the limits of adaptation and its link to 'migration and conflicts'; 'livestock-related emissions'; and what 'near-term efforts' entail.

The discussions on these issues are summarised below, where the language of the final approved SPM is compared with the earlier version (of 30 July) which was presented and negotiated among the government delegates and the IPCC authors.

Population and consumption

The following paragraph in relation to population and consumption became contentious. Paragraph A1.3



An informal discussion on the text of the Summary for Policymakers of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land taking place at the IPCC's 50th session in Geneva in August.

read as follows: 'Rapid population growth and changes in per capita consumption have caused unprecedented rates of global land and freshwater use. Irrigation now accounts for (about) 70% of global freshwater use. Biodiversity has declined largely because of deforestation, cropland expansion and unsustainable land-use intensification. Since 1961, the consumption of food calories per capita globally has increased by about one third, and the per capita consumption of meat and vegetable oils has more than doubled, but over 820 million people are still undernourished. Dietary changes have led to about 2 billion adults becoming overweight or obese. At the same time, around 25-30% of total food produced is wasted.'

Some developing countries led by India objected to the lack of differentiation between developed and

developing countries in food consumption, dietary changes, nature of food production, irrigation and population growth. India expressed disappointment that the paragraph did not reflect differentiation. On food waste, India questioned the 25-30% figure and added that there existed different reasons for such waste, ranging from lack of technology to over-production and throwaway culture.

In response to India, the author said that any government would have to consider 'the global picture' as well.

India also wanted clarity around the year 1961 in the sentence, asking for the sentence to be framed in a historical context and suggesting the addition of 'since the pre-industrial period'. There were several objections by the developed countries to India's suggestions; however, a compromise was found in the form of a

Photo by IISD/Mike Muzurakis (enb.iisd.org/climate/ipcc50/6aug.html)

footnote after lengthy discussions in a contact group. The footnote clarified that data was available since 1961 and it did not imply that the changes started only in 1961. The footnote also clarified that land use changes have been taking place from well before the pre-industrial period.

Further, Zimbabwe sought clarity on what kind of per capita consumption was being talked about; Cuba suggested including economic or GDP growth as well as population; while Bolivia supported India and Cuba and said there was no focus on unsustainable production.

The United States wanted consumption defined and said that obesity was a multi-causal system and the sentence was misleading for attributing obesity to a single cause. Norway said the description of consumption and calories could be linked to climate change.

After further discussions, the paragraph was split into two and the following formulations were agreed:

‘A1.3. Data available since 1961* show that global population growth and changes in per capita consumption of food, feed, fibre, timber and energy have caused unprecedented rates of land and freshwater use with agriculture currently accounting for [about] 70% of global freshwater use. Expansion of areas under agriculture and forestry, including commercial production, and enhanced agriculture and forestry productivity have supported consumption and food availability for a growing population. With large regional variation, these changes have contributed to increasing net GHG emissions, loss of natural ecosystems (e.g. forests, savannahs, natural grasslands and wetlands) and declining biodiversity.’ (* The appended footnote reads: ‘This statement is based on the most comprehensive data from national statistics available within FAOSTAT, which starts in 1961. This does not imply that the changes started in 1961. Land use changes have been taking place from well before the pre-industrial period to the present.’)

‘A1.4. Data available since 1961 shows the per capita supply of vege-

table oils and meat has more than doubled and the supply of food calories per capita has increased by about one third. Currently, 25-30% of total food produced is lost or wasted. These factors are associated with additional GHG emissions. Changes in consumption patterns have contributed to about 2 billion adults now being overweight or obese. An estimated 821 million people are still undernourished.’

Land surface temperature increase

The following paragraph in relation to the difference between the rise of average land surface temperature and the global land-ocean average surface temperature increase saw a lengthy exchange among the governments and the authors.

Paragraph A2.1 read as follows: ‘Average land surface air temperature has increased by 1.52°C (very likely range from 1.39°C to 1.66°C) from 1850-1900 to 1999-2018. Over the same period global land-ocean mean surface temperature has increased by 0.86°C.’

Several governments including Luxembourg, Germany and Spain called for consistency with the IPCC’s Special Report on 1.5°C global warming (released in 2018), while others such as the US called for the use of numbers to be avoided, since the text gave the impression that the world had already crossed 1.5°C. In response, the authors said that it was a very important finding and that many did not understand that land is warming faster than the global average. The authors also ‘failed to understand’ why some of the governments did not want to tell the ‘truth’. In the discussions that continued, India proposed the addition of references to ‘pre-industrial times’.

After further discussions, the following formulation was agreed to: ‘Since the pre-industrial period (1850-1900) the observed mean land surface air temperature has risen considerably more than the global mean surface (land and ocean) temperature (GMST). From 1850-1900 to 2006-

2015 mean land surface air temperature has increased by 1.53°C (very likely range from 1.38°C to 1.68°C) while GMST increased by 0.87°C (likely range from 0.75°C to 0.99°C).’

Emissions from the global food system

A paragraph in relation to emissions from the global food system was discussed at length. Paragraph A3.6 read: ‘The global food system accounts for the majority of AFOLU (agriculture, forestry, and other land use) emissions but also energy emissions from storage, transport, packaging, processing, retail, and preparation of food (including food waste), totalling 22-35% of all anthropogenic emissions. Without intervention, emissions from the food system are projected to increase by about 30-40% by 2050, due to increasing demand based on population and income growth and dietary change.’

India said it was not comfortable with expressing emissions from the food system as a certain percentage of total anthropogenic emissions, and cited doubts regarding the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)’s life-cycle analysis used to determine such numbers.

(Similar discussions had taken place on a table titled ‘Net anthropogenic emissions due to AFOLU and non-AFOLU and global food systems’, where India had opposed the presentation of the emissions from the food system as a percentage of total anthropogenic emissions, citing doubts on the FAO data source. The reference was removed in the table and India wanted the related paragraph to also reflect the same.)

Saudi Arabia and Algeria wanted clarification on the 22-35% reference and stressed that when one spoke about industrial usage, it was different in industrialised countries and developing countries. Saudi Arabia also referred to the lack of mention of market-distorting subsidies provided by developed countries to their farmers.

The United Kingdom and Switzerland called for inclusion of all



A paragraph on emissions from the global food system was among the issues discussed at length prior to adoption of the Summary for Policymakers.

emissions from the entire global food system.

In relation to the second sentence, India stressed that food security was important for developing countries, and that the sentence was framed in a manner that appeared to make the vulnerable population responsible for future emissions, which was not acceptable. Brazil too said it was important to see the context of food security rather than talk of increasing emissions. Switzerland expressed sympathy for what India said and added that a more refined statement which included the production and consumption approach should be included.

Following the discussions, further formulations emerged which referred to total emissions from the AFOLU sector as a percentage of total net anthropogenic emissions rather than singling out the food system. The revisions also took into account large regional differences in the contributions to emissions from different components of the food system.

The following text was finally approved: 'Total net GHG emissions from AFOLU emissions represent 12.0 +/- 3.0 GtCO₂eq yr⁻¹ during 2007-2016. This represents 23% of total net anthropogenic emissions. Other approaches, such as global food

system, include agricultural emissions and land use change (i.e., deforestation and peatland degradation), as well as outside farm gate emissions from energy, transport and industry sectors for food production. Emissions within farm gate and from agricultural land expansion contributing to the global food system represent 16-27% of total anthropogenic emissions. Emissions outside the farm gate represent 5-10% of total anthropogenic emissions. Given the diversity of food systems, there are large regional differences in the contributions from different components of the food system. Emissions from agricultural production are projected to increase, driven by population and income growth and changes in consumption patterns.'

Urbanisation and future warming

A paragraph in relation to future warming and urbanisation trends became contentious. The proposed paragraph read: 'Future warming and urbanisation trends will enhance warming in cities and their surroundings (heat island effect), especially during heat waves. Night-time temperatures are more affected than daytime temperatures. Increased urbanisation will

also intensify extreme rainfall events locally or downwind of urban areas.'

India said that the impact of urbanisation and pressures on resources had been neglected and added that the report was missing this very significant dimension on urbanisation's impact on land. It called for a more balanced statement on urbanisation and pressure on natural resources. In response, the authors informed governments that the land report did not look at every relationship between urbanisation and land and that it was only focused on one aspect, which was the heat island effect. India then called for a knowledge gap to be included to reflect the limited scope of urbanisation in the report.

The paragraph was thus revised and approved: 'Both global warming and urbanisation can enhance warming in cities and their surroundings (heat island effect), especially during heat related events, including heat waves. Night-time temperatures are more affected by this effect than daytime temperatures. Increased urbanisation can also intensify extreme rainfall events over the city or downwind of urban areas.'

The issue came up again in a related paragraph that read: 'Urban expansion is projected to lead to conversion of cropland leading to losses in food production. A projected 5% conversion of current global cropland due to urban expansion by 2050 would correspond to a 7% loss of food production, integrated response option for addressing adaptation, desertification and land degradation, and good security relevant for urban areas include management of urban expansion, green infrastructure and urban and peri-urban food production. Some of these options can have mitigation co-benefits, including carbon sequestration and reduced cooling and transport energy demand, as well as contribute to ecosystem services and promoting sustainable development.'

India expressed concern that since the impact of urbanisation on land had not been studied in the report, the paragraph could be misinterpreted because aspects of popula-

tion, growth, incomes, consumption and food security also had close relationships with urbanisation. Following further discussions in a huddle, the revised text was approved with a footnote which says that the ‘land systems considered in this report do not include urban ecosystem dynamics in detail...’.

The approved paragraph with the footnote reads: ‘Urban expansion is projected to lead to conversion of cropland leading to losses in food production. This can result in additional risks to the food system. Strategies for reducing these impacts can include urban and peri-urban food production and management of urban expansion, as well as urban green infrastructure that can reduce climate risks in cities.’ (The accompanying footnote reads in full: ‘The land systems considered in this report do not include urban ecosystem dynamics in detail. Urban areas, urban expansion, and other urban processes and their relation to land-related processes are extensive, dynamic, and complex. Several issues addressed in this report such as population, growth, incomes, food production and consumption, food security, and diets have close relationships with these urban processes. Urban areas are also the setting of many processes related to land-use change dynamics, including loss of ecosystem functions and services, that can lead to increased disaster risk. Some specific urban issues are assessed in this report.’)

Land responses contributing differently to adaptation and mitigation

A headline statement (which is an overarching highlighted conclusion of the SPM) addressing responses contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation became contentious for treating adaptation and mitigation on par. The statement read: ‘Many land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation can also combat desertification and land degradation and enhance food security. The potential for land-related responses is

context specific. There are barriers to adaptation and limits to the contribution that land-related responses can make to climate change mitigation globally.’

India said that it would be appropriate to signal in a headline statement that the burden of adaptation is on a large part of the world’s population who are among the most vulnerable and that the potential for adaptation is separate from the potential for mitigation, which should be highlighted.

Following an exchange with the authors, the final approved statement reads: ‘Many land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation can also combat desertification and land degradation and enhance food security. The potential for land-related responses and the relative emphasis on adaptation and mitigation is context specific, including the adaptive capacities of communities and regions. While land-related response options can make important contributions to adaptation and mitigation, there are some barriers to adaptation and limits to their contribution to global mitigation.’

Exceeding the limits of adaptation and migration and conflicts

A proposed sentence on exceeding the limits of adaptation read: ‘Exceeding the limits of adaptation will trigger escalating losses or result in undesirable changes, such as forced migration (low confidence), conflicts or poverty (medium confidence).’

The contention arose over the robustness of the findings as there was very little literature available establishing links to migration and conflicts. The authors explained that there was not much literature on the subject. They added that a few studies talked of migration but they were not certain about the trigger as a result of exceeding the limits of adaptation, and that in relation to conflict and poverty, a few more studies were available and in any case the authors had reflected whatever literature was available.

The US said that these were multi-causal situations, which should be made clear. The US and Luxembourg said that there was no consensus in the literature that exceeding limits to adaptation would trigger migration, conflict and poverty. The European Union said it had concerns about including low-confidence statements. India said that it was important to reflect on limits to adaptation. Trinidad and Tobago said that irrespective of the fact that it was a low-confidence statement, it should be included.

Following discussions, the approved sentence reads: ‘In some situations, exceeding the limits of adaptation can trigger escalating losses or result in undesirable transformational changes (medium confidence), such as forced migration (low confidence), conflicts (low confidence) or poverty (medium confidence).’

Livestock-related emissions

A sentence on reductions in the emissions intensity of livestock products and its link to GHG emission reductions read: ‘Reductions in the emissions intensity of livestock products that also lead to absolute reductions in GHG emissions are useful mitigation strategies.’

During the discussions, India said that it had ‘mounting discomfort’ with references to areas without any differentiation between developed and developing countries. It said that it was not talking of differentiation in the political sense nor in a policy-prescriptive sense, but in the ways in which the world existed. The US proposed adding ‘different farming and pastoral systems can achieve reductions in the emissions intensity of livestock products’.

With still no agreement, governments huddled on the sentence and the following was eventually approved: ‘Different farming and pastoral systems can achieve reductions in the emissions intensity of livestock products. Depending on the farming and pastoral systems and level of development, reductions in the emissions intensity of livestock products

may lead to absolute reductions in GHG emissions.'

Near-term efforts

A paragraph on what near-term efforts comprise was discussed at length. The proposed paragraph read: 'Near-term capacity-building efforts for resource management and governance can strengthen technology transfer for mitigation and adaptation in the land sector. Knowledge transfer between stakeholders and policy-makers can help enhance the use of natural resources for food security under a changing climate. Education about sustainable land management practices, agricultural extension, and expansion of access to agricultural services to producers and land users can address land degradation.'

During the discussions, the EU asked why the focus was on strengthening technology transfer when the underlying chapter mentioned several things including deploying response measures.

India asked why a loaded term such as 'governance' figured in the text and added that many other things besides strengthening technology transfer were required. The word 'governance' was subsequently removed. India also said that adaptation was more important when one was dealing with poor farmers. Iran seconded India on the governance issue.

Bolivia said means of implementation (MOI) should be included in the sentence. In response, the EU said MOI was a standing technical term from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which meant money but in the context of the land report, they were not talking about money but about setting standards and deploying response measures. The US agreed with the EU.

Saudi Arabia said it would be important to add 'finance support' to the formulation. Egypt, Algeria, Chad, Angola, Brazil and China supported Saudi Arabia.

