



Viewpoint

A Viewpoint on COP 15: Dispatches from Copenhagen

Million Belay, MELCA, Ethiopia

Editor's Note

These dispatches from Copenhagen were received from Million Belay, director of an environmental non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Ethiopia called MELCA. Million is a well-known environmental activist and educator in Africa, with long-standing contributions to conservation in Africa. He is currently completing a PhD on biocultural diversity, community learning and agency. Since this edition of the SAJEE takes its theme as 'Environmental Education in the Year of COP 15', I thought it would be of interest to EEASA members if we published some of the 'coalface' experiences of a respected environmental education researcher and activist who attended KlimaForum09 (the main civil society gathering at COP 15).

The dispatches cover 10 days' participation at COP 15 and are collected here as Copenhagen 1–10. They give insight into the range and complexity of the issues being discussed, the socio-politics of the time and how participation happens in such events. For education, it is perhaps salient to develop a deeper understanding of the social processes that shape how and what we educate about (e.g. climate change issues, REDD) and Million leaves us with some profound questions to ponder.

Copenhagen 1 (6 December 2009)

Hi folks,

Arrived at Copenhagen after a long and sleepless flight. I hate flying. It drains my energy for the second day. I can't do also any work in the plane. I am wondering how people who fly a lot also write copiously, as Vandana Shiva does.

The KlimaForum members waited for me at the airport. I was expecting a lot of girls with smiling faces to be at the airport waiting for participants as it is done in other countries. They were there but the person was waiting for me was an older guy with a lovely smile and kind words. He gave me a map and showed me where to go. The map shows that a river cuts through the city and the airport is at the other side of the river. People go the extra mile to be nice to delegates. One middle-aged man took me right into the train at the next station. The whole population must have decided to create a good impression on the participants. I saw a lot of couples with children on my way to the flat that African Biodiversity Network (ABN) has rented. Having heard that population growth in Europe is very low, that was a surprise. Teresa and Anne met me at the house on arrival. A family had left a three-bedroom flat for us.

Teresa showed me the note that the owner of the house left for us. It read 'We hope you will enjoy your stay here and hopefully you and the rest of the COP 15 participants will make great difference for the climate and the future of the world.' For a moment I thought, 'Wow! How nice!' Then I thought, 'How complex.' Saving the future of the world (he he he).

We went for the registration late afternoon and had to queue up for ages to do so. So many people. *The saviours of the world*. I don't remember queuing up for such a long time. The first part was outside and it was so cold. Anyway we saw some old faces. I hated to see some of them. I find them at every meeting I go to and it seems that they live for it. Some are really devoted and make us see the holes in the negotiations but most, at least for me, are just hordes of people who just go to be there. Sorry! Where do I belong???

We also learned that the Danish government has prepared prisons and some cells, about 350 of them, for people who may disrupt the meeting for one reason or another. Well if you are found on the wrong side of the street today, you might end up in one of the cubicles.

Well I will leave you with a statement from Martin Khor about the negotiation. 'Despite last week's announcements by the US and Chinese Presidents, the prospects are not so bright that Copenhagen will "seal the final deal"'. Hopefully the Conference can agree to a framework and basis of an eventual deal in 2010 that is both fair and effective.'

Talk to you tomorrow!

Million

Copenhagen 2: 7 December 2009

Hi hi,

It was still dark when we got up in the morning. It was the day of the opening and I was expecting flying tomatoes and rotten eggs at the conference centre, as there was a talk of violent demonstrations, but it was a bit noisy but peaceful. Somebody slammed a paper on my chest and I grabbed it in astonishment. He did not even look at me. I read the paper later and it basically says that climate change is a hoax and it is a scandalous conspiracy by the industry to siphon off money from Northern People to the fund industry to their benefit through mechanisms like carbon trading while millions of people are jobless. They cite the story about the East Anglia University as evidence that the whole thing is a conspiracy between the scientists and the corporations. Well what do you say to that? I think probably in response to this a lot of scientists are coming out with new data to back the climate change story.

I went later to the KlimaForum. This is a people's forum as they say. This is how the whole set up goes. At a place called the Bella Centre politicians sit for negotiations and NGOs join them for lobbying. That is, the politicians and the high-flying business world sit for negotiations. Somewhere in the centre of Copenhagen is a music festival every evening. This is near the City Hall. I was there last night and the setting and the music is really great. Some 300 metres to the right is the KlimaForum. This is where most of the radical NGOs, indigenous peoples and local communities gather together to network, learn and voice their concerns. The idea behind all

this is that the Bella Centre process will not address the issues of the majority of people. This is also where, I was told, new and sustainable values and principles are shared. I asked one of the coordinators how the two processes, the Klima and the Bella, are connected. He said through declarations and focused lobbying through some NGOs, which have a good rapport with the government officials at the Bella.

The Bella Centre – good heavens! It is so huge. A sea of faces of all colours and kinds. This is the first day and a lot of people will be arriving in the coming two to three days and will add to the confusion. I met an Ethiopian whose name is Mulugeta and he said ‘Hey! This is like a wedding. A lot of commotion, I do not know what to do! Welcome to negotiations. You really have to be strategic and, if it is your first time, you need to give at least three days to get your bearings’. He also told me that there is a European plan (he called it a ‘conspiracy’) to give ‘fast start’ finance to developing countries. Well you might say, what is wrong with that. As an ECO publication put it, ‘We got excited by such eagerness from the industrialised countries to move down the track. But on closer look we saw that the track drops off a cliff after a few metres.’ The argument is that there is no funding now without funding later. I think the developed countries wanted to repackage aid and give it as climate funding to developing countries. This should not be a substitute for predictable, additional and adequate finance over both the short and long term.

I was wondering whether or not we can join the negotiation but it was even closed to the media. Only those selected can go. I heard 20 from the press and 20 from the TV were selected. That is out of about 5 000. The total number of people who are registered to participate is more than 30 000. I am being conservative here and I will update you later but it can be much more. Not surprised with all the media attention.

Yesterday the US Environmental Protection Agency announced that it has passed a regulation that labels greenhouse gasses as a dangerous pollutant. This was greeted with enthusiasm from many. Well, we will see if this commitment pushes the other nations to do more to make the agreement a possibility.

