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Report of the GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK

CANCÚN MÉXICO, NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 10, 2010



A number of us within the network retain credentials in New York, Geneva, Bangkok and other UN centers and attend conferences and PrepComs of the Committee on Sustainable Development, the UNFCCC and congresses of NGOs. We have sponsored side events such as film screenings, panels of experts, spiritual observances, and open discussions on a variety of topics and hosted tables or displays at large events. For this reason, since 2000, GEN has held consultative status with ECOSOC and the UN-DPI. Rob Wheeler will be representing GEN at the CSD meeting in May this year, and also at the 7 intersessionals and PrepComs in the run-up to the next Earth Summit, Rio+20, May 14-16, 2012, where side events are still open for scheduling.

Report to GEN re: Cancún Climate Talks

by Albert Bates, with assistance from Maria Martinez Ros

INTRODUCTION

Since the launch of GEN at the UN Habitat II conference in Istanbul in 1996, we have been

a participant in the activities of the United Nations. GEN was an early participant in the UN Habitat Best Practices

initiative and continues contacts with UNEP and

UNDP through various projects, particularly in Africa. May East has for many years

worked with UNITAR on curricula for training in municipalities. Gaia Education Associates advances these ties when working with government agencies, such as its CIFAL

trainings at Findhorn (<http://www.cifalfindhorn.org/>).



While the budget for this work is small, funded often through volunteer efforts or paid by participants themselves, the impacts are substantial. They are also reciprocal. GEN's "positive vision" of a human planetary footprint in balance with the needs of Gaia — a vision that is joyful, practical and immediate — has pushed the discussion away from negative views (*ie.*: "lifestyle is not negotiable" or "we'll get to 1200 ppm and then we'll have geoengineering") and academic marginalization ("such a built environment may be feasible some day") and towards a more positive, proactive, hands-on approach. GEN provides answers to a broad spectrum of development issues, from water and energy to rural capacity-building and economic self-reliance. The recent move by the government of Senegal to bring ecovillages under ministerial auspices and set ambitious development goals is one strong indication of our success. (www.afriqueavenir.org/en/2010/08/19/senegal-launch-eco-village-project-to-reduce-greenhouse-gases/).

Reciprocity also means benefits that accrue to GEN for its UN work. Beyond mere recognition in the community of non-governmental organizations for both its accomplishments and its hopeful message, GEN stays informed. By interaction with the entire spectrum of governments, NGOs and inter-governmental agencies, GEN delegates become wiser about the direction we are going as a planet and some of the forces that are shaping that trajectory. We can adapt our own ecovillage and networking strategies accordingly. We become better able to slowly and persistently bend the direction of international negotiations and support toward a more positive outcome than otherwise might be considered possible. This was one of the more important contributions from GEN in both COP-15 in Copenhagen and COP-16 in Cancún.

The Team

For COP-16, Giovanni Ciarlo, as Organization Contact Person ("OCP" in UN parlance) sent out notices to potential participants and pre-registered all of GEN's delegates, meeting each deadline in a timely fashion. When the event began on November 29, on-site registration went uniformly smoothly, thanks to the work of Giovanni.



On August 15, Giovanni sent to the GEN UN listserv this message:

One way that GEN can be present in the conversation is by declaring a clear and common position regarding sustainable settlements and climate mitigation. Ecovillages around the world have much to contribute to the lifestyle and technological changes needed in order to reduce CO₂ and other GHG emissions on the village level. But we are not communicating enough of what Ecovillages do and can do about this most important issue of our times. Do you have something to contribute? Have you written on this subject?

GEN's new web site www.ecovillage.org offers us the opportunity to communicate to others what GEN's position is regarding climate change, and the way forward towards a more sustainable society. We are developing an entire page dedicated to our UN's activities and how GEN can engage with other NGOs in a common front on climate and justice.

I would like to invite all of you to send in ideas, articles, publications, and other informative resources identified with ecovillages to post on our web site leading up to Cancún. And please answer this question: do you think it would be useful for those attending the Cancún events to have a GEN flier to pass out? and if so, what would you like to see on such a flier? The GEN board could then use some of its limited resources to design and print a flier that represents our views, and informs people of the kind of things ecovillages can do to contribute to the global effort of mitigating GHG emissions into the fragile atmosphere of our home planet.

I hope we can coordinate our efforts on this important issue and let governments and civil society know that ecovillages are engaged and proactive about finding sustainable solutions to human settlements that foster peace, justice, resilience, and endurance for future generations.

From that solicitation came a good discussion that produced an excellent flyer that went out to all the various venues at COP-16.

Myself, Elliott Saxby, Aili Pyhala, Maria Martinez Ros and Hector Reyes were the credentialed delegates for GEN. We also had support from Rob Wheeler and Nicolas Metro, who were separately credentialed, and from Ane Mari Aakernes, Paddi Isis Amore, Ravenel Bisby and Daniel Trigo, who were uncredentialed. I was designated GEN Head of Delegation ("HoD") in Cancún. Because I had experience in this role from the second week of COP-15 a year earlier, I was

prepared to obtain special passes as needed, or otherwise help with any rough patches that might come up. Because of the low turnout for COP-16, special passes were unnecessary and we had only one minor glitch when, after the first week, Hector Reyes' badge expired. UN credentials authorities asked to speak only with the OCP, but I was able to persuade them that as HoD I had the authority to switch representatives and so that was accomplished, with Hector taking Marti Mueller's intended place in the second week.

When Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Peoples Network lost his credential because of his inadvertent role in an unauthorized protest march at the Moon Palace, I volunteered to bring him back in on a GEN credential (using Aili's since she had left). As it turned out, he didn't need it because the UN restored his IPN credential.



Maria and I also arranged for GEN to provide two side events at Klimaforum. That was a more appropriate venue for our type of contribution than the Cancún Messe, where side events were more narrowly focused on elements of the negotiating tracks for Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen Accord and Long-Term Cooperative Action.

The Venues

In the week before the opening of the COP, Hector, Maria and I drove past the Cancún Messe, an expo center on the South edge of Cancún. Already it was ringed by high fences, tanks and machine guns. Saturday, the first day when NGOs could register, we went 2 hours early, expecting long lines, and were allowed to proceed directly to registration, which was already open, with no lines at all.

Cancún Messe was divided between two large buildings, each with numerous meeting rooms and exhibit stands, joined by a food court. The entry to the Moon Palace resort, principal negotiating venue, was

through the Cancún Messe and then to secure buses, so all delegates not living at the Moon Palace (where rooms ranged from \$250 to \$700 per night) had to pass that way. While we placed some of the GEN brochures and *Creative Living* magazines from Copenhagen in the Moon Palace, particularly in the Press Conference rooms, the majority was dispersed on tables outside or inside meeting rooms at Cancún Messe, where they received the greatest exposure. Any remaining after the COP were distributed by Maria and Hector to hotels and restaurants as free handouts. Some were taken with them afterwards to Mexico City, where they were set out in popular locations.

The Moon Palace was itself very spread out, with several large buildings for side meetings and plenaries, and a distant conference center devoted entirely to the press corps, yet another bus ride away.

Klimaforum-10

From the Messe one can drive 30 minutes to reach the site of the Klimaforum. There was no shuttle bus. There were no signs along the way. If you are not someone local or have been there before, it can be hard to find. You drive south on the coast road from Cancún towards Puerto Morelos and then take an unmarked turn into the jungle. The signs for resort hotels like Jolie Jungle and Selvatica are really the only clues. Eventually you reach the El Rey Polo Club, very poorly marked, and turn off into a gated community, pass through the iron gates and proceed to the polo field and clubhouse, about half a kilometer farther into the jungle.

We first went to Klimaforum 3 days before the COP and the place was deserted. Nothing had been constructed but there were plans for a stage, tents, toilets, showers, etc. A dozen or so people were there as volunteers and were camping. I agreed to give a short talk at the inauguration ceremony with Tom Goldtooth, but when the time came, there was no audience so Tom and an elder from Bolivia gave a few remarks in a circle of the volunteers and that was the opening.



La Caravana Arcoiris had offered to come set up an "Ecoaldea Global" at Klimaforum, but had instead put their tremendous energy and skills into the bioregional Consejo de Visiones two weeks earlier and by the time of the COP had neither money nor great interest. A few members of the group from Huehucoytl and Gaia

University did come to Cancún and visit the Klimaforum, but seeing that nothing was happening there, left for the beach. It was just as well they did not go to the expense of bringing their large tent and equipment to Cancún, because none of that was needed. The Klimaforum had plenty of tents and chairs unoccupied every day and sound equipment that went unused.



The GEN presentations each Wednesday, with perhaps a dozen people in the audience, were among the largest Klimaforum gatherings all week.

There was also a last minute venue set up by corporations like Hewlett Packard and Coca Cola and the Mexican government as a counterpoint to Klimaforum, called Villa Cambio Climatica. There was a free shuttle service (involving three bus changes from either downtown or the Moon Palace). The sponsors paid for large art exhibits, a film festival, and numerous musical performances by some of the biggest names in Latin American music. It was all free, and close to Cancún, with lots of parking space, and also very poorly attended. Nobody knew about it. With a few exceptions, the biggest names in Mexican music found themselves singing to empty seats.

Another venue, “Villa Campesina,” was put 20 km down the road in Puerto Morelos. Unlike Villa Cambio Climatica, there was no free bus there. It was for the discontents, such as indigenous peoples, poor farmers, and landless movements, and the Mexican government went to pains to Klimaforumize it.

Other venues included a large resort near Playa del Carmen where the Communications Forum was held, and a large resort in the Hotel Zone of Cancún where Agriculture Day and Forestry Day were held. Buses from the Cancún Messe and various hotels were used to access these. Trips ran from 30 to 90 minutes each way.

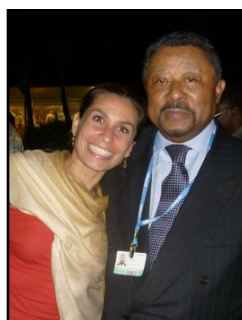
It was immediately apparent to the small GEN delegation that because of the distances between venues, typically involving many bus connections, and what was being offered at each, that our efforts would be best concentrated at



Cancún Messe and the Moon Palace.