Following a huddle, a revised text was presented which included the team 'enabling financial mechanisms'

and the paragraph was approved. The approved text read: 'Near-term capacity-building, technology transfer and deployment, and enabling financial mechanisms can strengthen adaptation and mitigation in the land sector. Knowledge and technology transfer can help enhance the sustainable use of natural resources for food security under a changing climate. Raising awareness, capacity building and education about sustainable land management practices, agricultural extension and advisory services, and expansion of access to agricultural services to producers and land users can effectively address land degradation.'

Another sentence on whether prompt action could reduce vulnerability or risks of people was discussed at length. The sentence in question read: 'Prompt action on climate mitigation and adaptation aligned with sustainable land management and sustainable development could deliver immediate benefits in most countries and reduce the vulnerability of millions of people to climate extremes, desertification, land degradation and food and livelihood insecurity.'

'Near-term capacity-building, technology transfer and deployment, and enabling financial mechanisms can strengthen adaptation and mitigation in the land sector.'

Several developing countries objected to the use of the term 'vulnerability', and countries agreed to replace 'vulnerability' with 'risk'. Bolivia also wanted to include the word 'support' alongside 'prompt action', but this was objected to.

Further, India and Saudi Arabia stressed that adaptation was context- and region-specific, and that action required support in terms of finance, technology and capacity building.

This too was not agreed. Instead, Norway proposed the inclusion of 'short-lived climate forcers' and their role in near-term global and regional climate mitigation. India opposed the inclusion, saying these gases were being dealt with elsewhere.

The approved sentence reads as follows: 'Prompt action on climate mitigation and adaptation aligned with sustainable land management and sustainable development depending on the region could reduce the risk to millions of people from climate extremes, desertification, land degradation and food and livelihood insecurity.'

Economic value of ecosystem services

A sentence on the total annual economic value of the world's terrestrial ecosystem services was discussed at length. The sentence read: 'The total economic value of the world's terrestrial ecosystem services has been estimated to be approximately equivalent to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2011.'

Bolivia and India were opposed to the economic valuation in terms of GDP and said that various approaches existed to measure the value of ecosystem services. Bolivia said while it was not against the global GDP approach, the sentence gave the impression that this was the only approach. Tanzania also expressed concerns along the same lines. The sentence was changed to include 'in one economic approach', with the value in a footnote.

The approved sentence reads: 'In one economic approach, the world's terrestrial ecosystem services have been valued on an annual basis to be approximately equivalent to the annual global Gross Domestic Product.' (The accompanying footnote reads: 'i.e. estimated at \$75 trillion for 2011, based on US dollars for 2007.')

In other comments, developing countries called for replacing ecosystem services with ecosystem functions and services and poverty reduction with poverty eradication in the text, which were done in the relevant places. ◆

Edited by Meena Raman

IPCC report warns of ocean warming and dire impacts

A separate IPCC report examines how oceans are affected by climate change, pointing, among others, to increased warming, sea level rise and the risks confronting coastal communities.



'Coastal communities are exposed to multiple climate-related hazards, including... extreme sea levels and flooding.'

Indrajit Bose

THE Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, which was adopted by member states on 24 September in Monaco, has issued dire warnings on the warming of the oceans and the widespread shrinking of the cryosphere.

(The report defines the cryosphere as 'the components of the Earth System at and below the land and ocean surface that are frozen, including snow cover, glaciers, ice sheets, ice shelves, icebergs, sea ice, lake ice, river ice, permafrost and seasonally frozen ground'.)

Member states of the IPCC adopted the report's Summary for Policymakers (SPM) and the underlying assessment report at the 51st session of the IPCC in Monaco.

The adoption was 18 hours behind schedule, as the meeting, which began on 20 September, was initially

scheduled to end on 23 September. Instead, it spilled over to the next day, following five days of intense negotiations over the key messages to be presented in the report. The SPM was negotiated line-by-line among governments and authors of the report and saw some contentious issues being raised.

The SPM comprises three sections: (i) 'Observed changes and impacts'; (ii) 'Projected changes and risks'; and (iii) 'Implementing responses to ocean and cryosphere change'.

On observed changes and impacts, the SPM states that 'over the last decades, global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere, with mass loss from ice sheets and glaciers, reductions in snow cover and Arctic sea ice extent and thickness, and increased permafrost temperature'.

'It is virtually certain that the global ocean has warmed unabated since 1970 and has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate sys-

tem. Since 1993, the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled. Marine heatwaves have very likely doubled in frequency since 1982 and are increasing in intensity. By absorbing more CO₂ [carbon dioxide], the ocean has undergone increasing surface acidification. A loss of oxygen has occurred from the surface to 1000 m.'

'Global mean sea level (GMSL) is rising, with acceleration in recent decades due to increasing rates of ice loss from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, as well as continued glacier mass loss and ocean thermal expansion. Increases in tropical cyclone winds and rainfall, and increases in extreme waves, combined with relative sea level rise, exacerbate extreme sea level events and coastal hazards,' warns the SPM.

It also states: 'Coastal ecosystems are affected by ocean warming, including intensified marine heatwaves, acidification, loss of oxygen, salinity intrusion and sea level rise, in combination with adverse effects from

human activities on ocean and land. Impacts are already observed on habitat area and biodiversity, as well as ecosystem functioning and services.'

'Since the mid-20th century, the shrinking cryosphere in the Arctic and high-mountain areas has led to predominantly negative impacts on food security, water resources, water quality, livelihoods, health and well-being, infrastructure, transportation, tourism and recreation, as well as culture of human societies, particularly for Indigenous peoples. Costs and benefits have been unequally distributed across populations and regions. Adaptation efforts have benefited from the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and local knowledge,' states the SPM further.

'Coastal communities are exposed to multiple climate-related hazards, including tropical cyclones, extreme sea levels and flooding, marine heatwaves, sea ice loss, and permafrost thaw.'

It also adds though that 'the attribution of current coastal impacts on people to sea-level rise remains difficult in most locations since impacts were exacerbated by human-induced non-climatic drivers, such as land subsidence (e.g., groundwater extraction), pollution, habitat degradation, reef and sand mining'.

Under the section on 'Projected changes and risks', the SPM highlights that 'global-scale glacier mass loss, permafrost thaw, and decline in snow cover and Arctic sea ice extent are projected to continue in the near-term (2031-2050) due to surface air temperature increases, with unavoidable consequences for river runoff and local hazards. The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets are projected to lose mass at an increasing rate throughout the 21st century and beyond. The rates and magnitudes of these cryospheric changes are projected to increase further in the second half of the 21st century in a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario. Strong reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades are projected to reduce further changes after 2050'.

The SPM also warns that 'Over



A glacier in Switzerland covered with tarpaulins to reduce melting. 'Over the last decades, global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere, with mass loss from ice sheets and glaciers...'

the 21st century, the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions with increased temperatures, greater upper ocean stratification, further acidification, oxygen decline, and altered net primary production. Marine heatwaves and extreme El Niño and La Niña events are projected to become more frequent.'

According to the SPM, sea level will continue to rise at an increasing rate. 'Extreme sea level events that are historically rare (once per century in the recent past) are projected to occur frequently (at least once per year) at many locations by 2050 in all RCP, especially in tropical regions.' (RCPs or 'representative concentration pathways' are scenarios which describe alternative trajectories for greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting atmospheric concentration from 2001 to 2100.)

'A decrease in global biomass of marine animal communities, their production, and fisheries catch potential, and a shift in species composition are projected over the 21st century in ocean ecosystems from the surface to the deep seafloor under all emission scenarios. The rate and magnitude of decline are projected to be highest in the tropics....,' cautions the SPM further.

Under the section on 'Implementing responses to ocean and cryo-

sphere change', the SPM highlights that the 'Impacts of climate-related changes in the ocean and cryosphere increasingly challenge current governance efforts to develop and implement adaptation responses from local to global scales, and in some cases pushing them to their limits. People with the highest exposure and vulnerability are often those with lowest capacity to respond'.

The SPM also states: 'The far-reaching services and options provided by ocean and cryosphere-related ecosystems can be supported by protection, restoration, precautionary ecosystem-based management of renewable resource use, and the reduction of pollution and other stressors. Integrated water management and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches lower climate risks locally and provide multiple societal benefits. However, ecological, financial, institutional and governance constraints for such actions exist, and in many contexts ecosystem-based adaptation will only be effective under the lowest levels of warming.'

'Coastal communities face challenging choices in crafting context-specific and integrated responses to sea level rise that balance costs, benefits and trade-offs of available options and that can be adjusted over time. All types of options, including

protection, accommodation, ecosystem-based adaptation, coastal advance and retreat, wherever possible, can play important roles in such integrated responses.'

The SPM also highlights that 'Enabling climate resilience and sustainable development depends critically on urgent and ambitious emissions reductions coupled with coordinated sustained and increasingly ambitious adaptation actions. Key enablers for implementing effective responses to climate-related changes in the ocean and cryosphere include intensifying cooperation and coordination among governing authorities across spatial scales and planning horizons. Education and climate literacy, monitoring and forecasting, use of all available knowledge sources, sharing of data, information and knowledge, finance, addressing social vulnerability and equity, and institutional support are also essential.'

Areas of contention

The SPM was adopted only after some difficult, line-by-line negotiations. A number of contentious issues had to be addressed through contact groups and huddles.

Among the areas of contention were the establishment of a link between the ocean report and the IPCC's special report on 1.5°C warming (SR1.5), scenarios assessed in the ocean report, description of 'high mountain regions', the lack of adequate mention of small island developing states (SIDS) in the SPM, and discussion around the term 'governance'.

In relation to a reference to SR1.5, a proposed sentence in the draft SPM read: 'This assessment reinforces findings in IPCC SR1.5 and SRCLL (Special Report on Climate Change and Land), and IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) (very high confidence).'

Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation were opposed to the sentence. Saudi Arabia said that it had no problem with the 1.5°C limit, but was against references to SR1.5 in the

ocean report since SR1.5 had several limitations which were highlighted in the SR1.5 report. A long discussion ensued and the following compromise was arrived at: 'This report reflects the state of science for ocean and cryosphere for low levels of global warming (1.5°C), as also assessed in earlier IPCC and IPBES reports.' Saudi Arabia was also opposed to referencing SR1.5 in other sections of the SPM and compromises were found after intense negotiations.

The RCP scenarios assessed in the report were also questioned by several governments including Saudi Arabia and Ecuador. The primary concern related to using findings from two extreme scenarios (RCP2.6 and RCP8.5) and ignoring other scenarios (RCP4.5).

A footnote was added to clarify why only two scenarios were primarily used: 'This report primarily uses RCP2.6 and RCP8.5 for the following reasons: These scenarios largely represent the assessed range for the topics covered in this report; they largely represent what is covered in the assessed literature...; and they allow a consistent narrative about projected changes. RCP4.5 and RCP6.0 are not available for all topics addressed in the report.'

Several developing countries such as India and Bhutan were of the view that the report focused too much on the Arctic and the description of 'high mountain regions' was not adequate. The solution arrived at was on the need to expand high mountain regions when underlying literature supported it, and a footnote was revised to this effect. The addition in the footnote said: 'For a list of high mountain regions covered in this report, see Chapter 2.'

Sentences dealing with high mountain regions were either expanded or elaborated on, such as the following:

- 'Glacier retreat and snow cover changes have contributed to localised declines in agricultural yields in some high mountain regions, including Hindu Kush Himalaya and the tropical Andes.'

- 'High mountain aesthetic and

cultural aspects have been negatively impacted by glacier and snow cover decline (e.g. in the Himalaya, East Africa, the tropical Andes).'

Another issue that gained prominence in the negotiations was inadequate mention of SIDS in the SPM. Following the discussions, SIDS were included in the following sentences:

- 'Human communities in close connection with coastal environments, small islands (including Small Island Developing States, SIDS), polar areas and high mountains are particularly exposed to ocean and cryosphere change, such as sea level rise, extreme sea level and shrinking cryosphere.'

- 'The low-lying coastal zone is currently home to around 680 million people (nearly 10% of the 2010 global population), projected to reach more than one billion by 2050. SIDS are home to 65 million people.'

- 'Many low-lying megacities and small islands (including SIDS) are projected to experience historical centennial events at least annually by 2050 under RCP2.6, RCP4.5 and RCP8.5.'

SIDS and countries affected by tropical cyclones also wanted exclusive reference to tropical cyclones, and the SPM was adjusted accordingly. For example, the following sentences were added:

- 'Increases in tropical cyclone winds and rainfall, and increases in extreme waves, combined with relative sea level rise, exacerbate extreme sea level events and coastal hazards.'

- 'Anthropogenic climate change has increased observed precipitation, winds, and extreme sea level events associated with some tropical cyclones, which has increased intensity of multiple extreme events and associated cascading impacts. Anthropogenic climate change may have contributed to a poleward migration of maximum tropical cyclone intensity in the western North Pacific in recent decades related to anthropogenically-forced tropical expansion. There is emerging evidence for an increase in annual global proportion of Category 4 or 5 tropical cyclones in recent decades.'



What does Greta Thunberg mean when she says ‘equity’?

If there is one word which consistently appears in Greta Thunberg’s speeches, it is surely ‘equity’. This insistence on fairness in the determination of how much sacrifice the rich and poor countries must make, given the historical responsibility of the rich countries for the current climate crisis, has never been fully accepted by the West. *Nathan Thanki* argues that if we are not insistent on such an equitable approach, then we are essentially telling millions of people that their lives do not matter as much as the lifestyles of a privileged few.

GRETA Thunberg has some memorable quotes that now adorn thousands of protest placards and Instagram posts. However, one word which she has mentioned consistently in her speeches – from the speech at last year’s UN climate conference in Katowice that made her a household name to her latest speech at the UN Climate Action Summit – has been given little to no attention, despite its being the key to climate action.

That word? Equity.

To put it as simply as possible, equity is about fairness.

You’ve probably noticed that in the discourse about climate change, in particular climate action, there’s a lot of use of the word ‘we’. But there’s a problem with this, which my friend Daniel Voskoboynik describes in his excellent book *The Memory We Could Be* as ‘the hollowness of we’.

This hollowness is everywhere around us. You see it in all the talk about saving the future, while in the present, people are already dying in a world stricken by climate change. When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s ‘Land Report’ came out in August, there was a Wired.com headline: ‘We’re eating this planet to death’. But 1 billion people go to bed hungry each night. 3.8 billion survive on less than \$5 a day, and 26 individuals own as much as the poorest half of humanity.

So, who are the ‘we’?

