

SPECIAL FOCUS ON COP 26



SHOULD WE SAVE CARS OR COWS?

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLE CALL FOR
END TO "WAR ON NATURE"**

**CAN A SINGING, DANCING
REBELLION SAVE THE WORLD?**

**CALL FOR ANNUAL UN YOUTH
CLIMATE SUMMIT**

**COP26 FINAL COMMUNIQUE
IGNORE FOOD SECURITY**

**PHILIPPINES YOUTH
GROUP FIGHT TO SAVE
INDIGENOUS LAND**

Issue 3 – November 2021

Bringing You Stories and Issues
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**Cover Photo: Regenerating from
the 2020 Bushfires in Australia
(Photo Credit: Kalinga
Seneviratne)**

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 3rd issue of Sustainable Development Observer bringing you news and views on sustainable development goals from the perspective of the Global South.

This issue focuses on Climate Change and the COP26 summit in Glasgow this month. We look at the debate on methane gas reduction from a farming mythology perspective. Indigenous people have called for a stop to 'war on nature' and we look at their perspective on climate change. And why is a Japanese Buddhist group calling for an annual UN Youth Climate Summit? Find out more in this issue. Also while Greta Thunberg gets all the attention, we look at why youth from the Global South says their voices are ignored at COP26.

Many Pacific Islands are threatened with extinction while the sea levels rise due to global warming. We bring you a viewpoint from the Cook Islands Prime Minister on why rich countries need to deliver on their "Pacific Climate Financing" promises, and also from the Pacific we bring you a report on how Australia is buying "silence" from Pacific nations on climatic change issues.

Looking critically at the COP26 final communiqué we question why farming and food security have been ignored? Because food security is a critical issue, we look at Africa and how climate change is creating environmental havoc and threatening food security.

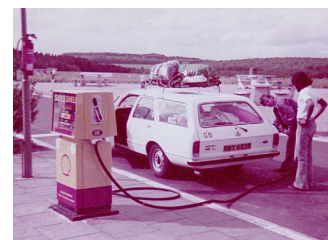
We have two special features from Asia – one from Thailand on how a Buddhist monk is helping COVID-affected people to embark on a new sustainable livelihood – and from the Philippines on how a group of young people are fighting to save indigenous land from "developers".

We feature 3 important reports that give different perspectives on the impact of climatic change on people. *The Health Argument for Climatic Action* gives 10 recommendations for tackling the climate and health crises. *The Heat Is On* provides data on where we are in the goal to achieving the 2030 greenhouse emission reduction targets. *Global Health Watch* is a critical expose of who controls the global health agenda.

Keeping to the theme of health, our major feature this month focus on the medical brain drain from the Global South with a special look at Nigeria and the Philippines.

Dr Kalinga Seneviratne - Editor

In Saving the Planet, What Should We Keep, Cows or Cars?



By Busani Bafana

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (IDN) - Livestock has been vilified as one key sources of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas which has contributed to global warming.

There have been global calls for a shift in livestock production and even removing meat off the menu in favour of plant-based diets to save the planet.

But there is greater need to differentiate livestock production systems because not all milk and meat are the same, according to a new report by the PASTRES research programme published ahead of the COP26 climate conference.

Important decisions about climate mitigation, food systems and land use—including dietary shifts, tree planting schemes and rewilding—risk being based on partial or misleading evidence, states the report *Are livestock always bad for the planet** by Ella Houzer and Ian Scoones.

Warning that millions of people worldwide who depend on extensive livestock production, with relatively lower climate impacts, are being ignored by debates on the future of food, the report notes that low-impact pastoral farming in dry lands and mountains has been 'lumped in' with much more intensive methods like factory farming.

Animal-source foods are vital for nutrition in low-income populations, and in places where crop production is not possible, including in many dry and mountainous parts of the world. Changes in meat and milk consumption must focus on the most climate-damaging diets, which are concentrated among a 'consumption elite'—often rich people in rich countries, the authors say.

IDN spoke to report co-author, Ian Scoones, an agricultural ecologist. Scoones is a Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and a Principal Investigator of the ERC-funded PASTRES project. Excerpts:

Question: Are livestock always bad for the planet?

The short answer is 'no'. We need to differentiate between different types of production system: some are more environment and people friendly; some are clearly not. The debate about the future of food and the climate needs to become much more sophisticated. Extensive livestock systems can provide a wide array of environmental and livelihood benefits and can show the way forward to a more climate-friendly future.

Q: You say that global studies of livestock emissions are skewed towards rich countries with an insignificant contribution from Africa; why is this so and how do we change this narrative?

Most of the evidence we have on livestock related emissions come from high input industrialised systems. There is far too little research from African settings. Even if methane production is lower per unit of product in industrial systems due to improved feeds, there are many other climate impacts - from importing the feeds, from the infrastructure, from transport and so on. Extensive systems, such as found across Africa, also have lower impacts than the assessment models assume.

In fact, some studies show that in mobile grazing systems, livestock can be in carbon balance through sequestering carbon in the soil. Extensive livestock systems such as mobile pastoralism replaces wildlife dominated systems, which also produce greenhouse gases. Pastoral systems may in fact not add extra emissions to this baseline, and so should not be treated as causing additional climate damage. Overall, we should not lump all livestock systems in together but differentiate between them.

Q: Could cows hold the key to fighting climate change in your view? Should we be getting rid of cars and keeping the cows?

The comparison between cows and cars is a false one. Both produce dangerous greenhouse gases and affect the climate. Cars rely on fossil fuels and so contribute to carbon dioxide emissions; cows produce methane from digestion. The difference is that carbon dioxide sticks around in the atmosphere effectively forever, while methane decays after about a decade, even though its effects on warming are significant.

So, we have to address both emissions from agriculture and from transport but deal with them in different ways. Within the livestock sector, in particular, we have to differentiate between industrial systems that have high emissions and extensive systems such as pastoralism that have much lower impacts. We need to focus on changing the processes of production not banning the products, such as meat and milk.

Q: Livestock are critical to livelihoods in Africa, they are part and parcel of the social, economic and cultural way of life and in some places, and the only means for livelihood, what insights does your study offer into the future of livestock farming?

Yes, in many settings livestock production is the central source of livelihood, a vital source of income and a contributor of high density protein essential for nutrition. Meat and milk are especially important in marginal areas and for the nutrition of growing kids. Livestock can make use of areas that are not suitable for cropping, and where there is no other alternative source of food.

And mobile, extensive livestock can also contribute to enhancing biodiversity, reducing wildfires and, under some conditions, sequestering carbon. Given their importance, simply saying 'let's reduce livestock production and the consumption of meat and milk' doesn't make sense. Again, we need to differentiate between production systems and contexts and have a more sophisticated debate.

Q: How do we include pastoralists in decisions about the future of food and in the climate change debate?

Pastoralists are almost completely excluded from the debate at the moment. The global debate is framed by western concerns, and the need to reduce meat and milk in elite, high consumption diets, along with reducing highly damaging factory farming of livestock. This is really important, as such systems are highly damaging to both people and the planet. But let's not make the mistake of thinking that all livestock production is bad.

As an alternative to damaging industrial production, pastoralists—whether in Africa or Europe—need to make the case that there are alternatives that are climate friendly and provide good, high-quality food. These voices are currently not heard and are drowned out by the anti-livestock rhetoric and the radical diet change advocacy of some, mostly in the west. [IDN-InDepthNews – 04 November 2021] (SDG 2: Zero Hunger and SDG 13: Climate Action)

Photo Credits: Cows grazing (Busani Bafana), Petrol station car filling (Sumithra Jayasekare)

* Download Report - <https://pastres.org/livestock-report/>



Indigenous activists demonstrate on the streets of the COP26 host city, Glasgow, during the landmark UN climate conference. (Photo: Credit: UN News/Grace Barret)

COP26: Indigenous Peoples Join UN Representatives in Calling to End the 'War on Nature' By J Nastranis

New York/Glasgow (IDN) - Mother Nature, or "*Pachamama*", as they say in Latin America, took center stage as the critical UN climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, as it reached the halfway point on November 6.

No one knows more about how best to protect nature, than the indigenous peoples of the world, which have been very active inside and outside the COP venue in Glasgow, working to influence negotiations in every way possible, including street protests.

"The indigenous culture teaches us to respect rivers, lakes, plants, animals and the spiritual beings who live in these places. You can't solve the climate crisis without including indigenous peoples and without protecting their territories", activist Eloy Terena told *UN News*.

Former UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, said that indigenous communities really are the experts on living in harmony with nature, one fundamental reason why their territories currently contain 80% of the world's biodiversity.

"We really use nature to solve all of our problems of food security, of water or climate change and other services and we have done it in a way that doesn't destroy nature, so we have a lot to share with the dominant world and we need support to stop governments from criminalizing us, for protecting our territories", she highlighted.

The international environmental activist said that while indigenous communities had strict laws and customs, to protect nature, States have conflicting laws.

"For example, in the Philippines, we have an Indigenous Rights Act, but we also have the Mining Act and well as an Investments Agreement who pushes them to extract our resources", she said.

Ms. Tauli-Corpuz explained that during COP26, indigenous representatives are moving their strategy to influence some of the decisions that are going to be made by the end of the week, including Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which will establish rules for carbon markets and other forms of international cooperation. "The push is to really say that we cannot have market-based mechanisms if they violate indigenous people's rights".

Although ancestral communities contribute next to zero to climate change, they have become one of its most vulnerable victims.

Daniela Balaguera comes from the Arhuaco indigenous community in the North of Colombia. An ancestral indigenous tribe, which lives in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, an isolated mountain range separate from the Andes, that runs through the center of the country and serves as the source for 36 different rivers downstream.

"Our territories are supposed to be sacred, they are for environmental conservation, but they are not really being treated that way and that is where we must delve deeper. If they are protected areas, they should be given the guarantees and rights that have been recognized but that they are not exercising", she says.

For her, and many other activists that have expressed their voices at COP, climate change is a matter of life and death.

"We are being threatened with the second extinction of our cultural practices, which is extremely worrying because it would be the second massacre, the second annihilation of our people", she said.

Ms. Balaguera's concerns were being echoed on the streets of Glasgow on November 6, and in many other parts of the world such as London and Paris, where activists from all ages and backgrounds have called for a Global Day of Action.

COP26 President Alok Sharma, also announced that the Glasgow Forest Declaration* presented on November 2, has been now signed by 130 countries, covering 93 per cent of the world's tree cover.

And, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said several times in recent months, humanity is "waging a war on nature". He is urging greater action.

"We can't continue to push nature into a corner and expect it to deliver. We want it to sequester carbon, to provide the buffers for the high storms and mangroves and to be the lungs of the world. "But when we mess with nature, nature will send us these invoices in the forms of greater intensity storms, more fires, more heatwaves and more droughts", UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen, told *UN News* at COP26 on November 6.

Solving climate change cannot be done without solving the challenge of biodiversity loss and degraded ecosystems, Ms. Andersen told a high-level panel. She called for unity and cooperation to find the solutions needed to restore nature and address climate change.

"The social-economic transformations we need, will only happen when we reset our relationship with nature, understanding that we can no longer invest in that which harms our planet", she said. As countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a big push for nature-based solutions against climate change, and in terms of aiding economic recovery, she added. These are initiatives that provide benefits for nature and for people, UNEP's chief explained to UN News.

"How can nature help us, and how we can help nature...There are two billion hectares of degraded land, and we all need to eat. So, the question is if we are going to cut down virgin forests, or restore that land into a working landscape", she highlighted. [IDN-InDepthNews – 07 November 2021] (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)

* For more information on Glasgow Forest Declaration refer - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1104642>

COP 26: Can a Singing, Dancing Rebellion Save the World?

Analysis by Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies

New York (IDN) - COP Twenty-six! That is how many times the UN has assembled world leaders to try to tackle the climate crisis. But the United States is producing more oil and natural gas than ever; the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere and global temperatures are both still rising; and we are



Greta Thunberg leads protests in Italy ahead of COP26 (Photo: Credit: Radio Habana Cuba)

already experiencing the extreme weather and climate chaos that scientists have warned us about for forty years, and which will only get worse and worse without serious climate action.

And yet, the planet has so far only warmed 1.2° Celsius (2.2° F) since pre-industrial times. We already have the technology we need to convert our energy systems to clean, renewable energy, and doing so would create millions of good jobs for people all over the world. So, in practical terms, the steps we must take are clear, achievable and urgent.

The greatest obstacle to action that we face is our dysfunctional, neoliberal political and economic system and its control by plutocratic and corporate interests, who are determined to keep profiting from fossil fuels even at the cost of destroying the Earth's uniquely livable climate. The climate crisis has exposed this system's structural inability to act in the real interests of humanity, even when our very future hangs in the balance.

So what is the answer? Can COP26 in Glasgow be different? What could make the difference between more slick political PR and decisive action? Counting on the same politicians and fossil fuel interests (yes, they are there, too) to do something different this time seems suicidal, but what is the alternative?

Since Obama's Pied Piper leadership in Copenhagen and Paris produced a system in which individual countries set their own targets and decided how to meet them, most countries have made little progress toward the targets they set in Paris in 2015.

Now they have come to Glasgow with predetermined and inadequate pledges that, even if fulfilled, would still lead to a much hotter world by 2100. A succession of UN and civil society reports in the lead-up to COP26 have been sounding the alarm with what UN Secretary General António Guterres has called a "thundering wake-up call" and a "code red for humanity". In Guterres' opening speech at COP26 on November 1, he said that "we are digging our own graves" by failing to solve this crisis.