Teresa came late to our house as she was lobbying on technology issues. Apparently technology transfer, out of the four main issues in the negotiations (finance, adaptation, mitigation, technology), is the least controversial. But Teresa is lobbying for a proper assessment of technology to be done before it is transferred. I also joined a meeting about carbon financing and agriculture. The agreement, so powerfully expressed with all around the table including Teresa, is that there should not be carbon offsets in agricultural negotiation texts as this will open the way for industry to usurp the process and come with their Genetically Modified (GM) solutions.

Till tomorrow!

Million

Copenhagen 3: 8 December 2009

Hi all

The day was volcanic. You might have heard about the Danish proposal. I will come to it later.

'Lost and found! You have lost some carbon here on your way to Copenhagen. Please take it and put it away in trees.' That was a shout from few demonstrators at the Bella Conference centre. I was greeted with some Chinese who may have not been Chinese, since they look similar to other people in the East, saying that vegetarianism is the best for climate. 'Don't eat meat.' They were shouting. 'I love meat. Meat is delicious!' I said to them and they laughed. There were also some youths painted in all green and saying 'Be like me. Be green.' Teresa was on the point of tears remembering these boys and girls while we were having dinner. She said 'They have no idea about the seriousness of the matter. They think they have done their job by jumping and shouting "Seal the deal! Say no to climate change!"' You could have seen her face when she was saying this.

I went to the KlimaForum/The Peoples Forum around noon. There was a presentation by Anna Filipina about Reduced Emission from avoided Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and climate justice. The gist of her presentation is that deforestation contributes only 10% of green house gas emissions while using fossil fuel contributes the remaining 80-90%. So by funding and supporting REDD, companies are trying to get our attention away from fossil fuels. The two main carbon sources are from underground, so you cannot plant the entire biosphere, enter in to a REDD agreement and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG). She said REDD will increase poverty, cause conflict, privilege carbon rights over human rights, privatise forests, repeat the mistake of the Clean Development Mechanism, etc. There was a similar meeting on REDD at the end of the day and there was a presentation from Nepal, Uganda and Panama basically saying the same thing that, with the current arrangement and mechanism, REDD will be used by companies to avoid their responsibilities of mitigating greenhouse gases and will provide an incentive to governments to abuse local communities and indigenous peoples. There was also a report that areas with high biodiversity were converted to monoculture tree plantation under a REDD mechanism. There was one government official from Ethiopia who proudly supports REDD and I was looking at him sideways to see his reaction. I thought I detected a smile on his face.

There was also a presentation on climate justice. The presenter said climate is a justice issue because climate is a space/a resource and we all have a right to share this space. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility says basically 'reduce domestically and give financial support to those who were not the original polluters'. Countries are entering into carbon trading because they do not want to reduce domestically and want to pay to other countries to offset it for them. So they look for places and mechanisms for cheapest reduction. That is why they like REDD. They pay countries to keep their forest or plant new one (can be genetically modified), and calculate the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that these forests have absorbed and pay for that.

I met Professor Wangari Maathai and she said ‘Heeeeeeyyyyyy Million. Liz told me about you. You are doing great things.’ Oh what did Liz say now? You know she puts a value 10 times of what you are and gets you into trouble as people expect a Martin Luther King kind of wisdom from you. My fear was confirmed as Wangari asked ‘Million tell me, have you been following issues on agriculture? What did they say? Did they put REDD as a mechanism there?’ There you go. I replied, ‘Yes they want to put carbon offsetting as a mechanism there and that is dangerous because first there is no assurance that they will talk about small-scale or sustainable agriculture, second there is no guarantee that the farmers will get the money and third carbon offsetting as a principle is bad as it gives polluters a right to pollute.’ I was thanking Teresa for shoving some documents on my lap and for discussing this with me.

We did not continue our conversation as we heard angry shouting a little further on from us. As we approached we could see that it was Africans and there were a lot of cameras flashing and recording what was happening. I did not understand it. Later we learned that the lead negotiator of the G77 and China, Mr Lumumba from Sudan, had a meeting with African civil society. He told them, in tears, that the Danish government has produced a document and it was bad for Africa. He said that in the negotiations some developed countries are proposing only 10 billion dollars per year as financial transfer to Africa. This is bad for Africa and this is not fair. So that was the commotion. I was impressed and happy that at least Africans are doing something. I remember during the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), I was a member of the African Civil Society Network for WSSD representing Eastern Africa, when ministers, the EU president, delegates and media were clambering to meet us and hear our views and positions. I advised some of them today to invite the Danish delegates to come and explain their position.

Well folks, the political machine in the delegates meeting room is churning as I write so I will get back to you with more musings.

Cheers!
Million

Copenhagen 4: 9 December 2009

Hi there,

You will not believe this. We arrived so early this morning. Still dark and we found the ‘no meat’ people distributing their ‘no eat meat’ document. That was fine but for one thing. This time it was all in a bag. The bag was heavy and I dived into it and came up with a book. It is a hardcover book with glossy paper. It has the picture of a Chinese lady, the Supreme Master Cheing Hei, and the title is *The Dogs in my Life*. Inside there is a picture of her dog sitting on snow and a line that says ‘Doggy your bottom is cold.’ There is another one and the dog is looking straight ‘Ah doggy! Are you looking at the camera?’ Pages and pages of this kind of nonsense. Can you imagine somebody printing this rubbish on a glossy paper and distributing it to every delegate

to the climate change convention? All this paper. About 20 people distributing this day and night. It is amazing the level that some rich people can go to satisfy their egos.

I liked an idea that I saw yesterday. They have put a big sculpture of a bear made of ice in the middle of the city. People go to touch it. Their touches will obviously melt the ice as their bodies are warm. The structure that was supporting the sculpture is becoming visible now. This is to show the effect of humans on the earth. We are basically stripping of the earth of its cover with our human touch and that is the story.

Well, there is a funny thing is going on here at the Bella Centre. By the way, it is really a challenge to go from the Bella Centre to the KlimaForum. Well a lot of silly things are happening here and you know silly things have their own attractions. One funny thing is that everybody seems to hunt for one secret document or another. A day before yesterday the hunt was for the Danish document. Yesterday it was for the adaptation document. I bumped into my friend Karamajong from Uganda, and he told me with lowered voice that 'You know I got a secret document from the Europeans. It is about their deal not to give enough adaptation funds to Africa and Least Developed Countries. Can you try to get the secret document from the Africans? The Africans have started looking at the Danish document and they have produced an alternative and I am looking for it. Can you help?' I laughed inside and left him.