You’ve all heard that 100 companies are responsible for 70% of emissions. That’s one way of cutting



The industrial countries, with a combined 20% of the global population, are responsible for around 80% of all emissions, ever.

the cake. Another is that the world’s richest 10% make 52% of the world’s income and are responsible for 50% of emissions; the poorest 50% get only 8% and are responsible for 10% of emissions.

Even though there is massive inequality within the industrialised countries of the Global North, it is also true that the overwhelming majority of the richest 10% are there, and the poorest 50% are almost entirely in the global majority countries of the South. The 40% of the ‘global middle class’ are in fact very poor – half of them earn less than \$20 a day and many earn less than \$3 a day. They are almost all in the Global South.

The US, with 4% of the world population, is still responsible for around 15% of all current emissions. From 1960-2005, the US emitted over 213,000 metric tons of carbon diox-

ide (MtCO₂), 26% of total global emissions. China emitted 88,000 MtCO₂, 10.7% of global emissions. The US emitted 720 tons of CO₂ per person per year from 1960-2005 – more than 10 times China’s emissions during the same period, and 90 times Kenya’s. US production-based emissions per person are 2.3 times higher than those of the EU and China, while its consumption-based emissions are almost three times higher than China’s.

Broadly speaking, the industrial countries, with a combined 20% of the global population, are responsible for around 80% of all emissions, ever. They have grown immensely wealthy and powerful as a result of the systematic plunder of the Global South – from slavery to colonialism to present-day imperialism.

This immense ‘historical respon-

sibility' is the basis for what climate justice movements have come to call 'climate debt'. The Northern countries owe reparations for denied development opportunities, and for impacts as a result of the warming they've caused and from which they've benefitted.

Now, as Greta often reminds us, the IPCC shows us there is not much 'carbon budget' left in the atmosphere beyond which the threshold of a 1.5°C temperature increase would be breached. The size of the remaining carbon budget depends on what probabilities we are willing to accept. The IPCC says that to have a 'reasonable' 66% chance of staying below 1.5°C, we need to cut global emissions by 50% within 12 years (and even this assumes vast amounts of unproven and potentially dangerous 'negative emissions technologies'). We need to get as close to zero as possible, as soon as possible, while socially just, people-led natural solutions draw down carbon from the atmosphere into soil and forests.

Our question of course is: how to do this? Climate justice movements have long talked about what a fair response to the crisis looks like, and have maintained that responsibility should be allocated in a fair way between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor people within countries. Wealthy countries and elites that have caused the climate problem must do the most to fix it, and those who have done the least to cause it but are most affected must be given support to cope.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also makes clear that all countries must contribute to climate action in accordance with their (common but differentiated) historical responsibility and current capacity. These are what we refer to as equity principles. But this has never gone down well with the US, which has sought to shirk its responsibility since the Convention entered into force in 1994. George Bush Sr best expressed this attitude when he said 'the American way of life is not up for negotiation'. It's just a shame that this way of life is killing



Greta Thunberg.

the rest of us.

To cut the long and horrible story of climate negotiations very short, the US eventually succeeded in instigating a 'Great Escape' of all developed countries from the targets and timetables approach of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (which it negotiated but never ratified). It managed to do this through a range of underhanded means, from espionage to cutting aid to propaganda to divide-and-rule.

The result was the 2015 Paris Agreement. Obama's Special Climate Envoy Todd Stern was very clear about the Agreement when negotiations began – he said 'if equity is in, we're out'. The Agreement lacks a clear system to determine what is fair and equitable between rich and poor countries – instead leaving each to be their own judge and jury. The result in terms of climate is that we're on track for 3-4°C warming. For this, the US inserted a clause that means it refuses to accept liability for damages resulting from its historic pollution.

The mitigation required by 2030 for a reasonable chance of staying on the 1.5°C pathway is around 35 gigatonnes (Gt). The mitigation so far pledged for 2030 is about 3 Gt. There's a huge 'gap', which is as big as it is because of historic pollution and decades of inaction from the polluters. But the way it is framed pushes responsibility from rich to poor.

It is possible to determine what a fair allocation of effort to bridge this gap would be. A broad coalition have developed a 'fair shares' methodology based on equity principles. There is a helpful online calculator developed by the Climate Equity Reference Project which allows the user to adjust the settings for different assumptions such as the start date from which

to begin measuring historical responsibility. It determines each country's capacity to reduce the emissions it will put into the atmosphere from now on, by considering incomes across the population. So, incomes of people who can only cover basic needs are not counted (a large part of the populations in poor countries). Incomes above \$7,500 per person per year are counted towards a country's capacity, and high incomes, e.g., above \$50,000, can be counted at a proportionally higher rate – similar to our tax systems.

When you run the numbers, it quickly becomes apparent that a fair allocation of emissions reductions globally requires industrialised countries to reduce domestic emissions to as near as possible to real zero as quickly as possible, and to simultaneously make it possible for poor countries to avoid emissions while they develop (e.g., build renewable energy systems, hospitals, schools, environmentally friendly industries etc.).

The UK, with the third-highest-emitting per capita lifestyle and where many of the world's mining giants are domiciled, has pledged to 'net'-zero by 2050 – not a fair share. Zero is not enough, and 'net' is not real zero. An actual fair share would be negative 202%, i.e., 202% below 1990 levels, by 2030. It can't do that all domestically, it would have to enable the excess reductions in other countries.

We can and should debate terms like development, but what we say when we use them in the context of equity is more intuitive – we're talking about the right to a dignified life. A right to food, water, land, energy, decent work in decent conditions. These are basic rights. If we're not insistent on an equitable approach, we are essentially telling millions of people that their lives don't matter as much as our lifestyles.

Greta put it even more clearly when she condemned a system in which 'the suffering of the many pays for the luxury of the few'. ♦

Nathan Thanki is an editor of The World At 1°C (worldat1c.org), an initiative of the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice. This article is reproduced from worldat1c.org.

War on the world

Industrialised militaries are a bigger part of the climate emergency than you know.

Murtaza Hussain

Originally published on 15 September 2019. Republished with permission from The Intercept (<https://theintercept.com/2019/09/15/climate-change-us-military-war/>), an award-winning non-profit news organisation dedicated to holding the powerful accountable through fearless, adversarial journalism. Sign up for The Intercept's Newsletter (<https://theintercept.com/newsletter>).

OVER a century before we reached the brink of ecological catastrophe, Rabindranath Tagore had a glimpse of where we might be headed. Tagore, an Indian author and cultural reformer who lived during the period of British colonialism, was among the last of a generation able to examine the industrialised world from the outside. He issued one of the earliest and most eloquent warnings about the precarity of a world sustained, like ours today, on the twin pillars of industrial consumption and industrial warfare. On a sea voyage to Japan in 1916, Tagore witnessed an unfathomable event that seems almost mundane to us today: an oil spill. To him, it was a jarring image of an earth destroyed by humanity's unbridled pursuit of power, now supercharged by the tools of modern science.

'Before this political civilisation came to its power and opened its hungry jaws wide enough to gulp down great continents of the earth,' Tagore wrote in *On Nationalism*, his 1917 book of essays, 'we had wars, pillages, changes of monarchy and consequent miseries. But never such a sight of fearful and hopeless voracity, such wholesale feeding of nation upon nation, such huge machines for turning great portions of the earth into mince-meat, never such terrible jealousies with all their ugly teeth and claws ready for tearing open each other's



US Army tanks in Baghdad. The war in Iraq led to a spike in carbon dioxide emissions through US military activity and also resulted in widespread poisoning of the Iraqi environment through the use of toxic munitions.

vitals.'

The climate emergency we are tipping into today – the tearing open of our mutual vitals – is a product of our collective failure to adhere to limits. An economic system that demanded endless growth and endless consumption was always too much to ask from a planet whose resources are finite. Yet, as Tagore recognised, the same avarice and contempt that led us to war against the earth would also lead to catastrophic, endless wars among peoples. At the time of his writing, World War I was underway. Tagore saw that conflict as the first of the modern wars that showed us the great power we had gained to destroy the natural world along with our fellow humans. The massive military industries created during that conflict pointed to an even more inhuman future that might be in store.

'The gigantic organisations for hurting others and warding off their blows, for making money by dragging others back, will not help us,' Tagore wrote. 'On the contrary, by their crushing weight, their enormous cost, and their deadening effect upon the living humanity, they will seriously

impede our freedom.'

Until his death in 1940, Tagore wrote about the dangers of militarism, race hatred, and a brutal type of industrial development that had begun to disfigure the natural world. The industrialisation of warfare has now given us powers to destroy other human beings and the earth itself on a scale surpassing even Tagore's warnings. Even those whose lives have been dedicated to the project of American militarism have begun to recognise the destruction being wrought. In the era of climate crisis, the relationship between environmental destruction and the destruction of human life that Tagore decried in his writings has become perhaps the central issue of our time.

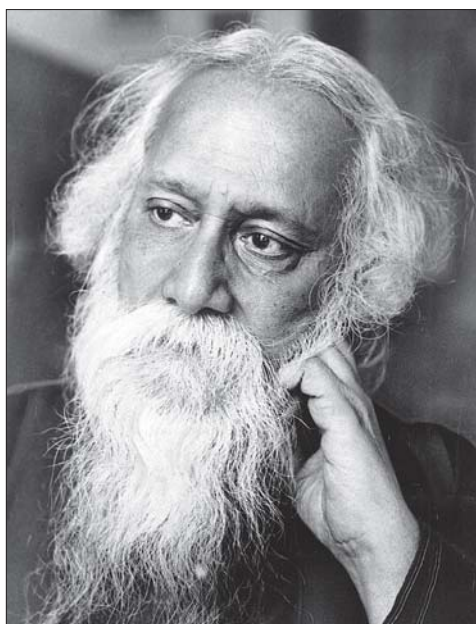
It may not come as a surprise that the largest industrial military in the history of the world is also the single biggest polluter on the planet. A recent study from Brown University's Costs of War project surfaced this startling fact: The US Department of Defense has a larger annual carbon footprint than most countries on earth. With a sprawling network of bases and logistics networks, the US mili-

tary is the single biggest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world aside from whole nation-states themselves. 'Indeed, the DOD is the world's largest institutional user of petroleum and correspondingly, the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world,' the report notes. If the Pentagon were a country, it would be the world's 55th biggest emitter of carbon dioxide. And its main purpose – warfare – is easily its most carbon-intensive activity. Since the present era of American conflicts began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the US military is estimated to have emitted a staggering 1.2 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. For comparison, the entire annual carbon emissions of the United Kingdom are roughly 360 million tons.

That massive additional burden on the planet might be justifiable were it all being done in the name of vital national security interests, but the biggest components of the US military's carbon dioxide footprint have been in wars and occupations that were almost entirely unnecessary. To put it crudely: The US poisoned the planet for vanity projects.

Take, for example, the occupation of Afghanistan, where after 18 years the United States may be close to cutting a peace deal with the Taliban. While the initial war was widely accepted as a necessary response to the September 11 attacks, the nearly two decades of fighting since then seem to have served no political purpose. From an American perspective, a better peace deal could have been reached in 2001, when the Taliban had nearly disbanded in the face of an international military offensive. Instead of sensibly concluding a deal then and declaring Afghanistan a victory, the United States decided to embark on an endless war and occupation. The costs have been tremendous: The Taliban was revived from near-death, at least 110,000 people have been killed, and the environmental toll has been massive.

In addition to emitting millions of tons of carbon dioxide during the



Rabindranath Tagore (pic) issued one of the earliest warnings about the precarity of a world sustained on the twin pillars of industrial consumption and industrial warfare.

war, the US military footprint contributed more directly to the immediate destruction of the Afghan environment. Deforestation has accelerated amid the chaos of the war and, through trash burning and other means, the US armed forces released toxic pollutants into the air that are blamed for sickening Afghan civilians and causing chronic illnesses among US veterans.

The environmental havoc wreaked by the war in Iraq has been even worse. Not only did the war lead to a spike in carbon dioxide emissions through US military activity, it resulted in the widespread poisoning of the Iraqi environment through the use of toxic munitions and the same so-called burn pits on military bases that were used in Afghanistan. The environment has become so toxic in some places that it has led to elevated rates of cancer, as well as crippling birth defects – terrible individual punishments inflicted on innocent future generations. A British doctor who co-authored two studies on the environmental impact of US military operations in Fallujah said that the city's population suffers 'the highest rate of genetic damage in any population ever studied'.

Much of this impact can be

blamed on the use of depleted uranium munitions by US forces. Despite vowing to cease their use, a study by the independent monitoring group Airwars and *Foreign Policy* magazine found that the military continued to use the toxic munitions during its most recent bombing campaign in Syria.

The fact that fossil fuel emissions have been the major driver of climate change adds another grim irony to these wars. For decades, the heavy US military footprint in the Middle East has been justified by the need to preserve access to the region's oil reserves. The industrial extraction of those same reserves has been one of the major drivers of global carbon dioxide emissions.

In other words, we have been killing, dying and polluting to ensure our access to the same toxic resource most responsible for our climate disruption. It took this perfect symmetry between industrial warfare and industrial exploitation of the earth to bring about the unspeakable emergency we now face.

The phenomena of endless war and climate change have benefitted from another shared indulgence: public indifference. To be clear, it's not that people don't care. Before the Iraq War began, millions went into the streets in a last-ditch effort to prevent the invasion. There has been a vibrant environmental movement in the United States for decades.

Over time, however, the raging wars abroad and stories about distant ecological catastrophes have become background noise. Even today, as genuine disaster stares us in the face, neither subject is the primary focus of our media or political discourse. Part of this seems to be based on who has suffered so far. Just as the terrible burdens of war have fallen mostly on foreign countries – as well as a small, volunteer military from the United States – the first stages of the climate crisis have mainly impacted distant places with brown-skinned populations like Brazil, Bangladesh, the Maldives and the Bahamas. As long as the crisis stays away from the



An oilfield in Iraq. '[T]he heavy US military footprint in the Middle East has been justified by the need to preserve access to the region's oil reserves. The industrial extraction of those same reserves has been one of the major drivers of global carbon dioxide emissions.'

mainland United States, even people who might be saddened by such news seem unwilling to treat it as an emergency.

Sooner or later, the emergency will come to our shores. This March, the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide reached a milestone 415 parts per million. To give a sense of what that means, the last time the atmosphere had that much carbon was 800,000 years ago. At that time, the South Pole was a temperate zone with forests growing and average global temperature was 3 to 4 degrees Celsius warmer than today. Sea levels were 60 feet higher than present levels. Without a drastic push for net-negative emissions – stopping carbon dioxide emissions and reducing the amount of carbon already in the atmosphere – we are on the way to creating a planet like that. Instead, net global emissions are rising.

