

# ECO

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*Editorial: Andres Fuentes*

## 50 lives lost in Sudan's heatwave hell: The world's shameful silence

The news from Sudan is nothing short of horror. Today, we must confront the tragic tale of more than 50 Sudanese people, in their desperate attempt to cross the Northern border, have died from merciless heatwaves. So severe was the damage done to the bodies that reports confirmed some bodies had skin peeled off due to severe dehydration. Survivors have reported to news outlets that "dozens in the desert have no water" and that "entire families died due to high temperatures and the deceased were left behind."

This grim reality underscores the brutal intersection of war, famine, and now deadly heat waves; none of which, of course, are the brainchild of the innocent civilians now left to roast in the Saharan sun. Sudan has tragically morphed into a sort of twisted playground for

regional powers. These powers exploit Sudan's chaos, digging for gold to fund their energy transitions and staking claims on arable land, all while millions of Sudanese people are left to wilt and wither.

More than 10 million people have been displaced within Sudan due to ongoing conflict, the largest displacement on earth, and over 15,000 are dead. Those displaced face violence and hunger, and now they are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather. The International Organization for Migration warns that 70 percent of those displaced are trying to survive in regions at risk of famine. With 18 million people acutely hungry and 3.6 million children malnourished, the addition of deadly heat waves exacerbates an already critical situation.

Why the silence, you ask? Where is the outrage? Where is the action? The international community's response—or lack thereof—is reminiscent of a poorly directed play, all exaggerated gestures and melodramatic posturing. The plight of the Sudanese people should be a rallying cry for humanity, a demand for action in these spaces and beyond. Yet their cries seem to be met with little more than a collective shrug and a muttered "not my problem". As global temperatures rise, those most vulnerable bear the brunt. We cannot sit idly by while the impacts of human actions claim the lives of millions of people. These vulnerable individuals are trapped in a twisted game of survival, governed by rules that seem designed to ensure their ultimate demise.

#KeepEyesOnSudan

## Climate Action without a pulse: ACE in the hole or just another card in the climate deck?

In the labyrinthine world of climate negotiations, where high stakes, higher temperatures, and the highest level of bureaucratic flair converge, there sits an unassuming champion—the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). Yes, ACE, that often overlooked yet curiously potent alphabet soup that promises to educate, engage, and empower. But does it? Or is it merely another decorative card in the climate action deck?

Let's cut through the smog. ACE should be the heartbeat of climate strategy, pulsing through education, public awareness, and, dare we say, actual participation. But as our high-flying delegates debate the fate of our planet, ACE often finds itself shuffled to the bottom of the deck, peeked at with interest but rarely played with the gusto it deserves.

This year, amidst coffee-fueled side chats and a proactive ACE Dialogue, a revelation seemed to dawn—of course at glacial pace—that without funding and firm commitments, ACE is like a solar panel under a shade tree: optimistically placed but disappointingly underutilized. Funding is where the lofty ambitions meet the road, yet here we are, watching as financial disparities are glossed over with all the enthusiasm of a mandatory safety demonstration.

In a world where 'engagement' too often means ticking boxes and where 'public participation' looks suspiciously like an echo chamber, ACE's potential for real, systemic change is being stifled. Civic space is shrinking, yet the space for empty rhetoric? Expanding faster than a hot air balloon in a heatwave.

So, what's the real deal with ACE? Is it the secret weapon in our climate action arsenal, or just another bureaucratic tick-box, a footnote in the annals of climate history? As negotiations drag on, the powers should keep in mind that empowering the very people affected by climate policies is not just nice but necessary. After all, what's the point of holding all these cards if we're not willing to play them effectively? What is the point of identifying that ACE is underresourced if developed countries won't even agree to talk truthfully about the financial gaps?

At the end of the day, ACE might just be the ace up our collective sleeve. Or it could continue to be the low ranking card. Only time—and perhaps another round of negotiations—will tell.

## Dear Mitigation Work Programme negotiators

ECO addresses this informal summary of complaints to you:

You have been negotiating now for ten days. You have exchanged views on the dialogues, whether to have inf infs, how to interpret complementarity, and so on. Many views diverged. Others converged. This discussion may not have mitigated anything or been programmatic, but it was certainly work. A lot of work.

On Wednesday morning, the co-facilitators attempted to capture Parties' views in an informal note. In that sense, ECO wants to thank AILAC and South Korea, for reminding

Parties on Tuesday how these informal notes feed into the process.