Yet governments are still focusing on long-term goals like reaching "Net Zero" by 2050, 2060 or even 2070, so far in the future that they can keep postponing the radical steps needed to limit warming to 1.5° Celsius. Even if they somehow stopped pumping greenhouse gases into the air, the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere by 2050 would keep heating up the planet for generations. The more we load up the atmosphere with GHGs, the longer their effect will last and the hotter the Earth will keep growing.

The United States has set a shorter-term target of reducing its emissions by 50% from their peak 2005 level by 2030. But its present policies would only lead to a 17%-25% reduction by then.

The Clean Energy Performance Program (CEPP), which was part of the Build Back Better Act, could make up a lot of that gap by paying electric utilities to increase reliance on renewables by 4% year over year and penalizing utilities that don't. But on the eve of COP 26, Biden dropped the CEPP from the bill under pressure from Senators Manchin and Sinema and their fossil fuel puppet-masters.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military, the largest institutional emitter of GHGs on Earth, was exempted from any constraints whatsoever under the Paris Agreement. Peace activists in Glasgow are demanding that COP26 must fix this huge black hole in global climate policy by including the U.S. war machine's GHG emissions, and those of other militaries, in national emissions reporting and reductions.

At the same time, every penny that governments around the world have spent to address the climate crisis amounts to a small fraction of what the United States alone has spent on its nation-destroying war machine during the same period.

China now officially emits more CO2 than the United States. But a large part of China's emissions are driven by the rest of the world's consumption of Chinese products, and its largest customer is the United States. An MIT study* in 2014 estimated that exports account for 22% of China's carbon emissions. On a per capita consumption basis, Americans still account for three times the GHG emissions of our Chinese neighbors and double the emissions of Europeans.

Wealthy countries have also fallen short on the commitment they made in Copenhagen in 2009 to help poorer countries tackle climate change by providing financial aid that would grow to \$100 billion per year by 2020. They have provided increasing amounts, reaching \$79 billion in 2019, but the

failure to deliver the full amount that was promised has eroded trust between rich and poor countries. A committee headed by Canada and Germany at COP26 is charged with resolving the shortfall and restoring trust.

When the world's political leaders are failing so badly that they are destroying the natural world and the livable climate that sustains human civilization, it is urgent for people everywhere to get much more active, vocal and creative.

The appropriate public response to governments that are ready to squander the lives of millions of people, whether by war or by ecological mass suicide, is rebellion and revolution - and non-violent forms of revolution have generally proven more effective and beneficial than violent ones.

People are rising up against this corrupt neoliberal political and economic system in countries all over the world, as its savage impacts affect their lives in different ways. But the climate crisis is a universal danger to all of humanity that requires a universal, global response.

One inspiring civil society group on the streets in Glasgow during COP 26 is Extinction Rebellion, which proclaims, "We accuse world leaders of failure, and with a daring vision of hope, we demand the impossible...We will sing and dance and lock arms against despair and remind the world there is so much worth rebelling for."

Extinction Rebellion and other climate groups at COP26 are calling for Net Zero by 2025, not 2050, as the only way to meet the 1.5° goal agreed to in Paris.

Greenpeace is calling for an immediate global moratorium on new fossil fuel projects and a quick phase-out of coal-burning power plants. Even the new coalition government in Germany, which includes the Green Party and has more ambitious goals than other large wealthy countries, has only moved up the final deadline on Germany's coal phaseout from 2038 to 2030.

The Indigenous Environmental Network is bringing indigenous people from the Global South to Glasgow to tell their stories at the conference. They are calling on the Northern industrialized countries to declare a climate emergency, to keep fossil fuels in the ground and end subsidies of fossil fuels globally.

Friends of the Earth (FOE) has published a new report titled *Nature-Based Solutions: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*** as a focus for its work at COP26. It exposes a new trend in corporate greenwashing involving industrial-scale tree plantations in poor countries, which corporations plan to claim as "offsets" for continued fossil fuel production.



Extinction Rebellion protestor
(Photo Credit: Cop26_extinction
rebellion instagram)

The U.K. government that is hosting the conference in Glasgow has endorsed these schemes as part of the program at COP26. FOE is highlighting the effect of these massive land-grabs on local and indigenous communities and calls them "a dangerous deception and distraction from the real solutions to the climate crisis." If this is what governments mean by "Net Zero," it would just be one more step in the financialization of the Earth and all its resources, not a real solution.

Because it is hard for activists from around the world to get to Glasgow for COP26 during a pandemic, activist groups are simultaneously organizing around the world to put pressure on governments in their own countries. Hundreds of climate activists and indigenous people have been arrested in protests at the White House in Washington, and five young Sunrise Movement activists began a hunger strike there on October 19.

U.S. climate groups also support the "Green New Deal" bill, H.Res. 332, that Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has introduced in Congress, which specifically calls for policies to keep global warming below 1.5° Celsius, and currently has 103 cosponsors. The bill sets ambitious targets for 2030, but only calls for Net Zero by 2050.

The environmental and climate groups converging on Glasgow agree that we need a real global program of energy conversion now, as a practical matter, not as the aspirational goal of an endlessly ineffective, hopelessly corrupt political process.

At COP25 in Madrid in 2019, Extinction Rebellion dumped a pile of horse manure outside the conference hall with the message, “The horse-shit stops here.” Of course that didn’t stop it, but it made the point that empty talk must rapidly be eclipsed by real action. Greta Thunberg has hit the nail on the head, slamming world leaders for covering up their failures with “blah, blah, blah,” instead of taking real action.

Like Greta’s School Strike for the Climate, the climate movement in the streets of Glasgow is informed by the recognition that the science is clear and the solutions to the climate crisis are readily available. It is only political will that is lacking. This must be supplied by ordinary people, from all walks of life, through creative, dramatic action and mass mobilization, to demand the political and economic transformation we so desperately need.

The usually mild-mannered UN Secretary General Guterres made it clear that “street heat” will be key to saving humanity. “The climate action army - led by young people - is unstoppable,” he told world leaders in Glasgow. “They are larger. They are louder. And, I assure you, they are not going away.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 03 November 2021] (SDG 13: Climate Action)

* To read MIT Report *Calculating China’s carbon emissions from trade* go to - <https://news.mit.edu/2014/calculating-chinas-carbon-emissions-from-trade>

** To download report *Nature-Based Solutions: A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* go to - <https://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Nature-based-solutions-a-wolf-in-sheeps-clothing-1.pdf>

About the Authors: *Medea Benjamin is cofounder of CODEPINK for Peace and author of several books, including ‘Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran’.* *Nicolas J. S. Davies is an independent journalist, a researcher with CODEPINK and the author of ‘Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq’.*



Young woman activist Vanessa Nakate from Uganda (Photo Credit: Global Information Network)

Young People from Global South at COP26 Still Being Ignored, Activist Says

By Lisa Vives

New York (IDN) - In a sharply-worded letter aimed at media leaders and chief editors prior to the UN Climate Change Conference now taking place in Glasgow, Scotland, young woman activist Vanessa Nakate of Uganda spared the politeness and highlighted today’s calamities in her part of the world.

“Melting glaciers, wildfires, droughts, deadly heat waves, floods, hurricanes, loss of biodiversity. These are all symptoms of a destabilizing planet, which are happening around us all the time,” she said in a letter co-authored with activist Greta Thunberg of Sweden.

“The climate crisis isn’t just about extreme weather. It’s about people. Real people. And the very people who have done the least to create the climate crisis are suffering the most.

“Those are the kind of things you report about —sometimes,” Nakate reminded the media community. “The climate crisis, however, is much more than just this. If you want to truly cover the climate crisis, you must also report on the fundamental issues of time, holistic thinking and justice.”

Nakate recalled walking with a friend through central Kampala last month when they saw a police truck go by, a body in the back.

“It’s a sight that has become more common in Uganda,” Nakate said. “The life of that person, and many others, was taken by a heavy downpour in my home city. Uganda has been battered by floods in recent years, as well as droughts and plagues of locusts. So much has been damaged and lost as a result of the climate crisis.”

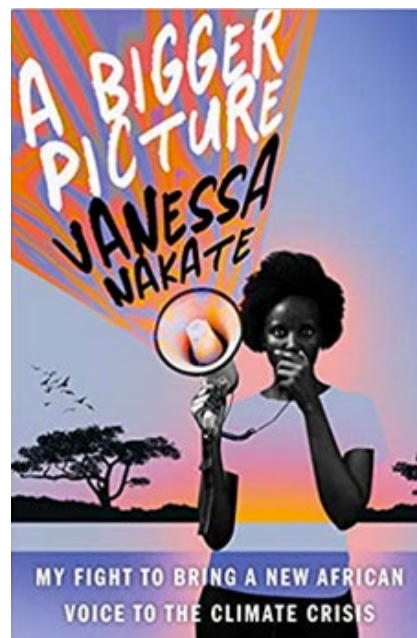
“I believe in the ‘polluter pays’ principle,” she declared. “We know who did this - but they don’t want to pay the bill. Rich countries providing finance only for the mitigation of our emissions and protections against future impacts is no longer enough. Climate-vulnerable countries need funds to deal with the damage we are suffering now.”

Nakate, 24, is the author of *A Bigger Picture: My fight to bring a new African voice to the climate crisis*. Her words were backed up by Malawi President, theologian and chair of the Southern Africa Development Community, Lazarus Chakwera.

Chakwera scolded rich countries. “If countries with the greatest capacity to effect change but do not, those with more modest means should not be expected to do so. At COP26, the West must show it is now fit for the challenge and will finally fulfill its obligations”.

“If you’ve been involved in bringing the earth we call home to this state, let’s clean it up, but you have to be responsible. Your \$100 billion climate pledge in 2009 to help poor countries deal with climate change each year is not a matter of charity,” he said. “So pay up or perish with us,” he declared.

Finally, among the many young people at the conference, 26-year-old Elizabeth Wathuti of Kenya, founder of Green Generation Initiative, expressed a widely shared view.



Vanessa Nakate’s book cover

“One of my key expectations was to see more action instead of going to these forums and hearing talks, talks, talks for the next years. My thought was, COP26 is coming up, and to me this translates into 26 years of inaction... Youth from Africa, Asia and Latin America make up 90 percent of the total Global youth population”, she said, “but the focus on youth in Europe, North America, and Australia remains most prevalent.”

“We felt so many times as though we were being ignored or not being listened to at all. Because if we were being listened to, then we would be fully represented in this global climate conversation...”

“It has been a struggle, but I really hope as we continue to use our voices to speak up for our countries, for our people, the world will begin to pay attention.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 October 2021] (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals)

* To get a copy of Venessa Makate’s book *A Bigger Picture: My fight to bring a new African voice to the climate crisis* go to - <https://www.amazon.com/Bigger-Picture-African-Climate-Crisis/dp/0358654505>

As Political Leadership Falters, Japanese Buddhist Movement Proposes Annual UN Youth Climate Summits

By Kurt Reynolds

London (IDN) - As the COP26 climate summit in Scotland was winding down, the long-term pledges and bountiful promises made by world leaders seemed never ending—stretching all the way to 2070.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a global roadmap to achieve a radical transformation of energy access and transition by 2030, while also contributing to net zero emissions by 2050.

The roadmap sets an aggressive timeline to ensure that 500 million more people gain access to electricity in a mere four years' time, by 2025, and 1 billion more people gain access to clean cooking solutions.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a net-zero emissions target, pledging India will become carbon neutral by 2070. And political leaders from Canada and Germany said, in a joint statement, they expect "significant progress towards the US \$100 billion goal in 2022" while expressing confidence it would be met by 2023. The leaders of the G20, comprising the world's major industrial nations, pledged to "pursue efforts" to limit the global average temperature rise to within 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

Meanwhile, a coalition of banks, investors and insurers, that collectively control \$130 trillion in assets, said it would commit to reaching net zero emissions across its investments by 2050.

The targeted dates were a peek into the future, perhaps an uncertain future judging by failed promises: 2023, 2025, 2030, 2050 and 2070. But a lingering question remains: how many of these world leaders will be politically alive to either help implement these pledges or live long enough to see them realized.

The chances are slim - which creates a significant role for a younger generation to take the lead role in the fight against climate change.



A Soka Gakkai International sponsored youth forum in Glasgow (Photo Credit: SGI-UK)

The Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a global, community-based Buddhist social movement promoting peace, culture and education, was one of the lead campaigners in Glasgow sponsoring not only several side events but also urging more and more young people take up the responsibility of adopting solutions to the current climate emergency.

How can young people overcome barriers of marginalisation and prejudice - and how best can they be supported in achieving their visions for climate-resilient futures

and climate justice? The hope, expressed by SGI, is how best to envision stronger inter-generational collaboration and how to overcome divisive narratives of youth and adults bringing generations together to address the climate crisis based on a shared concern for our planet.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has proposed an annual UN Youth Climate Summits leading to 2030 and has called for a Security Council Resolution mainstreaming youth participation in climate-related decision-making. He points out the world today is faced with a complex set of urgent crises that can only be described as unprecedented in the history of humankind.

"I use the term 'unprecedented' here not merely in reference to the overlapping and interlocking layers of crisis we are experiencing today. Humanity has been confronted with various kinds of challenges throughout its long history, yet it has never faced a situation in which the entire world is impacted at once, gravely threatening the lives, livelihood and dignity of people in countries everywhere, throwing them into conditions in which they find themselves requiring urgent assistance.", Ikeda said.

