

**EP Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development**

**SEMINAR**

**Climate Change: Towards an ambitious agreement in Copenhagen?**

**European Parliament, Brussels, Thu. 19th. Nov. 2009**

After months of tortuous debate, delegates are packing their bags and putting the finishing touches to their speeches for the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change. The big question is, will Copenhagen result in an ambitious agreement, or will we once again be left in limbo as the global superpowers bicker over the art of the possible?

I am President of the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Intergroup in the European Parliament, which is the largest intergroup with cross party support from more than 130 MEPs. But my main parliamentary role is in the Fisheries Committee, where I am currently senior Vice President. In that committee we are deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems.

Scientific experts have demonstrated that even slight increases in sea temperature can cause fish to spawn and start migration patterns at the wrong times, leading to massive impacts on the ecosystem. We know that because of global warming, many species in the world's oceans are now at their thermal limits and that ecosystem responses to such changes are not linear, especially in the warmer waters of the tropics. There are no gradual warning signs. No amber lights! Things can go from normal to 'dead' virtually overnight!

Corals are damaged irreparably by rising temperatures and where corals are allowed to die and crumble the natural defences are swept away and increased coastal erosion results.

The scientists among you will know how basic chemistry demonstrates that if you add CO<sub>2</sub> to water you form an acid and that the high amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> now in our oceans is gradually turning them into a chemical soup. This in turn kills off corals and wrecks fragile ecosystems.

So while we argue about costly new technologies to capture and store carbon in depleted undersea oil and gas wells, we crazily destroy vast swathes of global rainforest every year, cutting down and burning nature's own carbon capture and storage system. 25% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually come directly from deforestation. The only greater culprit as far as CO<sub>2</sub> is concerned is power plants at 26.6% annual emissions. By contrast, all international transport by sea and air, only accounts for 2.4% of annual emissions.

The doomsday clock is ticking towards midnight and our window of opportunity to take decisive action is fast disappearing. But still we dicker and dither. That is why Copenhagen is so important. I certainly hope that we get a good result. The European Parliament has now approved no fewer than five reports covering emissions trading, emissions performance standards for vehicles, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon capture & storage and renewable energy. We now have ambitious targets of a 25-40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 20% improvement in energy efficiency and a 20% share for renewables in the EU energy mix by 2020. The long-term goal is at least an 80% reduction in Europe's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050.

But any decision to move towards renewable energy must be sustainable. For example, we cannot rush into a policy of expanding biofuel production without considering its effect on the environment and the consequences for developing nations. We should be looking for practical solutions that actually meet the world's needs rather than responding to unworkable targets. I certainly do not support any policy that puts human or wildlife habitats or biodiversity at risk.

The issue of food security is now a reality. In the last year many developing countries experienced riots in protest against escalating food prices. And yet despite an expanding world population with an extra 6 million people being born every month, we continue to take millions of hectares out of food production annually to produce biofuels.

Every year 15 million children die from hunger. By 2030 the world population will have expanded by such an extent that we will require a 50% increase in food production to meet anticipated

demand. By 2080, global food production will need to double. But the reality is that production is declining rather than expanding. Deserts are spreading and an area the size of the Ukraine is being taken out of agricultural food production every year due to drought and as a direct consequence of climate change.

Vast tracts of the Amazonian and Indonesian rain forests are being torn up to make way for biofuel crops like palm oil or to grow maize, to replace US maize converted to ethanol. The amount of maize converted to ethanol to fill the tank of an American family saloon would feed a child in Africa for a year!

Swathes of rain forest are cleared to grow GM-free soya to meet a growing demand from Europe inspired by nothing more than a fear of 'Frankenstein Foods' driven by the Greens and eagerly seized upon by the tabloid press. Europe's Agriculture Commissioner - Mariann Fischer-Boel, recently spoke out demanding an urgent need for best practice and urging Member States to use 'science instead of prejudice' when it came to biotech crops. I couldn't agree more.

Of course there is a role for renewables in a mixed energy package. There is considerable merit in exploring the potential for off-shore wind and wave and tidal energy generation. But we must not allow greed instead of care to become the defining feature of our strategy for tackling climate change.

Nor should we allow the climate change debate to be hijacked by greedy politicians to meet their own, separate policy objectives. On Monday, Herman Van Rompuy, the current Prime Minister of Belgium and astonishingly the front runner to emerge tomorrow evening as the newly anointed President of the European Council under the Lisbon Treaty, told a meeting of the secretive Bilderberg Group, that he wants Europe to set green taxes to fund the rising costs of Brussels and the welfare state. Well I've got news for Mr Rompuy....We don't want Euro taxes and we certainly don't want to tax our EU citizens to help fund Belgium's soaring welfare costs. Hands off the environment Mr Rompuy! Don't regard climate change as a cow that can be milked every time you need more cash! Your ideas are unwelcome and are exactly the kind of policy that will turn the public against the campaign to control climate change.

So while I really pray for an ambitious package of proposals from Copenhagen, we need to ensure that the measures we take are sustainable and do nothing to damage biodiversity. We need to place a value on the world's rainforests and peat bogs. We need to place a value on the services our ecosystems provide. They are our global air-conditioning systems. Greedy power companies should not think the EU strategy is a green light for amassing profits at the expense of the environment.

It is not only the world's nations and governments that have a responsibility to deliver sustainable targets in Copenhagen. Big business and industry and NGOs have to work together in partnership to find solutions.

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