Ironically, given its own role in helping create this emergency, the Pentagon happens to be one of the few redoubts from the climate denialism now gripping the American government. 'The only department in Washington that is clearly and completely seized with the idea that climate change is real is the Department of Defense,' Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Gen.

Colin Powell, has said. The US military is preparing for a grim future of climate-caused political instability, food shortages, resource wars and massive refugee flows. Recognising the strategic threat posed by its own dependence on fossil fuel, it has even taken steps to diversify its energy sources.

Yet even these limited efforts have met pushback from the Trump administration. The US Navy recently killed a task force created to study the effects of climate change, undermining a bare-minimum effort to forecast the impact of rising seas and melting ice caps. In the words of the former rear admiral who led the Navy's climate change efforts until 2015, 'The task force ended, in my opinion, without full incorporation of climate change considerations.'

We tend to think of the 20th century as mainly one of material progress. It's worth remembering that it was also an era that gave us bloodshed on a historically unprecedented scale. The power of modern science was finally wedded to the primordial dark side of human nature. The result was the most savagely violent period in human history. The death tolls can scarcely be comprehended today, but World War II alone – with its industrial demonology of tanks, bomber

planes, poison gas and atomic weapons – killed over 70 million people. The war inflicted types of environmental harm never seen before. The nuclear blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave us our first realistic glimpses of how civilisation itself could end. We eventually staggered out of that catastrophe. We may now be walking into a far greater one.

The melting of the Arctic is not just creating an ecological emergency, but, in the eyes of American, Russian and Chinese military commanders, it is also creating a potential new battleground. Faced with a planet that is clearly at the limits of the abuse it can take, the groundwork is still being laid for more exploitation and violence.

Rabindranath Tagore died at the outset of World War II, before it reached its terrible nuclear crescendo. Many decades earlier, he had already foreseen where unlimited greed, military expansion and environmental contempt might lead the planet – unless we found a way to steer ourselves off the course. More than a century later, his words sound nearly prophetic. There are finally stirrings of a real movement against the endless war and environmental nihilism that have brought us to this precipice. Tagore left no ambiguity about where we would find ourselves if we fail.

'If this persists indefinitely and armaments go on exaggerating themselves to unimaginable absurdities, and machines and storehouses envelop this fair earth with their dirt and smoke and ugliness,' Tagore warned, 'then it will end in a conflagration of suicide.' ♦

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Originally published on 15 September 2019. Republished with permission from The Intercept (<https://theintercept.com/2019/09/15/climate-change-us-military-war/>), an award-winning non-profit news organisation dedicated to holding the powerful accountable through fearless, adversarial journalism. Sign up for The Intercept's Newsletter (<https://theintercept.com/newsletter>).

The US military's massive hidden impact on the climate

The US military's carbon footprint is enormous and must be confronted in order to have a substantial effect on battling global warming.

RESEARCH by social scientists from Durham University and Lancaster University in the UK shows the US military is one of the largest climate polluters in history, consuming more liquid fuels and emitting more CO₂e (carbon-dioxide equivalent) than most countries.

The majority of greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting routinely focuses on civilian energy use and fuel consumption, not on the US military. This study, published in June in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, calculates part of the US military's impact on climate change through critical analysis of its global logistical supply chains.

The research provides an independent public assessment of the US military's greenhouse gas emissions. It reports that if the US military were a nation state, it would be the 47th largest emitter of GHG in the world, if only taking into account the emission from fuel usage.

Report co-author Dr Patrick Bigger, of Lancaster University Environment Centre, said: 'The US military has long understood it is not immune from the potential consequences of climate change – recognising it as a threat multiplier that can exacerbate other threats – nor has it ignored its own contribution to the problem.'

'Yet its climate policy is fundamentally contradictory – confronting the effects of climate change while remaining the largest single institutional consumer of hydrocarbons in the world, a situation it is locked into for years to come because of its dependence on existing aircraft and warships for open-ended operations around the globe.'

Despite the recent increase in attention, the US military's dependence on fossil fuels is unlikely to change.



Within the US military, the Air Force is by far the largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

The US is continuing to pursue open-ended operations around the globe, with the life-cycles of existing military aircraft and warships locking them into hydrocarbons for years to come.

Transparency

The research comes at a time when the US military is preparing for climate change through both its global supply networks and its security infrastructure. This study brings transparency to one of the world's largest institutional consumers of hydrocarbons at a time when the issue is a hot-button topic on the US presidential campaign trail. Leading Democratic candidates, such as Senator Elizabeth Warren, are asking critical questions of the role of the US military in climate change and examining its plans for the future.

Co-author Dr Benjamin Neimark, Associate Director of the Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business at Lancaster, said: 'This research pro-

vides ample evidence to support recent calls by activist networks to include the US military in Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal and other international climate treaties.'

Co-author Dr Oliver Belcher, of Durham University's Department of Geography, said: 'Our research demonstrates that to account for the US military as a major climate actor, you must understand the logistical supply chain that makes its acquisition and consumption of hydrocarbon-based fuels possible.'

'How do we account for the most far-reaching, sophisticated supply chains, and the largest climate polluter in history? While incremental changes can amount to radical effects in the long run, there is no shortage of evidence that the climate is at a tipping point and more is needed.'

The researchers' examination of the US military 'carbon boot-print' started with the US Defense Logistics Agency – Energy (DLA-E), a powerful yet virtually unresearched

sub-agency within the larger Defense Logistics Agency. It is the primary purchase point for hydrocarbon-based fuels for the US military, and a powerful actor in the global oil market, with the fuels it delivers powering everything from routine base operations in the US to forward operating bases in Afghanistan.

‘An important way to cool off the furnace of the climate emergency is to turn off vast sections of the military machine,’ added Neimark. ‘This will have not only the immediate effect of reducing emissions in the here-and-now, but create a disincentive in developing new hydrocarbon infrastructure integral to US military operations.’

Other key findings of the report include:

- In 2017 alone, the US military purchased about 269,230 barrels of oil a day and emitted more than 25,000 kilotonnes of CO₂e (ktCO₂e) by burning those fuels. In 2017 alone, the Air Force purchased \$4.9 billion worth of fuel and the Navy \$2.8 billion, followed by the Army at \$947 million and the Marines at \$36 million.

- If the US military were a country, it would nestle between Peru and Portugal in the global league table of fuel purchasing, when comparing 2014 World Bank country liquid fuel consumption with 2015 US military liquid fuel consumption.

- For 2014, the scale of emissions is roughly equivalent to total – not just fuel – emissions from Romania, according to the DLA-E data obtained by the researchers, which includes GHG emissions from direct or stationary sources, indirect or mobile sources and electricity use, and other indirect, including upstream and downstream emissions.

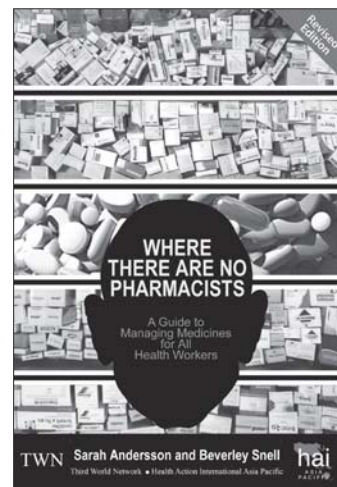
- The Air Force is by far the largest emitter of GHG at more than 13,000 ktCO₂e, almost double the US Navy’s 7,800 ktCO₂e. In addition to using the most polluting types of fuel, the Air Force and Navy are also the largest purchasers of fuel. – *Lancaster University* ♦

Where There Are No Pharmacists (Revised Edition)

By Sarah Andersson and Beverley Snell

Where there are no trained pharmacists serving communities, other categories of health workers are called upon to order, buy, store, dispense and advise people on rational use of medicines. *Where There Are No Pharmacists* explains how to order them, store them, prepare them, dispense them and use them safely and effectively – it is about managing medicines. Information to help communities benefit from the use of medicines is also included.

This book walks readers through each step, covering topics ranging from policy issues to patient education. It provides guidance for *anyone* who is doing the work of a pharmacist; anyone who sells, dispenses, prepares, manages, or explains to others how to use medicines.



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From California to El Salvador, climate-driven displacement is on the rise

Unless powerful countries take meaningful action on climate change, more than 143 million people across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America could be displaced from their homes by 2050, according to the World Bank.

Reprinted from Truthout

Mike Ludwig

AS part of the push for a Green New Deal, Democrats in both chambers of the US Congress have introduced legislation to support international refugees displaced by environmental disasters and climate disruption, and are continuing to challenge the Trump administration's immigration crack-down and ongoing quest to unravel what little progress the government has made on climate.

The bills would create a 'global resilience strategy' and a new humanitarian programme for people displaced by environmental disasters or climate disruption. 'Climate-displaced persons', as they are known, currently have no protections under domestic or international law, and the legislation would allow up to 50,000 people to resettle in the United States beginning in 2020. Meanwhile, as right-wing pundits railed against Democrats using climate fears to 'import' foreigners and joked about the very idea of climate refugees, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to evacuate their homes due to raging fires in the US state of California.

Unless powerful countries take meaningful action on climate, more than 143 million people across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America could be displaced from their homes by 2050, according to the World Bank. The poorest and most environmentally vulnerable will be hardest hit as sea levels rise, storms intensify and droughts and unpredictable weather patterns rob farmers of their livelihoods. They will become

refugees in their own countries, further driving international migration across the world. Researchers also predict that large coastal cities in these regions and others could be wiped off the map.

The Democrats' legislation has virtually no chance of becoming law as long as President Trump occupies the Oval Office. In September, the Trump administration came under fire for suppressing an internal report suggesting that climate change is contributing to food shortages in Guatemala that are driving record numbers of migrants to the southern US border, while freezing foreign aid to Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala – including money earmarked for small farms impacted by climate change. Democrats also demanded answers after reports suggested that the US State Department threatened to withhold aid from the International Organisation for Migration if it crossed the administration's political lines on climate.

The issue has become a rallying cry for Democrats backing the Green New Deal, and they are eager to challenge Trump on climate issues and resist his racist efforts to slash the number of refugees allowed to resettle in the US. It's an emerging issue faced by not only the US, but countries across the world.

'Sadly, governments are being very reluctant to acknowledge the power of climate change as a factor that is leading more and more people

to make the sad decision to go from their own countries to somewhere else,' said Oscar Chacón, executive director of Alianza Americas, a network of Latin American and Caribbean immigrant organisations in the US, in an interview with the Truthout website.

The United Nations recognises that disasters and environmental degradation associated with climate disruption increasingly react with other factors to drive migration across the world, including in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, where droughts and unpredictable rainfall are pushing low-income families away from agricultural areas and into cities. Climate disruption's contributions to extreme weather and food insecurity are now recognised as one factor behind the surge of migrants to the United States that Trump has used to rouse his nativist base and justify brutal immigration policies built around mass incarceration.

Chacón is from El Salvador, and he travels to Central America regularly to meet with advocates and investigate what is pushing so many people in the Northern Triangle of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala away from their homes. In rural areas, problems linked to climate change are often a 'trigger factor' forcing low-income people from the countryside to leave in search of economic opportunity in cities or even leave the country. It's a compounding factor in the Northern Triangle's various struggles, including poverty and gang violence.

'I'm not saying climate change is the leading reason why people are

leaving, but clearly climate change is one rapidly changing factor,' Chacón said. 'I would dare to say if we think about the next 10 or 15 years, it will become a significant factor in why people decide that there is no other choice for them than to go seek a better life in a foreign land.'

Earth

As a teenager living in El Salvador during the 1970s, Chacón remembers his grandparents planting crops at their farm every April and holding various harvests throughout the year on a fairly steady schedule. 'Now it's completely different: We no longer know for sure when there will be rain and when there will be sun for communities in the countryside,' Chacón said.

In the 1970s, Chacón said, coffee, sugar and cotton were central to the Salvadorian economy. While things have changed decades since, agriculture still represents about 11% of El Salvador's economy and employs about 20% of its labour force. In addition, many lower-income people living in the countryside rely on subsistence farming for their food. Climate change is a topic of discussion in the global media and halls of power, but little is being done to support rural areas populated by poor farmers, who have been caught off-guard and are increasingly being forced to leave their homelands.

'I was in El Salvador three weeks ago, and they were having incredible rain coming down, which is completely out of season, and that was following months of [drought], which is completely off, because the dry season historically has always begun in mid to late September, and it went all the way through the end of March,' Chacón said. 'That's no longer the case.'

Chacón said Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities are among the hardest hit in Latin America, and they already face other forces of displacement, such as rapid mineral mining development in Honduras and Guatemala. Alianza Americas and other groups are working to edu-

cate impacted people about climate change and build a framework for advocacy on the national and international stage.

That effort intersects with a broad array of issues at home and abroad, from economic inequality and energy consumption to immigration policy and racial justice. Indeed, the world is changing before our eyes as climate disruption touches everything from public health to urban planning. It is our future, and scientists are scrambling to mitigate its impacts as disasters continue to strike.

Fire

El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are not the only places experiencing climate displacement. Hundreds of thousands of residents have evacuated their homes to escape wildfires raging across California. Millions of residents have experienced rolling blackouts and power outages as energy utilities scramble to contain the damage and prevent more fires from breaking out.

On 29 October, Truthout climate fellow Sharon Zhang told the story of one evacuee, Cynthia Boaz, who fled with her dogs and chickens to escape the Kincade Fire raging in northern California. It was the second time Boaz had evacuated the home she shares with her husband, having already fled from the Tubbs and Pocket fires in 2017. Power outages put disabled and elderly people at risk, Zhang reported. At least 200,000 people were forced from their homes from the Kincade Fire alone.

In an op-ed at *The Guardian*, climate activist Bill McKibben openly wondered whether the climate crisis has made sunny California, home to Hollywood and the world's fifth largest economy, too dangerous to live in.

By 29 October, firefighters were battling more than a dozen fires across California. Climate change doesn't spark massive fires itself; they are often the result of accidents or human error, or even natural causes. However, the warming climate makes it more likely that fires will be more frequent and spread faster, as Zhang ex-

plained:

'Indeed, increasingly hot and arid seasons in California are exacerbating fire risk, and it's only going to keep worsening; hotter days only put more strain on already dated infrastructure. To avoid future catastrophes like the current state of emergency in the state, California [Governor] Gavin Newsom said that "things will have to radically change," reports *The Sacramento Bee*. "This can't be the new normal."'