With 12 million members representing 192 countries and territories, the SGI's social mission is to establish respect for the dignity of life, in all its forms, as the foundation of society. SGI is also an international NGO in consultative status with the UN.

SGI's vision was reflected on November 8 in a statement made by former US President Barack Obama who helped clinch the 2015 Paris Climate agreement. "The most important energy in this movement is coming from young people. And the reason is simple. They have more at stake in this than anybody else", he said, speaking at the COP26 summit, amid a standing ovation.

“I am the father of two daughters in their early 20s. it’s not always easy being young today. For most of your lives, if you are in that generation, you’ve been bombarded about what the future would look like if we don’t do anything about climate change,” he declared.

In a statement released in Glasgow, SGI focused specifically on Youth Engagement and Leadership: “Listening to the voices of young people is not optional; it is the only logical path forward if we are genuinely concerned about the future of our world. Youth have the clear-sightedness, the creativity and the boldness to lead us forward in ways that break down old stalemates and refresh our spirits. We must invest all our energy in empowering and supporting them, working together with them to find solutions to all the problems we face.”

At COP26, it is crucial, said SGI, that State Parties and negotiators:

- Record, share and amplify youth voices, including especially the outcomes of the Pre-COP Youth4Climate Event and the 16th Conference of Youth (COY16).
- Give real leadership opportunities related to climate issues to youth.

From a broader UN perspective, it is essential to:

- Hold regional- and national-level youth summits focusing on climate and other post-COVID challenges that we must face together.
- Establish a UN Youth Council that would regularize and sustain youth engagement and leadership.
- For the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution encouraging the mainstreaming of youth participation in climate-related decision-making, similar to Security Council Resolution 2250, which urges member states to strengthen the role played by young people in peace and security issues.

The underlying theme of the panel discussions, sponsored jointly by Soka Gakkai International-UK (SGI-UK) and Centre for Applied Buddhism @ Websters Glasgow, was “Sowing Seeds of Hope: Action for Climate Justice” and “Multi-faith dialogue Climate Justice—the power of faith communities acting together.”

Among the discussions on the role of youth was one titled: “Beyond Rhetoric —Youth Leadership for Climate Action” where young climate activists from the Global South and North discussed the challenges and opportunities for youth on the frontlines of climate action and explore how to better facilitate intergenerational collaboration. [IDN-InDepthNews - 10 November 2021] (SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals)

Australia Accused Of 'Bullying' Pacific Over Climate Action, 'Buying Silence'

By Asia Pacific Report Newsdesk

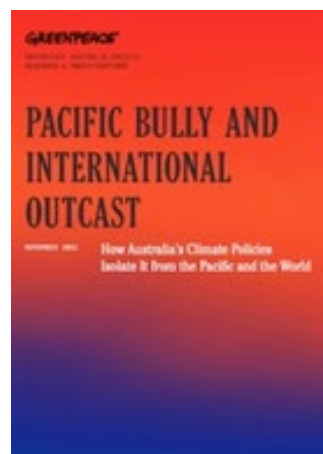
SUVA (IDN/APR) - Australia is accused of using “diplomatic strong-arm tactics” to water down outcomes in Pacific climate negotiations and “buy silence” on climate change, a new report has revealed.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific’s report, *Australia Pacific Bully and International Ourcast*,* reveals that the Australian government uses “bullying tactics” in regional negotiations on climate change, according to former Pacific Island leaders interviewed as part of the study.

The leaders include former Kiribati President Anote Tong and former Prime Minister of Tuvalu Bikenibeu Paeniu.

Australia’s aid to the Pacific has been “greenwashed”, with some of the largest and most expensive “climate adaptation” projects having no link to climate change or contributing to increase the climate resilience of Pacific peoples.

The Australian government’s climate position harms its



international relations and economy with Australia's export markets for coal and gas shrinking as major trading partners such as Japan and South Korea commit to net-zero emissions, says the report, published to coincide with the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.

The report draws on dozens of interviews with present and former Pacific leaders, Australian diplomats and academics to expose the hardline tactics used by Australia to thwart stronger regional action on climate change and to shift focus away from Australia's responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The report also uncovers the greenwashing of Australian aid in the Pacific, finding that millions of aid dollars have been given to "climate adaptation" projects that do not have any link to climate change.

Greenpeace Australia Pacific researcher and international relations expert Dr Alex Edney-Browne said the investigation showed Australia's international standing had been damaged by its climate obstruction.

"Australia has lost its once-respected position in the Pacific and now has a reputation for bullying and strong-arm diplomatic tactics to thwart regional climate action," she said.

"Pacific Island leaders are some of the world's strongest climate advocates, but Australia has brazenly tried to buy their silence through aid with strings attached.

"Morrison's last-minute commitment at COP26 this week to increase regional climate finance by \$500 million, via bilateral agreements, simply won't cut it. Given the level of greenwashing going on in Australia's foreign aid to the Pacific as revealed in this report, there is also no guarantee that this money will go where it's needed to increase the climate resiliency of Pacific peoples," she said.

"Australia has a history of using bilateral aid as a way of gaining leverage over Pacific Island countries. It would be nice to see Australia being a good international citizen and showing support for multilateral climate finance such as the UN's Green Climate Fund. It refuses to do so.

"Australia must make a serious effort on climate change, which is threatening the very survival of Pacific nations. That means ruling out any new coal or gas projects, ending the billions in subsidies given to the fossil fuel industry and committing to a science-based target to cut emissions by 75 percent this decade to bring it up to speed with our regional neighbours and trading partners."

Gareth Evans, a former Australian foreign minister, said Australia's climate policy was already hurting the country's diplomatic standing. "A country's reputation for decency in these matters does really, really matter... Australia's credibility in all sorts of ways depends on our being seen to be responsible, good international citizens and Australia is putting that reputation very much at risk on the climate front," he said.

Anote Tong, former President of Kiribati, said Australia had not acted in the spirit of mutual respect in its dealings with the Pacific on climate change. "I cannot read into the minds of Australian leaders, but it's always been my hope that we would treat each other with mutual respect, but I'm not sure this has always been the case," he said.

"But we should be partners in every respect and not when it is convenient to one party but not the other, for example on climate change. We expect Australia to be stepping forward because climate change is very important for us and we're meant to be part of this family. It had always been my expectation, my hope, that Australia would provide the leadership we desperately need on climate change."

Dr Matt McDonald, associate professor of International Relations at University of Queensland, refers to Australia's climate policies as a "perfect storm", with serious repercussions for the country's regional and international relations if these policies remain weak by comparison with similar developed countries. [IDN-InDepthNews – 06 November 2021] (SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals)

* The report *Australia Pacific Bully and International Ourcast* can be accessed from - <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/australia-pacific-bully-international-outcast/australia-the-pacific-family-bully/>

COP26: Final Communiqué Fails To Address Climate Change Impact On Food Security

By Kalinga Seneviratne



COP26 President Alok Sharma speaking at the final plenary (Photo Credit: UN)

Sydney (IDN) - About a third of global gas emissions come from agriculture and land use, yet, the final communiqué of COP26 failed to make any direct reference to the relationship between climate action and the world's food systems. This is at a time, when the World Food Program (WFP) has warned that up to 45 million people in 43 countries are on the brink of a famine.

For nearly three decades now, the United Nations has been bringing together almost every country on earth for an annual global climate summit—called COPs—which stands for 'Conference of the Parties'. This year's two weeks talkfest that ended on the

weekend in Glasgow was the 26th, and in this quarter of a century climate change has transformed from a fringe issue that is of concerns to mainly Green parties to one which is in the mainstream of global politics and media attention.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in a report released in April this year, estimated that more than 680 million family farms occupying 70-80 percent of the world's farmland, produce about 80 percent of the world's food. Yet, an issue that involves the livelihood of at least 3 billion people and has a direct impact on the achievement of food security as prescribed in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2, did not attract a direct mention in any of the 97 clauses that were in the COP26 final communiqué.

In a communiqué that begins with the words, "*Recognizing* the role of multilateralism in addressing climate change and promoting regional and international cooperation in order to strengthen climate action in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty", could not find space to refer to an issue that is central to eradicate poverty—food security. The preamble also refers to the "importance for some of climatic justice", and it is dressed up as a human rights and social inequality issue, presumably to placate some civil society groups.

A number of clauses, such as clause 15, urge developed country Parties to "urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country Parties as part of a global effort". This is a line pushed by many developing countries at COP26, but, it lacked detailed commitments.

Clause 27 talks about a decision to establish a work programme to urgently scale up mitigation ambition - meaning measures to minimizing greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere. And clause 38 emphasizes the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems with forests and other terrestrial and marine ecosystems acting as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases - but no link to the farmlands and fisheries that is the lifeblood of millions of communities. Next clause says that they recognize "that enhanced support for developing country Parties will allow for higher ambition in their actions".

In clause 44 there is an acknowledgement of the developed country Parties' failure to mobilise \$100 billion annually by 2020 for mitigation actions (as agreed over a decade ago). Clause 73 says that COP26 had decided to establish the "Glasgow Dialogue Between Parties" to look at providing financial support to communities that are suffering from irreversible damage from climatic impacts. But, the developing countries have asked for a facility to be established for this purpose not another dialogue.

The thrust of the communiqué seems to be heavily focused on technological solutions to mitigate climatic change impacts on communities which puts developing countries at the mercy of mainly western technology and transfer. There is no hint of rich countries making sacrifices such as cutting

their cattle or sheep herd numbers to reduce methane gas emissions. This was a reason why Australia refused to sign into the methane gas emission reduction agreement.

London's *Guardian* reported that none of the presidents of the UK's four farming unions present at COP26 were willing to reduce livestock numbers and instead they told the *Guardian* that methane emissions could be dealt with through new technologies rather than reducing the number of cows on farms. Thomas Vilsack, the US secretary of agriculture, has also told the newspaper that he believes Americans can carry on eating the same amount of meat while keeping the world within safe limits on global heating.

"Food systems are largely absent from the climate conversations," notes Ruth Richardson, president at the Global Alliance for the Future of Food. "And we know that when we look at food systems as a whole - when we're talking about chopping down the rainforest for livestock production, we're talking about transporting beef across the country and long supply chains, and we're looking at all the various aspects of food systems—we know that they are the No. 1 contributor to greenhouse gas emissions," she told Devex adding, "unless we deal with food systems, we're not dealing with climate."

The proposed solutions from COP26 seem to go in two different direction but being presented as complimentary—reforestation on the one hand and technological innovation in agriculture on the other.

Rodney Ferguson, CEO of Winrock, a US international development organization, argues that if small scale farmers are to be incorporated into climate-smart agriculture, it would require providing them with technology that they could afford to use and feed their families. "If it remains an additional cost borne by a smallholder whose annual income may only be \$300 a year anyway and you're asking he or she to implement methodologies or products - or not do things that may cost \$50 - that's never going to succeed," he told Devex.

There was however, one day - November 10 - allocated for discussion of sustainable agriculture and land use called the 'Nature and Land Use Day'. During the day a number of initiatives were announced including the Global Action Agenda on Innovation in Agriculture' signed by 150 countries - a global initiative aimed at reaching 100 million farmers with net-zero and nature-positive innovations.

Though this don't seem to have gone into the COP26 communiqué, Shane Holland of UK's *Slow Food* welcomes such commitments but points out that similar pledges in 2010 by rich countries are yet to be realised. He also questions whose land would be earmarked for reforestation? Pointing out that, we need to tackle the causes of climate change at its source by ending the world's hunger for global commodity crops such as soya (for feeding farm animals), and palm oil at its source. "Until we do this, global food will continue to drive climate change," he adds.

"We have heard arguments that said because the world expects crop losses that we must intensify agriculture to act as an insurance policy, yet this fails to acknowledge that this is precisely driving the problem," he argues. "There are many other things the world needs to do: from ending fossil fuel use, to overhauling transportation and our electricity supplies - but our food system has the potential to be a carbon sink, and (this) is an opportunity lost". [IDN-InDepthNews – 15 November 2021] (SDG 13: Climate Action, SDG 2: Zero Hunger)

* COP26 Final Communique could be downloaded from - https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2021_L16_adv.pdf



Livestock farming in Australia (Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne)

Food Insecurity At 'Crisis' Or 'Emergency' Levels Haunts More Than Half of Afghans

By Radwan Jakeem

New York (IDN) - Forty years of war, recurrent

A livestock farm in Australia (Photo Credit: UNICEF)



A mother of six tends to her youngest child in Khorasan Province in Iran. (Photo Credit: UNICEF Iran/Mehdi Sayyari)

natural disasters, chronic poverty, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic have devastated the people of Afghanistan. The recent upheaval has only exacerbated needs and further complicated an extremely challenging operational context, notes the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its latest situation report.

Even prior to the events of August 15, when the Taliban took control of the presidential palace in Kabul after former President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was one of the worst in the world.

By the mid-year mark, nearly half of the population - some 18.4 million people- were already in need of humanitarian and protection assistance in 2021. Protection and safety risks to civilians, particularly women, children and people with a disability, were also reaching record highs.

The country is currently facing the second drought in four years and the worst of its kind in 27 years, warns the report. The recently updated Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis shows the food security situation has further deteriorated with worrying implications for the winter lean season ahead.

An estimated 22.8 million people, or 55 per cent of the population, are expected to be in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) between November 2021 and March 2022, a nearly 35 per cent increase from the same season last year (16.9m). No provinces have been included under IPC 1 and 2 during the projected period till March. Some 9 million people projected to be in IPC 4 - the highest number in the world.

