

NEWSLETTER

June 2015

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Adaptation Network winter workshops underway

The Adaptation Network winter workshops kicked off in Durban this week at the Diakonia Conference Centre. Thirty participants from across KwaZulu-Natal and Free State attended the two days of fun-filled training, facilitated by Noel Oettlé and Shannon Parring. The workshops are titled *Practical Adaptation for Vulnerable Communities* and are designed to enable participants to deepen their understanding of climate science, and conceptualise and facilitate adaptation processes.



Workshop attendance is free for Adaptation Network members, and non-members are required to pay a R200 registration fee. Participants are asked to cover their own travel and accommodation costs. A limited number of travel bursaries are offered.

Upcoming Workshop Schedule:

Date	Location
12 & 13 August 2015	Gauteng, Pretoria
25 & 26 August 2015	Western Cape, Cape Town
1 & 2 September 2015	Eastern Cape, Grahamstown

Please email Candice Arendse for more information: info@adaptationnetwork.org.za

Or check our website for details: www.adaptationnetwork.org.za

Bonn climate negotiations leave much undecided

By Cintya Feitosa

Although June's climate negotiations preparatory meeting in Bonn, Germany, did lay a clearer path to Paris, it failed to establish real commitments on mitigation and finance, leaving civil society organisations around the world with a sense of neither success nor failure.

The Bonn meeting kicked off with high energy, but it wasn't long before it settled into the considerably more measured pace that is the norm in these meetings. This slower pace was one that unfortunately contributed to the chasm that remained at the end of the meeting between what is needed with regards to finance and emissions cuts, and what was actually put on the table. The meeting was intended to turn the "wish list" that had emerged from the Geneva meeting in February into a leaner and more viable text for negotiation at the Paris conference scheduled for December. It could be said that some progress was made toward that objective, as over the 11 days of talks, the text was brought down from 89 pages to 85.

WWF's Mark Lutes is ambivalent about the outcomes of Bonn, saying that although progress was made on the proposed revision of ambition after the Paris conference, nothing concrete was agreed. "There is nothing new about the content, not on the legal form. The commitment of developed countries was off the agenda. The US, for example, say they are willing to contribute, but do not enunciate actual commitment." He also remonstrates the lack of in-depth discussion on long-term finance.

One significant outcome of Bonn was the decision to incorporate REDD+ into the Paris agreement. This was welcomed by the Brazilian delegation, and in fact Brazil was cited as a leader in this sector. Civil society organisations, however, point out that there is no national REDD+ strategy, and complain of the lack of transparency in government decisions with regards to REDD+.

The UNFCCC's* Christiana Figueres said the breakthrough in Bonn was not the text itself, but the progress of negotiations, "The most important thing is to understand the effort to make the text clearer for the next meeting." She also highlighted the G7's statement that it intends to increase the range of adaptation actions, as well as advance the availability of funds for the Green Fund Climate.

"The G7 statement on climate was good news, but it comes too late and offers too little given the urgency of the climate crisis," said Carlos Rittl, executive secretary of Observatorio do Clima, "With little progress made, without any substantive negotiations in Bonn, we're just running down the clock to the new climate agreement. There are now only ten days of formal negotiations to Paris."

The ADP** co-chairs were tasked with summarising countries' positions into the next iteration of the text. This will be negotiated at the next preparatory meeting, which is scheduled for August in Bonn. It is expected that practical discussions for the new climate agreement will begin then.

Read more at : <http://www.observatoriodoclima.eco.br>

* UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

** ADP - Ad hoc working group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action

Article courtesy of Observatorio do Clima, Brazil.

Civil society meetings on INDC submission

By Happy Khambule

On June 8th and 10th, Project 90 by 2030 facilitated civil society meetings in Cape Town and Johannesburg respectively with the intention of formulating a joint civil society submission to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) regarding South Africa's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). Participants included representatives of environmental organisations, the labour movement and faith communities.

At the meetings, WWF outlined some of the key principles and figures relating to mitigation INDC. For one, countries are able to set their targets for emission reduction based on either a fixed year (e.g. 1990, as for the Kyoto Protocol), or on a percentage below a particular business as usual (BAU) emissions scenario. There are also different methodologies that can be used to measure emissions, namely absolute total emissions, per capita emissions, emission intensity or emission intensity per sector. South Africa upholds the pledge it made at Copenhagen in 2009, for a 34% emission reduction by 2020 and 42% by 2025, and its INDC is likely to reflect this. However, the pledge was conditional on support such as finance, capacity building, and technology, and the current BAU scenario was not part of the pledge.