We had a briefing yesterday from the brilliant Salim, he is from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and originally from Bangladesh. He follows issues related to adaptation but he is conversant with the politics of climate change. He said 'If anyone tells you that he knows what is going on right now, he is lying. Dr Tewolde confirmed this with me. I met him in the middle of one of the biggest rooms and asked him "What is going on?" He stretched his hand sideways and said "I don't know!" There you go.

Well basically, as Salim has put it, the negotiators have only till Friday to bring out an agreed text. Then the ministers will come in over the weekend and work on the document and prepare it for the heads of state. I think there is a high chance that the negotiators will not finalise a document or will not agree on a single document and the ministers will be asked to produce one. There is also a big chance that the ministers will not agree either and the heads of state will have to sit and negotiate. This is history in the making. The heads of state come for heads of state things, not to go over every paragraph and fight for an is and a was. This is also an opportunity. This may give the head of state a chance to agree on a new deal negotiated among themselves. I remembered our Shumacher talk (when I visited Shumacher College earlier this year) of living on the edge of chaos. It will be interesting to take them out of their comfort zones and let them face the issues. It might be an opportunity for them to learn about climate change, understand things and appreciate the pain of their negotiating delegates and the people who are and will suffer from the impacts of climate change.

The Danish Minister's story was interesting. I think he had an idea. He went to the Asian Pacific leaders meeting and told them. They nodded their heads. He then went to the Commonwealth meeting and told them. They also nodded their heads. He thought he got their agreement and talked with US and UK, they nodded their heads. Then the Chinese got word of it and invited the Indians, the Brazilians and the South Africans to Beijing in 48 hours and have discussed the issue and called themselves the BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and

China) group and came up with a 'non-negotiable principle.' The G77 reacted strongly when he presented his idea to them. Then my good friend John Vidal of the Guardian (we spent one week together in the wilderness of South Africa) got the paper and posted it over the web. That has created hell and an embarrassment to the Danish government.

This morning Anne, Teresa and I talked about agriculture and carbon offsetting. Anne talked about GMOs, Teresa about agrofuels and land grabbing in Africa and me about ecological agriculture. I had to brush my memory of the Institute for Sustainable Development project in Tigray and talk about it. We talked about ABN's solution for climate based on facilitating community resilience, ecosystem resilience and working for ecological governance. I think it went well. There was also an excellent presentation on Biochar from Biofuel Watch.

This is a mad city in terms of cost of things. You cannot think of food less than 50 Danish kroner. That is close to 200 birr (US\$9.60) and with that money the whole staff of MELCA can have a lovely lunch. I think it is the second most expensive country in the world, next to Norway. Very friendly people though. We met an Ethiopian student here yesterday and he said 'Well they are nice but it is very difficult to get close to them. They are into themselves.' This contradicts with what one old man told one of us yesterday when we were getting out of a lovely old bar 'Well don't dress up like this. The Danish ladies here are very friendly.'

The recent publication of ECO, the magazine that goes out every day and is widely read points its finger today at the EU. It said the EU today in Brussels must get their act together and suggest a higher target and give the negotiations a much-needed boost.

The Danish people are now calling their city *Hopenahagen*. Let's hope for the best. I am rushing to a closed NGO meeting called CAN (Climate Action Network) and I hope they will not close their doors on me. Will report tomorrow.

Cheers!
Million

Copenhagen 5: 10 December 2009

Hi hi hi,

What a bad morning. I am mad this morning. I could not let it out in the meeting so I am boiling inside.

I just arrived at DR Byen, a university rented by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) for a four-day conference on climate change adaptation and development. There was an impressive list of speakers and I wanted to get hooked in to it. As I arrived a taxi stopped and huge cardboard boxes and stacks of bags were offloaded. Salim of the IIED, the climate guru that I told you about, came out and said 'Million, can you help?' What timing. So I did some real exercise in the morning. But all is not lost. I got the chance to ask Salim about what is happening and he said 'There is a bit of development. The Asians have produced a document for political commitment'. This is a breakthrough, according to Salim, because it is a legally binding document. He asked me to lobby the African governments to

support it. I asked him whether or not he saw the document and he said he did not. He might even have been an architect in drafting the document, who knows??

Then the meeting began. Four speakers were expected but only three came. Professor Wangari Maathai was there. The Danish Minister gave a politician's talk and added that the Danish government is allocating US\$240-million *additional* funding for adaptation. A business CEO for a sustainable energy company said the right words. We have to start sustainable energy companies in Africa. Wangari spoke beautifully about the relationship of components of ecosystems. She talked about how deforestation exposes the watershed and how soil erosion will affect agriculture and how the soil run off will fill hydro-electric dams and because of this power cuts will result, leading to job loss. She also talked about the drying of rivers because of exotic tree plantations and how governance is critical to all of this.

The next speech was by a professor talking about GM Crops. He said 'Adaptation is needed for Africa because it is extremely destitute and here are the solutions: GM crops.' He said Romantic environmentalists from Europe forced the European governments to refuse GM and they shot themselves in the foot. Africans copied Europeans and they shot their own heart. Because African seeds are tired and useless they need to boost the seed with GM technology. He said Public Science is not the norm in the US, and Europe should do public research and save Africa, as there is no research in Africa. What do you say to that? I was flailing my hand but I could not get the chance to speak. I would have told him that Africa has close to a billion scientists, as every farmer is a scientist. Who gave to the GM companies the seed and the germplasm in the first place? Who gave the medicinal plants to the drug companies? I would have called him a reductionist, as there is no improvement in agriculture without an ecosystem approach. What about the resilience of communities? What about them deciding on their fate, governing themselves? Who asked them? Our treatment has been what somebody called a veterinary approach. You do not ask animals about where and what they feel. You just do one or two tests and prescribe a medicine. That is what he is promoting. Well you could see how he worked me up. I think we share also part of the blame. We do not write. We do not publish. We do not stand up and say what we believe in. We do always go to Europe with a begging bowl. We trust only 20% of what our scientists say and if a European comes and tell us, we believe at least 90% of what he says. Every time we do presentations, we say only the negative things about our own countries.

What a day yesterday was. It finally got to me. I was extremely confused and mad about the whole thing. I really felt angry. Why are we all here? Somebody told me that the normal number of participants at negotiations or conventions is between 5 000 and 10 000. We are over 30 000 now. You really feel the number when you are at the Bella Centre. I tried to see for myself how people are tuned in with the issues and, believe me, it seemed as if over 90% of the people have no idea of what is happening. I mean at the political level. So why all the CO₂ that we have released on the way to here? Publications? Hundreds of books, brochures, calendars, flyers, bags, you name it! A lot of it! You can even hear the trees crying through these papers. DHL is giving a free service for the mailing of 2kg per day to the delegates. So you can ship your load using airfreight without worry.