Speaking to journalists in New York, the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General pointed to reports that isolated clashes and violence affecting civilians and resulting in casualties continued countrywide this week.

In Jalalabad, in Nangarhar Province, gunfire directed at de facto authorities resulted in the deaths of two children on November 1. Two days later, a roadside radio-controlled improvised explosive device detonation reportedly targeting the de facto authorities killed two civilians. On November 4, armed clashes were reported in Bamyān Province, resulting in the injury of five people, including one civilian.

The OCHA shows concern about "conditional humanitarianism" or attempts to "leverage" humanitarian assistance for political purposes. Donors are also asking that transactions and other activities required for humanitarian operations are excluded from the scope of sanctions, to allow these activities to continue without impediment.

The Afghanistan Flash Appeal, which targets 11 million people with aid through the end of the year, seeks \$606 million and is currently 54 per cent funded.

Since September 1, 2021, the UN agencies and their partners have reached 48,383 children with community-based education activities, supported 82,761 people with emergency shelter and non-food items, and provided 4.1 million people with food assistance. About 580,050 people got primary healthcare and 85,623 children under five received treatment for Acute Malnutrition.

For its part, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) began the autumn season wheat seed and fertilizer distribution campaign in the east of the country. FAO also plans technical training sessions on agricultural best practices. The agency expects to reach nearly 140,000 people in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan. [IDN-InDepthNews - 07 November 2021] (SDG 2: No Hunger, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being)

Thailand: Devoted Monk Helps COVID Affected People to Embark on A New Sustainable Livelihood

By Pattama Vilailert

Sisaket, Thailand (IDN) - With a series of COVID-19 lockdowns, many workers in Bangkok and other major business cities like Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Samut Prakarn flocked to their hometowns. They are forced to seek ways to begin their new lives and rationalise how to live sustainably in the long term.



Phramaha Hansa with villagers in Khok Nong Na (Photo Credit: Pattama Vilailert)

In Thailand, it is common to see laypeople giving alms to monks in the morning all over the country as part of merit-making before starting their day. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, some monks have reversed roles in merit-making.

At Wat Ban Tha Khoi Nang, Phramaha *Hansa* Dhammhaso, abbot and director of the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya (University) translates timeless teachings of the Buddha into his community development work of 'Peace Village' (Khok Nong Na).

"Peace Village comes from four kinds of Buddha teachings on developments of physical, social, mental and intellectual (aspects) and I have turned them into our strategies to address ongoing problems", Phramaha *Hansa* told IDN. "The first issue in the village is poverty (and) we need to create sustainable occupations (to address it). If people are still poor, how can we develop peace in the village?" he asks. "So, I apply the Sufficiency Economy of King Rama IX's ideology to develop Khok Nong Na model".

The late King Bhumibol (Rama IX) introduced the concept of 'Sufficiency Economics' when Thailand faced a severe economic downturn in the late 1990s. There are three pillars underlining this economic model—moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity. All three are based on Buddhist philosophy. According to His Majesty's official philosophy self-immunity outlines four areas that everybody should strive to achieve including: Immunity to changes in material circumstance, Immunity to social changes, Immunity to environmental changes and immunity to cultural changes.

In explaining the application of these Buddhist teachings to his village, Phramaha Hansa explains that the environment is important. "Many people tried to corrupt the land, so I told them to follow the 5 precepts (Panchasila), stressing on the 2nd precept: not to steal nor cheat, and eventually it worked out", he says happily. "Lastly, villagers' well-being (is also important because) old people in the village have a lot of health problems, thus I brought my health expert students from Bangkok to train them on how to take care of themselves. Also, in the misery time of COVID-19 lockdowns, I have helped a lot of Sisaket and adjacent province returnees to settle in their hometowns."

The Bank of Thailand revealed that since the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (from February-April 2020), 2 million workers moved in and out of cities. In the latter part of the year 2020 over 200,000 people per month were on the move. Most of them are aged 21-60 years (80%) and more than half are low-income people. The laid-off workers migrating out of Bangkok and surrounding provinces like the main tourist cities such as Phuket and Chaing Mai were significant. The workers were unable to bear the cost of living in large cities and decided to return to their hometowns.

Bauchai, a migrant worker originally from Ban Tha Khoi Nang, Sisaket shares the same fate. Before the outbreak, she used to live in the vicinity of Bangkok and worked as a seamstress in a small factory for over 30 years. "In February 2020, during the COVID-19 first wave, I saw the rising number of infected people, and later in April, it got worse, so I planned to move back to Sisaket permanently. At the end of 2020, I settled myself in Ban Tha Khoi Nang, my hometown", she told IDN.

In the first and the second waves of the outbreak (around February 2020-January 2021), there were enough hospital beds to cater to COVID-19 cases. As for the third wave from April-June 2021, community and city hospitals could only provide direct medical care and supervision to COVID-19 patients.

However, from late July to the middle of August 2021, the number of cases had continuously hiked from 15,000 to 22,000 a day. According to the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA),

the highest infected cases were clustered in Bangkok and major business cities like Samut Sakhon, Chon Buri and Samut Prakarn. When the number of cases soared, the incident of bed scarcity happened in Bangkok and the main cities. The infected people had to go back to their hometowns for treatment and isolation.



Villager with Thai melon, produce of Khok Nong Na. (Photo Credit: Pattama Vilailert)

“In Ban Tha Khoi Nang, Sisaket, from the middle of July to August 2021, sons and daughters of Sisaket’s residents wanted to come back to the village, I reminded them to isolate themselves in our forest temple. Also, I together with the director of the hospital, set up field hospitals: the first hospital catered to 35 people while the second one could take care of 100 people,” explained Phramaha Hansa.

“People that knew about this activity called me from Samut Sakhon, Ayutthaya, Samut Prakran and other provinces to ask if they could come for isolation and treatment here. I told them to do so and, in some cases, I sent the van to pick them up. Thus, so far I had helped around 1,400 people.”

Aside from setting up field hospitals, Phramaha Hansa was also a focal point for district and public health authorities to communicate with villagers and those that got infected. He was live on Facebook with the concerned authorities to inform people on ongoing treatment accessibility, isolation protocol and others.

Treatment and isolation are not the only contributions of Phramaha Hansa, “besides giving them food and water for 2 months, we have Khok Nong Na where they can learn about farming, growing organic vegetables and helping one another and in the long run, they can live sustainably”. He also added that even though, the isolation and treatment ended, the farming in Khok Nong Na is still going on.

The villagers’ children who work in Bangkok and want to come back home in the future have shown interest in learning about farming in Khok Nong Na. Phramaha Hansa keeps inspiring the villagers’ children through his Facebook and Line application. From this month, some of them will come back and learn farming for them to live a sustainable life in the long term as COVID-19 has taught them the impermanence of life—a basic component of Buddhist—and self-immunity philosophy is designed to cushion its negative impacts.

Malinee, a former Tha Khoi Nang village head has joined in several activities initiated by Phramaha Hansa. “Venerable’s works allowed me to work closely with villagers, sub-district and district authorities as such I was able to gain cooperation from them all. Phramaha Hansa addressed the root cause of the village’s problem by applying sufficient economic philosophy. Khok Nong Na reduces expenses while increasing household income. His Peace Park also brings villagers to meditate from 5-6 p.m. every day, from there, villagers learn to live together harmoniously,” she told IDN.

The Thailand’s local development foundation suggests that the relocation to hometown rarely affects food security in the household because people could access natural resources and agricultural products. However, 76% of Thai agricultural households have relied on non-farm income. The wave of urban migrant workers returning to villages during the COVID-19 pandemic is also an opportunity to create change in the agricultural sector, the backbone of Thailand’s economy and lifestyle.

Khok Nong Na that Phramaha Hansa Dhammahaso is implementing has set two foundations for urban migrant workers and villagers to live sustainably to maintain physical needs together with fulfilling the mind with Dhamma (Buddhist teachings). His model reflects pragmatic application of spiritual teachings to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs).

“Dhamma does not exist anywhere else; it is in paddy fields and farms. Wherever we decide to do farming, Dhamma appears and reveals for us to learn. Thus, we come to realize that our body composes of soil, water, fire and wind elements,” argues Phramaha Hansa. “While working on the farms, we must be mindful and concentrate on what we are doing including seeking ways to manage land for living (sustainably) even though it is hard, we have to be patient”.

The energetic monk, who speaks fluent English and is a well-known Buddhist scholar in Thailand, acknowledge that the village farmers may not know Dhamma terminologies that well. “Dhamma (law of nature) exists (everywhere) and it includes (the practice of) patience, mindfulness, wisdom, concentration and endeavours,” says Phramaha Hansa Dhammahaso. [IDN-InDepthNews - 02 November 2021] (SDG 2: No Hunger, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities)



The young members of the Centre for Sustainability (CS) team with co-founder and advisor K.M Reyes in extreme left. (Photo Credit: J.R Lapuz)

Philippines: Youth Group Fights to Save Indigenous Land on The Palawan Island

By Nena Palagi

Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines (IDN) — It is a feat unimaginable by any modern standard. Six young people from this remote island of Palawan, in the Philippines, have taken on the goliaths of land ownership, and won. They got over 40,000 hectares of land legally declared as protected habitat with the direct endorsement from the Indigenous custodians.

The small non-profit Centre for Sustainability PH (CS)* had been spearheading the campaign, helping local Indigenous Batak people since 2014. How did they do it? CS Co-founder and Advisor, Karina May (KM) Reyes, says it is through sheer grit and “resilience day in day out”, for the last seven years. They implement their mission through Land Conservation, Reforestation and Citizen Science.

The small non-profit Centre for Sustainability PH (CS)* had been spearheading the campaign,

They recently took their story to the global stage, to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). And next, will be the big world forum of COP 26 in Glasgow starting on October 31, which Reyes is attending.

At COP 26, Reyes will be embarking on a new role with world NGO, *One Tree Planted*. Carrying advocacy for the climate change agenda in the ASEAN (Southeast Asian) region, their story from Palawan Island and the Philippines, is going global.

The leadership of CS six-member youth team ranged from the ages of 17 to 28 years, when they first started out lobbying for the protection of Palawan’s rainforests. Most have grown up swimming in the pristine rivers and lakes of Palawan Island, which earned the title as the “Best Island in the World” (Travel and Leisure Magazine).

Reyes—KM as she is affectionately called by Indigenous people—was born in Australia to Filipino heritage. When she visited Palawan a decade ago, she fell in love with the island and never left. Now, committed as ever to long-term sustainable environmental development and protection, she is determined to take their story to as far as the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC) international alliance, which represents at least 70 countries.

In preparation, CS recently held an online forum attended by a massive 740 young people in the Philippines, with a keynote address from Ambassador Mr. Zakri Abdul Hamid. Mr. Hamid is the Ambassador and Science Advisor for the Campaign for Nature, a global expert in the UN Convention for Biodiversity, which was first launched at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

CS’s project in Palawan, titled *CLEOPATRA’S NEEDLE CRITICAL HABITAT (CNCH)* garnered support from local and national governments and international and commercial bodies, which allowed them to get to where they are now.

The significance of winning the protection of ‘Cleopatra’s Needle’ in 2016 as a critical habitat cannot be underestimated. It is the Philippines’ biggest critical habitat and the ancestral domain of the disappearing Batak tribes in the island. It is home to 61 Palawan animal and plant species found nowhere else in the world, and 31 globally threatened species.

“We are guarding our forests and land because it is the source of our livelihood and key to our survival. We the Bataks live in the forest. And we have a tradition that we move from one part of the forest to another. It is part of our cultural practice to hold rituals and sacred gatherings,” Teodorico Villarica, former Tribal Chieftain from Sitio (district) Kalakwasan, told IDN.

“For example, for the good harvest of Almaciga (sacred tree) resin and honey, we offer rituals before we use and collect forest products. In our forests there are many sacred animals and plant species that are also essential to our future survival. Many Indigenous communities among us rely on the

forest for our food and also our fresh water source,” he added. Kalakwasan is the gateway to Cleopatra’s Needle Forest.

The Philippines along with Indonesia and Malaysia is one of the only countries in Asia among 17 in the world that boasts having the most mega-diverse forests, oceans and wetlands. CNCH’s western border is with Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, considered as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature, and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Cleopatra’s Needle, Sitio (district) Kalakasan, Gateway to Cleopatra’s Needle Critical Habitat (CNCH) site (Photo Credit: Julian Plack)

CS’s work for the vast 41,350 hectares of protected land at Cleopatra’s Needle contains the Philippines’s last remaining pristine forest near the island’s capital Puerto Princesa. In addition to Chieftain Villarica’s community, CNCH is also saddled by six other significant districts. However, the mainly hunter-gatherer Batak tribes living in the forest, are fast dwindling down to just 200 members. Hence, there’s a sense of urgency among the youth team to protect the last swathes of rainforest land left in Palawan.

Before Spanish colonization, 90-95 per cent of the Philippines Islands were forest cover. There’s merely 3 per cent of forest left in the whole country at present, mostly in Palawan. The forest coverings have been heavily depleted by open pit mines, extreme agricultural land use, wildlife poaching and logging.

CS’s guiding values in their work is about starting from the community and going back to the community for everything that they do. KM believes that without communities, environmental development is not sustainable.

“For us to reach a goal of saving at least 30 percent of our planet by 2030, we need to invest in Indigenous peoples and local communities. We need to be able to recognize and defend Indigenous tenurial (land) rights and Indigenous and community conserved areas,” Reyes told IDN. “We also need to be able to provide for simple cash transfers to Indigenous communities to spearhead conservation measures so they can perform their roles since time immemorial,” she adds.

