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Lord Stern

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MEETING

Copenhagen Warms Up

The International Scientific Congress on Climate Change was held on 10–12 March at the University of Copenhagen. With around 2,000 people attending. The aim of the conference was to ‘provide a synthesis of existing and emerging scientific knowledge necessary in order to make intelligent societal decisions concerning application of mitigation and adaptation strategies in response to climate change’. The findings of the Congress are intended to be complimentary to the work of the IPCC and provide a summary of scientific climate change research since the release of the IPCC’s *4th Assessment Report on Climate Change* in 2007.

The main findings of the Congress will be presented to policy makers at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December. Six preliminary key findings have been published:

1. Recent observations confirm that the worst case IPCC scenario trajectories are being realised;
2. Recent observations show that societies are highly vulnerable to even moderate climate change;
3. Rapid, sustained and effective mitigation is required to avoid dangerous climate change;
4. A well funded, adaptation safety net is required for those least able to cope with climate change;
5. The tools to deal effectively with climate change are already available and must be vigorously and widely implemented, and
6. To address climate change, a number of significant restraints must be overcome including reducing the influence of vested interests that increase emissions and enabling the shifts from ineffective governance and weak institutions to innovative leadership in government.

The sea level session of the conference received significant media attention. Eric Rignot, Professor of Earth System Science at the University of California Irvine told the conference that new research indicates that the mean sea level could rise up to a metre above the current global average by 2100. This is well above the 59 cm predicted in the IPCC’s worst case scenario.

The impact of sea level rises will have serious repercussions around the world. Reuters has reported on the effect of rising sea levels in India which are already causing salt water to flow further into the Ganges River. There is a risk that increased salinity will seriously affect the river’s ecosystem and the adjacent agricultural land that relies on the river for irrigation.

A new report in the journal *Nature* analysed the effects sea level rises would have on the northeast coast of the US. This report found that the northeast may experience sea level rises up to 20cm more than the rest of the globe. The flow of the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic current have kept sea levels in this region lower than the rest of the world and, if these currents slow as predicted due to climate change, then the rise in local sea levels will be more pronounced.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on the International Scientific Congress on Climate Change, including the full text of the preliminary key findings, see the official website climatecongress.ku.dk. [Click here for information about the latest research on sea level rises.](#)

[Read the Reuters report into how sea level rises are affecting the Ganges River.](#)

[Read the abstract of the report on sea level rises in the northeast of the United States here.](#)

REDUCING *Emissions* & REVIVING *The Economy*

Governments around the world are spending billions of dollars to stimulate their economies and drive recovery. Many countries have chosen to invest large sums on green investments including renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transport. Lord Stern has recently undertaken a thorough assessment of various ‘green’ fiscal measures. He and his co-authors argue that now is the time to be spending money on green measures such as energy efficiency and low carbon technology. The paper estimates that \$400 billion over the next 18 months should go to green policies and investments in order to help deal with the current economic crisis, create jobs and reduce emissions. The paper ranks 23 different green fiscal measures.

The *Financial Times* has produced an informative interactive graphic which compares different countries’ stimulus packages based on the percentage of spending dedicated to ‘green’ measures. The *FT* defines green measures as money spent on public and mass transport systems, low-carbon energy technologies, efficiency in buildings and households and green jobs. While the United States’ \$972 billion spending plan is the largest plan of any country, only 12% or \$112.3bn of the plan is dedicated to green spending. China has committed a larger amount to green measures, setting aside \$221bn of its \$586bn plan. 81% of South Korea’s \$38bn stimulus package has been dedicated to green measures, the largest percentage of any of the countries examined in the *FT* report.



WANT TO KNOW MORE? Download Lord Stern’s paper ‘An outline of the case for a ‘green’ stimulus’.

A 60% cut in emissions by 2050 will have 'little or no impact' on national employment but would require a massive mobilisation.

Allen Consulting

Politics



Shining Light in the Smart Sunshine State

REDUCING EMISSIONS WITH A SINGLE ACTION

At her policy launch, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh announced that, if re-elected, her Government would more than double the number of solar water heaters in the State. Replacing electric water heaters with solar is one of the biggest single emissions reductions a household can make. There are currently over 4 million resistance electric water heaters being used in homes around Australia.

Kinesis has calculated the emissions savings that could be achieved if Australia phased out the sale of all new residential electric water heaters with solar gas boosted water heaters. Water heaters have an approximately 10 year life cycle—if no new electric water heaters were sold from 2010 all homes currently using electric water heaters would need to replace these with solar gas-boosted by 2020. This single piece of comparatively simple policy, focused on one activity; residential water heating, could potentially reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 2.3% of total 2000 level emissions by 2020—an annual saving of over 12 million tonnes of CO₂.

POLICY WATCH

Federal Government Releases Draft CPRS Legislation

On 10 March, the Federal Government released its exposure draft Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) legislation. This represents a major step towards the establishment of a mandatory national emissions trading scheme in Australia. The draft legislation does not differ significantly from the White Paper which was released in December 2008 and the target date for start of the scheme remains July 2010. The emissions reduction targets of 5–15% by 2020 and 60% by 2050 from 2000 levels remain unchanged. The final scheme caps will be announced in early 2010 following the UN Climate Change Conference which will be held in December 2009 in Copenhagen.

Recent debate on climate policy has been dominated by discussion of the effectiveness and impact of the CPRS. There has been much debate on the effect of a price on carbon on jobs and on the economy.

A 2004 paper by Brian Copeland from the University of British Columbia and M. Scott Taylor from the University of Wisconsin found that, while environmental policies can have some impact on the location of pollution intensive trade and production, there is little evidence of major relocations of companies to so called 'pollution havens' — countries with less stringent environmental regulations.

More recently, a report by the CSIRO and the Allen Consulting Group published in June 2008 found that achieving a 60% cut

in emissions by 2050 will have 'little or no impact' on national employment. However it would 'require a massive mobilisation of skills and training—both to equip new workers and to enable appropriate changes in practices by the three million workers already employed in key sectors influencing our environmental footprint'.

Kinesis Director, Nick Rowley appeared on ABC Radio National's Late Night Live in February with Richard Denniss, Executive Director of the Australia Institute to discuss the CPRS and the key issues surrounding Australia's domestic climate change policy. Podcast available at iTunes or ABC Radio National.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

To download a copy of the draft CPRS legislation go to www.climatechange.gov.au/emissionstrading/legislation/index.html

To read the full CSIRO report go to: www.dsf.org.au/papers/204.htm



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