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econewsletter@climatenetwork.org • www.climatenetwork.org/eco-newsletter • June 4, 2024

ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at most international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. ECO is produced cooperatively by the Climate Action Network at the UNFCCC meetings in Bonn during the SB60 meetings.

Editorial: Andres Fuentes

Climate Crisis Gets a Health Check: WHO's New Resolution Puts Planet on Doctor's Orders!

At last week's World Health Assembly, 194 World Health Organization (WHO) member states adopted the landmark Climate Change and Health resolution. The resolution highlights the increasing recognition of climate change as a major threat to global public health and elevates climate mitigation and adaptation to public health priorities. This outcome is a result of years of efforts by civil society and WHO leadership. Crucially, it enables WHO and the global health community to tackle the climate crisis more effectively, working closely with the UNFCCC and building on the COP28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health.

The resolution calls out the many ways climate change affects health, including through increasing food insecurity, air pollution and infectious diseases. It also sets a framework for promoting health and building climate-resilient and sustainable health systems. The resolution

tasks governments to take rapid action for a "health-in-all policies approach, without diverting resources meant for primary health care." They must assess national vulnerabilities, develop adaptation plans, and integrate climate data into early warning systems.

However, the resolution has some glaring gaps. It fails to explicitly mention the role of fossil fuels in driving the climate crisis or the need for a just transition to renewable energy. It also falls short of addressing gender-responsive climate action, health systems and health services, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, and the needs of marginalised populations like children and youth, older people, LGBTQIA, and refugees.

The resolution was adopted less than six months after the launch of the COP28 UAE Declaration on Health and Climate Change, which

was accompanied by governments making big promises. As Parties begin the next two weeks of negotiations in Bonn, they have the opportunity to begin translating rhetoric to reality. Mere words cannot protect people's lives from the threat of climate change. Lives can only be protected when health is embedded into UNFCCC negotiations across adaptation, loss and damage, just transitions, agriculture and beyond — and when governments truly commit to implementing them. For this to happen, governments need to collaborate across WHO and UNFCCC processes, across environment and health ministries at national level, and together with civil society. Lastly, countries need to pay the bill. Because without adequate finance for climate — through an ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal — and for health, any promises to protect the planet and its people will remain purely tokenistic.

The Just Transition Work Programme: this could've been an email

The eagerly anticipated first dialogue on the UAE Just Transition Work Program (JTWP) took place on the 2nd and 3rd of June. The topic was promising: "Lessons in incorporating Just Transition into NDCs, NAPs and LT-LEDS Breakout Discussions". ECO couldn't sleep due to our excitement on having meaningful exchanges about how we: secure justice for workers, communities and whole countries; and equitably phase out of fossil fuels, transform food systems, and phase in renewables. All this underpinned by the principles of CBDR and international cooperation.

However, to our disappointment, the discussion was a rehashing of old talking points. Countries seem to have forgotten they have agreed already on *the* social and economic transformation as part of a Just Transition! And that the national

context have to shape just transition strategies. Restricted by a structure focused on NDCs and other national plans, countries presented their work in self-congratulatory "icebreaker" presentations. Truth be told, it was a very non-dialogue-y dialogue. You know that feeling when you go to a meeting thinking you are going to have a robust discussion about implementation gaps, challenges, and places of consensus for enabling a just transition, and leave thinking: this could have been an email?

Although ECO appreciated the various examples of stakeholder consultations mentioned, there is a stark difference between mere inclusivity and actual, meaningful participation. And we believe that the JTWP upholds an important moral imperative in ensuring meaningful social dialogue and participation. This dialogue should be

shaped by the perspectives, priorities and needs of workers, women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and other marginalized groups, in a way that shifts power, embeds a collective human rights framework, and considers redistributive justice.

With the first contact group on the JTWP due to take place today, ECO thinks Parties should focus on finishing the work they started in Dubai and agree on modalities and themes that will ensure we have the right conversations. The JTWP was never intended to be just a dialogue. We should use the Contact Group to agree on the themes to be discussed under the JTWP, how to ensure the meaningful inclusion of rights-holders, and establish a joint Party-Observers Advisory Body that would steer work in between sessions. ECO is ready to engage in these discussions with lots of ideas.

Can Australia cook the right dish?

While the great finance cook-off gets underway here in Bonn (see yesterday's ECO), ECO is also looking ahead to see which chefs in the UNFCCC kitchen will be selected to host COP in 2026. For today's ECO, we'll look at what Australia is baking.