Water

Much has been written about the disruption of glaciers and permafrost in colder parts of the world, where melting ice contributes to rising seas or releases stores of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The 'cryosphere', as the Earth's frozen parts are collectively known, also provides potable water for about half the world's population, and the United Nations weather service warned in October that this water supply is becoming increasingly unpredictable as the world becomes warmer.

The World Meteorological Organisation held a 'high mountain summit' in Geneva in October, where researchers and experts from around the world gathered to discuss the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s latest report released the previous month. Over the past few decades, the IPCC reports, global warming has led to 'widespread shrinking' of ice sheets, glaciers, Arctic sea ice and snow cover. This melting creates various feedback loops and in general contributes to warmer ocean temperatures and further surface warming in colder regions, causing escalating damage to the cryosphere and global temperature rise.

The UN's weather service is concerned about sources of freshwater in the world's mountains, and the ecosystems and human populations they sustain. Rising global temperatures are causing 'unprecedented changes' in high mountain regions as the cryosphere shrinks and patterns of rainfall shift. Not only does this make

sources of drinking water less predictable, it also increases the risks of hazards to property and human life, such as avalanches and glacial lake flooding. For example, in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, floods already account for one-third of natural disasters and are increasing in frequency, putting one billion people living downstream at great risk.

Air

Birds nest in all sorts of different habitats, but most species also spend a lot of time in the air, especially if they migrate seasonally. In October, the Audubon Society warned of a 'bird emergency': Nearly two-thirds of North American bird species – 389 species, to be exact – are threatened with extinction if climate disruption continues unabated. The report from the Audubon Society comes on the tail of research released in September showing that North America lost about 30% of its bird population since the 1970s, or about three billion birds.

'A lot of people paid attention to [the] report that North America has lost nearly a third of its birds,' said Audubon Society President David Yarnold in a statement. 'This new data pivots forward and imagines an even more frightening future.'

Audubon researchers used 140 million observations made by scientists and bird watchers to map out where 604 North American bird species live today, which is known as their 'range'. Like other animals, specific bird species require certain conditions and habitats to survive, and researchers used the latest climate models to predict how the 'range' occupied by various species would shift as climate disruption and related environmental impacts sweep across the continent. The results reveal that many bird species will be forced to search for more suitable habitats outside their traditional range, and some will not survive.

'Birds are [an] important indicator species, because if an ecosystem is broken for birds, it is or soon will be for people, too,' said Brooke Bateman, the senior climate scientist for

the Audubon Society's national office, in a statement.

Species at risk of climate-driven extinction include birds that have become icons in various regions of the US, including the American robin, the Baltimore oriole, the common loon and the brown pelican. With the Audubon Society's online searchable database and 'climate visualiser', users can zero in on specific regions and areas to see which species of birds living in their communities could be impacted.

In the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, floods already account for one-third of natural disasters and are increasing in frequency, putting one billion people living downstream at great risk.

The Audubon Society estimates that 76% of threatened bird species in North America could be saved if carbon emissions are stabilised or reduced to keep global warming 1.5°C below pre-industrial levels, the gold standard established by the IPCC that has become a global goalpost for averting severe climate disruption. Achieving this goal may require broad changes in consumer habits and serious reductions in fossil fuel consumption, particularly in large or wealthy countries such as China or the US.

It also requires political will – something that simply does not exist within the Trump administration. Climate change is often framed as a global issue addressed by international summits and accords, processes Trump has shunned completely (along with the idea that climate disruption is a threat at all). However, climate disruptions are often regional or even local – droughts that lead to fire, a species of bird disappearing

from a neighbourhood, a farm family forced to pack up and move to a city slum. Solutions for these challenges are often then proposed and debated by political leaders, who put forth plans to address climate challenges from the top down.

Activists like Chacón say solutions must also come from the bottom up. We know the countries driving climate change are also the best suited to use their wealth to find solutions, Chacón said, naming the US, China and powerful countries in Europe as prime examples. Chacón said addressing the climate crisis is a 'global collective responsibility', yet the people who are most likely to fall victim to the crisis are not necessarily those who hold power in these countries.

The people most impacted, Chacón says, are 'likely to be people of colour, people in countries where there are already great, great problems when it comes to economic equality, and when it comes to longstanding racial discrimination structures'.

Grassroots solutions, according to Chacón, must also involve holding political leaders, who should be doing much more to address this crisis, to account. That goes for the US, which is a global leader in fossil fuel consumption and production. And it also goes for governments in Central America, which must do more to address economic inequality and develop alternatives for people who depend on agricultural lands impacted by climate change.

'I think we must really do a much better job organising communities, not only to inject ways in which they can begin to prepare themselves, but in the ways that we hold decision-making individuals in our countries accountable,' Chacón said. ♦

Mike Ludwig is a staff reporter at Truthout and a contributor to the Truthout anthology Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect? In 2014 and 2017, Project Censored featured Ludwig's reporting on its annual list of the top 25 independent news stories that the corporate media ignored. Follow him on Twitter: @ludwig_mike.

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Why protecting the Amazon is critical to solving the climate crisis

The Amazon fires are pushing the rainforest towards a dangerous climate change feedback loop that human intervention could no longer reverse, warns the *Climate Reality Project*.

THE world spent weeks watching fires ravage the Amazon rainforest and, along with it, our chances of meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. What's more, scientists predict that this critical ecosystem is nearing an irreversible tipping point: a decline from lush rainforest to dry savanna.

The Amazon fires may have mostly started in August, but the tinder was set long before. Specifically, on 1 January – the day Jair Bolsonaro was sworn in as Brazil's new president and seemingly set out to win an alarmingly tight race to be 'the most environmentally dangerous head of state in the world'.

Less than a year on in office, he's gutted Brazil's anti-deforestation regulations and environmental agencies, which together successfully protected the Amazon for years. Frustratingly, it was all so predictable.

With that said, learning those facts makes it easy to conclude that this one man is entirely responsible for the fires. The truth, however, is more complicated.

Part of the blame certainly lies on Bolsonaro, but Amazonian destruction – which has covered an area larger than Texas since the 1970s – started long before his rise to power. Looking at the full timeline, his election was merely a splash of fuel that made these annual land-clearing fires bigger than usual.

The reality is that this destruction is the product of a globalised world with changing consumer tastes.

Since the 1960s, international consumption of meat has doubled; and experts expect demand will only keep increasing as the emerging



A firefighter in Brazil's Amazonas state. Burning trees releases massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which accelerates climate change and further dries out the forest.

economies of the world continue growing. Ranchers and farmers in Brazil, which happens to be the world's largest exporter of beef, set off about 80% of the fires to create pasture for cattle.

Bolsonaro may be turning a blind eye to unprecedented environmental devastation, but the truth is that these ranchers and farmers couldn't profit from destroying the Amazon without such a huge demand for their products. And in areas that haven't seen tremendous economic development, many don't see better options – or even see anything wrong with what's happening.

If there's a silver lining to the fires, it's that people started them intentionally. The primary forces behind them – lack of development and economic opportunity together with consumer demands – should be solvable problems. Although we're seeing

many wildfires intensified by our warming world, humanity still holds the reins of this particular carriage.

The real question is, will we drive that carriage off a cliff? Because, as the scientific community has pointed out, we're approaching it – fast.

A point of no return

The fires are pushing the Amazon towards a dangerous climate change feedback loop that human intervention could no longer reverse.

So, how severe could this be?

Public Radio International describes how until recently the rainforest 'absorbed as much CO₂ pollution every year as the amount produced by all the cars on the planet'. Now, however, 'deforestation and climate change are pushing the forest to a tipping point beyond which it will actually release more CO₂ into



Deforestation and climate change are pushing the Amazon rainforest to a tipping point beyond which it will actually release more CO₂ into the atmosphere than it captures.

the atmosphere than it captures’.

Pushing the rainforest to that edge would be an unprecedented step backward in the climate fight. With that said, here’s how experts believe the loop is unfolding:

It all begins with a generally changing climate.

Thanks to rising global temperatures, the Amazon is progressively becoming hotter and drier.

The rainforest, which is unable to adapt quickly enough to the changes, is increasingly being pushed to its limits – a process which ultimately kills trees and other plant life, scattering the forest floor with dead wood that acts as fodder for natural fires.

Given that context, the intentionally-set blazes fuel the feedback loop in three ways:

First, burning trees releases massive amounts of carbon dioxide directly into the atmosphere, which accelerates climate change and further dries out the forest.

Second, by destroying those trees, the fires remove one of our planet’s most crucial carbon sinks. Few other ecosystems around the world photosynthesise as much CO₂ as the Amazon. Losing this emissions-absorbing miracle contributes signifi-

cantly to further warming – which further dries the Amazon itself, making natural fires even more likely.

The third impact, which uniquely threatens the Amazon, deals with transpiration. This critical part of the water cycle occurs when the roots of trees absorb water from the ground and release it into the air as water vapour. This process forms clouds that transport the water on to other parts of the rainforest – essentially making the Amazon rainforest a self-sustaining system.

Through this process, the Amazon releases up to 20 billion metric tons of water each day. For reference, this cycle carries more water throughout the forest than the Amazon River, which is the largest river in the world.

Zoom back out and we see that the more forest we burn and keep cleared, the less water is carried to the rest of the forest through transpiration, and the drier the entire ecosystem becomes. If deforestation continues, this loop of increasing dryness will create conditions favourable for an entirely different habitat: a savanna.

As Harvard professor and Amazon researcher Brian Farrell de-

scribes, ‘If fire removes the plant life responsible for moving water up into the clouds, the land will dry and rainforests will be replaced by grasslands able to withstand the newly arid conditions, which can persist for thousands of years.’

In terms of numbers, leading scientists believe that the Amazon could enter this feedback loop if as little as 20-25% of the forest is lost. This estimate is troubling, given that according to the Brazilian government itself, about 17% of the land necessary has been lost already. Really, we could be just a few percentage points of clearing away from triggering this feedback loop.

Ultimately, what we’re seeing is the transformation of one of our most crucial assets against climate change into an emissions machine.

We must act for the Amazon

The scientific community has made its message loud and clear: we cannot afford to let the Amazon rainforest slip away. There is simply too much at stake. Apart from being an unimaginable tragedy, letting an Amazon-climate change feedback loop begin could squander our efforts to avoid catastrophic warming.

The thing is, Amazonian deforestation has declined before. As shocking as this event may be, we must remember that global action has previously succeeded to preserve this crucial ecosystem.

The window of opportunity is closing, but acting proactively today can change our future. That’s why here at Climate Reality Project, we’re training new climate activists, promoting innovative clean energy solutions, and giving people the tools to understand the urgency of the climate crisis and, more importantly, the solutions. ♦

The Climate Reality Project is a US-based non-profit organisation whose mission is to catalyse a global solution to the climate crisis by making urgent action a necessity across every level of society. This article is reproduced from its website www.climateRealityProject.org.

A revolt against neoliberalism the media refuses to acknowledge

'Neoliberalism was born in Chile and will die in Chile' has become a rallying cry for the country's protest movement. Yet few in the West are aware of Chile's tumultuous history as an experimental laboratory for free-market economics imposed by the United States.

Alan MacLeod

'WE are at war with a powerful, relentless enemy that respects nothing nor anyone,' thundered Chilean President Sebastian Piñera during a speech to the nation, deliberately echoing the infamous catchphrase of fascist military dictator Augusto Pinochet.

The 'enemy' he was referencing were Chilean citizens, more than one million of them who have taken to the streets in a revolt against the neoliberal system Piñera is implementing against their will, demanding his resignation.

The spark for the revolt that started on 14 October was a 30-peso increase in the subway fare in Santiago, the country's capital and by far its largest and most important city. But demonstrations quickly escalated into a general protest against the decades of neoliberal economic policies carried out by successive governments that increased the cost of living and marginalised and disenfranchised the population, leading to greater social and economic inequality. As a popular slogan of the protest goes: 'It's not about 30 pesos; it's about 30 years.'

The government's response has been brutal. The president has declared a state of emergency across much of the country and ordered tanks through Santiago to break the movement. Images of these would be on endless repeat in the US media if Piñera were not such a loyal ally of Washington. The death toll currently stands at 18, with security forces arresting over 5,400 people in the first four days alone, well over double the



More than a million Chileans have taken to the streets in a revolt against the neoliberal system being implemented by President Sebastian Piñera.

number arrested in Hong Kong after six months of unrest. This is one reason why many in Chile see the threat to their country coming not from the people in the streets, but from the Piñera administration itself.

While most of the images we see emanating from Chile are from Santiago, the protests have spread across the country, including to the sleepy southern regions where Whitney Webb, a staff writer with MintPress News, lives and reports from. Speaking on 29 October, she emphasised the regional differences in the protests:

'In Valdivia there have been a lot of riots and looting recently but a couple hours to its north, in Temuco, protests lately have been peaceful, with whole families participating (kids and

babies included) in marches against austerity and the AFP system, among other hot button issues,' she said, referencing the hated privatised pension programme.

'I have lived in the Araucania region for five years and have never seen protests (peaceful or otherwise) on this scale ever. From what I've experienced here and from what I've seen of Santiago, I think people are by and large fed up, whether on the left or the right, with the crony capitalism and corruption that has enriched people just like Piñera and those that surround him.'

The protesters see themselves as fighting to end the neoliberal model imposed on them since 1973. 'Neoliberalism was born in Chile and will die in Chile' has become a rallying cry



Bombs being dropped on the presidential palace in Santiago on 11 September 1973 as soldiers supporting the coup take cover. After the coup, the US had an opportunity to construct a new society in Chile based on neoliberal principles.

for the movement. Yet few in the West are aware of the country's tumultuous history as an experimental laboratory for free-market economics imposed on Chile by the United States.

A warning from history

'I'm not at all surprised at what's happening in Chile,' remarked US linguist and political theorist Noam Chomsky. 'They are the completely predictable consequence of the neoliberal assault on the population for forty years.'

After managing to overthrow the democratically elected Marxist President Salvador Allende in a 1973 coup, the United States had an opportunity to construct a new society based on neoliberal principles, with the help of the new fascist dictator Pinochet. The country became the 'empire's workshop', where American economists had free rein to construct the perfect society along market principles.

The problem was that the population did not want everything privatised and sold off to foreign corporations, workers' rights to be removed and the social safety net to be de-

stroyed. Therefore, the population had to be terrorised into submission first. At least 3,000 people were killed and tens of thousands brutally tortured by the Pinochet dictatorship, which remained in power until 1990. Two hundred thousand managed to flee the country.