Reyes points out that Indigenous peoples represent 5 per cent of the global population yet protect 80 per cent of global biodiversity. Also, that Indigenous lands represent 37 per cent of the world’s natural lands and store 25 percent of the world’s remaining above-ground carbon.

“As Indigenous people we’ve directly witnessed the harm done by overharvesting the Almaciga tree over our livelihood. Our sacred resources such as the Almaciga tree, rattan wood and honey, we the Bataks are careful that we do not abuse its use. We think that in the future there’ll be nothing left if we abuse its use,” says Villarica.

He argues that their harvesting practices will benefit future generations. “We apply in our practise the right time to plant and harvest, to make sure that the Almaciga tree is mature before harvesting. We only tap its resin when it is ready to do so,” explains the former chieftain. He added that along with CS they have planted 3000 trees to avoid soil erosion and regenerated 10,000 seedlings for their “precious tree which takes a lifetime to grow.”

“Indigenous communities only spend 16 to 23 percent of the budget of global conservation institutions with the same outcomes,” says Reyes. Because of her unrelenting work, KM has been awarded a National Geographic Explorer grant since 2018. While with CS, she was also awarded the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations of the Philippines (TAYO) Award.

Reyes, whose background is in peace and international studies with a degree from Australia’s University of New England, believes the Indigenous peoples are the best custodians of sustainable development over their land. And this is what she continues to lobby for to whoever is willing to listen and become their partner.

“For the first time the Indigenous Bataks have a legal paper which says as the land’s custodians they have first rights to the area through the Cleopatra’s Needle Critical Habitat declaration,” points out Reyes. “We break barriers by telling our decision makers that because of Indigenous people’s original expertise from time immemorial, we continue to preserve our last pristine forests. And that they must tap into this Indigenous expertise and invest in it.”

“KM and her CS team have been working patiently to understand our Indigenous culture. So, we really appreciate what they’ve done for us,” says Villarica. “CS had been with us from the beginning (of the campaign) and when finally, Cleopatra’s Needle was declared legally as a critical habitat, it was one of our greatest achievements together.”

CS has trained many Bataks as wildlife enforcers and they are now gearing up for more battles to save other indigenous land in Palawan Island. CS continues to navigate wildlife poaching, illegal logging, land grabbing, large-scale mining and now encroachment from developers.

“It’s really a race against time for many of us young people. We are very conscious that Indigenous Palawenyos, affected by climate change, can’t even participate in world debates directly affecting them,” notes Reyes, adding, “our island Palawan is situated on a geo-political hotspot”.

Palawan islands borders the disputed South China Sea and the Philippines government had officially designated this very area as part of the country’s exclusive economic zone. “(This area) is now included among the contested area by China. This makes our work in this beloved Island even more urgent,” concludes KM Reyes. [IDN-InDepthNews – 29 October 2021] (SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 10: Reduced Inequality, SDG 13: Climate Action)

* Check website of Centre for Sustainability PH at <https://centreforsustainabilityph.org/>



Okavango elephants. (Photo Credit: Africa Geographic)

Okavango's Ecosystem Falls Prey to Oil Drilling

By Lisa Vives

New York (IDN/GIN) - Drilling companies are on the run—or at least they should be. A worldwide movement to reduce global warming and protect endangered supplies of water has turned its firepower on the growth of oil well drilling, particularly in areas of precious wildlife preserves in southern Africa.

The movement has captured grassroots environmentalists, church groups and land protectors in Namibia and Botswana who are demanding a halt to drilling in the Okavango Delta - a World Heritage site and a vast inland river delta known for its sprawling grassy plains that flood seasonally, becoming a lush animal habitat.

Anglican bishops in Namibia and three archbishops from around the world have expressed their opposition to oil drilling by the Canadian company ReconAfrica, saying it would disrupt the culture and ancestral heritage of the San people.

"It will also negatively affect low-impact eco-tourism, which provides a sustainable income to guides, crafters and artists," the petition in the online EcoTourism Expert read. "We call it a sin. To destroy life and God's creation is simply wicked."

The Okavango Delta is one of Africa's most biodiverse habitats, home to a myriad of birds and megafauna species including the largest African elephant population left on the planet.

"The rejuvenating waters of this complex and beautiful ecosystem are so vast it's visible from space," wrote Prince Harry and Reinhold Mangundu, a Namibian environmental activist, in a *Washington Post* editorial that appeared this week. "The Okavango watershed is a natural beating heart that has nourished humans and wildlife in Southern Africa for generations - and it's at risk," the authors warned.

Drilling of boreholes for oil exploration can threaten the ecosystem through potential oil spillage, noise pollution and water contamination, said Jan Arkert, a South African-based engineering geologist with the firm Africa Exposed Consulting Engineering Geologists. "Even during this first phase, we don't know how they are going to dispose of their wastewater," Arkert told Al Jazeera.

ReconAfrica insists there will be no damage to the ecosystem and denies that its wells are located in the area of national parks, conservancies or World Heritage sites.

Still, a campaign called #SavetheOkavangoDelta has been started by *Fridays for Future Windhoek* and *Frack Free Namibia and Botswana*, two local green groups. An online petition appealing to the governments of Namibia and Botswana reportedly gathered more than 150,000 signatures.

"Who gave the government the right to determine the destiny of Indigenous communities? This is just another case of environmental racism," Ina-Maria Shikongo, the founder of *Fridays for Future Windhoek*, told Al Jazeera. "My worst fear is that it could turn into a new Niger Delta," she added, referencing the ongoing fight to clean up areas polluted by oil companies there. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 October 2021] (SDG 13: Climate Action)

Nations Protecting "Greedy" Pharma Companies Threaten Global COVID-19 Recovery

By Kalinga Seneviratne

Sydney (IDN) — The European Union (EU), United Kingdom, Japan and Australia are holding the world hostage by refusing to support a waiver of COVID-19 vaccine patents for the world to recover from the pandemic. The World Trade Organization (WTO) remains at an impasse for one year.



Vaccines in plenty (Photo Credit: eETrade for All)

Then, India and South Africa applied for approval of a waiver over Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for COVID-19 vaccines so that they could produce the vaccines—especially Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA vaccines—to help their countries as well as many developing countries to recover faster from the pandemic.

But Australia and other countries supporting the continuation of the IPRs questions whether such a waiver could be effective in delivering greater number of vaccines to the global population. The United States initially had this view, but later President Biden announced that the US will support a temporary lifting of the IPRs on COVID-19 vaccines. Lately Australia also seems to be coming around to that position.

On October 2, 2020, India and South Africa co-authored a proposal requesting that certain obligations in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) be waived with respect to the prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19.

Issuing a statement to mark the first anniversary of this proposal submitted to the WTO, Amnesty International (AI) pointed out that since then a staggering 3.5 million people have died from COVID-19. "How many more people must die needlessly before countries do the right thing and support the lifting of patent restrictions, so Covid-19 vaccines, tests and treatments can be produced worldwide?" asked AI.

"It is simply shameful that a handful of wealthy governments continue to monopolize vaccine supply while consistently opposing attempts to free up intellectual property rights that would enable other States to fulfill their obligations to protect their people," noted AI's Secretary General Agnès Callamard.

"Pharma companies have also behaved shamefully—pushing up prices, monopolizing intellectual property, blocking technology transfers, and lobbying aggressively against measures that would expand global manufacturing to line their pockets" she argued, adding, "greed is triumphing over human life and human rights".

On May 21, 2021, a number of countries (including India and South Africa) issued a revised proposal requesting that certain obligations in the TRIPS Agreement "be waived in relation to health products and technologies including diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, medical devices, personal protective equipment, their materials or components, and their methods and means of manufacture for the prevention, treatment or containment of COVID-19".

But the very countries that love to lecture others on human rights including EU members Norway, Switzerland and Germany have opposed such a move.

Recently, the Geneva-based South Center—a think tank for the Global South—organized a working session on the issue. During the session, Dr Dean Baker from the Washington-based Center for Economic Policy and Research noted that the COVID-19 vaccines were largely funded by public resources: Moderna received \$450 million for the research to develop the vaccine and then \$450 million for clinical trials, as well as advance purchase agreements (similar to Pfizer).

Oxford/Astra Zeneca had over 90% of public sector financing. He pointed out that this highlights the fact that IP (Intellectual Property) as a necessity for innovation is factually untrue.

"With IP, all decisions rely on IP holders, leading to the almost obscene situation we are in: a disproportionate share of vaccines which went to Europe and USA and boosters to healthy people being inoculated before frontline workers in developing countries," noted Dr Baker.

Prof. Carlos Correa, Executive Director of the South Centre, speaking in the same session pointed out that the proponents of the TRIPS Agreement had argued that it will bring about benefits to developing countries in terms of innovation, technology transfer and foreign direct investment (FDI).

"Such promises were not fulfilled. Empirical evidence shows that increased standards of IP protection over 40 years in developing countries have not led to more innovation," he said. "In relation to transfer of technology, IP has actually provided more room for technology holders not to share, instead of facilitating it—the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines are an example in that regard."

Since there is no evidence that increased levels of IP protection attracted FDI, Dr Correa argues, "we need rethinking of the arguments concerning TRIPS and its alleged role in supporting transfer of technology and FDI".

Another speaker at the South Centre session was Dr Yuanqiong Hu, of the Geneva-based MSF Access Campaign, who said that from the experience of his organisation barriers generated by IP has concentrated power in the hands of pharmaceutical companies.

"This is a systemic issue since all outcomes related to COVID-19 vaccines are based on the power exerted by such companies, including the management of the supply chains," argues Dr Hu, who believes that mRNA vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna can be replicated quickly, at low-cost, and many

developing countries could produce them, "and yet no deep technology transfer agreements have been signed".

Currently, WTO's TRIPS Council remains engaged in 'text-based discussions', where countries meet in smaller groups to discuss various texts in order to develop a draft proposal to be taken to the WTO Ministerial Council (as a decision on a waiver will require consensus of the Ministerial Council or, if it were to go to a vote, a three-fourths majority in accordance with Article IX of the WTO Agreement).

Following the July meeting of the TRIPS Council, countries have agreed to continue to discuss the two proposals, but positions remain divergent. If the waiver proposal were to go to a vote, 123 countries would be required to support the waiver and the next Ministerial Council is not scheduled till November 30 to December 3 this year.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank Group, World Health Organization (WHO) and WTO have joined forces to accelerate access to COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics for low- and middle-income countries.

The aim is to vaccinate at least 40 per cent of people in every country by the end of 2021, and at least 60 per cent by mid-2022. This task force is mobilizing critical financing, with a focus on grants and concessional lending; and is calling on countries to share at least 1 billion vaccine doses with developing countries during 2021.

The world is already miles off track from these targets argue AI's Agnès Callamard. "Many countries continue to grapple with over-run hospitals and lack of medical supplies, including vaccines which is what has kept millions of peoples out of hospitals in wealthy countries that have a steady supply," she notes. "We don't have the luxury of time. Rich states must act now. Countless lives depend on it." [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 October 2021]



While increasing support from WTO members for a proposed waiver from certain obligations under the TRIPS Agreement with regard to health products required for responding to COVID-19 has made a decision on the TRIPS waiver imminent, the waiver will have to be implemented domestically by WTO members through appropriate legislative, administrative or judicial measures, including through executive orders that have been utilized to implement emergency measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the scope of the TRIPS waiver, as well as the terms of applicable free trade agreements (FTAs) and international investment agreements (IIAs) will also impact the policy space available to countries to implement the waiver. Ensuring a broad scope of the waiver, as well as complementary measures to safeguard the implementation of the waiver from potential challenges under FTAs or IIAs will be critical. This research paper discusses some options that could be explored to enable the implementation of the TRIPS waiver by overcoming possible impediments that could arise under such agreements.

The above report could be downloaded from - https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RP135_Implementation-of-a-TRIPS-Waiver-for-Health-Technologies-and-Products-for-COVID-19_EN-1.pdf



On 4 May 2021, a High Level Dialogue on TRIPS Waiver: *If Not Now, Then When?* was organized by Third World Network, Health Action International, MSF Access Campaign, Public Citizen and Public Eye. For a list of interventions by the co-sponsors, statements and op-eds supporting the waiver proposal and news reports about the proposal go to - [https://www.twn.my/title2/intellectual property/trips waiver proposal.htm](https://www.twn.my/title2/intellectual%20property/trips%20waiver%20proposal.htm)

It's Time to Deliver on Pacific Climate Financing

Viewpoint by the Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown*

Avarua District (IDN/APR) — After years of empty promises by major emitters, it's time to deliver on climate financing. The world is warming. The science is clear. Most large, developed countries need to take ambitious action to reduce their emissions in order not to impact us further.

If they don't, there is dire consequence, and in turn a significant rise in adaptation cost to us, those that did not cause this problem.

Some people call it paradise, but for me and thousands of Pacific people, the beautiful pristine Pacific Island region is simply home. It is our inheritance, a blessing from our forebears and ancestors. As custodians of these islands, we have a moral duty to protect it—for today and the unborn generations of our Pacific anau. Sadly, we are unable to do that because of things beyond our control. The grim reality of climate change, especially for many Small Island Developing States like my beloved Cook Islands, is evidently clear.

Sea level rise is alarming. Our food security is at risk, and our way of life that we have known for generations is slowly disappearing. What were "once in a lifetime" extreme events like category 5 cyclones, marine heatwaves and the like are becoming more severe.