However, throughout yesterday, sessions disappeared from CCTV mysteriously. ECO learned that some usual suspects actively prevented this informal note from being introduced to the room. Although ECO definitely would have preferred a draft text, in its absence the informal note could have provided some basis to resume negotiations.

Then, when everyone finally got into the room, certain countries accused the co-facilitators' summary of being illegitimate – even after Secretariat lawyers provided legal

advice that co-facilitators can prepare informal documents of their own motion.

ECO is disappointed to witness this level of mistrust and lack of transparency in the MWP space. Some called it a "toxic space"; at first ECO was confused, but now totally gets it. For different reasons though.

Dear Parties, without substantive discussion the MWP cannot deliver. Unblock the room and allow for the needed exchange. Is it just that you are enjoying Bonn's terrible coffee so much that you never want to leave?

Sincerely yours,  
ECO

## Remember me? I'm that fund you created not so long ago.

Today is the last day of the negotiations in Bonn, and I've been feeling left out. Last year, you were hyped about creating me - the Loss & Damage Fund - but you seem to have left me behind in the Expo City of Dubai. My second board meeting is around the corner, but some of you don't even want to invite me to the new climate finance goal. What am I, if I'm not climate finance?

Yes, we urgently need to mitigate and adapt, but what about the communities that are already facing climate impacts because of your decades of burning fossil fuels and failing to provide finance to developing countries? I'm here to help them respond, rebuild, recover,

and keep their heads above water - literally.

The third and final Glasgow Dialogue made me hopeful for some recognition, and you did raise many important points: making me directly accessible to communities, gender-responsive, and human rights-based. You talked about my relationships with the WIM and the Santiago Network - as Facebook would say: "it's complicated". But now that the Glasgow Dialogue is over, there is no new space available to discuss how I will grow and develop? And how am I even going to exist, if I'm not funded at scale to meet the needs of communities and countries?

Dear delegates, as we approach the

end of ten long days of negotiations, and as some of you start packing your bags to meet me in Songdo, remember me: a potential lifeline for communities at the frontlines of climate disasters. Now that we are making progress in setting up the Secretariat, let's get the money pledged at COP28 in the bank account, provide it to developing countries at the earliest, and raise billions more! Your talk about ambition and urgency rings hollow without concrete and adequate support and commitment. Let's ensure that when I see you again, I'm not a forgotten promise, but a tangible source of hope and justice: filled with money, human rights guarantees and community-led activities.

## "Quantum" seems to be the hardest word

As ECO leaves SB60 seeing no progress achieved in the Ad Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG, here's our sad, sad song to Parties...

(to the tune of Elton John's 'Sorry seems to be the hardest word'...)

What do I got to do to make you fund me?

What do I got to do to make you care?

What do I do when TEDs just dodge

me?

And in each and every session you're not there

What do I do to make you want me?

What do I got to do to be heard?

What do I say when AHWP's over?

Quantum seems to be the hardest

word

It's sad (so sad) so sad

It's a sad sad situation

And it's getting more and more

absurd [it really is!]

It's sad (so sad) so sad

Why can't we talk it over [well in advance of COP29]?

Oh, it seems to me that the quantum seems to be the hardest word...

ECO thinks we need to urgently hear much, much more from developed countries about just how much the climate finance goal should actually be based on needs in developing countries. Over to you.

## ECO mourns the loss of the visionary Klaus Töpfer

Monday afternoon the news spread that Klaus Töpfer has died at the age of 85. ECO mourns this loss and commemorates his achievements in a wide set of environmental policies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Klaus Töpfer was Germany's environment minister and drove forward some progressive policies on climate, circular economy, and waste. In Germany, he made particular headlines in 1988 when he swam across the Rhine River near Mainz, demonstrating its improved water quality after chemical accidents and fish die-offs.

From 1998 to 2006 Töpfer headed the UN Environment Programme and played a key role in lifting it out of a deep crisis into an organisation embracing a more comprehensive environmental perspective and more strongly integrating wider sustainable development considerations.

Töpfer was a strong advocate for environmental causes, often ahead of the discourse in a visionary manner, including the phase-out of nuclear energy after the Chernobyl catastrophe, and promoting renewable energy sources, as an early

supporter of the founding of the International Renewable Energy Agency. As German housing minister, he framed the important support for low and zero-energy buildings ("Passive housing") and worked closely with trade unions involved in buildings renovation to lower heat demand.

ECO remembers that his meetings with CSOs in numerous conferences in Bonn, but also worldwide, were famous, filled with insightful anecdotes and inspiring suggestions, often accompanied (or triggered) by good wine.