The Copenhagen books that Hildur Jackson produced were held in customs but Maria managed to hire a customs agent and get them released, so we put those out at nearly all the different venues, along with the GEN flyers brought by Aili. GEN’s side events at Klimaforum were fantastic panel presentations, really remarkable in their breadth and depth, but poorly attended. Our primary contributions were in contacts we made and questions we asked at the various other meetings, and in what we ourselves gained from this exposure.

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So, for instance, Maria made several important contacts with high-level officials in the Mexican government and natural environment and development agencies that should help Ecoaldea Gratiud, the Latin American Permaculture Network, and ENA. Aili, Rob Wheeler, Nicolas Metro and other members of our delegation made similarly productive use

of the opportunities provided.

The GEN Side Events

It is a pity that the side events we hosted at the Klimaforum were neither attended by a larger audience nor recorded, because they were remarkable events and quite distinguishable and a notch above anything else we attended in the entire two weeks, apart from the final plenary.

At the first event, held in the large tent to an audience of about 6 to 8 people, we had a panel of GEN including myself, Elliott Saxby, Aili Pyhala, Maria Martinez Ros and Hector Reyes. We dispensed with the planned slide shows of ecovillages around the world and just had an extended interaction with the audience. Maria began with a guided meditation, followed by a “think-and-listen” pairing of participants, and then a review of impressions. I provided a brief historical and organizational background on ENA and GEN, Aili and Elliott discussed GEN-Next, Hector described the view of a newcomer to the movement, and we mentioned the recent announcements by Senegal to create a Department of Ecovillages, appoint a Minister, and build

10,000 ecovillages, and of recent interest by Ghana and Cameroon in following this same path. Ane Mari Aakernes and Rob Wheeler provided support from the audience, alternatively asking and answering questions.

At the second event a week later, we moved into a smaller tent and again set up a panel of GEN including myself, Maria Martinez Ros, Hector Reyes and Nicolas Metro. Ravenel Bisby of Gaia University and Daniel Trigo of Guayabé were additional resource people in the audience. This time the audience was bit larger, perhaps 12-15 people. We again began with a guided meditation, a “think-and-listen,” and a brief historical and organizational overview, followed by extended Q&A. Nicolas Metro of Trees and Life described his work with GEN-Senegal, taking a proposal that UNDP/GEF was on the verge of discarding and performing the serious work of pre-



proposal research and a feasibility study to turn it into a successful GEF-funded plan to engage 3 traditional Senegalese villages in tree nursery enterprises that will effectively transform them

into the first model African ecovillages.

While it is unfortunate that these side events were so poorly attended, that seemed symptomatic more of the marginalization of all events outside of the direct control of the UN or Mexican government than of the quality of the events or the talent brought to bear.

Klimaforum was impossibly difficult to get to and once there, had little to offer to keep anyone lingering on site.

The Negotiations

India put out its energy intensity reduction target and a national action plan on climate change. China went aggressive in building a renewable energy portfolio. Brazil went on to cut its rates of deforestation. All this was done without any matching commitments from the US. The US continued to commission and build coal-based power stations and increase its gas-guzzling vehicle fleet.

— Sunita Narain, “The endgame at Cancún,” Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi

While it has been widely acknowledged that the Cancún Agreements are as good or better than might have been expected after the debacle in Copenhagen, it is also universally noted that they do almost nothing to slow the march towards the climate precipice, and that physics and chemistry cut no slack in this regard. A legally enforceable climate treaty seems as distant now as it was at the first COP in Berlin in 1995. Many observers feel that Cancún accomplished virtually nothing.

My own views towards the result are more charitable, and I think I should spend a few paragraphs explaining why.

Last year, even though over a hundred world leaders arrived in Denmark to forge a deal, the Copenhagen Accord is generally regarded as a failure. Rammed through at the 13th hour with a lack of transparency or trust, marginalizing civil society and scientists alike, the Copenhagen Accord gutted the mandatory Kyoto process in favor of a weak, voluntary pledge system and dubious funding.

In the run-up to Cancún, the UNEP released a devastating report showing that even if the pledges made in Copenhagen were fulfilled (and they have not been), there would be a “gigatonne gap” that condemned the climate to unacceptable warming by mid-century and risked runaway effects that could not be recovered from.

Nonetheless, for the first 13 days of COP-16, negotiations ground on slowly. Japan reiterated what it had said months earlier, that the Kyoto Protocol was a failure and should not be extended. Russia, Canada, Australia and other large players shared that opinion. On the other side, small developing nations said that either Kyoto would be given an extension or they would see no reason to stay at the table.



Several parties, including China and the US, began walking back their Copenhagen commitments. A US side event to talk about targets for gas-mileage, lighting and appliance standards, coal power reductions, and other initiatives was almost too pitiful to listen to. Stronger measures were implemented by the Carter Administration, 35 years ago.

A major rift was thus revealed between the developing countries, who maintained that they should not be bound — and under the Kyoto formula would not be

bound — to emissions reductions, and the developed countries, who would rather *not* have a firm goal than make excuses about why they couldn't get it done in these hard economic times.

One of the members of the Indian delegation said the atmosphere has about 300 gigatonnes of carbon (GtC) space available between 2010 and 2050. The question therefore is how to equitably distribute this allocation. If you base the ration on current levels, you lock all participants into their respective degrees of development, he said. That is not acceptable to the developing world. So the question is, how do you split the pie?

Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh convened a meeting to discuss “equitable access to the world’s carbon space.” Speakers from countries such as China and Malaysia made the case for an agreement that recognizes that most industrial countries have already used up their rightful share of the world’s carbon budget — and that therefore all future emissions should be allocated solely to developing countries. Additionally, India calculated that industrial countries owe developing countries between \$4 trillion and \$40 trillion in “climate reparations” over the next 40 years.

Setting aside that the G20 would likely never agree to this kind of formulation, it is really questionable whether this “pie” could be called an accurate view of atmospheric chemistry. Fossil fuels are currently responsible for about 6.4 GtC of emissions of all kinds each year, and the effect that 6.4 GtC has on the atmosphere is to overwhelm it with carbon, resulting in a 2 ppmv annual increase in CO₂ equivalent GHG concentrations.

We have already supersaturated the oceans, causing a disastrous acidification and threatening the entire marine food chain. We need to walk the atmosphere back to 350 ppm, or below, and to stop overloading both atmosphere and ocean. To do this we need to not merely not emit the 300 GtC referred to, we need to sequester that much, or more, in soils, plants and forests to take carbon out of the air and water parts of the cycle. Preferably we would

sequester it in recalcitrant forms, like biochar, or long-term stocks, like old-growth forests, rather than short term, labile forms like maize for animals or biofuels.



As if these problems were not already insurmountable, the emerging Latin economies, “ALBA,” opposed almost all parts of the Long-term Cooperative Action (LCA) track and threatened to blow up any compromise deal using the UNFCCC’s consensus rule unless their demands were met. Among their demands:

- that the climate fund come only from general revenue sources (taxes imposed on the public) from developed countries (Annex I) — you know, those tubbies slurping slurpies in Wall-E.
- that it be set at 1.5 percent of GDP from these countries, more than most now spend on all foreign aid combined.
- a ban on using market mechanisms — offsets and carbon pricing — to leverage funding for resource protection and reforestation programs. No “guilt” tree-planting! Stop flying!
- that the target for reductions be lowered to 1 degree of warming — slightly more than a tenth of a degree from where we now stand (bearing in mind that where we now stand is the result of human activities up to about the 1980s, and we have yet to feel the impact of what we did for the last 25 years).
- a climate justice court, to prosecute historical climate criminals and the big polluters.
- that the overall agreement acknowledge “rights for Mother Nature.”



The US position was even more ambiguous than in Copenhagen, if that is possible. It still pledged only the weakest of reductions in its emissions and sent no members of the Obama cabinet to attend. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was doubtless chagrined by Wikileaks revelations that she had ordered inside-the-UN spying, including taking DNA samples on high-level Security Council delegates, and that the Obama Administration had bribed, extorted and blackmailed countries like the

Maldives, Ecuador and Saudi Arabia to change their positions on the Copenhagen Accord (research that was

brought out after prompting to *The Guardian* by myself during the first few days of the conference). At the same time, the US seemed to have found détente with China on the MRV issue through a process of technology transfer. Confronted by a newly elected Congress openly hostile to the very idea of climate change, the US did not want a treaty, but it did want something to keep the process alive.

President Correa of Ecuador was asked by Amy Goodman of *DemocracyNow!* if he could confirm the \$2.5 million bribe Ecuador was offered by Obama and whether he thought his refusal to take it was a cause of the failed coup attempt on his government earlier this year. President Correa said that indeed Ecuador had refused the \$2.5 million, but that it would offer the US \$5 million if it would ratify the Kyoto Protocol. As for the coup, Correa did not implicate Obama, but he said he would not go so far as to vindicate rogue elements of the US government held over from the previous administration.

We have never been especially fond of Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa, its true. In the course of the first two weeks of December, however, our opinion reversed. Before the Cancún Summit we saw him as a Bush toadie who ascended to power over the populist candidate and rightful president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador through a Diebold-rigged election.

But, during the Summit, we watched slack-jawed as he opened the doors to civil society and welcomed all to attend the discussions. He held stakeholder sessions to listen to the views of science, development organizations working in the field, the media, indigenous rights groups, religious groups, and sub-governmental agencies. Everyone had access. Guayaberas replaced suits; “tú” replaced “usted” or “Excellency;” his casa was our casa.

In Copenhagen we had been forced to stand in blowing snow for hours to get daily passes only to find the doors to meeting rooms blocked by plainclothes security with earbuds and bulging armpits. In Cancún, if you jumped through a few months of hoops to get credentialled, or had a Giovanni Ciarlo, you could observe almost any meeting, and in many of them you were offered the microphone and translator services, if you needed to speak. Contrary to the chants of the

protestors, the UN did not silence civil society.

The effect this had was to bring in out-of-the-box thinking that was the only possible way to break through the numerous loggerheads.



Peter Wood of Australian National University told delegates in one meeting that the impasse boiled down to how nations deal with the free rider incentive. No-one wants to jeopardize their economy by being the first to act, or by acting alone. But, Wood said, “Some game theory mechanisms based on countries either matching each others’

commitments or subsidizing each others’ reductions have game theory solutions: fully cooperative outcomes.”