These developments are no longer theory. Despite our negligible contribution to global emissions, this is the price we pay.

We are talking about homes, lands and precious lives; many are being displaced as we speak. I am reminded about my Pacific brothers and sisters living on remote atolls including some of those in our 15 islands that make up the Cook Islands — as well as our Pacific neighbours such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau and many others, not just in the Pacific Ocean.

This family of small islands states is spread beyond our Pacific to across the globe.

Here in the Cook Islands, we are raising riverbanks to protect homes that for the first time in history are being reached by floodwater. We are building water storage on islands that have never before experienced levels of drought that we see now.

Over the years, the devastating impact of climate change has evolved from a mere threat to a crisis of epic proportion, now posing as the most pressing security issue to livelihoods on our island shores. We live with undeniable evidence to back up the science. Most of you who follow the climate change discourse know our story. We have been saying this for as far as back as I can remember.

For more than 10 years of my political career, our message to the world about climate change has been loud and clear. Climate change is a matter of life and death. We need help. Urgently.

Today, I am sad to say that after all the years of highlighting this bitter truth, the discourse hasn't progressed us far enough. All we have been given are promises and more empty promises from the world's biggest emitters while our islands and people are heading towards a climate catastrophe where our very existence and future is at stake.

But we will not stop trying. As long as we have the strength and the opportunity to speak our truth to power, we will continue to call for urgent action. In the words of our young Pacific climate activists, "We are not drowning, we are fighting."

As the political champion of Climate Finance for the Pacific Islands, I believe it is imperative that world leaders fast track large-scale climate finance that are easy to access for bold long-term and permanent adaptation solutions.

It is critical that COP26 begins discussions for a new quantifiable goal on climate finance. We need to do this now. Not tomorrow, next year or the next COP.



Prime Minister Mark Brown of the Cook Islands

Last week when I addressed world leaders attending COP26, I urged them to consider a new global financial instrument that recognises climate-related debt, separately from national debt. We need to provide for innovative financing modalities that do not increase our debt.

We need to take climate adaptation debt off national balance sheets, especially since many Pacific countries are already heavily in debt. Why? Pacific countries contribute the least to global emissions and they should not have to pay a debt on top the consequences they are already struggling with.

We need to consider amortising adaptation debt over a 100-year timeframe.

We must seek a new commitment that dedicates financing towards Loss and Damage that would assist our vulnerable communities manage the transfer of risks experienced by the irreversible impacts of climate change. We must also ensure that adaptation receives an equitable amount of financing as for mitigation.

I want to reiterate that adaptation measures by their very nature are long-term investments against climate impacts, thus we need to be talking about adaptation project lifecycles of 20 years, 50 years and 100 years, and more.

We are at a critical juncture of our journey where the fate of our beautiful, pristine homes is a stake. I call on all major emitters to take stronger climate action, especially to deliver on their funding promises.

Stop making excuses; climate change existed way before covid-19 when the promises of billions of dollars in climate financing were made. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 November 2021]

** Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, is also the Pacific Political Champion for Climate Finance at COP26. While not attending the COP this year due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, Prime Minister Brown is providing support and undertaking this role remotely. This article is republished with permission from Radio New Zealand and Asia Pacific Report.*



Koro Island, Fiji, after Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016. "It is critical that COP26 begins discussions for a new quantifiable goal on climate finance." (Photo Credit: UNOCHA)

Climate Change: How This Crisis Will Impact the Achievement of The SDGs?

Viewpoint by Fernando Rosales*

Geneva (IDN) — The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) adopted in 2015 reflect the multilateral consensus to deal with the most crucial problems humanity is facing nowadays. The 17 goals are multidimensional and are interlinked with each other. At the same time, climate change crisis is the most serious threat to human life itself and it has deepened in the last 30 years. Even though, SDG 13 specifically relates to “Climate Action”, it is very likely that the climate crisis is also going to affect the achievement of many other SDGs.

Over 40 years ago, during the First World Climate Conference, the international community based on scientific findings expressed “...serious concern that the continued expansion of man's activities on Earth may cause significant extended regional and even global changes of climate”.. Since then, concerns and climate problems continued to grow around the world, leading the international community to adopt the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 during the Earth Summit.

The UNFCCC established the basic principles for international cooperation with provisions about the responsibilities of developed and developing countries. Historically, developed countries counted for around 70% of global carbon emissions, even though they have represented only 20% of the world's population. The UNFCCC recognized that the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries. Therefore, these countries have to face their responsibilities and it is expected that they take the lead to fight the climate crisis and support developing countries, including by providing financial support to the latter to comply with their obligations under the Convention.

This convention in turn, gave birth to the Paris Agreement (PA) in 2015 which establishes a global goal 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, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change”. Since then, countries have adopted National Determined Contributions (NDCs) establishing their own targets to achieve the goal mentioned above. The PA states that the NDCs are going to be reviewed after every five years with the hope of having more ambitious targets in each review.

Despite these advances in international cooperation, it remains insufficient to fight against the climate crisis. Global warming continues at an unprecedented rate. The last IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change) report on climate change, issued in August 2021, examined five scenarios about the likelihood to reach 1.5°C global warming in the next 30 years. The analyses of this scientific body found that in each of the five scenarios, the 1.5°C global warming is exceeded sometime in the next 20 years (2021-2040).

Unfortunately, any increase in global warming is going to impact negatively on human life. According to the IPCC 2018, the effects of climate change are going to have negative impacts on almost every human activity. This is the case of health for example where some vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever will increase. Heat waves will be more frequent causing more droughts and floods, making farming more difficult, lowering crop yields, and causing food shortages.

Rising seas will clearly impact people living in coastal regions, which may be submerged in the coming decades. Small island nations are particularly vulnerable in this regard. The Arctic is already close to having a summer with no ice. Once it happens, it will likely happen every year, which has not happened in at least two million years. Many species of insects, plants, and vertebrates will be at risk of extinction. The consequences will be far worse if the 2°C threshold is reached.

The situation does not look very promising. 2020 was already one of the three warmest years on record—the global average temperature was 1.2°C above the pre-industrial baseline and with just this temperature the world has witnessed serious flooding in western Europe, Japan, China, droughts in Iraq, extreme heat and wildfires in North America, South America, Australia and so on. In May 2021, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned that there is about a 40% chance of the



Fernando Rosales, Coordinator of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Programme of the South Centre (Photo Credit: South Center)

annual average global temperature temporarily reaching 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level in at least one of the next five years.

In this context, the UNFCCC Conference of Parties N° 26 (COP26) will meet from October 31 to November 12, 2021. The main outcomes expected from that meeting are more ambitious NDCs for 2030 to keep 1.5°C within reach, Global Goal on Adaptation, climate finance including the need for setting the new collective quantified (post-2025) goal and finalizing Article 6 in the Paris Rulebook.

The issues mentioned above are of critical importance for developing countries. One of the crucial issues that may enable developing countries to contribute better to the fight against climate change is climate finance. Governments in developing countries, are struggling with their socio-economic needs and increasing external debt. The COVID 19 pandemic has made the situation even more challenging.

Without the appropriate means of implementation these countries may not be able to achieve the PA goals. This is something that the international community, in particular developed countries, have to consider for taking decisive actions, in line with their international commitments, to support developing countries to fight the climate crisis.

One thing is clear, if the humanity is unsuccessful in stopping the climate crisis, it is going to be very challenging to achieve many SDGs by the 2030 timeframe. As explained above health will be affected, as well as food security, access to clean water and sanitation. Climate change also is going to stress inequalities, since those who suffer the most during environmental crisis are vulnerable populations.

At COP 26 we expect that all Parties, in particular, developed countries work with the view of finding actual solutions to tackle the climate crisis, taking into account the interests and needs of developing countries. [IDN-InDepthNews – 29 October 2021]

* Fernando Rosales is Coordinator of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Programme (SDCC) of the South Centre.

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Concerted Action Necessary to Achieve Carbon Neutrality in the Asia-Pacific Region By 2050

Viewpoint by Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana*

Bangkok (IDN) — As the leaders of Asia and the Pacific prepared to head to Glasgow for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), they could be sure that our region will be in the spotlight.



ESCAP head Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (Phot Credit: ESCAP)

Many of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change are located here; the seven G20 members from this region are responsible for over half of global GHG emissions; and five of the 10 top countries with the greatest historic responsibility for emissions since the beginning of the twentieth century are from Asia.

The starting point is not encouraging, however. A joint study by ESCAP, UNEP and UN Women shows that the Asia-Pacific region is falling even further behind in its efforts: greenhouse gas emissions are projected to increase by 34 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010 levels. Getting the 30 Asian and Pacific countries that have so far updated their NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) to drastically raise ambitions and securing adequate NDCs from the other 19 who have yet to submit will determine if the region — indeed the world — can maintain any hope of keeping the temperature increase well below two degrees.

There is some reason for hope. Leaders have been lining up to make their carbon neutrality pledges, shrinking the gap from commitment to action across the sectors that drive the region's development. With major players moving away from foreign investments in coal, momentum is building for a transition to cleaner energy sources. There is a growing share of renewables in the energy mix, and going forward we should support increasing subregional and regional energy connectivity to enable the integration of higher shares of renewable energy. However more support to exporters is needed to wean them off lucrative coal and fossil fuel reserves, supported by long-term low emissions development strategies (LT-LEDS).

The shift to sustainable transport has been slow but the EV-mobility is growing. Countries are also emphasizing low-carbon mobility in a new regional action plan under negotiation ahead of a ministerial conference on transport later this year. Local government commitments to carbon neutrality also support the greening of our cities.

The ESCAP Climate-smart Trade and Investment Index (SMARTII) and carbon-border adjustment mechanisms shows that Asian and Pacific economies have significant room to make their trade and investment more climate-smart. A growing number of countries include climate and environment-related provisions in trade agreements. More are requiring energy efficiency labelling and standards on imports. Digitalization of existing trade processes also helps reduce CO₂ emissions per transaction and should be accelerated, including through the regional UN treaty on cross-border paperless trade facilitation.

The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network is crafting an Asia-Pacific Green Business Deal in pursuit of a “green” competitive advantage, while companies are responding to greater shareholder and consumer pressure for science-based targets that align businesses with climate aspirations. Entrepreneurs, SMEs and large industries in the region could adopt this new paradigm, which would also enable countries to meet their commitments for sustainable development.

Such ambitious climate action will require a realignment of finance and investment towards the green industries and jobs of tomorrow. Innovative financial instruments and the implementation of debt-for-climate swaps can help to mobilize this additional funding. Putting a price on carbon and applying carbon pricing instruments will create liquidity to drive economic activity up and emissions down. Mandatory climate-related financial disclosure will help investors direct their investments towards climate action solutions that will help manage risks associated with climate-related problems.

It is clear from the science and the frequency of disasters in the region that time is not on our side. The combination of disasters, pandemic and climate change is expanding the number of people in vulnerable situations and raising the “riskscape”. Countries are ill-prepared for complex overlapping crises; the intersection of COVID-19 with natural hazards and climate change remains poorly understood and gives rise to hotspots of emerging and intensifying risks.

Building resilience must combine climate mitigation efforts and investments in nature-based climate solutions. Moreover, it also requires increasing investments in universal social protection systems that provide adequate benefits over the lifecycle to people and households. The active engagement of women and girls is critical to ensuring inclusive climate action and sustainable outcomes.



Back to “low carbon” living? A cyclist in Singapore
(Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne)

Without concerted action, carbon neutrality is not within the reach of the Asia-Pacific region by 2050. All stakeholders need to collaborate and build a strong case for decisive climate action. Our leaders simply cannot afford to go to Glasgow with insufficient ambition and return empty handed. Since it was founded nearly 75 years ago, ESCAP has supported the formation of strategic alliances that have lifted millions out of poverty and guided the region to enabling a better standard of life.

The time is right for such an alliance of governments, the private sector and financial institutions to help turn the full power of the region’s ingenuity and dynamism into the net zero development pathway that our future depends on. [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 October 2021]

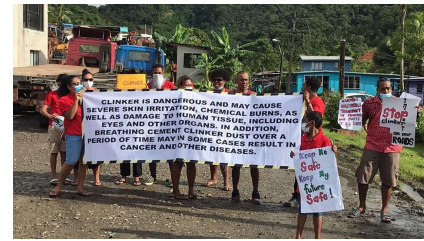
** Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana is the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*

Fiji Islands: Gasping for Air Residents Await Government Action

By Josefa Babitua*

SUVA, Fiji Islands (IDN) — “I have never been in a situation where I’ve had to fight for our right to breathe clean air,” says Sydel Whippy, a resident of Lami, an urban township north-west of the Fijian capital Suva.

She worries about a cement manufacturing chemical, clinker, that fills the atmosphere in Lami, posing a risk to the health of the residents of the densely populated area. Whippy has lived in Lami for the last 35 years. There are other environmental problems to cope with in the township, where many industries are located, but she feels that the clinker pollution is the most dangerous.



Lami residents rally against harmful chemicals emitted by cement factories in the area. (Photo Credit: Josefa Babitua)

“Everyone in the area is inhaling the dust—pregnant mothers, young babies, pedestrians and passengers on buses,” she said. The alleged sources of the problem are two cement factories Tengy Cement (Fiji) Limited and Pacific Cement Limited in Lami.