I participated at the Climate Action Network (CAN) meeting yesterday. You need to get a CAN sticker to attend. I had my friend from Zaire and he gave me one and I got into the meeting. There were about 150 die-hard activists. Long hair, bleary and sharp eyes from fatigue, anger on their faces and agitated. People had divided themselves into issues so they were reporting to the audience. There is somebody that types as they write. Gosh her speed must be 200 words per minute. So fast. Well, the gist of it is that there is little progress on many fronts.

We met the Kenyan Prime Minister yesterday. His speech focussed on the usual 'Africans must unite and we can do it and we have to speak with one voice and we have a lot of resources but we are poor ...' Some people even clapped for him. But I respected him for taking the pain to come to talk to African Civil Society. You could not imagine that happening in our case. That is really sad. The relationship between the Kenyan civil society and government is really great. Maybe most of the parliament also worked at NGOs some time ago. Maybe it is a reflection of the relative freedom that Kenyan media and Kenyans enjoy back home.

Copenhagen 6: 11 December 2009

Dear friends,

This morning I was bouncing and whistling happily as I was going to the train station. The two ladies in the house are so kind. This morning Anne cooked a delicious Kenyan bean sauce and served rice with it, while Teresa asked if I had any washing that needed doing.

I was thinking what Teresa told me this morning about somebody called Depak. He started the Biofuel Watch. Judging from the flow of information, I thought it to be a big organisation with a number of highly paid staff. Apparently he sold his house to live in a flat and to volunteer five days per week to monitor and write about biofuel-related issues. Most of the people working for him are volunteers. What dedication!

I went to KlimaForum to talk on GMO and agriculture with Vandana. I popped in before the talk at the KlimaForum feeding tents to see what they were serving. The usual lentil and chickpea soup with bread. The soup is hot and it tastes good but, having it everyday, well that is another story. You see a lot of volunteers cooking, cutting bread, washing and trying to help you if you need help. A fantastic sense of wanting the Convention to succeed.

I talked about the right solution to climate change in the session about GMOs and climate change. Vandana was one of the panellists. She is great, as you know. It is daunting and also a privilege to speak alongside her. I spoke about the Institute for Sustainable Development Tigray project and ABN's community resilience, ecological governance and ecosystem resilience approach as one of the best mechanisms for adapting to climate change. It is a pity that the Institute of Sustainable Development (ISD) is not visible here. Sue must buy me lunch for one week for promoting her work in every meeting that I spoke at. I think we all need to emulate and sell ISD's and Navdanya's approach for revitalising rural livelihood.¹

I had dinner with Pamela and Maria of the SwedeBio and Yoke Ling of Third World Network (TWN) and Silvia and Diana from Environment, Technology and Corporations (ETC). Five highly dedicated and knowledgeable women! As this is a climate change convention, Yoke Ling

took the centre stage. The TWN people are absolutely brilliant in the way that they follow issues. Very analytical! Yoke Ling said basically that ‘both the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) are suspended. It means the climate negotiation in Copenhagen is stalled. Apparently the small island states led by Tuvalu, the first island to sink because of climate change, brought a text to serve as a basis of negotiation and asked for a committee to be set up to do it. All other small island states and some African countries (Senegal and Burkina Faso?) supported them. China did not like this, along with some other countries. The Tuvalu proposal asks not for a 2°C cap but for a 1,5°C cap and has some strict measures. I think G77 and China has also agreed to this 1,5°C cap. Well apparently the NGOs thought that Tuvalu is leading the show and felt that the others are resisting and undermining Tuvalu. So there were demonstrations in the Bella Centre, Tuvalu Tuvalu *viva viva!* Apparently this is all a game of repositioning and there was no basic disagreement between the G77 and China and Tuvalu. By reacting like that the NGOs did not get the story right and are doing much harm. So that Tuvalu Tuvalu (you can have a picture in your mind of hundreds of young people shouting this) is a misled move.

The other story is that Patrice Lumumba, the Sudanese leader of the G77 and China, gave a briefing to the NGOs. Everybody came out of that meeting mesmerised and full of high-flying appreciations. What he said was that a deal that cannot save humanity is not a deal. A 2°C cap will heat Africa by 3,5°C and will destroy the small island states. So the emission reduction should be 52% by 2012, 65% by 2020, 85% by 2030 and 100% by 2050. That is tough, isn’t it? He also said that the Kyoto Protocol should not be changed.

By the way, they are going to chuck some of us out of the Bella Centre. They said there is absolutely no place for the number of people that we have now and when the heads of state come, it will be packed so we need to reduce some people. So I might be reporting from outside.

By the way the KlimaForum is also getting full. I visited the display there and the contrast with the Bella Centre is interesting. Most of the bags and other materials are for sale while people beg you to take them at the Bella centre. You also see a lot of dishevelled and longhaired guys and girls lying on the floor sleeping or chatting with their friends.

I am copying the TWN daily briefing text here, just to show you the level of confusion here!

Copenhagen, 11 December 2009 (Meena Raman) – There was an important turn of events at the Copenhagen Climate Conference on Friday when the Chairs of the two main working groups issued draft texts early in the morning which they proposed for negotiations among the Parties. This caught most delegates by surprise because there had been no prior announcement or notice that there would be ‘Chair’s texts’ and certainly not so early in the process.

The two texts were distributed by Michael Zammit Cutajar of Malta, the Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) and John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the Ad-hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

At around 11.30 am this morning, the Chairs of the two Working Groups convened a session with Parties at an informal session, to discuss the draft texts. Several countries were said to have given their

preliminary views. On the LCA text, diplomatic sources said that some countries indicated it could be the basis for further discussion on condition that the Chair's text on Kyoto Protocol also moves forward. A few countries had serious reservations, including Bolivia which questioned the mandate and process, while the US said it had not had time yet to study the text but had found problems with some of the content. The EU and Russia apparently accepted the text for further discussion but had reservations that it assumed there would be a separate decision on the Kyoto Protocol when they wanted a single agreement, according to the sources.