The economy immediately collapsed, as did living conditions for ordinary people. It continued to underperform and proved extraordinarily volatile throughout the 1970s and 80s. However, the upper class prospered, and many foreign investors became incredibly rich, explaining perhaps why the *Washington Post* described the country as an 'economic miracle' and a 'model' for others to follow. Chile became one of the most unequal countries in the world, something that scholars of neoliberalism such as David Harvey, Gerard Duménil and Dominique Levy argue was precisely the point.

While the dictatorship is formally over, Pinochet negotiated a transition from a position of power, leaving many of his henchmen in high office and those handpicked and fast-tracked under the fascist dictatorship now in top positions in the police,

army, courts and the media. Furthermore, the neoliberal economic system and Pinochet's constitution remained, as did the people's fear of the government and what it was capable of.

Two of those tortured in concentration camps were the parents of journalist and documentary maker Pablo Navarrete, founder and co-editor of *Alborada* magazine. He spoke to MintPress News about the protests threatening to upend the social order.

'Chile is living through an incredible moment,' Navarrete

said. 'The neoliberal model forced on Chilean society with such brutality under Pinochet from 1973 onwards and which served as a laboratory for the right in places such as the UK and US has been dealt a mortal blow.'

Despite the 'vicious levels of repression' by security forces, Navarrete claimed that his country has reached a 'tipping point' where 'Chileans have lost their fear' of the state. What is the way forward now? Can the protesters topple a president, or will the replacement of a figurehead without meaningful structural change achieve anything?

'It's now key that we support the Chilean people's call for the creation of a Constituent Assembly, so they can create a new, democratic constitution, and discard the current one that was imposed under Pinochet,' he advised. 'It is an outrage that nearly 30 years since the end of the dictatorship, Chile should still have this Pinochetera constitution in place.'

Media distortion

Mainstream media like CNN, NBC News and *The Guardian* have shown far less interest in, or solidarity with, Chile than Hong Kong, fram-

ing the former not as protests but as 'riots', a word never used to describe the Hong Kong protests.

Webb criticised the press for their warped coverage: 'The media in the West and also in Chile has focused largely on the looting and rioting (that does occur) and is claiming that ALL the protests are this way, and this is completely false.'

Navarrete agreed, recommending, 'Those wanting to keep abreast of events in Chile in the English language will, as with most other issues, have to turn to independent media for balance, as there has been a relative absence of mainstream media coverage regarding the scale of the uprising and the ferocity of the government's repression.'

There has been comparatively little coverage of the massive movement in Chile. And much of it obscures what the protests are for and, crucially, what they are. Neoliberalism is largely absent in mainstream reporting of the protests; there has been no mention of the word or its derivatives in any reporting on Chile from CNN, MSNBC or Fox News, for example. Meanwhile Slate amended the title of an article originally titled 'Chile's People Have Had Enough of Neoliberalism' so the headline read simply 'Chile's People Have Had Enough', removing all mention of the word from their reporting.

The real driver in all this, according to a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece, was not crony capitalism, but the socialist governments of Cuba and Venezuela, which are 'playing a key role' in directing the movement. Piñera, it explains, was 'forced to declare a state of emergency' to 'protect property and life' from the 'left-wing terrorists savaging Santiago and cities around the country'. Only a fool would believe these protests are or-



The protesters in Chile see themselves as fighting to end the neoliberal model imposed on them since 1973.

ganic, it explains. After all, 'market policies have been successful' in Chile, so why would anyone be unhappy?

The United States, however, sees a Russian hand directing the protest. Trump-appointed Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Michael Kozak claimed that the Kremlin has penetrated Chilean social networks and was circulating fake news in order to inflame tensions.

Meanwhile Human Rights Watch, always quick to condemn leftist Latin American governments like Bolivia, Venezuela or Nicaragua for their transgressions, called for the swift prosecution ... of the protesters. Its Director of the Americas, José Miguel Vivanco, stated, 'Prosecutors should also carry out prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations into serious crimes committed by demonstrators in recent days.' The full-scale crackdown and the suspension of the most basic civil liberties merely had Vivanco 'worried' that

'there has been an excess of force' from the government.

The future of Chile

Piñera has already gutted his cabinet in an attempt to placate the public. But Webb suspects the protesters will not be silenced so easily.

'He is mistaken to think this will die down. I think at this point the only way he could quiet it would be to do something more drastic in terms of policy, like end the AFP programme,' she said. 'I doubt he will though, since his brother was a key factor in putting that programme in place and it would be a blow to the great neoliberal "experiment" that was foisted on Chile during the Pinochet era.'

Despite the elite voices in the West working to undermine the emerging anti-austerity movement, Navarrete is hopeful: 'It's clear that Chileans have had enough and are demanding profound democratic changes. Chile has awoken and I'm excited about the country's future.'

Corporate media is unlikely to give the protesters a fair hearing, given what their demands are and what they are struggling against, but that should not surprise or disappoint them. Those who witnessed how Occupy Wall Street, the anti-war demonstrations, the Global Climate Strike or the Bernie Sanders campaign were treated by the press know how it works. After all, as the jazz poet Gil Scott Heron told us, 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.' ♦

*Alan MacLeod is a contributor to MintPress News – in which this article first appeared (www.mintpressnews.com/chile-protests-revolt-against-neoliberalism-media-refuses-acknowledge/) – as well as an academic and writer for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting. His book *Bad News from Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting* was published in April.*

Military Keynesianism marches on

The term 'military Keynesianism' refers to economic policies in which the government devotes large amounts of spending to the military in order to foster economic growth.

Joan Roelofs

OUR elected representatives do not have to be bribed with campaign contributions from weapons makers to support the Department of Defense (DoD) budget. They may, shockingly, be representing our nation. Australian political scientist David T Smith states: 'The National Security State maintains democratic legitimacy because of the way it disperses public and private benefits while shielding ordinary Americans from the true costs of high-tech warfare.'

Some support for our military's activities and its budget can be attributed to propaganda, or veteran nostalgia, or the glorification of violence in our history books, schools and patriotic parades. In addition, a multitude of interests sustains the military and its budget, and encourages silence about its activities.

The 'free enterprise' economy, although always government-supported, has been increasingly weakened by foreign competition, outsourcing, automation, consumer satiation, rust-belt, poverty and demographic changes. A 'mixed economy' then fills the breach. Public-private entities in the form of local economic development councils have been created because the 'free enterprise dynamic system' can do 'everything better' (so its advocates claim) except keep the economy going. Capitalism must be saved by massive national, state and local government investment and intervention in education, research, healthcare, highways and other infrastructure, transportation, agriculture, urban planning, environmental remediation, social services, recreation, business incubators, prisons and



Defence contractor BAE Systems is the largest employer in the city of Nashua, which according to a survey is 'the best place to live in New Hampshire' state.

much else.

'Military Keynesianism' is a major part of our 'Blood Red' New Deal; some of its practices recall the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s. (Not coincidentally, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Bonneville Power project served munitions production, and later, at Oak Ridge and Hanford, supported the enormous energy that nuclear fuel required.)

Unfortunately, the mission of the US military, according to its Defense Strategy Review, is to 'build a more lethal force' and 'With our allies and partners, we will challenge competitors by manoeuvring them into unfavourable positions, frustrating their efforts, precluding their options while expanding our own, and forcing them to confront conflict under adverse conditions.'

Our military is not particularly concerned with the welfare of persons or the environment, nationally or internationally. Its strategy does not propose using cooperation, diplomacy or

international law to reduce the threat to human civilisation. Do not think that I come to praise this state of affairs; I come to bury it. But first we must see what sustains our Romanesque empire.

Certainly DoD contracts with weapons makers and their subcontracts provide a sharp economic stimulus. (Lobbying and excessive weapons acquisition is a gigantic part of the problem, but as the subject has been well covered in *CounterPunch*, Center for Defense Information, Center for International Policy, TomDispatch and other sources, that aspect will have only a brief mention here.)

The *NH Business Review* reported that: 'In New Hampshire [state], the F-35 programme supports 55 suppliers – 35 of which are small businesses – and over 900 direct jobs, much of them located at BAE Systems in Nashua. The F-35 programme generates over \$481 million in economic impact in the state' (21 September 2017). In contrast to the widespread urban decay in the US,

'Nashua is the best place to live in New Hampshire, according to a new survey. *Money Magazine* said it selected the "charming" Gate City for the top spot due to its "up-and-coming" downtown, recreation options and proximity to Boston' (17 January 2018). The city of Nashua's website informs us that BAE is the largest employer in the city, and in addition: 'A total of 130 defence contractors were awarded contracts between 2000 and 2012, which is indicative of how robust the defence industry has become in Nashua.'

The New York Times reported that unlike many rustbelt cities, St. Cloud in Minnesota state 'sustained its prosperity through a mix of the right investments, favourable geography and sheer serendipity.' It did not mention the bevy of military contracts in the area; a filtered search by zip code + Department of Defense in usaspending.gov explained the anomaly.

Rebecca Thorpe's book, *The American Warfare State: The Domestic Politics of Military Spending*, relates that after World War II many rural and semirural areas became economically dependent on defence spending; their representatives filled the bill regardless of an absent or negative national security impact.

The juicy profits create oases of civilised existence in terms of social services, education and the arts. Their lucrative investment returns enrich many museums, charitable institutions, churches and public workers' pension funds. Contractor philanthropy supports the arts, education, and environmental and social justice efforts.

Weapons are just one part of the picture; construction, technology, cybersecurity and intelligence firms also secure huge contracts. Logistics represent a large chunk of the budget: food, transport, janitorial, guarding and others. For example, the DoD has contracts for janitorial services, clothing and furniture with Goodwill Industries, Lighthouse for the Blind and other non-profit corporations employing disabled people, veterans and people with chronic difficulty finding

work. Involving a significant part of the lowest-income working class, these are similar to jobs programmes of the Depression-era Works Progress Administration. As Nancy Rose explains in *Put to Work*, our government back then also used contractors, including for-profit businesses, as administrators.

The DoD's landscaping and environmental remediation needs provide work for businesses such as Environmental Alternatives, Inc. in Swanzey, New Hampshire, which provides nuclear decontamination. In addition, enormous contracts and grants are awarded to The Nature Conservancy and other non-profit environmental organisations for services that include preventing encroachment near bombing ranges. Trout Unlimited also gets hooked into the picture.

Support or silence for militarism is purchased by every kind of thing the military establishment needs: daycare, velcro, textbooks, conference hotels, safer cribs for family housing, microwave ovens et al. In 2018 *The New York Times* noted that Granite Industries of Vermont in Barre 'makes 3,500 to 4,000 headstones a year for Arlington [National Cemetery] – a steady line of business in a town that has seen its stonework fortunes decline over time'. Nick Turse's fine book, *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives*, includes many more examples.

Research funds go to industry, think-tanks, hospitals, medical institutes and universities. All types of science and technology research are DoD-supported; Silicon Valley is an outgrowth of this command economy. Social scientists are not neglected; for example, anthropologists were used to create the controversial Human Terrain System. The Minerva Research Initiative funds political scientists; a recent study asks: 'How do citizens within countries hosting US military personnel view that presence?' and concludes: 'We find that contact with US military personnel or the receipt of economic benefits from the US presence increases support for the US presence, people, and govern-

ment.' That may very well be the case, but one wishes for an investigation funded by a neutral sponsor.

There has been fine reporting on problems and protests at overseas and US colony bases: books such as Gerson and Birchard, *The Sun Never Sets*; Lutz, *The Bases of Empire*; Vine, *Base Nation*; Turse's article, 'Bases, Bases, Everywhere... Except in the Pentagon's Report'; and the video *Standing Army*. However, a comprehensive and objective study of the political, cultural, and economic impact of occupation entities would require funding that is rarely available to those without ties to the national security state.

In addition to the bases, military contracts, including weapon parts, bioweapons research and intelligence, have been outsourced throughout the world; thus we also export military Keynesianism. Construction firms employing US personnel, locals and third-country workers provide economic stimulus both over here and over there. The new NATO headquarters in Brussels, costing over a billion dollars, is a symbol of the capitalist democracies' 'command economies', now with satellites under the 'Uranium Curtain'.

In the US, the national security state apparatus goes far beyond the DoD. The Departments of Energy, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security are obviously involved; Agriculture, Commerce, State, Interior and others also get into the act. The Department of State coordinates overseas military training, which is required for all purchasers of weapons. Its most recent report indicates that in 'Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, approximately 78,700 students from 155 countries participated in training'. In addition to direct aid and warfare 'fairs', the generous financing of foreign sales boosts contractor profits. Offshoring of supposedly obsolete weapons enables the US Congress to fund the next best lethal thing.

To insure a steady priming of the pump, there are organisations of contractor lobbyists, such as the National Defense Industrial Association, with chapters in most states.

One of the most militant is the Washington [state] Military Alliance; its membership includes industries and most of the state's local economic development councils. It is supported by both the state and funds from the DoD (give those who lobby you a leg up). The Washington state government also has a Military Department. The state is heavily militarised already, including the notorious Hanford site, but it wants these benefits to keep coming.

Economic stimulation, with its silencing effect, does not radiate solely from contractor locales. There is the military establishment itself. Estimated current personnel number 1.4 million active duty, 800,000 reserve and national guard, and 750,000 civilian employees. Veterans, numbering about 18 million, are prominent in businesses, non-profits, and elected and appointed government positions. There is a large array of patriotic and veterans organisations, most of which, but not all (for example, Veterans for Peace), bang the drum for militarism. In addition to the traditional membership groups such as the American Legion, there are now many created by foundations and the DoD itself to assist in transition to civilian life. Some urge retired officers to seek leadership of non-profit organisations; others convert 'Troops to Teachers' or, with the Student Conservation Association, to careers in conservation. There is also one, the Armed Services Arts Partnership, for training as a stand-up comedian.

Educational institutes of the military exist far beyond the service academies. The National Defense University system has more than 150 components, including the Naval War College, the University of Health Sciences and the Defense Acquisition University. Many of these, as well as the Western Hemisphere Institute of Security Cooperation (formerly known as School of the Americas) in Fort Benning, Georgia, and the US Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, also train foreign military and civilians.

Much training occurs overseas,

through the State Department's International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme or in institutes such as the George C Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany or the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

The land-grant universities were always intended to include military research and training. Private institutions, such as Norwich University in Vermont, are also major military training centres. A ranking of the 100 most militarised universities in the US includes many of our distinguished institutions as well as some that are mostly distance learning and primarily feeders for national security agencies. In addition to research contracts, universities with ROTC (reserve officer training corps) programmes receive DoD funding.

