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Reporting Africa's Climate Change Concerns

The bar for Cancún was set low: steer the mighty, squabbling barge that is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change off the sandbank of disagreements that it struck in Copenhagen.

The Mexican pilot succeeded in deferring fatal disagreement amongst the more than 190 captains aboard this unwieldy vessel and it remains afloat, with all eyes turning towards its next port of call in Durban at the end of 2011.

Two long weeks of negotiations dragged on into the early hours of the final day, until applause and cheering by more than 190 national delegations greeted the announcement of the Mexico's foreign secretary Patricia Espinosa of "a consensus without Bolivia".

Most left Cancún believing the stage is set for a substantive agreement at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Durban next December.

"Governments have given a clear signal that they are headed towards a low-emissions future together," declared UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres. The Cancún Agreements represent "the essential foundation on which to build greater, collective ambition."

Bolivia's dissent, however, was well-founded. The World Meteorological Organisation declared in December that this decade will close as the hottest 10-year period on record. The 100+ pages that form the "Cancún Agreements" will do nothing to curb greenhouse gas emissions warming the planet, but did revive the U.N. climate negotiation process after its near death in Copenhagen in 2010.

Kumi Naidoo, executive director of Greenpeace said, "It's pathetic the world community struggles so much just to climb over such a low bar. Our only real hope is to mobilise a broad-based climate movement involving all sectors of the public and civil society before Durban."

This newsletter contains a swift snapshot of what is at stake for Africa in these discussions.



Kochito Gabre is among farmers who've found a new accommodation with nature in the Kafa Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia. (Omer Redi/IPS)

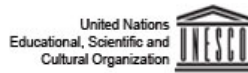


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Front page picture caption:
 La Via Campesina (the International Farmers Movement) held a 'Global Day of Action for Climate Justice' on Dec 7, 2010, which included a protest march in Cancun (Mexico) alongside the COP16 Climate Change negotiations. (Credit: Diana Cariboni/IPS)



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Political Will Needed to Travel Last Mile



Hammer in Vía Campesina march.
(Renee Leahy/IPS)

By Nastasya Tay

CANCÚN, Mexico – Countries must redouble their efforts, to “travel the last mile to a successful outcome,” says U.N. climate chief Christina Figueres.

“More needs to be done,” Figueres told the press on the penultimate day of climate negotiations in Cancún.

Earlier in the week, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cautioned against high expectations.

“Don’t expect an all-encompassing global agreement in Cancún,” he said following the opening of the High Level Session of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

“There are possibilities for progress to be made, but the negotiations around a climate deal remain “not a sprint but a marathon”.

Ban affirmed the need for progress on all fronts, but highlighted specific areas where he feels important decisions could be made/agreement could be reached. The Secretary-General also listed mitigation, transparency and accountability, as well as the future of the Kyoto Protocol as additional focus areas.

As the Friday close of negotiations approached, the future of Kyoto remained uncertain. Canada, Japan and Russia were reported to be resisting pressure to accept an extension of the Protocol; many parties see the Kyoto Protocol, which placed a legal

requirement on developed countries to cut emissions to five percent below 1990 levels by 2012, as symbolic of a fair and binding agreement.

The argument for extending the Kyoto Protocol is that developed countries should continue to assume a share of responsibilities in line with their historical contributions to global warming.

But the group resisting an extension say there’s little point in extending an agreement that does not include the world’s two largest polluters: the United States – which never signed on to Kyoto – and China, who between them produce around 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Civil society groups have called for greater political will and creativity on the part of ministers and negotiators in the talks.

The establishment of a global climate fund, with balanced and accountable governance, as well as frameworks for technology transfer and adaptation support would constitute success in Cancún, David Turnbull, the Climate Action Network’s Executive Director, told TerraViva.

However, emissions reductions must also be addressed, Turnbull asserted. “We want see the pledges on the table confirmed and anchored into the negotiations, but we also want to see countries recognise that they are simply not enough, and that we need to see greater ambition to close the gap between what’s currently on the table and what the science is calling for.”

Lucy Wanjiku Macharia tends coffee bushes at her farm in Central Kenya. (Suleiman Mbatiah/IPS)



Defining Africa's Green Fund

Funding to developing countries to support reduced emissions and adaptation to the impacts of climate change is one of the tasks before negotiators and politicians at the U.N.'s Climate Conference in Cancún. **The African Development Bank's Dr Anthony Nyong explains to Rosebell Kagumire about Africa's position on how much money is needed, for what, and who should manage it.**

Q: You have presented a proposal to set up a continental fund called the African Green Fund, but we haven't seen any money. How much money is to be made available for Africa's adaptation needs?