DEA's presentation by proxy outlined South Africa's current plan for its INDC. The country is calling for a rigorous assessment of fairness in the new agreement, emphasising the need for an equity reference framework. Its stance is for stronger mitigation so that there is less pressure for adaptation and less loss and damage. The country will also submit an adaptation INDC and is busy with a planning and policy process, needs and costs assessment, assessment of adaptation investments made in the past five years, and identification of programmes and projects for implementation. It sees adaptation as the "centre piece" of the 2015 agreement. At provincial and local government level, South Africa has already prepared a national adaptation strategy, national adaptation plan, rural climate adaptation plan, and long term adaptation scenarios.

Project 90 by 2030 calls on South African civil society needs to pressure government to insist on a legally binding agreement in Paris, but points out that for this to be effective, South Africa needs to increase its mitigation ambition. The lack of policy coherence between government departments is identified as a significant challenge in addressing climate change, and the organisation says that climate change policy needs to be streamlined into relevant policies.

Benchmarks for the South African INDC were discussed at the meetings, and a working group was established to develop those benchmarks in more detail. On the adaptation INDC, recommendations from the meetings include increased transparency of the allocation and disbursement of adaptation funds, institution of an enabling and enforceable legislative framework for the National Climate Change Response, a rejection of genetically modified organisms as an adaptation strategy, a need to focus on building community level capacity, and a prioritisation of labour intensity over economic efficiency.

The deadline for the submission of the South African INDC is in October, and DEA will hold consultations in Cape Town in July, and Gauteng in September.

If you would like information on the benchmarks document and future meetings, please write to Happy Khambule at happy@90x2030.org.za

Renewables 2015 Global Status Report

By Candice Arendse

Renewable energy has become vital in the journey towards achieving a climate resilient society and providing energy access to those areas that lack modern energy services. The 2015 Renewables Global Status Report shows several achievements in the renewable energy sector, as well as an increase in global energy consumption, during the course of 2014.



Wind turbines near Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape

Although policy implementation for renewable energy faced several challenges during 2014, there was an increase in the number of countries with energy targets and policies that support implementation of renewable energy. On a global scale, China took the lead in new renewable power capacity installations during 2014, with Brazil, India, and South Africa following. The report indicates that municipalities worldwide have played a strong role in supporting progress in the use of renewables by setting and achieving targets. These targets were met through using tools such as incorporating the use of renewables in building codes, public-private partnerships, and community power systems.

Wind and solar PV were the leading resources used for power generation. Solar PV increased by 40 GW installed for a total global capacity of about 177 GW in 2014. The global wind power market increased from 319 GW in 2013 to 370 GW in 2014, with an estimated off-shore grid-connected capacity exceeding 8.5 GW. Renewables represented 59% of net additions to global power capacity in 2014, and comprised an estimated 27.7% of the world's power generating capacity, which is enough to supply 22.8% of the global electricity demand. Renewables have also outperformed fossil fuels in terms of net investment in power capacity additions. Global investments in renewable power and fuels have increased, with new investments totaling USD 301 billion.

Global carbon emissions remained stable during 2014, despite the increase in energy consumption, indicating that the use of renewables as an energy source has been prioritised and is being mainstreamed into the developing world. This is due to several factors, including renewable energy support policies, increased funding, increasing cost-competiveness, and awareness of the need for deployment of renewable energy services in remote and rural areas.

The REN21's Renewables 2015 Global Status Report is available at www.ren21.net/gsr

Conservation International workshop on ecosystem-based adaptation

By Stephanie Kimball

During the climate negotiations meeting in Bonn this month, Conservation International (CI) held a workshop on ecosystem-based adaptation in partnership with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Birdlife International, Rare, Frankfurt School, Nature Conservancy, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) is the use of ecosystem services and biodiversity as part of an overall strategy to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. EbA uses the sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems to provide services that enable people to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The workshop brought together 70 policymakers, adaptation planners and practitioners to explore the opportunities that EbA solutions present to adaptation planning processes, and to provide a platform for practitioners to discuss their experiences in implementing common methodologies and strategies.



Through the UNFCCC National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, many countries are developing adaptation plans with the assistance of NAP technical guidelines. Various organisations are developing supplements to the technical guidelines to assist the process. At the first session of this workshop, policymakers, planners and practitioners were introduced to CI's ecosystem supplement, which was developed to help prioritise areas of capacity building and information gathering needed to consider ecosystems in the adaptation planning context. This tool, currently under development, aims to facilitate progress and inform decisions on effective adaptation planning processes.