More than 3,000 US high schools (and some junior high schools) have Junior ROTC programmes. DoD funding can make a significant difference in these districts and permit clean and sharp facilities that contrast with poorly funded local schools. Chicago has six public high schools that are military academies; all students must be in JROTC. Often parents who are not particularly interested in the military aspect may nevertheless enrol their children in the newer and more disciplined academies. Not too many of these children end up as military officers, but all JROTC instruction has a military perspective.

The Army Corps of Engineers, also part of the DoD budget, entail vast expenditures for recreational sites, water projects and military-related construction. Throughout the nation there are ACE-created and maintained places like the one near me:

'Otter Brook Lake offers many recreational opportunities that everyone can enjoy. It offers a picnic area with 90 tables and 55 fireplace grills; swimming on a 400-foot-long beach; a boat ramp; boating for canoes, rowboats, sailboats, and motorboats (no wake); and sanitary facilities. During the winter, visitors enjoy cross-country skiing, ice fishing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.'

Military bases in the United States and 'territories' are significant hubs of economic stimulation. The most recent Base Structure Report lists 4,150 sites within the US and 111 in territories, but not all are substantial bases. Of the 368 sites listed for California state (which has the most bases), about 47 are considered major bases.

The US mainland has the largest military bases in the world, some like small or medium-sized cities. The largest of all is Fort Bragg in North Carolina, which has been excellently portrayed by anthropologist Catherine Lutz in *Homefront*. Other giants are Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Benning, Georgia; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington; and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Some bases are villages with bombing ranges or seaside training areas. Among the 4,000-plus DoD sites are listening posts, drone bases, armouries, medical centres, educational institutes, recruiting stations, etc., but there are probably more than 400 bases with substantial acreage and personnel.

One way that communities near bases have increased prosperity is through DoD contracts for operating elementary and high schools for base children; administrative costs are included. This is especially welcome to poor school districts, but the 1% are not neglected. The town of Lincoln, Massachusetts, has a two-year \$32 million contract to run Hanscom Air Force Base schools. Hanscom, despite its location near a superwealthy part of the country, is a superfund site. The military is an equal opportunity polluter.

Many personnel live off-base, and that benefits real estate sales and rentals, and hotel-motel chains, which offer housekeeping suites specifically for military families. Military personnel and civilian employees are customers for car rentals, supermarkets, restaurants, entertainment, Wal-marts – the whole suburban mall scene. These businesses, along with museums and recreational and historical sites, have ads on the bases' websites.

Base expansion and construction



Fort Bragg in North Carolina state is the US military's largest base.

is itself a boon to local real estate interests. Frequent improvements to buildings, technical capacity and measures against encroachments to bombing ranges also require expenditures, often massive, that benefit local as well as multinational corporations. For example, upgrades for cyberwarfare at the Buckley Air Force Base in Aurora, Colorado, part of the Air Force Space Command, have entailed many billions' worth of contracts for weapons, technology and construction companies:

'Team Buckley strives to be bold information technology investors who shape operations in, through and from cyberspace. Our emphasis is toward functioning and fighting as cyber warriors, defending our networks and core missions from attacks and preparing for offensive operations to execute when appropriate authorities direct.'

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, another city-sized base in North Carolina, has '11 miles of amphibious operations beachfront'. The Student Conservation Association has recently been awarded a \$13 million DoD grant for conservation assistance, with a special concern for the protection of endangered sea turtles.

Closed and shrunk bases, often superfund sites, are still economic hubs. For one thing, the cleanup crews will be there for decades, and they also require local goods and services. Although billions have already been spent on base cleanup, the Gov-

ernment Accountability Office warns that much more must be spent to deal with 'emerging contaminants'.

New Boston Air Force Station in New Hampshire, near my home, is a former bombing range and a superfund site. Now it is a more compact remote tracking station. The Air Force has determined that it has been cleaned up and currently offers much of its 2,600 acres for camping and recreational activities (for those with a military connection). It has 50 campsites, four ponds and equipment rental including skis, snowboards, poles, boots, snowmobiles, popup trailers, kayaks, canoes and boats. Pease Air Force Base, another New Hampshire superfund site, was officially closed in 1991. Part of it is now an Air National Guard Base, while some of the area designated clean is a civilian commercial centre.

Upgraded, downgraded or degraded, military sites have economic significance. The most unlikely tourist attraction is Hanford Nuclear Site, a decommissioned nuclear fuel production facility operated by the Department of Energy. Currently, the DOE 'offers a variety of tours of the Hanford Site focusing on Hanford's environmental cleanup mission. Hanford Site tours provide visitors the opportunity for a firsthand look at the progress of our environmental cleanup efforts, projects and facility operations'. If you are hotfooting it there for one of these tours, you are required to wear closed-toe shoes.

Elected and appointed government officials at all levels, and local economic development councils, are aware of the vital impact of the military budget, which often clouds their thoughts on the lethal activities that it supports. Even citizens with no direct connection to contracts, bases, contractor philanthropy, veterans' benefits, et al. understand that without these, their area might be a notch away from rustbelt status. Young people in many normal US towns see a military career as an alternative to a dead-end job. Retirees living a quiet life note the job opportunities for their children in military-related work, whether they are disabled, mechanics, environmentalists, scientists, or perhaps entertainers or artists in a charming city of weapons contractors.

Yet this military economic salvation promotes *Scarred Lands, Wounded Lives*, as in the film of that name. The National Priorities Project and others have determined that government funding supporting the well-being of humans and the environment would have greater economic benefit, without the destruction of whole countries as well as our own land and people.

How to make the change is the question; the problem is gigantic. It may be that our Romanesque empire is also a Greek tragedy. The ancient Athenian (semi)democracy was likewise influenced by propaganda and economic benefits. It voted for war, a likely destroyer of the Athenian experiment. Perhaps democracy – even the best of them are now increasingly militarised – is too much shaped by propaganda and majorities with benefits. ♦

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Billionaires and American politics

Although big money has always played an important role in US politics, its influence has been growing over the last decade. *Lawrence Wittner* elucidates.

IS the United States becoming a plutocracy?

With the manifestly unqualified but immensely rich Donald Trump serving as the nation's first billionaire president, it's not hard to draw that conclusion. And there are numerous other signs as well that great wealth has become a central factor in American politics.

Political donations

Although big money has always played an important role in US political campaigns, its influence has been growing over the past decade. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, by 2014 the share of political donations by the wealthiest 0.01% of Americans had increased to 29% (from 21% four years before), while the top 100 individual donors accounted for 39% of the nation's super PAC contributions.

With the 2016 presidential primaries looming, would-be Republican nominees flocked to Las Vegas to court billionaire casino magnate Sheldon Adelson and his wife, who had donated well over \$100 million to Republican groups during the 2012 election cycle. Although even Adelson's money couldn't save them from succumbing to vicious attacks by Trump, Adelson quickly forged a close alliance with the billionaire president. In 2018, he became the top political moneyman in the nation, supplying Republicans with a record \$113 million.

In fact, with Adelson and other billionaires bringing US campaign spending to \$5.2 billion in that year's midterm elections, the big-ticket players grew increasingly

dominant in American politics. 'We like to think of our democracy as being one person, one vote,' noted a top official at the Brennan Center for Justice. 'But just being rich and being able to write million-dollar cheques gets you influence over elected officials that's far greater than the average person.'

This influence has been facilitated, in recent years, by the rise of enormous fortunes. According to *Forbes* – a publication that pays adoring attention to people of great wealth – by March 2019 the United States had a record 607 billionaires, including 14 of the 20 wealthiest people in the world. In the fall of 2017, the Institute for Policy Studies estimated that the three richest among them (Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Warren Buffett) possessed more wealth (\$248.5 billion) than half the American population combined.

After this dramatic example of economic inequality surfaced in June 2019, during the second Democratic debate, the fact-checkers at *The New York Times* reported that the wealth gap 'has likely increased'. That certainly appears to be the case. According to *Forbes*, these three individuals now possess \$350.5 billion in wealth – a \$102 billion (41%) increase in less than two years.

The same pattern characterises the wealth of families. As Chuck Collins of the Institute for Policy Studies revealed, Charles and (the now deceased) David Koch of Koch Industries (their fossil fuel empire), the Mars candy family and the Waltons of Walmart possessed a combined fortune of \$348.7 billion – an increase in their wealth, since 1982, of nearly 6,000%. During the same period, the median household wealth in the United States declined by 3%.

Self-interested

Not surprisingly, when billionaires have deployed their vast new wealth in American politics, it has usually been to serve their own interests.

Many, indeed, have been nakedly self-interested, sparing no expense to transform the Republican Party into a consistent servant of the wealthy and to turn the nation sharply rightward. The Koch brothers and their affluent network poured hundreds of millions (and perhaps billions) of dollars into organisations and election campaigns promoting tax cuts for the rich, deregulation of corporations, climate change denial, the scrapping of Medicare and Social Security, and the undercutting of labour unions, while assailing proposals for accessible healthcare and other social services. And they have had substantial success.

Similarly, billionaire hedge fund manager Robert Mercer and his daughter, Rebekah, spent \$49 million on right-wing political ventures in 2016, including funding Steve Bannon, Breitbart News and Cambridge Analytica (the data firm that improperly harvested data on Facebook users to help Trump's campaign). After Trump's victory, Robert stayed carefully out of sight, sailing the world on his luxurious, high-tech super yacht or hidden on his Long Island estate. But Rebekah worked on the Trump transition team and formed an outside group, Making America Great, to mobilise public support for the new president's policies.

The story of the Walton family, the nation's wealthiest, is more complex. For years, while it fierce-

ly opposed union organising drives and wage raises for its poorly paid workers, it routinely channelled most of its millions of dollars in campaign contributions to Republicans. In the 2016 elections, it took a more balanced approach, but that might have occurred because Hillary Clinton, a former Walmart director and defender of that company's monopolistic and labour practices, was the Democratic standard-bearer.

Although some billionaires do contribute to Democrats, they gravitate towards the 'moderate' types rather than towards those with a more progressive agenda. In January 2019, an article in Politico reported that a panic had broken out on Wall Street over the possibility that the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination might go to someone on the party's left wing. 'It can't be [Elizabeth] Warren and it can't be [Bernie] Sanders,' insisted the CEO of a giant bank. More recently, billionaire hedge fund manager Leon Cooperman made the same point, publicly assailing the two Democrats for their calls to raise taxes on the wealthy. 'Taxes are high enough,' he declared. 'We have the best economy in the world. Capitalism works.'

The political preferences of the super-wealthy were also apparent in early 2019, when Howard Schultz, the multibillionaire former CEO of Starbucks, declared that if the Democrats nominated a progressive candidate, he would consider a third-party race. After Schultz denounced Warren's tax plan as 'ridiculous', Warren responded that 'what's "ridiculous" is billionaires who think they can buy the presidency to keep the system rigged for themselves'.

Can they buy it? The 2020 election might give us an answer to that question. ♦

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Economic&PoliticalWEEKLY

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The ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Christians that nobody is talking about

As Christmas approaches, it is sad to reflect on the fact that Palestinian Christians are leaving the birthplace of Christianity in droves. For Israel, this exodus is a boon as a Palestine without Christians will enable it, in a world rife with Islamophobia, to portray its conflict with Palestine as a religious war. *Ramzy Baroud* explains.

PALESTINE'S Christian population is dwindling at an alarming rate. The world's most ancient Christian community is moving elsewhere. And the reason for this is Israel.

Christian leaders from Palestine and South Africa sounded the alarm at a conference in Johannesburg on 15 October. Their gathering was titled 'The Holy Land: A Palestinian Christian Perspective'.

One major issue that highlighted itself at the meetings is the rapidly declining number of Palestinian Christians in Palestine.

There are various estimates on how many Palestinian Christians are still living in Palestine today, compared with the period before 1948 when the state of Israel was established atop Palestinian towns and villages. Regardless of the source of the various studies, there is a near-consensus that the number of Christian inhabitants of Palestine has dropped by nearly 10-fold in the last 70 years.

A population census carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2017 concluded that 47,000 Palestinian Christians are living in Palestine – with reference to the Occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. Ninety-eight percent of Palestine's Christians live in the West Bank – concentrated mostly in the cities of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jerusalem – while the remainder, a tiny Christian community of merely 1,100 people, live in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The demographic crisis that had afflicted the Christian community



A worshipper lighting candles in church in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. The Christian population of Palestine is declining rapidly.

decades ago is now brewing.

For example, 70 years ago, Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, was 86% Christian. The demographics of the city, however, have fundamentally shifted, especially after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in June 1967 and the construction of the illegal Israeli apartheid wall starting in 2002. Parts of the wall were meant to cut off Bethlehem from Jerusalem and to isolate the former from the rest of the West Bank.

'The Wall encircles Bethlehem by continuing south of East Jerusalem in both the east and west,' the 'Open Bethlehem' organisation said, describing the devastating impact of the wall on the Palestinian city. 'With the land isolated by the Wall, annexed for settlements, and closed under var-

ious pretexts, only 13% of the Bethlehem district is available for Palestinian use.'

Increasingly beleaguered, Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem have been driven out from their historic city in large numbers. According to the city's mayor, Vera Baboun, as of 2016, the Christian population of Bethlehem has dropped to 12%, merely 11,000 people.

The most optimistic estimates place the overall number of Palestinian Christians in the whole of Occupied Palestine at less than 2%.

Pressure of Israeli occupation

The correlation between the shrinking Christian population in Palestine, and the Israeli occupation and



A Christmas celebration in Bethlehem, believed to be the birthplace of Jesus. The Christian population of Bethlehem, which stood at 86% 70 years ago, has dropped to 12%.

apartheid should be unmistakable, as it is evident to Palestine's Christian and Muslim communities alike.

A study conducted by Dar al-Kalima University in the West Bank town of Beit Jala and published in December 2017 interviewed nearly 1,000 Palestinians, half of them Christian and the other half Muslim. One of the main goals of the research was to understand the reason behind the depleting Christian population in Palestine.

The study concluded that 'the pressure of Israeli occupation, ongoing constraints, discriminatory policies, arbitrary arrests, confiscation of lands added to the general sense of hopelessness among Palestinian Christians', who are finding themselves in 'a despairing situation where they can no longer perceive a future for their offspring or for themselves'.