The 7-page draft text of the Chair of the AWG-LCA states that 'In the draft text, the outcome of the work of the AWG-LCA is envisaged as a package consisting of a core decision and thematic decisions further elaborating enhanced action for the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention. The Chair states that this draft of a possible core decision is presented with the intent of facilitating progress in the AWG-LCA under the Convention negotiations toward a comprehensive and balanced outcome. The draft is not intended to prejudge the results of these negotiations or the form and legal nature of the agreed outcome to be adopted by the Conference of Parties in accordance with the Bali Action Plan. In its references to the Kyoto Protocol, this draft text assumes the adoption of a second commitment period under the Protocol.'

The Chair's draft text for the AWG-KP states that they are 'intended to facilitate progress in the negotiations of the AWG-KP. They have been prepared under the responsibility of the Chair and should not prejudge the form of the results of the work of the AWG-KP session.' The Chair also noted that 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.'

Meanwhile, it is learnt that several developing countries and their groupings have also prepared draft texts of a final outcome in Copenhagen. These proposed texts include one from China, with the support of India, South Africa and Brazil; another document by the LDCs; and a text by the Africa Group in the form of a Decision of the Conference of parties; as well as a document in the form of a draft protocol by the Alliance of the Organisation of Small Island States. Some of these texts were circulated at the meeting of the G77 and China and it is learnt that there may be an effort to coordinate among these countries on how to proceed. It has also been learnt that the Danish Minister for Climate and Energy, Connie Hedegaard, who is the President of COP 15, is convening a meeting to which Environment Ministers of 50 countries have been invited.

Cheers!
Million

Copenhagen 7: 12 December 2009

Good morning friends,

Well I went to the march half an hour before it started. I alighted at one of the stations and had to walk for half an hour to the Copenhagen Centre where the march was started. Posters including *'We do not have planet B'*, *'Change the politics not the climate'* *'Our climate – Not your businesses'* and so on, were there. You should have seen them on the TV. There were free placards to be distributed. I took the *'Change the politics and not the climate'* one and walked with it. There were all sorts of people. People were also marching with their families. Red-faced children were marching with their parents in that cold. Many Ethiopian mothers would have fainted if they found their children in that cold.

While I was marching I was thinking of three things. How is it that it is so easy to march/demonstrate here? Marching can be dangerous back home. I also did not see a heavy military presence all the way except when we got near to the Bella Centre. The police looked nervous and the atmosphere looked tense when we got near there. By now you will have heard that over 900 people were arrested – well, I survived to write this e-mail. I met Ed of GAIA now and he told me that there was a kind of an anarchist in the bus that brought him here from London and the main reason for him coming was to provoke violence.

I was also thinking how this climate change scenario has brought the world together. There were more than 100 000 people in the march and there were also marches around the world. As the industry collaborates to take over the world, the people are also making their move. This morning I attended the 'Information and adaptation' (title totally mine as I have forgotten the right one) meeting and I was bored as I could not find anything new. I bumped in to Nigel Crawhall on my way out and we had had a lovely meeting. He is great. We talked about the recently formed Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and he said he liked the name and I reminded him that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has taken on the responsibility of coordinating the Alliance. He knows the issues and politics around the Convention for Biological Diversity, Indigenous Peoples movement, protected areas, you name it. He said he could see now that there are lots of networks out there working on the same issue that AFSA is working on and he finds it easier to see the need for a bigger alliance among different continents. So part of his mission is to do that. That is the first example how linkage can happen in the world.

The second interesting initiative, this is the story: I also went to KlimaForum late this morning and, as I was looking for an internet connection, a woman came to me and said 'I am interested in you.' She took the breath out of me and I said 'Sorry! What?' 'Yes I am interested in you. You are beautiful and I am sure you have interesting ideas.' I was fumbling for words and she gave me a card and went. The card has the picture of the globe in the middle with '2020, I'm in' written on it. Under it it says 'Which piece of the puzzle do you hold?' At the back of it it says, 'Come join us at the Climate Solutions Meshwork Space.' Apparently there are nine sites in the Mesh and you see where your idea belongs and sit there and talk about your solutions and that will be shared among the multitudes that are interested in that subject. So all that she

was interested in was my ideas! The card says 'Find the people you need. Access the growing body of best practices and solutions relevant to you.' Brilliant idea and approach, isn't it? I am planning to get to this place and see what these nine session tables are.

We had a lovely time last night at the Indigenous Peoples evening organised by the Christensen Foundation. I met Liz there. She was doing the Liz thing the whole night – hunting for funding and connecting me with people. Christensen has a lovely exhibition at the KlimaForum and their exhibits are really great. Under each of the photos there is a detailed and clear explanation about each of the pictures. So educational! I was thinking of improving the cultural biodiversity exhibitions that we have all over Africa.

The Bella Centre is closed today. Don't know why – maybe to sort out how to strengthen the security from now on. Talk to you tomorrow.

Cheers!

Million

Copenhagen 8: 13 December 2009

Hello there,

What a flood! The conference centre at Bella was literally flooded today with people. I thought for a moment on arrival that it might not be possible to enter today. Apparently the screening and the chucking out of us NGOs will start tomorrow. Each of the institutions that have accredited us decides who will have access to the Bella Centre. My Ethiopian friends told me yesterday that the majority of them would not enter tomorrow.

Speaking of the Ethiopian night, we had a lovely evening yesterday. We were about 22. There were many who did not come. This climate change issue is galvanizing the civil society. The Ethiopian civil society was preparing for Copenhagen. They helped in educating the public back home. There was a series of talks till the two young ladies from the group almost ran away. There was a Danish woman among us. Apparently she played a key role in coordinating the civil society for climate change and everybody was grateful. I was thinking on the way to where I am staying, 'How many Europeans, of European origin, played a key role in strengthening civil societies in Africa. Some even with a huge mark in rural Africa. I can count a handful for Ethiopia.' Most of the time we blame Europe for one thing or another. Some of this blame is really justified. But sometimes we should also be thankful to the European public who donates the money and to some of them who really work hard to bring an initiative to fruition.

On your way from Bella Centre to the city centre, just a few hundred metres from the station, there is a statue of three men: one wearing a blue cloth, the second an orange and the third a red. I was watching them this morning. It gets dark earlier here so in darkness they look like three village elders. In daytime their gaunt face and sunken eyes stare at you. The wind blows their cloth. They watch the conference delegates to the Bella Centre when they go in and on their way back. I was musing 'What would they make of these throngs of people as they go in and out?' In a day or so they will also be watching the heads of state coming in out. 'What

if they represent the eye of the world? What do we all say to them? We are all responsible in our own way? What will we answer if they ask us, what have you been doing? What are you going to take back home? How will your participation change the situation back home in some way? Hard questions, eh?