A: The baseline matter is straightforward, but some people have decided to complicate it.

In December 2009 when they endorsed the Copenhagen Accord, the fast-track finance that was agreed upon was for 2010-2012. In Copenhagen, developed nations made political commitments to provide developing countries with \$30 billion dollars for the period from 2010 to 2012 for adaptation and mitigation.

The AfDB has drawn up a proposal to have a Africa Green Fund. This was supported by all African nations, that Africa should take care of the climate finance at a regional level.

The proposed fund includes enhanced direct access by countries, complete alignment with Africa's priorities and processes as well as the strengthening of country systems to support the implementation of projects.

This Fund has been recognised in a report by the panel of experts that the U.N. Secretary General tasked to look at long-term climate financing and how we can get to the \$100 billion annually by 2020 that develop countries opened up to.

And we are represented by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia on the team the looks at the options of getting this money. This report will be put before the parties this week.

This panel has proposal that the African Green Fund should receive about \$20 billion a year, but that's not our recommendation. Africa's recommendation is \$40 billion a year. The Fund is not just an initiative of the bank, it's an initiative of the continent, we are simply responding to that request.

This will help implement projects in mitigation, adaptation and other enabling areas like capacity building and technology transfer, all the things that are being negotiated.

Q: African negotiators have quoted varying amounts needed for the continent's adaptation to climate change. What do you see as the most credible number?

A: When you are costing for adaptation, many people cost adaptation to include basic development. If you don't have good roads, you can't implement your disaster reduction strategy. If you do not have good hospitals, you cannot adapt to the health impacts of climate change.

So it varies. Some put the cost of basic development down as part of adaptation; for others, they see adaptation without necessarily including the cost of basic infrastructure.

I personally support the model that tells you that adaptation consists of basic development and then the additional costs to be incurred by climate change.

Q: Who should manage an adaptation fund?

A: Regional development banks should manage the funds. These funds should not be centralised anymore.

We want these resources decentralised to bring them closer to the people. If you manage this centrally, it defeats the purpose of distributed development. My take is that the regional development banks like the African Development Bank should manage the fund.

Q: Will the Fund rely entirely on money agreed at these negotiations?

A: No, African countries too will make commitments to this fund and the African development fund will not stop countries from accessing climate funds outside this regional framework.

Q: You have warned African negotiators not to accept an agreement that won't work for Africa, and you have used the example of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). How has this failed?

A: During the negotiation process for the Clean Development Mechanism in Kyoto, the financing mechanism was not fully aligned with Africa's needs and priorities. We don't want this to be repeated.

The problems of CDM are many, the first being that the level of development cannot easily support projects that would help us earn any carbon credits from carbon market.

We have not seen many sustainable development projects in the energy sector because we have largely renewable energy.

Then the second problem is that the sectors that actually generate emissions from Africa were largely excluded, like agriculture and forestry.

The third problem is that the transaction costs of doing business in Africa is still high. This had led to the low levels of participation in this mechanism for Africa.

Q: How certain are you that developed countries will deliver the money, taking into account the current financial economic crises in Europe?

A: There are crises and there are commitments. There are things you have to do even when you have a crisis. And a commitment to climate change adaptation is one of them.

We expect that these countries will honor their commitments to ensure that there's a global solution to climate change. We spend a lot of time talking about funds, but the best way of adaptation is mitigation. If you do not cut your green house gas emissions there's no amount of money that can help.

