

Call for win-win framework at COP24

An African delegation is in the Polish city of Katowice to join 30,000 delegates and thousands others from almost 200 countries attending the 4th edition of what has come to be known as annual climate change negotiation conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations.

This year's conference comes 24 years after the establishment of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and it is the fourth since countries inked a deal in 1992 in France where after years of disagreements, adopted the Paris Agreement on climate change, ipnews.net wrote.

The two-week conference takes place at the backdrop of the alarm sounded by scientists working under the auspices of UN-mandated Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose special report released in October warned of dire consequences if the global community fails to put in place drastic measures to arrest the accumulation of climate-polluting emissions which cause global warming.

In its 'state of the climate' report released five days ago, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicates that the 20 warmest years on record have been in the past 22 years, the global average temperature, and if the trend continues, the temperatures may rise by 3°C to

5°C by 2100.

This spells doom for communities at the frontline of climate change impacts, but which may not be aware that the shifting seasons which are making it impossible for them to plant crops as they used to, the erratic rainfall which appears late and ends even before they plant, and are characterized by floods that wreck havoc in villages and cities, recurrent droughts which wipes their livestock and crops, are all manifestation of the changing climate which they should learn to live with in the foreseeable future.

Mihika Mwenda is the Executive Director for the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA).

The negotiations taking place in Katowice are aimed at discussing the best way possible to defeat challenges posed by climate change. Over years, discussions have centered on the efforts to reduce the greenhouse gases believed to accelerate global warming, and how to live with the damage already caused while helping those who are unable to absorb the shocks emanating from climate change impacts.

At stake is the so-called 'Paris Rulebook', a framework of the



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Paris Agreement implementation which has already resulted into fissures between delegations from developed countries and poor countries. Developing countries, especially those from Africa, want the elements of the Paris rulebook to be as unambiguous as possible to avoid past deliberate oversights that have rendered impotent previous Pacts aimed at addressing climate change. On their part, industrialized countries are

fighting to ensure the framework helps them escape their historical responsibility, which they successfully achieved under the Paris Agreement that seemingly has watered down the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Whether Katowice will deliver a balanced rulebook or an eschewed framework favoring the powerful countries due to their manipulative, intimidating

and/or carrot-dangling strategies will be judged in the two weeks. Throughout 2018, the Fiji Presidency has facilitated over a series of trust-building conversations meant to agree on contentious issues, including emission reduction levels by countries and sources of money for such efforts.

The Fiji-facilitated interactions, known as Talanoa Dialogue, have been characterized

by mistrust and normal rituals witnessed in all negotiations, and sceptics see no credible success in breaking the persistent North-South divide. Though Fiji has tried its level best to apply the spirit of 'Talanoa', which means, trust-building, the good intentions of the Pacific Island State have not helped to move the process forward.

Indeed, the president will be handing over the baton to his Polish counterpart with his only achievement being process-based "where are we...where do we want to...how do we want to go there" ritual, which avoided to tackle the hard questions threatening to endanger the gains so far made in international climate governance system.

For African countries, any framework for the implementation of Paris Agreement that does not define the source of money and technology is hopelessly barren. Rich countries have turned the negotiations into market places to expand markets for their goods and services. In their effort to turn climate change into business opportunities, the industrialized countries and those in transition such as China, India and Brazil have encouraged their major transnational corporations to train

their eyes on the emerging opportunities in the 'climate sector', where sectors such as 'climate-smart agriculture', 'forest as Carbon sinks', 'clean coal', 'climate finance', 'low-carbon', 'climate resilient growth', are gradually overtaking normal development discourse.

There is nothing wrong in turning the challenge of climate change into opportunities as the industrialized countries have vouched in the ensuing transformation where even international development assistance is conditioned. What is curious though is the fact that these conditionalities may disadvantage people already suffering the impacts of climate change. In addition, many donors are only interested in projects that are mitigation in nature, such as energy and major infrastructure projects which assure them on bigger profit margins. Adaptation, which does not have return for investment, is not attractive to many donor partners nor private sector investors.

A win-win framework in Katowice which considers the interest of industrialized countries and their businesses, as well as developing countries and their vulnerable communities to enable the transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient development trajectories without jeopardizing the livelihoods of the present and future generations is thus the most suitable outcome.

Trump's disbelief won't stop dangerous climate change

"I don't believe it," said US President Donald Trump when asked about the fourth national climate assessment, authored by 13 government agencies and hundreds of the US's top climate scientists.

His administration had tried to hide the report, publishing it on Black Friday when many Americans were either recovering from a Thanksgiving food coma or stampeding department store sales, theguardian.com wrote.

The administration's plan backfired badly – the latest alarming climate science report became front-page news. Numerous Republican politicians were asked about it on TV news and politics shows, and their answers demonstrated that Trump's climate science denial continues to pervade the GOP.

Republican party leaders' answers ranged from platitudes – such as "our climate always changes" and "innovation" is all that is needed to solve the problem – to accusations that "a lot of these scientists are driven by the money."

Addressing the latter point, one of the report's lead authors, Prof Katharine Hayhoe, noted that many of its contributors were "paid zero dollars" and estimated that in the time she devoted to the assessment, she could have written eight of her own papers. Conversely, GOP politicians and operatives are paid millions of dollars annually by the fossil fuel

industry. Some people are clearly driven by the money, and it's not climate scientists.

Trump's comments did not stop at disbelief – he also appeared to shift blame to other countries and tout the US's clean air and water.