I went to meet Liz and other three people at the Imperial Hotel. It was not guarded yesterday but today there were three cops. They are huge these cops. They remind me of the movie *Robocop*. They look like two people in one cloth. Security is getting pretty tight now. We were explaining the work of ABN and the new initiative of connecting Asia, Africa and Latin America to the people around the table. We talked about the mapping that we did in Venda, South Africa, and how that has mobilised the local community, how we are planning to roll this out in Africa and how protecting places of energy on the landscape is critical for the survival of the ecosystem, how connecting elders with young is essential for the continuity of biocultural knowledge and practices, etc. Their question was, 'Yes we know, you know, but how do we package this? How do you brand this? This is not poverty reduction, or improving livelihoods or giving opportunity for children for education ...' Well I think if they think about it is all that. But new ideas are always a challenge to many. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said that 'All ideas/ truths go through three steps. First it is ridiculed. Second it is violently opposed and third it is accepted as self-evident.' I hope ideas of working with sacred sites are accepted sooner before we lose our ecosystems.

I will leave you today with a highly readable and informative piece from Martin Kohr. This is the situation right now as I write:

Deadlock at Copenhagen Climate Summit

By Martin Khor

More than halfway through the UN Copenhagen Climate Conference, the fate of the meeting lies in the balance between partial success and outright failure. The conference has just completed its first week. The more difficult and tense part will come this second week, when a hundred Presidents and Prime Ministers are expected to attend on 17 and 18 December. The hope is that they will be presented with a draft of an 'agreed outcome' or Declaration that the officials and Ministers have prepared. But the way the talks have gone so far, it is more likely the political leaders may have to make some of the key decisions themselves. There are just too many key issues still unresolved. The biggest contentious issue that has emerged in the last few days is the shape and structure of the future global climate regime. The developed countries, especially Japan and Europe, are insisting that a new agreement be established that replaces the present Kyoto Protocol. Almost all members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are members of this protocol, with the United States as a notable exception. Since the US does not want to join, the other developed countries don't want to continue being in it, and instead want to set up another treaty that includes the US but that also places new obligations on the developing countries to act on their emissions. This is unacceptable to the developing countries, since the new treaties will most likely not place strict and legally binding commitments on the developed countries to cut their emissions, unlike the Kyoto Protocol. Moreover the developing countries under the present rules are not obliged to take on

legally binding emission-cutting commitments, and they don't want to be pushed at this late stage into taking on new obligations that is not mandated in the Bali Action Plan and that they fear will adversely affect their economic development, particularly since the promise of finance and technology transfer has not been fulfilled.

When new drafts of the decisions were issued last Thursday at the conference by the Chairs of the two main working groups (on further commitments to reduce emissions by Annex I developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol; and on long term cooperative action under the Convention), Europe and Japan led an attack on them as they were based on the premise that the Kyoto Protocol would remain. For more than a day they even refused to engage in the talks on the Kyoto Protocol, and instead wanted consultations with the Chairs to see if their texts could be modified. At a plenary meeting last Friday, Europe and Japan again voiced their opposition to the texts. The extension of the Kyoto Protocol won't solve the need to reduce emissions, they said. A 'single agreement' that also includes the US and the developing countries is needed instead. At the same meeting, the developing countries insisted that the Kyoto Protocol continues and that the developed countries agree to cut their emissions of Greenhouse Gases by at least 40% by 2020, compared to 1990 levels. And that separately, through Decisions of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention, the US should commit to a similar effort in a COP Decision, while the developing countries would take voluntary mitigation actions, supported by finance and technology transfers. In the past weeks, some developing countries have been announcing national targets. For example, China stated it would decrease the emissions intensity of its GNP by 40–45% by 2020 compared to the 2005 level. For each unit of output, it would emit 40–45% less Greenhouse Gases. This is quite an ambitious target, which is more than the developed countries themselves have achieved in recent years, according to a Chinese scientist at a forum on 'Carbon Equity' held at the conference centre last week. But the Europeans were not impressed, saying that the Chinese target is not enough. And at the Copenhagen conference, they and other developed countries kept stressing that the developing countries have to commit to do more, such as to deviate from their 'business as usual' emissions level by 15-30% by 2020. There is no agreed definition or even common understanding of what is 'business as usual'. Such an obligation is not what was agreed to at the Bali COP conference in December 2007, and has been rejected by most developing countries, which are ready to make national targets voluntarily but do not want to bind these targets in a treaty. [The Convention and Kyoto Protocol are based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, recognizing the historical responsibility of developed countries in causing global warming and their far greater ability to take emissions reduction actions.] Developing countries argued strongly for a 'two track' outcome in Copenhagen. Track 1 is an agreement for a second period of deep emissions cuts by developed countries (except the US) under the Kyoto Protocol (starting 2013). Track 2 is a set of COP Decisions under the Convention in which the US will make an emission reduction commitment similar to the other developed countries, while developing countries agree to take mitigation actions backed by finance and technology (and these are subject to being measured, reported on and verified). 'The lack of progress in the negotiations and lack of will by developed countries to engage is unacceptable, and we are opposed to their intent to kill the Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding instrument we now have,' said the chairman of the Group of 77 and China, which is currently Sudan. Developing countries spoke up one after the

other to support this, and reiterating that there must be a 2-track process at the Friday meetings of the Convention Parties and the Kyoto Protocol Parties. These included Grenada (on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States), Gambia (on behalf of the African group), South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, India, China, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Oman, Egypt, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Afghanistan, Palestine, Kuwait, Micronesia and Bolivia. 'The sanctity of the two tracks must be maintained and we must avoid any side-stepping from our main work to conclude the second period of the Kyoto Protocol' said India. China also stressed that the twin track system was what was agreed by all the Parties to the Convention (including the US) in Bali, and now the world was watching again as the conference has only a few days left, while developed countries have not shown the political will to act. Bolivia chided the developed countries, which is responsible for 75% of the historical emissions in the atmosphere, for wanting to kill the Kyoto Protocol in order to deny repaying the climate debt they owe to developing countries and to Mother Earth. 'Now they say they want to wait for others to pledge before they make their response. That's not a responsible attitude.' As the wrangling went on in the conference halls, over 100,000 people marched through the streets of Copenhagen, demanding action as well as 'climate justice' from the world's leaders. The deadlock in the talks, especially on whether the Kyoto Protocol will survive and whether there will be an outcome in two tracks, or a new single agreement, is threatening a successful conclusion to the conference. Only days remain before the Presidents and Prime Ministers turn up on 17-18 December, hoping to sign a historic climate deal. Whether there is a partial deal, which must at least include the architecture of the climate regime, or only an agreement to keep on talking, remains to be seen. (Martin Khor is Executive Director of South Centre.)