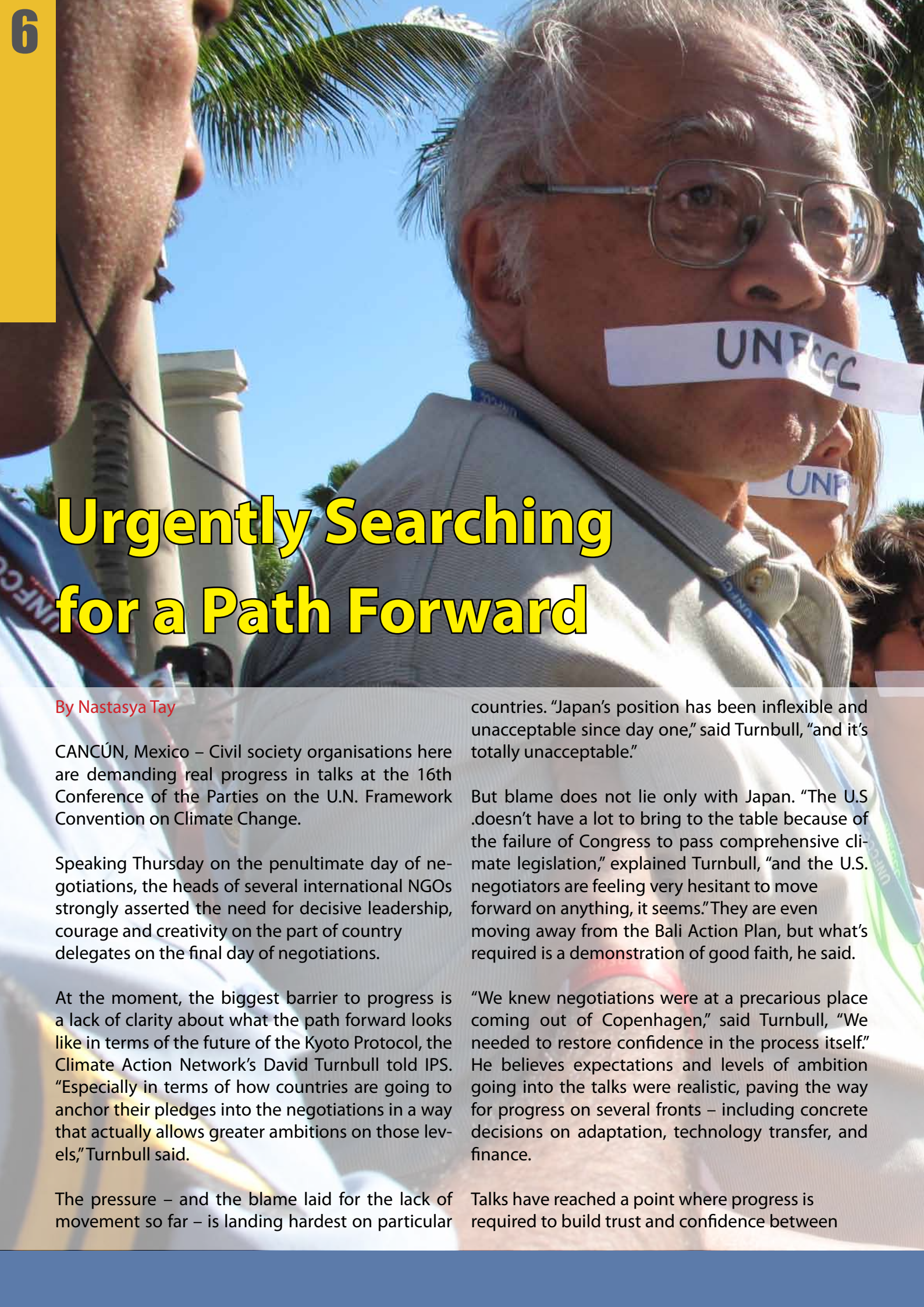
So the developed countries have two things to do. First, cut down their emissions to scientifically acceptable levels, and secondly, provide resources for countries that are affected to take action.

Q: What will be the role of the new Climate Change Policy Centre set up by the African Union, African Development Bank and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa?

A: The Centre will guide our policy development to ensure that countries are capacitated enough to address the challenges and effects of climate change.

There are two issues we have to address in Africa to cope with climate change, projects and policies. One of the reasons why renewable energy is not expansively implemented in Africa is because we do not have policies.

The Policy Centre will ensure that African countries have policy and regulatory reforms to ensure climate change initiatives are taken up.



Urgently Searching for a Path Forward

By Nastasya Tay

CANCÚN, Mexico – Civil society organisations here are demanding real progress in talks at the 16th Conference of the Parties on the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Speaking Thursday on the penultimate day of negotiations, the heads of several international NGOs strongly asserted the need for decisive leadership, courage and creativity on the part of country delegates on the final day of negotiations.

At the moment, the biggest barrier to progress is a lack of clarity about what the path forward looks like in terms of the future of the Kyoto Protocol, the Climate Action Network's David Turnbull told IPS. "Especially in terms of how countries are going to anchor their pledges into the negotiations in a way that actually allows greater ambitions on those levels," Turnbull said.

The pressure – and the blame laid for the lack of movement so far – is landing hardest on particular

countries. "Japan's position has been inflexible and unacceptable since day one," said Turnbull, "and it's totally unacceptable."