"You're going to have to have China, and Japan, and all of Asia, and all of these other countries – you know, [the report] addresses our country. Right now, we're at the cleanest we've ever been, and that's very important to me. But if we're clean but every other place on Earth is dirty, that's not so good. So, I want clean air, I want clean water – very important," the president said.

These comments confuse climate change with air pollution, but the two are connected. The national climate assessment report pointed out that climate change was exacerbating wildfires, which in turn create air pollution. The Camp Fire in November produced so much smoke that California had the worst air quality in the world at the time.

A key figure showed that climate change had approximately doubled the area burned by wildfires in the western US, and the report noted that – contrary to the administration's frequent claims – this increase was "more closely related to climate factors than to fire suppression, local fire manage-



JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ment, or other non-climate factors."

Trump's claim that US air is "the cleanest it's ever been" is also not strictly true. Despite a long-term downward trend, owing in large part to the replacement of coal power plants that the Trump administration is desperately trying to save, particulate matter levels were up slightly from 2016 to 2017.

The administration's efforts to weaken and repeal every possible environmental regulation certainly do not merit credit for the long-term improvement in air and water quality in the US.

Trump's efforts to shift blame to other countries is also at odds with the fact that every other nation in the world has signed up to the Paris climate accords and only one government has announced its intent to withdraw from them.

The Republican Party leaders who were willing to acknowledge the threats detailed in the report claimed that all the climate policies proposed thus far would be harmful to the economy, and that we should instead focus on innovation.

While individual climate policies may or may not slow the economy, the scientific research is clear that climate change will curb economic growth – particularly in the US. The assessment report makes clear that if we're worried about the economy, we must slow global warming. And while research into potential carbon-cutting technology innovations is needed, hoping that somebody will invent a way out of this mess is too bigger risk. It is accepted that solving global warming won't be cheap or easy but failing to do so will come at a much higher cost and not just in terms of money.

Turnbull speech draft said Australian Labor's 45% emissions target might not drive up bills

Malcolm Turnbull suggested it was possible Labor's proposal to preserve the National Energy Guarantee (NEG), with a 45 percent emissions reduction target, would not drive up prices, in an early draft of his speech to an energy conference obtained by Guardian Australia.

Turnbull re-entered the energy policy fray at the New South Wales Smart Energy Summit with a full throated defense of his record, lauding the Snowy Hydro 2.0 expansion, and lamenting the demise of the NEG.

The former prime minister urged his Liberal colleagues to revive the NEG – abandoned as a casualty of the August leadership fight – arguing it was a

"vital piece of economic policy and has strong support, none stronger I might say, than that of the current prime minister and the current treasurer". Labor is proposing to keep the NEG with a 45 percent emissions reduction target. The text of the speech the former prime minister ultimately delivered, now uploaded on his website, did not address the impact of Labor's higher target.

But an earlier draft of the speech, did. "Labor has announced it will adopt the NEG but with a higher emissions target," the early draft, seen by Guardian Australia, said.

"Ours, as you know, was 26 percent which was only just above business

as usual so it obviously had no adverse impact on prices.



Malcolm Turnbull

"That assertion serves skeptical assessment, but it is also

"There is some modeling already from Frontier Economics which suggests that Labor's 45 percent target will not result in higher prices," the early draft said.

important regularly to review these models in the light of the latest technology and market information.

"A great deal depends too on whether a 45

percent reduction means simply that emissions in 2030 – in that year – should be 45 percent less than in 2005. If that were the case, implying a hocky stick, the additional cost may not be as high as it would appear."

Turnbull issued the following statement to Guardian Australia about the unauthorized disclosure of his draft speech to the energy conference.

"The notes were obtained by Guardian Australia without my authority. "They are incomplete draft material. The only remarks released with my authority was the speech that I gave at the conference, a transcript of which is on my website."

China says three regions failed to meet energy efficiency targets last year

A group of three Chinese regions failed to meet their targets to curb energy consumption growth and improve efficiency last year, the country's top planning authority said in a notice published on Wednesday.

Liaoning Province in the rustbelt northeast and the big coal producing regions of Ningxia and Xinjiang in the northwest failed to meet targets to cap rises in energy use and reduce the amount of energy consumed per unit of economic growth, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said, Reuters reported.

China has been trying to fashion what it has called an "energy revolution" in order to ensure the economy continues to grow without significant increases in fossil fuel consumption, carbon emissions and pollution.

It aims to keep annual primary energy consumption at less than five billion tons of standard coal by 2020, up from 4.5 billion tons last year. It has also said it would cut energy intensity – the amount consumed per unit of economic growth – by 15 percent over the 2016-2020 period.

Though 12 provinces and regions exceeded their targets last year, some have continued to struggle. Liaoning, an old industrial base dominated by sectors like coal, oil and

machinery, has struggled to diversify and its economy has been one of the country's worst performers.

Meanwhile, Ningxia and Xinjiang are emerging as major new coal and electric power suppliers as traditional "energy bases" near the eastern coast come under greater pressure to curb air pollution.

China is trying to encourage regions to make greater use of clean and renewable energy resources, and it said on Tuesday that it would implement a new renewable energy quota system and improve grid access for wind, hydro and solar generators.

Meanwhile, state news agency Xinhua said on Tuesday, citing research from a government think-tank, that traditional coal-fired power plants are coming under increasing financial pressure as cleaner rivals become more competitive and their fuel, financing and environmental compliance costs increase.

According to research by the China Institute for Reform and Development, nearly half of China's thermal power generators are facing losses as a result of their inability to pass higher costs onto consumers, with many turning into "zombie enterprises" after being forced into a "vicious circle" of debt.