The second session of the workshop followed a knowledge exchange format. EbA practitioners shared lessons learned and exchanged best practices from EbA project implementation experiences. Common EbA methodologies were explored, including vulnerability assessments, cost-benefit analyses, and implementation processes to identify key knowledge gaps and priorities.

The workshop fostered many in-depth conversations that helped to build collective EbA knowledge and identify points of future collaboration. A compilation of the presentations and a report of the workshop will be circulated to those who are interested.

More information is available from Stephanie Kimball at skimball@conservation.org or www.conservation.org/ebasolutions

Climate News

By Rehana Dada and Candice Arendse

Significant decline in plant growth by 2100

A study by researchers at the University of Hawai'i shows that ongoing climate change will result in a significant decline in plant growth by 2100. This challenges the perception that warming creates positive conditions for plants at northern latitudes, although it also shows improvement of conditions in some northern regions, predominantly in China, Russia, and Canada. Higher latitudes will have less frost and snow on the ground, but there will not be enough sunlight for plants to be able to take advantage of the warmer temperatures. By 2100 there could be an overall reduction of about 11%, in the number of days with suitable plant growth, with some tropical regions facing a reduction of up to 200 days per year. About 2,1 billion people are vulnerable to the projected changes because of their heavy dependence on plants for food, jobs and revenue, and their minimal capacity to adapt. Significantly, under strong and moderate mitigation scenarios, the changes in suitable plant growing days were negligible. The study is published in *PLOS Biology* and can be accessed at: www.plosbiology.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pbio.1002167

US northeast sea shelf undergoing change

The waters of the northeastern coast of the United States show large-scale changes, including an accelerated rate of sea level rise and signs of collapsing fisheries. According to a study by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, water temperatures are rising, with warming since 2002 occurring 15 times faster than in the previous century. Warming is occurring throughout the water column, and warming is occurring faster as time progresses. Researchers are uncertain if this is decadal variability, or represents a long-term trend. <http://www.whoi.edu>

New research chair in global environmental health

In June the Universities of Cape Town and Basel launched a bilateral research Chair that is intended to improve international collaboration in research in global environmental health, and enable stronger presentation of African perspectives. The Chair's objectives are to investigate key South African environmental health challenges, and research the relationship between climate change, chemical exposures and health effects in the Western Cape. Its focus will be on the effects of environmental exposure to pesticides on the developmental and respiratory health of rural children in the Western Cape; the impact of air pollution on asthma in the Western Cape; the health impacts of poor water quality and pollution of soil in an urban informal area, rural area and industrial area; and the relationship between climate change, ecosystems, chemical usage, health and environmental pollution in South Africa and their impact on health. Research will target marginalised populations in informal and rural settlements that are vulnerable to the impacts of environmental exposure on their health. The joint Chair holders are Associate Professor Mohamed Aqiel Dalvie of UCT and Professor Martin Roosli of the University of Basil.

California's wildflowers losing diversity in warmer and drier winters

A study by the University of California shows that a number indigenous wildflowers species in California have been severely impacted by the dry winters that the region has experienced over the past 15 years. This evidence of climate change related impacts on biodiversity in grassland communities is based on the monitoring of 80 sampling plots in the McLaughlin Reserve. According to the study, climate change will worsen conditions for grassland communities through factors such as decreasing productivity, extinction, increasing vulnerability to invasion by exotic species, and ultimately affecting all levels of the food web that are grasslands dependent. Rehabilitation efforts are considered to have no effect, as the dry conditions in California are projected to intensify over the next few decades. The study was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Shifting Alaskan boreal forest

A ten year study led by the University of Alaska has produced evidence of a biome shift in Alaska that results from warmer summer temperatures across the state. The research team focused on white spruce trees, analysing measurements from the trees' growth rings and comparing tree growth to temperature data from historical records and weather stations. They also drew on previous scientific work. Boreal forest in interior Alaska is shown to be deteriorating because of warm temperatures, but now thriving in western Alaska, where the forest transitions to tundra. White spruces live for 100 to 250 years and thrive within an optimal temperature range. The researchers found that as summer temperatures rose, tree growth slowed in the lowlands in interior Alaska, but became more rapid at higher altitudes in western Alaska. In the mid-1970s, temperatures suddenly increased and have cycled around a higher average since. The researchers are clear that their findings do not indicate that the boreal forest is entirely disappearing, but that it is shifting. The findings were published online by *Forest Ecology and Management*.

Newsletter Credits

Candice Arendse facilitates the production of this Newsletter.

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Photographs

In Renewables 2015 Global Status Report: Rehana Dada

In Ecosystem-based Adaptation Workshop in Bonn: Stephanie Kimball

Deadline for submissions for the next newsletter : 21 July 2015