But blame does not lie only with Japan. "The U.S. doesn't have a lot to bring to the table because of the failure of Congress to pass comprehensive climate legislation," explained Turnbull, "and the U.S. negotiators are feeling very hesitant to move forward on anything, it seems." They are even moving away from the Bali Action Plan, but what's required is a demonstration of good faith, he said.

"We knew negotiations were at a precarious place coming out of Copenhagen," said Turnbull, "We needed to restore confidence in the process itself." He believes expectations and levels of ambition going into the talks were realistic, paving the way for progress on several fronts – including concrete decisions on adaptation, technology transfer, and finance.

Talks have reached a point where progress is required to build trust and confidence between

Indigenous rights protestors bundled away from negotiations by police.
(Nastasya Tay/IPS)



negotiating countries – across the developed and developing world divide, said Jeremy Hobbs, executive director of Oxfam International. “We’ve seen real progress in the last two weeks,” Hobbs said, and “now we’re in a position to see real practical moves.”

However, that does not preclude a repeat of the Copenhagen talks where delegates got into game-playing, warned Hobbes. They must start making concessions, talking to each other, working out solutions, he told the press.

Kumi Naidoo compares the campaign for international action on climate change to his experiences as a young activist during the apartheid regime in his native South Africa.

“However bleak things might be, with inspired leadership, with political will, and thinking about future generations, we can be inspired by the history of winning against all odds,” he told IPS. Naidoo identifies the biggest barriers to progress as a lack of political will, as well as shortsightedness.

“Developed countries are currently not feeling the effects of climate change, and it is the people in poor countries who are feeling the effects and paying the first and most brutal price,” Naidoo said. “But we know that ultimately we get this right as rich and poor countries, and we secure the future of all our children and grandchildren. We get it wrong and we all go down together.”

“We are strangled by short-term political expediency, and short-term political interest, and election cycles,” he said. Naidoo bemoans the lack of a legally binding treaty on the table, describing it as a tragedy.

“In Copenhagen, when you talked about a fair, ambitious and binding treaty, you weren’t thought of as a loony lefty, it was considered that you were making a mainstream demand. Here, you’re regarded as a fringe element,” he said. Naidoo, a leader of the Global Campaign for Climate Action, believes that talks are at a crucial point in Cancún, with high expectations for next year’s negotiations in Durban.



DRC – ‘Illegal Logging Will Thrive’ Despite REDD

By Rosebell Kagumire

CANCÚN, Mexico – One of the stumbling blocks to finalising proposals to fund the conservation of forests in Africa is that some of the most ecologically – and commercially – valuable forests in Africa are in areas racked by conflict.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has received plenty of attention and money to preserve its rainforest. One hundred thirty million hectares – nearly two thirds – of this enormous central African country is forested.

Somewhere between 20 and 37 billion tonnes of carbon are stored in the second largest rainforest in the world (only the Amazon is larger), as well as a tremendous amount of biodiversity.

The DRC was the first African country to complete a Readiness Proposal Plan for REDD (reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation), and there are a dozen pilot projects of various sizes in place in the country.

The country has received about \$120 million for its REDD+ processes – developing the plan and supporting provincial efforts and popular participation in conservation.

Half a million hectares lost each year

But the country is still losing around 500,000 hectares of forest every year. Illegal logging is top of a list of drivers of deforestation that also includes charcoal production, trade in bush meat and ongoing armed conflict. War, particularly in the eastern DRC, has forced many people into camps for the internally displaced which place increased pressure on forests.

More seriously, the conflict has all but destroyed regulation and oversight of forests, allowing an illegal timber trade to flourish.

In 2009, the government cancelled around 60 percent of the country’s timber contracts after an anti-corruption probe found that 91 deals covering nearly 13 million hectares of forest had been granted under questionable circumstances by corrupt officials.

A 2001 U.N. panel also found that three of the DRC’s neighbours, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, were guilty of looting timber under cover of war.

The U.N.’s report said this included confiscation of forest products, forced monopoly and price-fixing;

it implicated top government officials from each of these countries, who profited hugely from the illegal logging.

Designing and implementing an effective conservation strategy will have to account for illegal logging and cross-border security in a challenging political environment.

"As we move forward with the REDD projects, we will have to hold talks through various sectors like trade and security to ensure these cross border illegal activities that affect REDD are checked," said Victor Kabengele wa Kadilu from the DRC Ministry of Environmental Conservation.

"Illegal logging is still big challenge," he said. "So far we have a project in Mambasa, (North Kivu) to control the logging through certification of forest products."