Copenhagen 9: 14 December 2009

Hi folks,

I felt a pang of sadness today for not be able to report to you from Copenhagen starting tomorrow. Tomorrow will be my last day. I asked for a plane and they said I should pay close to 1400 Euro! Can you believe this? Well anybody that thinks my reporting is worth more than 1400 Euro, please get back to me quick (he he he). I was hoping to participate in our Prime Ministers (PMs) talk and report.

You know every day I forget one thing or another for reporting. I think I should have a little notebook for the future to remind me. I forgot, for example, to report about Anne, Teresa and my presentations yesterday. How can I forget that! The two ladies were absolutely marvellous. The halls at the KlimaForum are huge and the LCD screen covers a big chunk of the wall. So we had to stand to talk. So I think this gave them the chance to dance and charm the audiences while talking. Anne called her generation 'a fish and chips' generation. She lamented that we are forgetting the foods of our parents and are killing ourselves with junk food. We are contributing to the loss of seed and other biodiversity by stigmatising and marginalising our food, she added. This, she said, has opened the door for seed companies and researchers to appropriate our vegetables and seeds and sell them back to us. She also talked about how the Alliance for Green

Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is wearing the cloak of small farmers and is strengthening seed companies and intellectual property rights (IPR) systems in the name of a green revolution in Africa. Teresa gave the examples of expansion and subsequent failure of Agrofuel in Africa. She talked how this is exacerbating climate change, as the areas given are forest or agricultural lands. This is happening, they say, in marginal lands. 'Well,' Teresa said, 'these "marginal lands" are grazing lands for pastoral and agro pastoral communities and areas of biodiversity.' She also talked about the land grabbing that has gripped Africa as a fever.

Well there is nothing new in what I said but this time I focused on the image that people have about Africa and how that is shaping Northern policy and research and subsequent prescription of one solution or another. Well this image is sought by Northern NGOs because they will not get money if they show the beauty of Africa. I remember a story from one of the highly respected NGO leaders in Ethiopia. She went to Germany for fund raising. There were industry and government people for the occasion. She wanted to look like an Ethiopian and had her cultural outfit. She dubbed her eyelashes with some things and put on her lipstick and looked gorgeous. She went out of her dressing room smiling. The lady who was leading the program came running to her and said 'What are you doing? Why are you wearing this? You should immediately take this cloth off and wear something dirty. We are portraying you here as poor and here you come wearing this cloth.' She did not even wait to listen but went to the stage bouncing. She said she cried, cried and cried. For a long time. Too shocking to be true, isn't it?

I came to the Bella Centre today. Much quieter than yesterday. As expected most of them are government people. They have taken over the place from NGOs. A lot of people with dark suits and exquisite overcoats! I asked one of the Ethiopian delegates about the day and he said 'Nothing is happening. No change. We still are stuck in our positions. They (developed countries) have probably got five strategies. We only have one. I think they want to exhaust us with a lot of documents and in the end they will make us agree on what they want pretending that it is our issue which has prevailed.' I wondered at the level of mistrust that the negotiators have of each other after listening to him.

I heard today that the Ethiopian Prime Minister comes tomorrow and he will give a speech on adaptation. Africa led the developing countries yesterday and insisted that the conference place top priority on the developed countries' emission reduction commitments, and on the continuation of the Kyoto protocol (KP), which is the legally binding treaty under which the commitments are to be made.

Martin Khor writes 'For a whole morning, the work in several "contact groups" stopped while the developing countries' leaders met with the Danish climate change minister Connie Hildegard, who apparently agreed that the KP track of the Copenhagen talks would be given due attention. She also tried to allay fears that the Danes would throw in their own new draft for the heads of governments to consider and adopt on 18 December. Fears and suspicions abound in the conference, and the stakes are high. Many contentious issues are still far from resolved and no one knows how much the gaps can be closed in the next days.'

Let me leave you with an extract from my favourite writer, George Monbiot:

This is the moment at which we turn and face ourselves. Here, in the plastic corridors and crowded stalls, among impenetrable texts and withering procedures, humankind decides what it is and what it will become. It chooses whether to continue living as it has done, until it must make a wasteland of its home, or to stop and redefine itself. This is about much more than climate change. This is about us.

The meeting at Copenhagen confronts us with our primal tragedy. We are the universal ape, equipped with the ingenuity and aggression to bring down prey much larger than itself, break into new lands, and roar its defiance of natural constraints. Now we find ourselves hedged in by the consequences of our nature, living meekly on this crowded planet for fear of provoking or damaging others. We have the hearts of lions and live the lives of clerks.

This is a meeting about chemicals: the greenhouse gases insulating the atmosphere. But it is also a battle between two worldviews. Today the battle lines are drawn between expanders and restrainers; those who believe that there should be no impediments and those who believe that we must live within limits. The vicious battles we have seen so far between greens and climate change deniers, road safety campaigners and speed freaks, real grassroots groups and corporate-sponsored astroturfers are just the beginning. This war will become much uglier as people kick against the limits that decency demands.

While economies grow, social justice is unnecessary, as lives can be improved without redistribution. While economies grow, people need not confront their elites. While economies grow, we can keep buying our way out of trouble. But, like the bankers, we stave off trouble today only by multiplying it tomorrow. Through economic growth we are borrowing time at punitive rates of interest. It ensures that any cuts agreed at Copenhagen will eventually be outstripped. Even if we manage to prevent climate breakdown, growth means that it's only a matter of time before we hit a new constraint, which demands a new global response: oil, water, phosphate, and soil. We will lurch from crisis to existential crisis unless we address the underlying cause: perpetual growth cannot be accommodated on a finite planet.²

Talk to you tomorrow on my last bit.

Cheers!

Million

Copenhagen 10: 15 December 2009

Hi Folks,

I am writing my last Copenhagen report from Copenhagen. The ladies said 'Oh no. We do not have any one to spoil now.' I am lying. By the way last time I wrote about them cooking for me, it was me who took the waste to the waste dump. Talking of the waste, people here have excellent waste sorting mechanisms. You do not throw organic and inorganic wastes together. Bottles are also put separately. They sort it starting from their backyard. I always ask myself 'Do

I know where the waste from my house is going?’ That is environmental hypocrisy for you. It is challenging to walk your talk as you know.