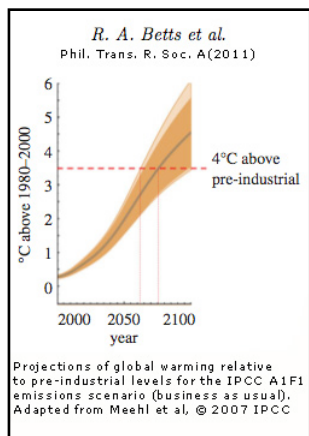


In a recent analysis published in *Foreign Affairs* and reviewed in *Scientific American* on-line, (<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=game-theorist-predicts-failure-at-climate-talks>), Prof. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita of NYU argues that political leaders will, by and large, act on what keeps them in power or helps them to get re-elected, not that which protects the planet. Even promising their constituents light economic pain now for understood benefits years into the future isn’t a winning formula.



“One way that it could work is to link cooperation on climate change with cooperation on other issues, such as trade,” argued Wood. “If a country introduces a carbon price, it may also want to introduce a ‘border tax adjustment’ that levies a carbon price on emissions-

intensive imported goods.” That is also a strategy championed by James Hansen following a recent trip to China. According to Hansen, China may find economic advantage in going carbon-negative and could, under the rules of the WTO, impose import tariffs on countries like Australia, the US and Canada that were less environmentally responsible.



However, what game theorists failed to take into account was the latest findings in cognitive neuroscience. Not coincidentally, that is precisely the kind of knowledge that permaculturists, transition towns affiliates and the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) brought to the discussion.

Research by behavioralists Felix Warneken and Michael Tomasello indicates that toddlers as young as 18 months instinctively behave altruistically. When we contemplate violence done to others we activate the same regions in our brains that fire up when mothers gaze at their children. Caring for strangers is in-bred. When we help others, pleasure centers in our brains light up like Christmas trees. There is no self-other. We are our brothers' keepers.

Most game theorists begin with the assumption that humans are hardwired to be aggressive and selfish, and politicians seek only self-interest. Ecovillagers and Transition Towners know from actual experience that people not only can behave well and nobly, but can take deep pleasure in doing so, a pleasure so intense it suggests that an unspoken, unmet appetite for fulfilling work and sharing community lies just below the surface of our collective angst.

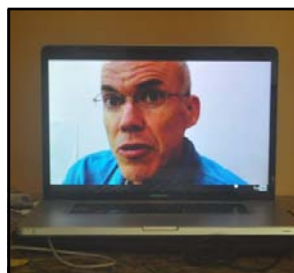
Some of us even yearn for quick collapse, to get past the inevitable and back to a recognition of *communitas*. Civilizational collapse is not always as bad as it is made out to be. Ask the Maya.

At the Communications Forum we learned that 64% of the delegates believed the unwillingness to risk economic or political damage at home was the greatest barrier to reaching agreement. Only 20% think it is due to skepticism of



the science. Of those representing industrial countries, 69% were unwilling to jeopardize continued economic growth; 59% in developing countries.

As many of the submissions from civil society made clear, however, excellent studies in various countries and regions already show profitable means to achieve 40% aggregate reductions from 1990 levels for 2020. Some groups, like Climate Action Network, Centre for Alternative Technology and European Climate Foundation, have shown how we can transition to a zero carbon economy for developed countries by 2050 or even 2030. Dubious technologies like clean coal and nuclear can be pursued by countries inviting their own financial ruin, but most will likely choose to adopt renewables targets like China's. China's carbon goal, without precondition of treaty or reciprocity by others, is 15% primary energy from solar/renewables by 2020 and an increase in forest cover by 150,000 square miles.



A declaration signed by 150,000 Chinese “members of the public” endorsed that national commitment, even though it recognized that cutting GHG by 40-45% of 2005 levels by 2020 would entail real changes in lifestyle options. Note however that China's pledge is -40-45% per unit of GDP. That “per unit of

GDP” rider is a significant qualifier since China's GDP grows 8-10% annually. If the math seems a bit opaque, that is no accident.

South Korea's *Green Growth Initiative* (<http://greengrowth.org>) is groundbreaking in several ways: it has broad bipartisan and public support, it is being implemented with detailed and forceful legislation; and despite early opposition from energy-intensive sectors such as steel and cement, it has been embraced by mainstream industry. Firms like Hyundai and Samsung have implemented their own “green growth” strategies, including entering into new business areas such as solar energy, wind power, electric vehicles, and zero-emission factories.

Most impressive about South Korea's initiative is the “just-do-it” philosophy that drives it. The country's leaders are frustrated by the maddeningly slow and ideological character of the climate negotiations. They are firmly – and accurately – convinced that the global economy is no longer sustainable on its current track, and that those who choose to seize the “early mover” advantage and pioneer low-carbon, green industries will strengthen their economies and create millions of jobs. This was a repeating theme hammered in events featuring “Green Tech” displays, the CEO of WalMart and L. Hunter Lovins. We attended a Worldwatch sponsored event titled “Low-

Carbon Energy Roadmaps: Insights from Those Who Are Leading the Way,” which, while pretty lame in its ambitions and case studies, showed how being green is, as a practical matter, the only financially sound option for the degrowth economic milieu.

Other good ideas, like Ross Jackson’s idea for an international carbon board or the carbon maintenance fee concept developed by Richard Douthwaite at FEASTA were advanced through the unveiling of a cross-cutting study being tasked to the World Resources Institute by UNEP. These and other outside works, involving financial reforms, fee-bates, incentives and tariffs, and many other ideas, will now come into greater discussion in future COPs, as they are laid side-by-side and looked at in scientific, political and economic contexts.