The DRC's REDD proposal recognises the need to improve governance of forests. One of the measures it puts forward is to improve the salaries of the officials who enforce forestry regulations with a system of performance bonuses, as well as greatly increasing their numbers: at present, there are just 50 forestry agents for the entire DRC.

Kadilu says that an agreement on funding would go a long way towards securing DRC's forests.

"We have ongoing projects to minimise the pressure on forests. We have encouraged new, improved agricultural practices; agroforestry and new technologies like the improved cook stoves on a large scale," he said.

"To continue with all this we need a lot funding and we are hoping that the monies pledged are delivered and that more pledges are made at this conference."

Outlook not promising

Charles Mushizi, a lawyer from the Kinshasa-based Centre for Exchanges On Legal and Institutional Reform, is sceptical.

"Most of our political decision-makers don't understand these issues and our policies are still not in line with climate change demands," he said.

"Corruption is very big in DRC. On one side you have wars, and on the other we have a lack of capacity of government structures.

"Those in armed conflict areas are committed to logging and the sale of timber to finance the conflict and of course REDD activities in such areas will not easily be carried out."

Wally Menne, an environmentalist affiliated with the Timberwatch Coalition, told IPS that it is difficult to see REDD succeeding in DRC.

"The DRC government is under pressure to convert forests to plantations of oil palm and eucalyptus, on the understanding that there will be REDD+ money to subsidise the conversion of natural forests that are 'degraded', and at the same time get money from logging," said Menne.

"The argument is that they will only plant in 'degraded' forests, which usually means that the forest has been disturbed at some time in the past and can no longer be called 'pristine', but is still ecologically important." He pointed to other government policies on land that will affect the success of conservation efforts.

"In the DRC there have already been schemes to attract farmers from other countries (including South Africa) with grants of free land and tax holidays for mass food production. This might not be directly linked to REDD, but it will mean that more 'degraded' forests will need to be bulldozed to make way for crops."

In Menne's view, illegal logging by international actors is a lesser threat than the activities of big corporations with legal concessions who supply enormous and profitable markets in Europe.

"Illegal logging is going to thrive because it will be seen as a way to make money from forests before they are 'sold' to a REDD project for 'restoration' with one or other kind of plantation," he said. "It does not look very good either for the forests and grasslands, or the indigenous peoples and local communities.

REDD will most likely bring more problems than solutions, and it is unlikely to succeed in protecting natural forests."

'A Lot of People Misunderstand China'



Civil Society protest march in Cancun (Natasya Tay/IPS)

In 2008, China pumped out 6.5 gigatonnes of CO₂, roughly equal to the emissions from the rest of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East combined. But that's not the whole story. China's enormous population means that its per capita emissions are just below five tonnes of CO₂ per person – approximately a quarter that of the U.S.

China is also a developing country, and one which feels that it should be afforded space for economic growth as it tries to lift the 150 million of its 1.3 billion people who still live in poverty. In this complex environment, the country is attempting to map out a growth path for the future and negotiate the tension between fuelling economic growth and delivering on green imperatives.

It has invested more in renewable energy than most developed countries, including the United States. It has embarked on an ambitious energy efficiency programme, trying to convince its millions to change their lightbulbs, and has mainstreamed climate change into policy-making across levels of government. But in the face of its momentous climate change challenges, is it enough?

Natasya Tay spoke to Renate Lok-Dessallien, head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in China, which engages heavily with the PRC government on its strategy to deal with climate change, providing financial support and technical assistance on some of its programmes.

Q: China's gotten a lot of attention for becoming the world's largest emitter of CO₂. Do you think the country's trying to change perceptions of its climate change agenda?

I think China's done a lot of work. First of all, she's internalised the problem, which is more than one can say for some countries. Formerly, climate change was considered a scientific study, but now it's absolutely central to the whole development agenda. This has huge significance, because the challenges are so great.

How do you continue to develop a country the size of China – 1.3 billion people – 500 million people taken out of poverty in the last 30 years, and 150 million people remaining in poverty, and expecting that to happen for them in the years

ahead. And how do you do that on a low-carbon growth path? It's never been done before. There's no models out there.

The second area is the whole area of energy efficiency and conservation, where they've set targets. And when China sets targets, they're serious targets. And they get implemented – even sometimes at the expense of other things. [Other colleagues have said that] China's even gone to the extent of switching off the electricity for a week.

It may seem a little extreme, but it also indicates the seriousness with which the whole issue of target-setting and target meeting is addressed in China.

Q: The country appears to be taking climate change challenges very seriously. But is it enough?