In 2018, the Environment Ministry received four complaints and issued a stop work notice to the two factories. At the time, the Permanent Secretary for Environment, Joshua Wycliffe, said the ban would only be lifted if the dust emissions stopped. He said that the companies would be required to provide dust mitigation plans. The notice was lifted in 2019, but a ‘prohibition notice’ was issued in March this year again to both companies for breach of the earlier notices. Mr Wycliffe said the dust emitted from the two factories may not have met the national air quality standard.

A major ingredient in cement making, clinker is known to cause skin irritation, serious eye damage, respiratory irritation and even cancer, according to a ‘Safety Data Sheet for Portland Cement Clinker’ report released last year by the CEMBUREAU, the European Cement Association in Belgium. The report revealed that certain technology and regulations should be in place to ensure that the emission of dust particles or chemicals do not cause health problems.

The factories are in the vicinity of several communities between Nadonumai and Namuka-i-Lau on the Queens Highway, with a potential exposure to a population of about 20,000. Whippy and a group of protesters feel that the cement companies are not following proper safety procedures in the transportation of the chemicals along the Queens Highway, passing through Lami Town. She believes that the people living just metres away from the main road are exposed, and at great risk.

Ms Whippy says the chemical has been escaping into the atmosphere during transportation and offloading. “I have taken so many photos and videos of the unloading of the clinker and the wind direction blowing it towards Suva City and the market, where a lot of people converge,” she said. According to Whippy, a number of people in the community had become asthmatic with skin irritation as a result of exposure to clinker.

Despite the numerous protests Whippy has organised, the practice continues. “We are trying to figure out what the next step is. I have been getting anonymous calls telling me to take it to the Prime Minister, but I do not know how that will work. We are going to keep voicing our concerns,” she insists.

Another Lami resident, Susan Leitupo, said the dust from the cement factories coated their windows, and filtered into their homes. Her family suffered from some health problems after breathing in the dust. “It affects my eyes. It stings and I couldn’t see properly. My husband’s skin becomes itchy when he comes into contact with the dust. It is still a horrible experience,” Leitupo said.

Ms Whippy, a member of the Environment Department’s Environment Monitoring Committee, feels that the Ministry was not doing enough, given the length of time the problem has dragged on for and how the cement companies keep reoffending. “They do seem like they are trying (Environment Department) but nothing much has changed,” she said. Questions sent to Pacific Cement Limited, and the Lami Town Council remain unanswered. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 November 2021] (SDG 13:Climate Action)

* The writer is a final year Journalism student at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji Islands.

Dogged by massive floods, Nigeria ramps up actions to tackle climate crisis

By Leon Usigbe

The Nigerian government on 30 July 2021 submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) its first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The ratification reinforces President Muhammadu Buhari's 2016 commitment to cut emissions by 45 per cent by 2030. It also signalled the government's commitment to actions that mitigate or reverse the effects of the climate crisis.



A mother and child attempt to escape the flood water in Niger State, Nigeria, following torrential rains which have hit the region since mid-July 2018 (Photo Credit: UNDAC/Pierre Trouche)

The effects of climate change are stark in Nigeria, including frequent massive floods.

For example, in 2012, rivers burst their banks and submerged vast lands in 30 of the country's 36 states, killing over 400 people and displacing 1.3 million others. That disaster resulted in an estimated \$17 billion damage, according to the Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

In 2019, a total of 277,555 people were affected by floods and 158 were killed. In 2020 the number of those affected by floods rose to 2,353,647 resulting in the deaths of 69 people, according to Muhammadu Muhammed, NEMA's former head, at the unveiling of the 2021 annual flood outlook by the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NHSA). The NHSA outlook report had predicted that 27 states across the country were at substantial risk of floods in 2021.

The coastal states of Bayelsa, Delta and highly populated Lagos (23 million people) were projected to be particularly susceptible to floods due to a rise in sea level and tidal surge. In July 2021, NEMA warned Lagos residents to observe safety precautions because floods had submerged many parts of the state with about 4,000 residents displaced.

The NHSA flood outlook is in sync with the recently released report by the Sixth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) titled, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*.

The IPCC report observes an increase in river flooding across countries in West Africa and projects "increases in mean wind speed; increase in heavy precipitation and pluvial flooding."

Flood victims in Nigeria are taken aback by the intensity and relentlessness of weather disasters.

"The flood was so high that it nearly swallowed my car. It was scary. I have never seen that amount of flood in my life," says 42-year-old Bitrus Maina, a resident of Jalingo, Taraba State's capital. Two people died and 300 homes were damaged in Jalingo on 5 August this year. On the same day of the Jalingo flooding, in neighbouring Bauchi State eight people died, 57 houses, several farmlands and livestock were destroyed following heaving flooding.

"Recently in Katsina state, we witnessed 100 millimetres of rain in just a single day. It has never happened in over 100 years. It shows that these extreme events are being driven by climate change," says Prof. Mansur Bako Matazu, head of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet).

However, President Buhari assure Nigeria and other countries are committed to taking measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, including flooding. "I am constantly monitoring the situation and we will ensure that all possible help is extended to victims," he pledged in August, as he commiserated with victims of floods around the country.

Despite current abnormal weather events, the government boasts of surpassing the target it set in 2016 to achieve a 20 per cent emissions reduction by 2020. "Based on our calculations, we met that 20

per cent emission reduction last year. In fact, I can even say we surpassed it," Mohammad Abubakar, until recently Nigeria's Minister of Environment, told *Africa Renewal*. The government continues to raise awareness among government agencies and citizens of the need for effective waste management, tree planting, land reclamation, landscaping and beautification efforts, as well as for addressing land, water, noise and air pollution and reforestation.

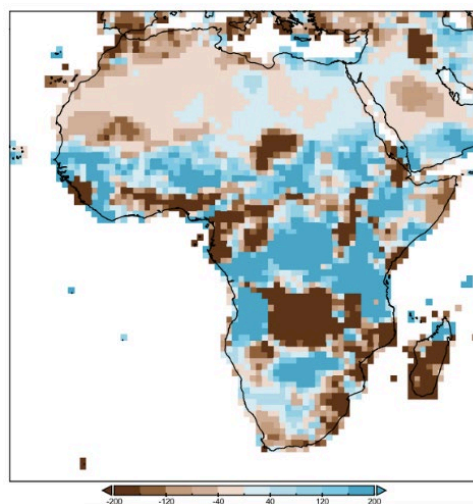
To prevent desertification, the government is creating a "wall of trees" across 11 states under the *Great Green Wall* of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative. The wall, spanning 1,500 kilometers in length and 15 kilometers wide, will cover many communities in the so-called desertification frontline states—Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe and Borno. A total of 225,000 hectares of land are expected to be rehabilitated under this project. To boost agricultural productivity, the country is actively promoting alternative sources of energy, dryland agricultural technology and alternative water sources for human, plant, and animal use through solar-powered boreholes.

Source: African Renewal, 27 October 2021

Climate Change Triggers Food Insecurity, Poverty and Displacement in Africa

The State of the Climate in Africa 2020 a new multi-agency report coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) provides a snapshot of climate change trends and impacts, including sea level rise and the melting of the continent's iconic glaciers. It highlights Africa's disproportionate vulnerability and shows how the potential benefits of investments in climate adaptation, weather and climate services and early warning systems far outweigh the costs.

"During 2020, the climate indicators in Africa were characterized by continued warming temperatures, accelerating sea-level rise, extreme weather and climate events, such as floods, landslides and droughts, and associated devastating impacts. The rapid shrinking of the last remaining glaciers in eastern Africa, which are expected to melt entirely in the near future, signals the threat of imminent and irreversible change to the Earth system," said WMO Secretary-General Prof. Petteri Taalas in a foreword.



Absolute precipitation anomalies for 2020 in relation to the 1981–2010 reference period. Blue areas indicate aboveaverage precipitation while brown areas indicate below-average precipitation. Source: Global Precipitation Climatology Centre (GPCC), Deutscher Wetterdienst, Germany.

"Along with COVID-19 recovery, enhancing climate resilience is an urgent and continuing need. Investments are particularly needed in capacity development and technology transfer, as well as in enhancing countries' early warning systems, including weather, water and climate observing systems," said Prof Taalas.

The report is a collaborative product of WMO, the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) through the Africa Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), international and regional scientific organizations and United Nations agencies. It was released on 19 October during the Extraordinary World Meteorological Congress and ahead of the UN Climate Change negotiations, COP26. It adds to the scientific evidence about the urgency to cut global greenhouse gas emissions, step up the level of climate ambition and increase financing for adaptation.

"Africa is witnessing increased weather and climate variability, which leads to disasters and disruption of economic, ecological and social systems. By 2030, it is estimated that up to 118 million extremely poor people (i.e. living on less than US\$ 1.90/day) will be exposed to drought, floods and extreme heat in Africa, if adequate response measures are not put in place.

Source: African Renewal 19 October 2021

Namibia: Minister Denounces Aquifer Mining

Namibia's minister of agriculture, water and land reform Calle Schlettwein says the government should no longer allow mining activities to be conducted in areas that are dependent on groundwater resources.

At the launch of the third edition of Namibia's hydrogeological map in Windhoek on 8th October, Schlettwein said the government should equally hasten to stop potentially harmful exploration and other mining activities currently taking place in areas which have been declared water reserves. This is to prevent the pollution of groundwater reserves, rendering them unfit for human consumption.

Source: Namibian, 11 Oct 2021 - <https://www.namibian.com.na/106163/read/Schlettwein-denounces--aquifer-mining>

Brazil: Communities Suffering in the Shadow of Mining Denied Benefits

A vast iron ore mine in Brazil, owned and operated by UK multinational Anglo American, is causing water shortages, ill-health and disaster anxiety among low-income Afro-descendant communities. Few benefits are visible locally from mining taxes or royalties, according to a new joint report from Brazilian NGO IBASE (Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas) and global transparency coalition Publish What You Pay.



A vast Brazilian mine owned and operated by UK multinational Anglo American (Photo Credit: Publish What You Pay)

In Search of Transparency: Ending Opacity in Brazil's Extractive Sector assesses the environmental and human rights impacts of Minas-Rio, the world's ninth largest iron ore mine, located in Minas Gerais State, and reveals the Brazilian government's lack of transparency and accountability for mining tax and royalty receipts. The report shows the local municipality struggling with the social costs of the mine, possibly receiving a smaller share of royalties than its due, and failing to report to citizens how it spends the money. Local rural communities fear a dangerous mine waste tailings dam failure.

Source: Publish What You Pay, 7 Oct 2021 - <https://www.pwyp.org/pwyp-news/brazilians-suffering-in-the-shadow-of-mining-denied-benefits-from-company-payments-new-study-shows/>

Countries' Climatic Pledges Built On False Data, Post Investigation Finds

Many countries are inaccurately reporting their annual greenhouse gas emissions to the United Nations, with some undercounting emissions by as much as 13.3 billion tons annually, according to a Washington Post analysis.

Inconsistencies between reports and reality are caused by "the application of different reporting formats and inconsistency in the scope and timeliness of reporting," the UN says.

Source and Full Story: The Washington Post, 7 Nov 2021 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2021/greenhouse-gas-emissions-pledges-data/?wpisrc=nl_sb_smartbrief

Kazakhstan: Authorities Turning 'blind eye' to Chinese Corporate Polluters – Watchdog

Officials in Kazakhstan appear to be giving preferential treatment to Chinese businesses operating in the country when it comes to enforcing environmental protection standards, the watchdog group Crude Accountability alleges.

Based on first-hand observations and research, Crude Accountability highlights conditions at two Chinese projects in Shymkent, a city in southern Kazakhstan near the Uzbek border. Residents living near both facilities – an oil refinery and a steel mill – have lodged numerous complaints about foul odors and “intense emissions” occurring at night. In one two-day period in July, a local web portal received 289 individual messages about questionable operations at the recently refurbished refinery run by a subsidiary of the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC), according to Crude Accountability.

The October 18 statement says local authorities have “turned a blind eye to the complaints,” adding that no automated air-quality monitoring systems are located near the facilities in question. Local environmental protection officials rely on data supplied by the companies, Crude Accountability said.

Independent spot checks of emissions are impossible “because advance permission is necessary, which tips off the polluters ahead of time,” the Virginia-based nonprofit contended.

Source: business-humanrights.org, 20 Oct 2021 - <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/kazakhstani-authorities-turn-blind-eye-to-chinese-corporate-polluters-report-alleges/>

Over 560 Groups Worldwide Endorse ‘People’s Declaration’ for Radical Food Systems Transformation



Peoples' Coalition calls for Peaople over Profits (Photo Credit: Photo credit: International League of Peoples' Struggle)

Amid the ongoing COP 26 in Glasgow, the Global People’s Summit (GPS) on Food Systems announced that 566 groups from 78 countries have endorsed its resulting Declaration that calls for people’s rights to just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems and the end of corporate monopoly control.

The GPS, the Global South-led counter-summit to the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), gathered 45 global formations, 25 regional groups, and 496 national and local organizations from all over the world in support of the Declaration.

The People’s Declaration asserts the urgent need to radically transform food systems in confronting global hunger and the climate crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Pan Asia Pacific, Press Release, 6 Nov 2021 - <https://panap.net/2021/11/over-560-groups-worldwide-endorse-peoples-declaration-for-radical-food-systems-transformation-amid-cop-26-climate-talks/>

Philippines: Government Mulls Total Deployment Ban to Saudi Arabia Over Unpaid OFWs

The Philippines’ Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is considering a total deployment ban to Saudi Arabia after reports bared thousands of OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) remain unpaid by their employers in the Middle Eastern state.

DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III said on 18 October that the department has sent a memorandum to President Rodrigo Duterte, seeking authority to discuss the issue with the minister of Saudi Arabia this month.

“I would like to take up with the minister the issue of our unpaid workers ... who have been working 1 to 2 years and have not been paid salaries, including end of services pay,” Bello said in a virtual press conference. Bello said around 9,000 Filipino migrant workers in Saudi Arabia have not received their salaries even as the country’s courts have ruled in their favor.



OFWs arriving in Saudi Arabia (Photo Credit: ofwnewsbeat.com)

Source: ABS-CBN, 18 Oct 2021 - <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/18/21/dole-mulls-total-deployment-ban-to-saudi-arabia-over-unpaid-ofws>

Australian Farm Workers Entitled to Minimum Wage in Major Industry Shake-up

Farmers will now be forced to pay a minimum wage to pickers after the Fair Work Commission ruled in favour of putting a floor in the award.

The move effectively abolishes piece rates, which is when a worker is paid according to how much they pick, rather than an hourly rate.

With piece rates, there has been no guarantee of workers making minimum wage, and the system has been linked to exploitation, with some workers claiming they have been paid as little as \$3 an hour.



Foreign workers in Australian farms (Photo Credit: eastasiaforum.org)

Farmers have been vocal opponents of any changes to the award rate – with some arguing a floor in the minimum pay rate would be burdensome and result in an increase in prices for customers.

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) lodged its claim with the FWC in December last year, arguing that every worker should be guaranteed a minimum rate of at least \$25.41 an hour.

Source: Business-humanrights.org, 4 Nov 2021 - <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/australia-farmers-will-now-pay-minimum-wage-to-pickers-following-fair-work-commission-ruling/>

UN Official Urges Investment in Human Trafficking Fight as Police Get Fresh Training

A top regional official in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 5th November urged governments to invest in new investigative and preventative tactics in the fight against “staggering” levels of human trafficking in the region.

No country is immune to human trafficking, with the scourge affecting more women and girls than men and boys, said UNODC Deputy Regional Representative Melissa Flynn as an advanced training course for Royal Barbados Police Force on trafficking in persons (TIP) closed.

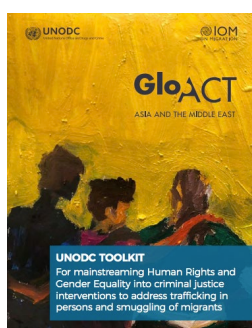


(Photo Credit: UNODC)

The training was co-sponsored by the Attorney General’s Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNODC.

Flynn said that the percentage of women and girls who are victims of human trafficking in this part of the world is staggering and needs to be addressed not only on a national level but in partnership with regional and international law enforcement agencies. “Human trafficking shows that women and girls account for more than 75 per cent of all detected victims in the western hemisphere,” she said. “This is well above the global average of 65 per cent.

Source: Barbados Today, 6 Nov 2021 - <https://barbadostoday.bb/2021/11/06/un-official-urges-investment-in-human-trafficking-fight-as-police-get-fresh-training/>



This Toolkit is a collection of tools to help practitioners understand and incorporate human rights-based and gender equal responses into criminal justice responses to smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. The focus of the toolkit is on criminal justice because the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is mandated to address the criminal dimensions of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

The report could be downloaded from :

https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/GLO-ACTII/UNODC_Toolkit_for_mainstreaming_Human_Rights_and_Gender_Equality_Feb_ruary_2021.pdf

Challenges Of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) In The Post-COVID Era Recent Reports from International and Regional Think Tanks on Threat from Climate Change



The above report could be downloaded from - <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/cop26-special-report>

The 10 recommendations in the COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health propose a set of priority actions from the global health community to governments and policy makers, calling on them to act with urgency on the current climate and health crises.

The recommendations were developed in consultation with over 150 organizations and 400 experts and health professionals. They are intended to inform governments and other stakeholders ahead of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to highlight various opportunities for governments to prioritize health and equity in the international climate movement and sustainable development agenda. Each recommendation comes with a selection of resources and case studies to help inspire and guide policymakers and practitioners in implementing the suggested solutions.

With climate change intensifying and scientists warning that humanity is running out of time to limit global warming to 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels, 2021 has been a fraught year for the planet.

The Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On is the 12th edition in an annual series that provides an overview of the difference between where greenhouse emissions are predicted to be in 2030 and where they should be to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

The Report could be downloaded from - <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2021>



The above report could be downloaded from - <https://phmovement.org/download-full-contents-of-ghw5/>

The fifth edition of the Global Health Watch, similar to the previous editions, provides an alternate discourse on health. The Global Health Watch was conceived in 2003 as a collaborative effort of activists and academics from across the world.

Global Health Watch 5 has been coordinated by six civil society organizations – the People’s Health Movement, Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social (ALAMES), Health Poverty Action, Medico International, Third World Network and Medact. Global Health Watch 5, like the preceding volumes published in 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014, provides policy analysis, debates technical issues and provides perspectives on current global processes that shape people’s health in different parts of the world.

While the book covers a very large canvas, this edition has a particular focus on two areas: the recently announced Sustainable Development Goals; and the rapid transition on global governance for health from a nation-driven process to one that promotes the influence of private foundations, consultancy firms and corporations.



CLIMATE POLICY BRIEF

Key Elements for Developing Countries in Climate Change Negotiations of COP 26: Climate Finance, Article 6 Negotiations and Implications

By M. Natalia Pacheco Rodríguez and Luis Fernando Rosales

Human influence is deepening the climate crisis at an unprecedented pace. Developing countries' economies have been hit hard by the crisis caused by COVID-19. Means of implementation are crucial for them to contribute to the achievement of the Paris Agreement goal. Developed countries must fulfill their commitments to provide US\$ 100 billion per year by 2025 to climate finance. The latest years' negotiations have shown the importance of improving the reporting methodology and the need for an agreed operational climate finance definition. In turn, Article 6 negotiations offer an opportunity to ensure higher ambition of both mitigation and adaptation through cooperative approaches while respecting the agreed balance between market and non-market approaches. What should developing countries expect on these issues at COP 26?

Download Document from - https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CPB26_Some-Key-Elements-for-Developing-Countries-in-Climate-Change-

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: Saving, Sharing and Taking Care of the Plants and Seeds that Feed the World

By Dr. Kent Nnadozie

This Policy Brief provides an introduction to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and its contribution to conserve, sustainably use and fairly and equitably share the benefits of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, for sustainable agriculture and food security. The brief also provides an update on the involvement of the ITPGRFA in the prevailing issues under discussion in various biodiversity-related fora, including ongoing negotiations for a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

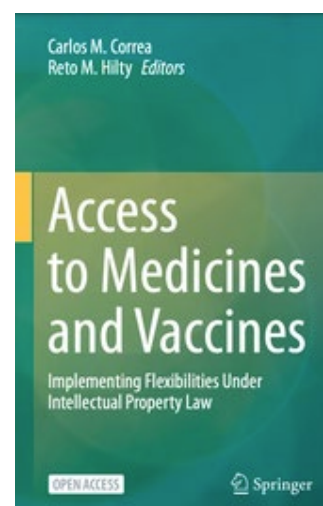
Download document from - https://www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PB105_The-International-Treaty-on-Plant-Genetic-Resources-for-Food-and-Agriculture_EN.pdf

Access to Medicines and Vaccines: Implementing Flexibilities Under Intellectual Property Law

Edited by Carlos M. Correa and Reto M. Hilty.

This book examines topics of particular relevance for shaping intellectual property regimes that take into account public health concerns. It provides not only deep analyses but options for the interpretation of existing regulations or the adoption of new legislation that, being consistent with the TRIPS Agreement, can allow the judiciary and policy makers to take such concerns into account.

In different chapters, the book addresses various dimensions of the flexibilities allowed under the TRIPS Agreement - such as the 'Declaration on Patent Protection, Regulatory Sovereignty under TRIPS' elaborated under the auspices of the MPI, the book contains new reflections and examines recent developments in case law and legislation.



Download the book from <https://www.southcentre.int/book-by-the->

Medical Brain Drain in Nigeria and its impact on Sustainable Development Goal 3

By Nweke Emeka Wilfred and Chimere Iheonu



Nigerian Health Workers (Photo Credit: Southern Voices)

The Nigerian health system has suffered several setbacks. It is vastly under-resourced in terms of personnel and medical infrastructure. While this is a widespread problem, conditions in rural areas are often far worse compared to urban ones. Nigeria's poor health system has resulted in penurious outcomes, prompting stakeholders to call for immediate government intervention. Yet, the government's health expenditure is still significantly lower than the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation of 15% of the annual budget.

Over the decades, the migration of medical doctors from Nigeria has increased. The NOI Poll in 2018 revealed that 88% of doctors in Nigeria were seeking employment abroad. Furthermore, between 2015 and 2021, about 4,528 Nigerian-trained doctors have migrated to the United Kingdom (UK). Even with the pandemic and existing health burdens in Nigeria, doctor's migration has increased. This worrying trend exacerbates an already deteriorating health system. And it is unlikely to stop, as Nigerian doctors continue to seek better working conditions abroad.

Health Personnel Shortage and Migration

A WHO report revealed that Nigeria has a Doctor-Patient ratio of 4 doctors per 10,000 patients and five hospital beds per 10,000 patients.

With over 200 million people, it would take about 25 years to produce enough doctors to cater to the population, asserts the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA). This dire situation can only lead to poor health outcomes. High child and maternal mortality rates are preventable if doctors are readily available. The link between the number of physicians and mortality rates has been documented in the literature, reflecting the negative consequences of doctor shortages in Nigeria.

The primary reason for the large number of medical doctors emigrating each year is the lack of adequate funding in the sector. The 2021 health expenditure accounted for only 7% of the total budget. It is less than the 15% agreed on by African leaders and the WHO in 2001.

According to the NMA, approximately 2000 doctors leave the country each year. The average number of doctors trained in Nigeria and currently practising in the United Kingdom (UK) increased significantly between July 2020 and May 2021 – ranking Nigerian doctors the third highest in the UK.

In 2020 the highest monthly earnings of a Nigerian doctor were about USD 1,365. In Sierra Leone, a doctor earns up to USD 2,000, while doctors in the UK, United States, and Saudi Arabia earn up to ten times what doctors earn in Nigeria. It automatically increases the appeal of emigrating to these countries. Further, the lack of equipment in hospitals in Nigeria and poor working conditions mean that the opportunity cost of emigration is significantly low.

Implications for Sustainable Development Goal 3

The growing trend in the number of migrating doctors could prove detrimental and pose a significant constraint in achieving SDG 3 (good health and well-being) in Nigeria. It has drained the country's human capital, the majority of which was paid for with government resources. One target of SDG 3 is to improve the recruitment, professional development, and retention of health professionals in developing countries. However, given the high rate at which doctors are leaving the country, Nigeria may not achieve the SDG 3 targets by 2030.

The significance of a fully functional health system cannot be over-emphasized. Economic and social welfare conditions are among the fundamental causes of brain drain. Hence, a significant financial

commitment through the provision of critical infrastructure in the health sector and improved governance would facilitate the retention of doctors within the country. The government should prioritize the health sector, given its link with better life quality and economic development. Workers' remuneration should be made competitive with international standards. That would increase the opportunity cost of emigration.

Source: Southern Voices, 20 September 2021

Brain Drain: Philippines Sends Nurses Around The World But Lacks Them At Home

The Philippines is known for training nurses and exporting them to all corners of the world, but now the nation finds itself shorthanded just as its number of coronavirus infections and deaths skyrocket.

The islands' death toll from COVID-19 has surged nearly fivefold since April 1 to 462, and the confirmed cases have tripled to 6,981. That's despite President Rodrigo Duterte imposing a lockdown on the main island of Luzon until at least April 30.

With more Filipinos becoming sick, the consequences of a medical brain drain are weighing on the health care industry. There is an estimated shortage of 23,000 nurses nationwide, according to the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines Inc. The situation is so severe that most Filipinos die without even seeing a medical professional, a lawmaker said. Meanwhile, about 150,000 Filipino nurses currently work in the U.S. alone.

"It's always on my mind: the fact that my daughter is a nurse in a foreign land in this time of pandemic when my own countrymen are just as, if not more, needful of her services," said Gemma Borilla, 55, of Bulacan province, north of Manila. Her 32-year-old daughter works in Saudi Arabia.

The Philippines produced an annual average of about 26,000 licensed nurses from 2012 to 2016, while about 18,500 moved abroad each year during the same period, according to government data.

Source: Japan Times, 24 April 2020 – for full story go to <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/04/24/asia-pacific/science-health-asia-pacific/brain-drain-philippines-nurses/>

An Ethical Analysis of the Global Medical Brain Drain

By Christiana Oshotse

Driving forces such as poverty and political instability intensify the mass emigration of health care workers from developing countries, resulting in critical shortages of remaining workers to meet the basic health needs of citizens in these countries. Medical workers emigrate for better employment opportunities, to earn higher wages, and to secure the future of their family. Other factors include a desire for safer working conditions with greater resources. Widespread agreement exists – including a WHO Global Code - that the medical brain drain severely undermines the capacity of developing countries to develop competent health care systems. Efforts at the national and international levels to impose policies against the encouraging of medical brain drain have lacked implementation and remain largely ignored. This paper, written in 2019, analyze the problem of the brain drain that has been exuberated since the advent of COVID-19 pandemic.

The report can be accessed from

<https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/bioethics/article/view/5920/2978>

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