The Outcome

Over the two week period the GEN delegation winnowed down to just three of us: myself, Maria Ros, and Hector Reyes. At times we found ourselves having to divide among venues in order to cover essential ground. Days became longer, nights shorter, and basic survival needs like sleeping, eating or showering were frequently rushed or postponed. The GEN message — that there is a better world waiting — was raised in key venues and press conferences. Still, it seemed until the final day that the outcome would be an impasse similar to Copenhagen’s.



That was the message of all the major NGOs on the final Friday morning — lower your expectations. Then we heard that no plenary

meetings would take place until evening. We planned to attend a US press conference in the afternoon, but it was cancelled. The same for a UNFCCC press conference. However, COP President Patricia Espinosa temporarily stopped the negotiating on Friday afternoon and, working with UNFCCC chair Christina Figueres of Costa Rica and LCA chair Margaret Mukahanana-Sangarwe of Zimbabwe, prepared a chair’s text which made hard choices on all points of disagreement. The proposed draft was handed out at 2 pm and a three hour break was called to absorb it. In those three hours there was a noticeable uptick in the optimism level.

The Cancún Agreements reflected serious concern for REDD leakage, the rights of indigenous peoples, the landless, local communities, and intact ecosystems and

their myriad services being supplanted with monocrop GMO plantations. The document was remarkable in its scope and inclusiveness and obviously reflected attention being paid to both the science community and the NGOs.

Within the Agreements are some remarkable passages on what we will need to do as a species to abate catastrophic climate change.



The Agreements call on the world’s largest emitters — China, the United States, the European Union, India, and Brazil — to commit to various targets and actions to reduce emissions by 2020. The distinction between industrial (Annex I) and developing (non-Annex I) countries is blurred. There is an abundance of politically-correct window dressing like repetitive references to “common but differentiated responsibilities,” but all the actors are brought in and placed under a uniform MRV regime, an independent panel of experts that will monitor and verify reports of emissions cuts and other actions.

The distinctions between “developed” and “developing” worlds, begun in Kyoto, were retained in the Cancún Agreements, although a mechanism was created that may allow some criteria to evolve that would allow migration between categories, as Brazil, India and China have done. More than 50 non-Annex I countries now have greater per capita income than the poorest of the Annex I countries, and given the finances of Ireland, Greece and Spain, that gap can only increase. Nonetheless, Cancún provides for emissions reductions by the “developed” world and only reductions from “business as usual” growth projections by the “developing” world. India’s point about there being 300 GtC reserve capacity in the atmosphere was therefore adopted, and the race to use that space is now on. This is a tragic flaw.

In our view, geographic borders have less significance than gross happiness indices. Cultural distinctions, while honored, matter less than built-environment harmonization with underlying ecosystem health. The only borders are ones of self-realization, which can be easily broken down by transfers of inspiration and empowerment. Oh, and a universal debt jubilee would also help. Well, while we’re at it, lets just scrap the whole Bretton Woods/Federal Reserve/IMF/WTO system and start over with community credit unions, local currencies and microfinance. But never mind, that’s just us.

The Agreements commit all major economies to

greenhouse gas cuts, to launch a fund to help the most vulnerable countries, and to avoid some political landmines that could have blown up the talks, namely decisions on the future of the Kyoto Protocol or climate reparations. While many important issues were “kicked down the road,” the Agreements are structured so as to beg their gaps as important questions that must be addressed as soon as possible.

What the Agreements did not do was use mandatory language, in the style of a binding treaty. It struck an advisory tone, after the style of the Copenhagen Accord. As described by some of the law professors in the Irish government’s side event on Legal Form, this may have been the Cancún Agreements’ strength and weakness, both.

Neither the international moratorium on high seas drift nets nor the Helsinki Accord to reduce nuclear weapons are legally binding treaties but both are effective because they create a review process and pressure to conform. Cancún’s form is a strength because as an advisory agreement it does not require country-by-country ratification, which would be impossible for the US and perhaps a number of other countries. It can still foster public pressure and debate, provide social learning and stimulate domestic policy adoption, without requiring ratification.

The legal form is a weakness, as is being pointed out by many critics, because it has inherently weaker obligations, no enforcement mechanisms or penalties for violations, and less invested political capital or domestic buy-in than a legally binding treaty would have.



Had Cancún failed, the UN process itself, based on multilateralism, NGO participation, science and law, could well have ended. Attention would have shifted to the G20 or the dying Empire’s latest pet, the Major Economies Forum. Backroom deals between the large industrial economies would rule the planet until collapse overtook us all.

Instead, the UN multilateral consensus process has been reinvigorated. Transparency and inclusivity have been vindicated. Robert Stavins, Director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program,

observed,

“The key role played by the Mexican leadership is consistent with the notion of Mexico as one of a small number of ‘bridging states,’ which can play particularly important roles in this process because of their credibility in the two worlds that engage in divisive debates in the United Nations: the developed world and the developing world. ...



Mexico, along with Korea, are members of the OECD, but are also non-Annex I countries under the Kyoto Protocol. This gives Mexico — and gave Minister Espinosa — a degree of credibility across the diverse constituencies in the UNFCCC that was simply not enjoyed by Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen at COP-15 last year.”