If you look at it from an absolute emissions reduction perspective, it's not enough. China has to do more, but all countries have to do more. And it looks very much like China is taking it seriously, but it's also waiting for other countries to take it seriously. In particular, the other big emitter countries, which happen to be developed countries.

There's still a long way to go. They have competing demands on them. And how do you balance the need for development, the need for poverty reduction, with the need emissions reduction?

We have some technology fixes which allow you to both, but on a large scale which would make a big dent in emissions reduction, we don't yet have a magic bullet. It will be tough sailing for a while until we have that kind of technology. So they've recognised that as well, and are investing heavily in innovation and research to develop the technologies.

Q: Do you think it might be possible or desirable to replicate China's efforts in other developing countries?

A lot depends on the international financing mechanisms that finally, hopefully come to be. It's not realistic to expect least developed countries to dole out huge proportions of their budgets on this – some proportion yes, obviously, but to

the same degree as China, probably not. So there we're probably dependent on the whole issue of international financing for climate change.

I think that a lot of people misunderstand China, and perhaps have misconceived ideas about how the system actually works.

Government has set serious targets and they've actually linked the personal performance assessment system of provincial leaders and some of the large city leaders on meeting some of these targets. That in itself is totally replicable. Why don't developed countries do that? It seems like a very responsible way to go about it, and it doesn't have anything to do with the kind of government that you have. It just means that you're taking it seriously.

I think getting the incentive system right is the essence of it. If the country as a whole decides that it's an important priority, then it's beholden upon whichever government you're talking about to figure out the mechanisms. Each country has its own governance system, each country knows how it operates. It doesn't have to be the same.

I think the performance system is totally replicable. That's what good governance is all about – getting the incentive system right. Whether it's climate change, or whatever you're talking about.

Q: So, what's next for the country? What are we likely to see in the next few years?

As we move to the 12th Plan period in China, they're going to be restructuring the economy on multiple fronts. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis, they realised their economy was over-dependent on an export-led system. Now that there's a rising middle class in China, they want to migrate the structure towards a more consumption-based system.

At the same time they're doing that, they're trying also to feed in a low-carbon growth path and cope with a lot of poverty. They've got a lot on their hands, and getting the right balance is going to be a challenge. But they can get the right balance, and they're certainly moving in that direction. That'll be a huge inspiration for other countries.

Don't Look to South Africa for Leadership

By IPS Correspondents

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa is Africa's largest economy and the continent's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. The country's emissions per capita are on par with those of the United Kingdom, and more than twice as high as China's emissions by the same measure.

South Africa is presently responsible for about half of Africa's emissions, with 80 percent of its estimated 400 million metric tonnes of CO2 coming from the energy sector alone.

Africa is expected to be disproportionately affected by climate change, with a global rise of two degrees Celsius - the acknowledged worldwide target - resulting in a possible four to five degree rise in many parts of the continent. Changes in temperature, quantity and distribution of rainfall have enormous implications for farming, compounded by weak infrastructure and the vulnerability of impoverished populations.

But going into negotiations at the U.N. Climate Conference in Cancún, it is likely that South Africa will align itself with other big developing economies, advocating an approach that prioritises poverty alleviation over any binding commitment to reducing emissions.

Ahead of the last 15th Conference of Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in Denmark in December 2010, South Africa announced a voluntary commitment to reduce emissions by 34 percent below "business as usual" levels by 2020. This reduction is, however, conditional upon international support that is not certain to materialise.

South Africa's Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, represented South Africa's

interests at the 16th U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancún, Mexico.

"We believe that it is quite important that as developing countries we also get an opportunity to allow development to happen because of poverty," Molewa says. "We need to allow space for us to actually introduce those emissions [reductions] over time, because developed countries have gone through the processes."

The country experienced rolling blackouts in 2008, severely impacting the mining and manufacturing sectors, and causing the cancellation of big energy-intensive projects. Securing an energy supply to support economic growth and reduce high levels of poverty remains uppermost for planners.

The government's second Integrated Resource Plan seeks to map out long-term energy and technology options for the South Africa, taking into consideration sustainability, security of supply, accessibility, affordability, security of supply and environmental impact.

The short-term answers are dirty: the coal-fired Medupi power station is expected to contribute 4,800 megawatts to the national electricity grid from 2012, and to emit around 26 million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year, despite employing super-critical coal technology, which is less polluting than older coal plants. The subsequent Kusile station is projected to have similar outputs on both scores.

Farmer: South Africa (Kristin Palitza/IPS)