It was snowing yesterday. Beautiful to see!

We went to an Ethiopian night organised by GTZ and the German and Danish birdlife international members a day before yesterday. There were beautiful slide exhibitions and tastings of Ethiopian coffee. Very positive image and I was happy as you can imagine. One of the panellists was a South African lady and she said that the problem for the South African communities coping strategy is institutional and information need. During question answer time I raised my hand and boasted of my knowledge of Venda and said that according to the *makazis* (the women traditional leaders) and the chiefs, the main problem is the disintegration of their culture expressed in increasing consumerism, degradation of their territory, disempowerment and the decrease in intergenerational transfer of traditional ecological knowledge. Recently, I was discussing the same issue with teachers and elders in Venda and they said that previously they could tell about weather patterns through reading nature (they watched termite mounds, for example, and when the termites close the openings of their mound, they would know that it is going to rain). But they now get daily environmental information through radio and stopped reading their environment. We saw a movie about technology and human beings disassociation with nature and the message is ‘Humans have started seeing the sky through television windows rather than their room windows.’ Well this may sound far-fetched but at the root of all our problems is the increasing separation that we are having from nature.

I went to KlimaForum for the last night and was astonished to find George Monbiot speaking. He shocked me when he said that his uncle came cycling to Copenhagen. He was 71 years old. He was found dead today. He asked for half a minute’s silence that was observed. Some people! It is difficult in our context to come to speak at a meeting when you lose someone close.

His story about nuclear power is also shocking. Well before him a nuclear scientist spoke about the issue in general. He said the argument for nuclear power is that it is clean, cheap, secure and storage and production processes have improved and with no fear of a Chernobyl kind of crisis. The reasons against it were interesting. He said there is little skilled power in the world now. Those who know about it are either very old or have died. There is also a rising cost for start-up. Huge cost. International relevance is decreasing. There is also a terrorist threat. What will happen if the workers are infected with flu, he asked. The whole plant will be shut, as there is a shortage of skilled power.

George Monbiot told story after story of crisis. What surprised me was his story about an Italian mafia family who were commissioned to dump nuclear waste by the Norwegians. He said ‘of all people, by the Norwegians. They have the money and are one of the countries with strictest environmental regulations. If they did it, who will not do it?’ They sank the ship somewhere near Italy. Once they were caught they said that this was one of the more than 200 ships that they were commissioned to do. The majority of dumping happens near the coast of Somalia. The Somalis have had a vigilante group to control this. This is after the famous tsunami where the waves have taken buried barrels of nuclear waste into the villages of Somalia and killed an unreported number of people. Now there are warships apparently protecting the ships from the Somali pirates but some ships still come to dump their nuclear waste and do illegal

fishing. Do you believe this? Stealing and dumping under the protection of an international community!

We had a lovely dinner with the two ladies of the house. We also used the evening to evaluate ABN's engagement with the COP. We patted each other's backs for the little success that we have achieved. Teresa worked so hard in the last few months of the COP preparations to get us here and prepare us. The house that we live in is really great. She has also contributed to the changes in some of the texts. Anne was connecting with the Africa group and even has participated in some Demonstrations with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) crowd.

We also said that we could have been more strategic. We could have used the media more strategically. I think the first step in that is to be absolutely clear in our stories and to know how to deliver it clearly and in simple terms. A TV channel interviewed me yesterday and the lady asked me to tell her the story before recording. When I said 'You know we have to be climate resilient through ecological governance ...' she cut me short and said 'that is too technical my friend. Simplify your words.' I went on 'Okay, we really need to diversify the livelihood ...' 'I am sorry Mr Million this livelihood thing is a big concept please simplify it again ...' I looked at her in bewilderment and I said 'Okay. Let us take a farmer in a village. What would it take him to live with climate change? He has to have cohesion with the other community members so that they act together in times of unexpected weather extremes.' She said 'Now you are talking.' Then we continued. See! I think this was a big lesson for me.

We also said that we could have systematically watched each of the stalls and picked something that ABN can emulate. I think Anne and Teresa will do this in the coming two days. We could also have been more strategic in linking with other partners. Overall though, for our number and the scale of the confusion here, we really have done better than other times.

Well, my final word. After engaging heavily with the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, I was disgusted with the whole mumbo jumbo of international meetings and decided to avoid them as much as I could. What kept me sane that time was my work with the farmers of ISD. I avoided after WSSD all the COPs of environment-related negotiations. They can be extremely exhausting. I think if you are true to yourself, it is extremely difficult to influence these processes. So it is better to leave these processes for some who are adept at it. I may engage with these COPs in the future after reflecting on them as thoroughly as I can. I will find my time and energy better used if could strengthen community processes and advocacy at Africa level. I am so excited about the networks that we have started in Africa, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), and I think we should spend our energy to bring more networks in this wing and bring a bigger and stronger front for Africa. This is the way for change. Not big international meetings. I am not denying their importance but you need to be extremely strategic and very clear about the purpose of your engagement. Sorry for talking Big!

Bye my friends! I need to run to the airport. I am already late by half an hour.

Cheers!
Million

Some final thoughts

I was impressed with the amount of information on climate change at the COP 15. It looks as if everything to be known is already known. But on a closer look, you can see that there are many holes to be filled. Many areas of interest for environmental education research! As you can see from my dispatches and musings above, there are so many complexities to the climate change discussions, but for environmental educators, I think the following points are worth considering.

1. The coping strategies of local communities: How do they learn to cope? How do they learn to adapt? How are adaptation techniques by local communities transmitted among generations?
2. How is adaptation gender and age segregated? How do children adapt to change in climate? What is the implication of this for education?
3. How can education help communities to adapt?
4. How do we create activists on environment in the context of climate change at all school levels?
5. How do we communicate climate change to local communities? How can we understand local realities and communication mechanisms and use this to communicate about climate change? How can we make this communication help local communities understand what is happening at the global level and prepare them for the eventualities of climate change?

Endnotes

- 1 The ISD encourages farmers to do soil and water conservation, to heal the land, planting of trees and grasses to increase plant biomass and produce compost using crop residues and plant material from the planted trees and grasses. It was started in four villages and now it has become one of the programs of the Tigray Region (one of the nine regions in Ethiopia) and is going to be adopted at a country level.
- 2 See full article on www.monbiot.com/archives/2009/12/14/this-is-about-us/.