Green Climate Fund

The “Green Climate Fund” was given over to the World Bank as initial trustee (to Bolivia’s horror), but that trusteeship was placed under a 3-year sunset clause. The document says, “The trustee shall administer the assets of the Green Climate Fund only for the purpose of, and in accordance with, the relevant decisions of the Green Climate Fund Board.” The board of directors of the fund is skewed towards those most vulnerable to climate change — those whose sense of urgency is deepest felt. Of the 40 members of the board, 15 members represent developed countries and 25 members developing countries, with:

- (a) Seven members from Africa;
- (b) Seven members from Asia;
- (c) Seven members from Group of Latin American and Caribbean States;
- (d) Two members from small island developing States; and
- (e) Two members from least developed countries.

This board is empowered to replace the World Bank with a trustee of its own choosing after 2013. It is useful to remember that the World Bank itself has been evolving. Lord Nicholas Stern, the author of the UK study on the economic impacts of climate change, is now its chief economist. Former IPCC team leader and director of the UC Berkeley Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory Dan Kammen is its energy director.

The fund is not restricted to national tax revenues or UN dues but can employ a variety of revenue streams, with targets based on the Copenhagen Accord: \$30

billion fast start to 2015, and \$100 billion annually by 2020.

Daniel Caperton at the Center for American Progress notes:

“Formal discussions on this topic started in Cancun, where a proposal to put a price on the carbon emissions from international transport and shipping was included in early drafts. Some developed countries,

including the United States, opposed this idea because of legal concerns, but it should be back on the table in South Africa.

“Indeed, every single source of finance that the U.N. High Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing identified in their final report should be part of the negotiation in South Africa, including a financial transactions tax and revenue generated by a putting a price on carbon. Now that the Green Climate Fund has been built, it’s time to think about how to put money into it.”

One of the early recipients of fund largesse will be the Climate Technology Center and Network, whose goal will be to construct a global network to match technology suppliers with technology needs. Presidente Calderon pledged that México would build one of the first nodes in this network, a Caribbean Climate and Renewable Technology Center, to

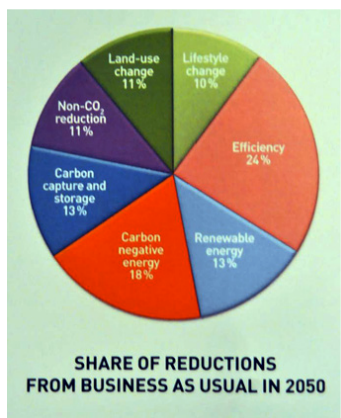
rigorously test and modify the latest breakthroughs and deploy them quickly throughout Latin America.

Some of the breakthrough technologies on display in Cancún worth a trip to Wikipedia include: Barefoot College; Energia Geo Rotational (www.energiageorotational.org); EcoTotality; Ecovative; WorldStove; Freeplay Energy; Morphosis; Solar Electric Light Fund; and some nifty oil paintings hung in on a windy balcony, rattling gently against the wall behind them, making electricity by piezoelectric current. (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/12/19/magazine/ideas2010.html#Turbine-Free_Wind_Power)

Another potential revenue stream are “market-based mechanisms” such as carbon capture and storage and afforestation projects using carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In this context, there is a small attempt to address the “hot air” issues of Kyoto by offering some special recognition of Central and Eastern European countries and by conceding there are countries at the edge between developed and developing, such as Turkey and Egypt. This also opens the door for expansion of carbon trading regimes and exchanges, and the setting of a price on carbon, often seen as the only way to avoid Jevons’ Paradox when greening energy or other parts of the economy. There is much devil in future details to be worked out.

So, for instance, Bellona Foundation projected in 2009 that setting a price on carbon would create many wedges that would begin to drop atmospheric concentrations.

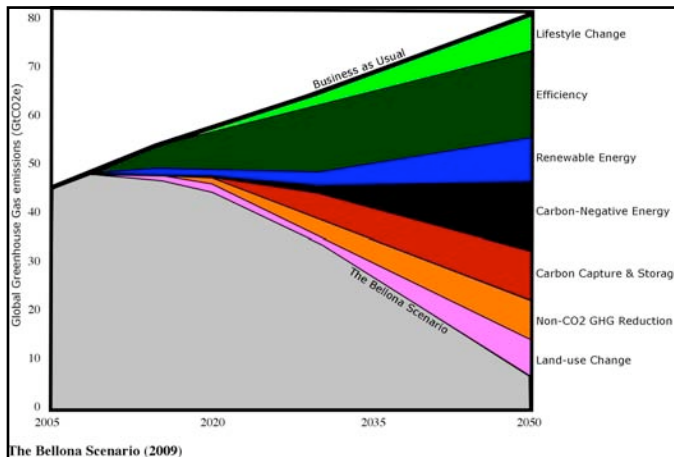
Sadly, like the IPCC’s 2007 Assessment, the Bellona Forecast failed to take account for Peak Oil. While crude oil peaked globally in 2006, substitute liquids from deep sea gas, fracking shale gas and tar sands have allowed addicts to keep getting higher, bordering on overdose, but real world energy return on



GEN Delegation Finances - COP16

Income	USD	MEX PESO*	Expense	USD	MEX PESO
Gaia Trust Grant	550	5700	Customs Storage	244	2680
Global Village Inst Grant	500	5540	Customs Agent	155	1700
Albert Bates donation	140	1582	Customs Docs	61	670
Total Income	1190	12822	Gasoline	145	1600
			Taxis & Buses	82	900
			Food & lodging (2 wks)	456	5020
* Peso exchange rates varied over 2 weeks			Supplies & Copies	47	520
Not included are out-of-pocket costs borne by GEN delegates.			Total Expense	1190	13090 *

investment (EROI) is about to alter that chemistry.