Unfounded claims that Palestinian Christians are leaving because of religious tensions between them and their Muslim brethren are, therefore, irrelevant.

Gaza is another case in point. Only 2% of Palestine's Christians live in the impoverished and besieged Gaza Strip. When Israel occupied Gaza along with the rest of historic Palestine in 1967, an estimated 2,300 Christians lived in the Strip. However, merely 1,100 Christians still live in Gaza today. Years of occupation,

horrific wars and an unforgiving siege can do that to a community whose historical roots date back two millennia.

Like Gaza's Muslims, these Christians are cut off from the rest of the world, including the holy sites in the West Bank. Every year, Gaza's Christians apply for permits from the Israeli military to join Easter services in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Last April, only 200 Christians were granted permits, but on the condition that they must be 55 years of age or older and that they were not allowed to visit Jerusalem.

The Israeli rights group Gisha described the Israeli army decision as 'a further violation of Palestinians' fundamental rights to freedom of movement, religious freedom and family life', and, rightly, accused Israel of attempting to 'deepen the separation' between Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel aims at doing more than that. Separating Palestinian Christians from one another, and from their holy sites (as is the case for Muslims as well), the Israeli government hopes to weaken the socio-cultural and spiritual connections that give Palestinians their collective identity.

Israel's strategy is predicated on the idea that a combination of factors – immense economic hardships, per-

manent siege and apartheid, the severing of communal and spiritual bonds – will eventually drive all Christians out of their Palestinian homeland.

Israel is keen to present the 'conflict' in Palestine as a religious one so that it could, in turn, brand itself as a beleaguered Jewish state amid a massive Muslim population in the Middle East. The continued existence of Palestinian Christians does not factor nicely into this Israeli agenda.

Sadly, however, Israel has succeeded in misrepresenting the struggle in Palestine from that of a political and human rights struggle against settler colonialism into a religious one. Equally disturbing, Israel's most ardent supporters in the United States and elsewhere are devout Christians.

Equally victimised

It must be understood that Palestinian Christians are neither aliens nor bystanders in Palestine. They have been victimised equally as their Muslim brethren. They have also played a significant role in defining the modern Palestinian identity, through their resistance, spirituality, deep connection to the land, artistic contributions and burgeoning scholarship.

Israel must not be allowed to ostracise the world's most ancient Christian community from their ancestral land so that it may score a few points in its fierce drive for racial supremacy.

Equally important, our understanding of the legendary Palestinian *soumoud* – steadfastness – and solidarity cannot be complete without fully appreciating the centrality of Palestinian Christians to the modern Palestinian narrative and identity. ♦

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Bringing Israeli apartheid to the US-Mexico border

Elbit Systems, an Israel-based technologies conglomerate, has played a central role in the implementation of the repressive policies of Israel against the Palestinians. As Elbit spreads its tentacles first to the US-Mexico border and then worldwide, it is incumbent upon all human rights activists to prevent this conglomerate from becoming the handmaiden of repressive regimes.

THE same racist and xenophobic logic that prevails in Israel's violent response to the Great March of Return is also evident in the United States' militarised southern boundary area with Mexico. Events both in Gaza and on the Mexican border reveal the global reach of Elbit Systems, an Israel-based technologies conglomerate spanning multiple continents.

Elbit's dedication to hyper-scrutiny and criminalisation under the euphemism of 'border patrol' is apparent, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or the United States. Advocates for Palestinian rights, migrant rights and privacy rights have a transnational mission to challenge inherently intrusive and repressive means such as those employed worldwide by Elbit and the governments which contract with the company.

While Elbit generates most of its revenue in North America, it is also the pre-eminent hardware and software provider for Israeli 'defence and homeland security' industries. The conglomerate specialises in 'intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance' services.

In the summer of 2017, American officials developed a favourable impression after conducting an on-site analysis of methods pioneered by Elbit for monitoring the border between Egypt and Gaza. A few months later, in September, Elbit publicised an agreement increasing the number of 'radar and surveillance towers' at the boundary between the United States and Mexico, beefing up a \$145 million agreement from 2014.

In addition to 'border security', Elbit Systems is also heavily involved in the maintenance and monitoring of Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

Stephen Welty

It is part of a consortium of companies collaborating on repressive policies that confine Palestinian mobility through the apartheid wall, a network of militarised checkpoints, and other technologies of 'security' and control. Elbit's systems, including Peregrine and the mobile/relocatable surveillance systems, anchor 'security' in the West Bank as well as the US-Mexico border.

Elbit harnesses 'big data' and other 'data streams' and marries them to defence hardware to scoop up and catalogue details of whatever its array of sensors, monitors and computers might freely appraise. Unfettered 'data streams' can be and are put to a variety of pernicious uses in the hands of the US Department of Homeland Security and the US Armed Forces. With the various publics kept in the dark regarding what is catalogued, the capacity for government institutions to criminalise people based on this data is maximised.

The Peregrine system can connect to an assortment of monitors and 'motion systems' at borders, though these systems, which can be affected by wind and other factors, are unreliable. They can produce misattribution and responses that can prove dangerous to a readily criminalised population.

Elbit employs 'truck mounts' with heat-analysing cameras paired to vehicles that surveil borders. These devices complement Elbit's 'driverless' motorised scrutiny that has surveilled the boundary dividing Israel and the Gaza Strip 'since at least 2009' and the West Bank as of De-

cember 2015. A 'mounted surveillance system' also operates on the US-Mexican border.

Elbit's E-merge system subscribes to the same 'data stream' philosophy of massive 'cyber-scoop' that has gotten online corporations like Amazon and Facebook, and even the US National Security Administration, into trouble with the court of public opinion. This philosophy is integrated with both the apartheid wall and the Integrated Fixed Towers, and it works to stifle mobility and promote repression in Palestine. A public already aroused against Facebook's involvement with Cambridge Analytica and against the NSA cyber-scoop of online bustle should also be concerned about the Elbit framework for invading the privacy of those most likely to be criminalised by racist states.

As a powerful transnational conglomerate, Elbit can strike at the human rights of residents and migrants near the US-Mexico border and throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Through its methods of data scooping and 'automatic' surveillance, Elbit is poised to heighten its universal assault on human rights.

Anyone who backs Palestinian rights, migrant rights or privacy rights should oppose the Elbit corporation. ♦

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‘They are only interested in soy’

Peasant and indigenous women in Paraguay are organising to survive the twin threats of industrial agriculture and climate change.

Global Forest Coalition

DEVASTATING fires across South America’s fragile forests have put the spotlight on the impacts of an emboldened livestock and feedstock sector that is hungry for land and unburdened by legislation or law enforcement. The Chaco forests in western Paraguay have been particularly badly hit by deforestation and fires, as cattle ranchers expand their pastures.

Eastern Paraguay, on the other hand, has already been largely cleared of its forests, which were burned over recent decades to clear land for agribusiness. There, 94% of arable land is used for cultivating genetically modified monocultures, primarily soybeans, which are exported as animal feed.

Peasant and indigenous communities are caught between a state-sponsored agribusiness industry that steals land and poisons the air, soil and water, and a climate emergency that puts even more pressure on their already fragile ability to feed themselves.

With minimal external support but maximum threats to land security, community health and food sovereignty, peasant and indigenous communities are organising to reclaim control of their lives. Women are at the forefront of this resistance, and in particular they are strengthening their organisations through training and skill-sharing to tackle gender-based discrimination, on top of all the other pressures they face.

Eastern Paraguay was once covered by wooded savannahs, grasslands and dense humid subtropical forest, but these habitats have been devastated in the race to free up land for industrial-scale export-oriented agricultural production, especially of genetically modified soy and beef.

Sojization or ‘soyification’ is the



Peasant women walk through a field of genetically modified soy. In eastern Paraguay, 94% of arable land is used for cultivating genetically modified monocultures, primarily soy.

Luis Wagner/globalforestcoalition.org

term used locally to describe this process. Many peasant and indigenous communities have been evicted from their lands or persuaded to sell or lease their lands for little in return. The people left behind speak of empty schools, and land and water contaminated with agricultural toxins, which are killing crops and animals as well as making people sick.

The dire situation in Paraguay has led to serious conflict between the state and agribusiness on one side, and Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities on the other.

Through organisations such as the Federación Nacional Campesina (National Federation of Peasants/FNC) and Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas e Indígenas (National Coordination of Peasant and Indigenous Women), peasant and indigenous communities, in particular their women members, are working together to protect their food sovereignty, indigenous seeds, natural medicinal resources and traditional, ancestral knowledge. Faced with the twin threats of advancing monocultures and climate emergency, they are building their own resilience from the soil up.

The community at Crescencio González is a direct result of the struggle over land. It cost the lives of five

militants, including Crescencio González, who was the first to be killed and from whom the settlement takes its name. The dispute ended when the government gave the community back 5,000 hectares to live on and farm.

The participation of women in political assemblies and decision-making meetings in Crescencio González is increasing, and they are doing so with extraordinary enthusiasm. Together with their children they participate and debate, and are heard and respected by their peers. In one assembly, while women discussed how to achieve food sovereignty through sustainable food production, the men in the community cooked and then served them lunch.

Crescencio González is organised by the FNC. One of the main objectives of the FNC is to conserve agrobiodiversity, which encompasses the variety and variability of animals, plants and microorganisms which are necessary to sustain the key functions of the agroecosystem, in order to support and ensure food production and food security. This is in stark contrast to the vast majority of agriculture in the country, which relies on vast monocultures and huge inputs of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.



Women from Crescencio González participating in a community assembly. Peasant and indigenous communities, in particular their women members, are working together to protect their food sovereignty.

Food sovereignty and security are central to climate resilience and the ability of communities to adapt to increasingly extreme climates. As in many parts of the world, Paraguay's climate is getting hotter and drier, with drought conditions straining already fragile and marginalised local food production. At the same time, extreme weather events are causing severe flooding in the wet season, which has turned many peasant and indigenous communities into climate refugees, and forced them into slums in urban areas.

The FNC has a Women's Front, which for many years has been working to empower women to fulfil political roles in the organisation and more broadly. As an example of the success of this women-led organising, this year's Peasant March in the capital Asunción was led by FNC women who carried a banner with the slogan 'Land and Production for National Development'.

During the closing ceremony, the three speeches were also given by women. A woman from Sebastián Larrosa commented of the Paraguayan state: 'They are not interested in peasant or indigenous production, they are only interested in soy. Their response is always eviction, because they need more and more land to produce on.'

The pressures from competing land uses and climate change are felt by all communities in Paraguay. While some are able to support themselves to live in dignity, others are not

so fortunate.

The Tovatiry community is home to the Ava Guaraní Indigenous People, and now finds itself in a situation of extreme poverty, having been forgotten by local and national authorities. The drought suffered in the spring spoiled all of the corn crop and much of the bean crop.

Several families have already left the community to go to the closest city. The families that have remained had to subsist on cassava and by hunting, and the eggs that four hens provided, shared between 10 families. There were also several reports of sexist violence against women leaders. Despite these extreme challenges, the community continues to resist and build towards a better future.

Before the drought and with the support of the National Coordination of Peasant and Indigenous Women, the Ava Guaraní community had been planning to build a storehouse to preserve the diverse range of crops they had planted. But the limited resources available to them through the fundraising of peasant and indigenous organisations had to be redirected towards helping to plant the next crop, in the hope that another drought wouldn't destroy that too. In the absence of state support, it is up to grassroots organisations to provide the support themselves.

The community at Tovatiry is a clear example of the vulnerability of communities on the frontlines of cli-

mate change, and how precarious their lives are.

The Arsenio Vázquez settlement is another FNC success story, built on the struggle for access to land. It covers 1,100 hectares and is named after a peasant leader who was martyred during the occupation that ultimately secured the land and rights to it for the community. Today, at almost 15 years old, it is flourishing and produces food for the community and surrounding areas.

Women in Arsenio Vázquez are confident and defiant. The level of organisation and collective action in the community, and the importance given to women's participation in collective processes, are responsible for its growth and development.

Community members are free and able to come together to discuss all of the issues that are important to them and learn from past mistakes, whilst also bringing new knowledge and understanding to traditional practices, allowing their quality of life to be continually improved. They recognise that deforestation produces climate change and poverty, and that a system that evicts farmers from their land for cows and soybeans can only benefit the very privileged few.

With the threats posed by climate change and industrial agriculture only increasing, they must support each other to survive.

These communities are clear that in order for them to be able to adapt to the worsening climate crisis, big agribusiness must be stopped from stealing their land, destroying their biodiversity and poisoning their water.

At the same time, their collective and women-led efforts to organise for their own resilience must be respected and supported. The indigenous and peasant women of these communities embody the kind of ambitious and transformative climate action that is so desperately needed. ♦

The Global Forest Coalition is a worldwide coalition of 99 non-governmental and Indigenous Peoples' organisations from 62 different countries striving for rights-based, socially just forest conservation policies. This article first appeared on the Coalition's website (globalforestcoalition.org).

The Chilean poet *Pablo Neruda* (1904-1973), a Nobel laureate long regarded as one of the finest Latin American poets, was a fierce opponent of the 1973 military coup which toppled the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. Neruda's death in mysterious circumstances in the aftermath of the coup has sparked suspicions that he was murdered.

They receive instructions against Chile

Pablo Neruda

But we have to see behind all them, there is something
 behind the traitors and the gnawing rats,
 an empire which sets the table,
 and serves up the nourishment and the bullets.
 They want to repeat in you their great success in Greece.
 Greek playboys at the banquet, and bullets
 for the people in the mountains: we'll have to destroy the flight
 of the new Victory of Samothrace, we'll have to hang,
 kill, lose men, sink the murderous knife
 held to us from New York, we'll have to use fire
 to break the spirit of the man who was emerging
 in all countries as if born
 from the earth that had been splashed with blood.
 We have to arm Chiang and the vicious Videla,
 give them money for prisons, wings
 so they can bomb their own populations, give them
 a handout, a few dollars, and they do the rest,
 they lie, bribe, dance on the dead bodies
 and their first ladies wear the most expensive minks.
 The suffering of the people does not matter: copper
 executives need this sacrifice: facts are facts:
 the generals retire from the army and serve
 as vice-presidents of the Chuquicamata Copper Firm,
 and in the nitrate works the 'Chilean' general
 decides with his trailing sword how much the natives
 may mention when they ask for a raise in wages.
 In this way they decide from above, from the roll of dollars,
 in this way the dwarf traitor receives his instructions,
 and the generals act as the police force,
 and the trunk of the tree of the country rots.

Translated by Robert Bly and James Wright