Australia is emerging as a promising contender to host COP31, but to deserve the honour, ECO believes they must be able to show in the lead up that they can deliver both results that meets the competition's standards, and amiability in the kitchen — that is, good collaboration with their intended team partners, the Pacific.

A huge number of civil society viewers penned an open letter last week to express their concerns about Australia's ability to compile a balanced NCQG this year. While a course of mitigation and adaptation finance on their own might have been enough to win over audiences in 2009, it's evident to anyone watching that the climate has changed and the

stakes are now much higher. ECO has made it clear that a finance goal in 2024 must contain loss and damage not just as a nice garnish, but as a key ingredient. But to date, Australia has seemed determined to leave ECO with a bitter taste, promoting an NCQG that remains two dimensional.

Just because the Paris Agreement's mandate for the NCQG was agreed in 2015, well before the Loss and Damage Fund was established, does not mean that the climate finance goal should omit loss and damage. Rather the opposite. The mandate is clear that developing country needs and priorities are to be taken into account, and in the face of a lack of action on climate, loss and damage is emerging as one of the highest priority areas for developing countries.

Disappointingly, Australia does not even seem willing to serve loss and damage as a side to the NCQG. Despite supporting the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund last year, Australia is yet to either contribute to the Fund or serve its

own dedicated Loss and Damage finance dish, even though there's plenty of demand to see both of these announced this year.

Australia's prospective host partners, the Pacific, have been outspoken in their desire to see loss and damage included in this year's main course. If we are to believe Australia can truly act as team players, they must show they will listen to, and actually incorporate, the ideas their partners bring to the table. Otherwise, it will look a lot like they are relying on the Pacific's popularity to give them an edge in the competition, while dishing out the same outdated offerings they'd have served alone.

What happens here in Bonn will be key to ensuring a successful outcome in Baku. If Australia is serious about having everyone around for dinner at COP31, ECO thinks it's time for them to show they'll listen to their co-hosts and deliver what the Global South wants to see. Because ultimately, will be the judge of this year's final dish.

Hey SBM, we're not done participating!

Welcome back to Bonn! Wasting no time, the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body kicked off the meeting yesterday with a session to engage with Parties and stakeholders. ECO appreciates the Supervisory Body's attempts to have more consultations and to boost stakeholder participation. The bad news is, their attempt is largely failing. Deadlines for written inputs on critical documents are impossibly tight (sometimes only a week!), and interaction during the meetings is left until the very end, when minds have mostly been made up. This has meant that the long list of questions shared for the stakeholder consultation sadly could not be covered in detail during the consultation. So ECO will take this opportunity to outline once again what needs to be front and center in the future deliberations on Article 6.4.

Firstly, REDD+ projects pose such inherent risks in terms of permanence, additionality, quantification and human rights infringements as to make them incompatible with Article 6.4, whether at the project level or jurisdictional level. To

prejudge their eligibility with any specific guidance is a mind-bogglingly bad idea indeed.

Secondly, ECO remains concerned about the ongoing revisions to draft recommendations on removal activities and methodological requirements (which ECO hasn't seen any work on). The questions in the stakeholder consultation fuel this concern: some suggest that methodological principles such as downward adjustment may not apply to all crediting approaches, or that different rules for quality depend on whether a credit is authorised. All credits under 6.4, whether authorised or MCUs (which in this case is Mitigation Contribution Units, not the Marvel Cinematic Universe), could be used for offsetting and thus the same stringency is required for all. While it was reassuring to hear several Parties agree with ECO on these points, it's deeply worrying these points are even on the table.

Simultaneously, ECO worries about the many other operational tools

that are being developed. Members have limited time to adequately consider the many risks ranging from permanence issues to severe environmental, social, and human rights violations. These concerns have not been adequately addressed so far.

And finally, carbon markets are not climate finance. Climate finance is needed for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage. It should be provided by developed countries in the form of grants, and not as a license for the grantee to continue to pollute: carbon credits are bought primarily to offset ongoing pollution. Moreover, carbon credit transactions often serve intermediaries (primarily from the Global North) more than they serve developing countries. As a reminder, the science is clear: there is no room for offsets. We need real action to phase out all fossil fuels and to stop deforestation and forest degradation. Using these activities to offset emissions elsewhere eliminates any mitigation benefits they have.