Another good example put forward through side events was that of Germany's climate and energy policy framework consisting of eco-taxes, feed-in tariffs, an emissions trading scheme (ETS), and other measures to drive production of renewables and increase efficiency. Germany's ETS funds both domestic renewables projects and aid projects through its International Climate Initiative. Countries with progressive vision are starting to see a first-mover advantage in low-carbon technology regardless of climate negotiations or international carbon trading schemes.

Defining Success

Ultimately, the Cancún Agreements embraced the notion — from South Korea, Germany and other self-starters — that there is a solution to the climate problem that involves economic hope and opportunity. The Agreements set aside, for now, the gloomy vista painted by India, The South Center and ALBA — of deprivations, imposed sacrifice, and penalties for historic wrongs.

In monasteries and convents from Bhutan to Trieste, monks and nuns gathered up their robes and booked flights to the Mayan Riviera. There they met and linked arms with backyard inventors from Guatemala, bicyclists from Nova Scotia, Amazonian Indians, climate scientists, Lapland herders, political game-theorists, bloggers, tweeters, Chinese youth, Greenpeace Warriors of the Rainbow, Mariachis, Yucatecans, the poor, and the powerful. They joined in common cause. And their voices were heard.

By 3 AM on Saturday, when the final Agreements came up for a plenary vote, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and most of ALBA's opposition evaporated (the result of Calderon's skills as a diplomat) and Bolivia was left standing on "procedural irregularities" in a final attempt to derail consensus. "Consensus does not

mean giving the right of veto to one country," said the delegate from Colombia.

"Consensus does not mean unanimity," echoed COP President Patricia Espinoza. "We regret that Bolivia chose not to participate in the drafting of the document, but they cannot be permitted to block the will of all the other parties now... Of course I do note your opinion and I will be more than happy to make sure it is reflected in the records of the conference. And if there is no other opinion, this text is approved." The gavel fell. The cheers erupted. Cancún was a done deal.

We are in the final throws of the collapse of the Industrial Empire, which began at about the turn of the 20th Century and will conclude, probably with the same abruptness as experienced in the former Soviet Union, some time soon. That event is a minor blip in history, however. What drew young and old, weak and strong to Cancún was the end of history, as Bill McKibben put it, 20 years ago.

Humans as a species may be slow to change, and much of our genetic heritage works to slow our recognition of intangible threats, but in Cancún a big shift in our awareness could be felt. Governments that had hemmed and hawed, thrown up obstructions and excuses, and denied that any alternative to business as usual was even possible, were seen coming to grips with the existential issues of the day. Whether shocked by cascading weather events, embarrassed by the Copenhagen debacle or enticed by the green economy, they stood together at the final dawn and applauded a change in direction.



It was exhilarating. Intoxicating. Transcendent. Naked apes as a species had stared into the abyss and said, as newly sentient beings, with global awareness, "Whoa, dude, don't want to go there!" or vocal-chord-vibrating grunts to that effect, and had decided to actually do something different. Something radically different. Already science had come together with something exponentially more difficult than the moon shot and had found consensus. Now world diplomats, finally, did the same.

While a legal treaty might have been better, it more likely would have been worse. Politicians are neither

scientists nor diplomats. In many ways they are an order lower on the evolutionary chain from members of the general public, who seem to be better read. No binding climate treaty is likely to pass the US Senate, which, when fully in the hands of the Democratic Party was unable to pass a weak, watered-down carbon credits bill. Even if it were ratified by enough countries to go into effect, the result could well be like Kyoto — failed efforts to meet pledges by most, and economic penalties accruing to those who performed with honor.

Without the legal form now, the route to emissions reductions becomes a private competition. Those who develop and deploy the technology first (and can stay ahead of the crashing fireball and toxic dust cloud of the American Industrial Empire) will be the big winners. Greening your economy means staying in the game. Brown loses and is ejected. This is not a bad outcome.

What the Cancún Agreements did was set up and fund the arena, hand out uniforms, and lay down some beginning rules for fair play. Durban, Seoul and later

contests on the UNFCCC circuit will refine those rules after seeing them in practice. It is clear that some of the players don't yet get this, and are still stuck in older dialectics. Too bad for them. They will be slow off the bench and will probably eat a lot of dust before they find themselves playing catch up.



In Cancún, on the final day, what seemed at first another impasse suddenly broke open with some astonishing and foresightful developments. Quite the opposite of another Copenhagen and more akin to what happened to the World Trade

Organization when they met here many years ago, Cancún showed the power of small, rhizomal networks to bend the arc of history.

Speaking on behalf of the entire GEN delegation, we were privileged to participate.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert Bates
December 24, 2010



*Thank you for
this opportunity
to represent you!*