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COVID-19

How African countries
are coping with the
pandemic

BOLIVIA AND PERU

What difference new
left-wing presidents
are making

CLIMATE

Scientists take
stand against solar
geoengineering



Green Recovery

Editorial

- 3 **HANS DEMBOWSKI**
How to rise to global challenges

Magazine

- 4 **BEN EZEAMALU**
Covid-19 impacts on Africa
- 5 **JÖRG DÖBEREINER**
Humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan
- 6 **ANKE SCHWARZER**
Hamburg museum returns precious artefacts from colonial era to Nigeria
- 9 **SUSANNE STOLLREITER**
Left-wing presidents in Peru and Bolivia
- 11 **SABINE BALK**
The Blue Action Fund is making a difference
- 12 **IMPRINT / THUANY RODRIGUES**
Nowadays: Coronavirus burnout in Brazil

Debate

- 13 **KARIM OKANLA**
ECOWAS puts sanctions on Mali because of military regimes' election postponement
- 14 **IMME SCHOLZ**
Why scientists want solar geoengineering to be banned internationally

- 16 **JAVIER A. CISTERNA FIGUEROA**
What next president's choices for Chile's new cabinet reveal

- 17 **HANS DEMBOWSKI**
The historical truth matters – and those who want to suppress it, ultimately want to suppress people

Focus: Green Recovery

- 20 **INTERVIEW WITH DAVID MFITUMUKIZA**
Governance systems are overburdened in least-developed countries

- 22 **JOSÉ SIABA SERRATE**
Latin American and Caribbean countries need more long-term thinking

- 25 **INTERVIEW WITH SALEEMUL HUQ**
Why the global financial scenario is "totally unfair"

- 27 **WANJOHI KABUKURU**
Community-based approaches to tackling the loss and damage that result from global heating

- 28 **KATIE CASHMAN**
The USA must build back better – but due to Senate obstruction, it may fail to do so

- 31 **JÖRG DÖBEREINER**
Climate ambitions of Germany's new federal government

- 32 **SABINE BALK**
Relevant reading: Maja Göpel on what is wrong with the western model

FOCUS

Green recovery

Governments around the world face a double challenge. The policies they adopt must allow their nations to escape the coronavirus pandemic and drive the transformation to environmental sustainability at the same time. As the saying goes, crises generally go along with opportunities. Unfortunately, it does not look as though opportunities for well-considered action geared to both short and long-term results are being grasped. It is essential to build back better.

Title: Nature-based solutions matter: afforestation in Peru.
Photo: picture alliance/AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd





 **Our focus section on green recoveries starts on page 19. It pertains to all of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.**

are preparing to increase interest rates. Global energy and food prices are rising particularly fast, but do not respond much to national interest rates. To some extent, food prices reflect adverse climate-impacts on agriculture. Moreover, Covid-clogged supply chains also contribute to inflation. Higher interest rates will not change that.

However, the media are putting pressure on central banks to do something, so rate hikes look ever more likely. What is certain, however, is that they will further reduce the fiscal space in less fortunate and often heavily indebted countries. New special drawing rights issued by the IMF help, but are not enough. They benefit the richest nations most so they should pass on fiscal fire power to others (see Kathrin Berensmann in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/10).

Humankind needs coherent policies that rise to global challenges. Among global leaders, Kristalina Georgieva, the head of the always controversial IMF, has excelled in proposing intelligent policies. Are national leaders paying attention? Our common future depends on it.

How to rise to global challenges

Humanity is struggling with multiple crises, including Covid-19 and global heating. We need coordinated action, but mostly get policies based on narrow-minded nationalism.

After the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, the G20 was established to convene leaders of the world's largest economies with an eye to the global common good. Disputes between big emerging economies and long established economic powers soon weakened this forum, and tensions between the west and both China and Russia have only been growing since. Nature, however, is not interested in power politics. Only multilateral cooperation can solve the huge global problems we face.

Unfortunately, the institutions of global governance are not up to task. Their landscape is far too fragmented. The World Health Organization is supposed to deal with diseases, but the World Trade Organization is in charge of pharma patents and intellectual property in general. That is one reason why efforts to vaccinate all nations did not take off fast enough.

The International Monetary Fund is focused on macroeconomic stability while the World Bank is supposed to support development. Of course, the UN Development

Programme has a stake in the latter matter as well. Various UN bodies deal with environmental issues, including the UN Environment Programme and the Secretariats of the conventions on biodiversity, desertification and climate change. This is not a solid base for coherent policymaking.

The landscape of financing looks even more fragmented, with bilateral funding complementing the multilateral kind. In the past two years, the governments of high-income countries with large fiscal space have spent massively. Their stimulus programmes kept their economies going. Vaccinations also ensured a fast recovery. None of this was possible in least-developed countries.

By March 2021, stimulus spending around the world amounted to \$16 trillion according to the UN. The 30 largest economies accounted for almost \$15 trillion. Experts from Vivid Economics, an international consultancy, reckon the G20 and 10 further large economies spent \$14.9 trillion, but used not even \$1.8 trillion for environmental sustainability. Humankind needs to do better, but things are set to get worse.

In view of high consumer-price inflation, central banks in prosperous countries



HANS DEMBOWSKI
is editor in chief of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

euz.editor@dandc.eu

If you regularly read D+C/E+Z, you will be aware of Saleemul Huq, the climate scholar. A few years ago, he left the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development in order to head the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Dhaka and contribute more to capacity development in Bangladesh. In this



issue, he argues that high-income countries are failing poorer world regions, particularly in regard to climate-induced losses and damages (page 25).

► You'll find all contributions of our focus section plus related ones on our website – they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.



Kenyan nurse preparing an AstraZeneca shot in January 2022.

COVID-19

“The virus is everywhere”

Africa has low Covid-19 mortality rates, but frightfully low vaccination rates too. Future waves may prove less forgiving – and the economic slump has already caused serious pain.

By Ben Ezeamalu

Africa’s coronavirus caseload surpassed the 10 million mark in the second week of January 2022, forcing public health officials to consider a different strategy in response to the disease. As of 12 January, the continent had recorded 10.2 million cases, with 232,770 deaths and 9.2 million recoveries, according to the Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC). South Africa leads the region with 3.5 million cases of coronavirus, followed by Morocco and Ethiopia with one million and 450,000 cases respectively.

With the number of cases still rising, experts say the disease is becoming en-

dem. The term stands for something that is part of the natural environment, but does not imply that it is harmless. Malaria, for example, is endemic in Africa too.

“We are no longer in the logic of containing the virus,” says John Nkengasong of the Africa CDC. “The virus is everywhere.” A bright light, according to the health expert, is that vaccination helps. While people who got the shots may yet become sick, they are unlikely to be hospitalised. Nkengasong calls for more vaccinations and more testing.

Unfortunately, vaccination programmes have not gained much momentum in Africa. Compared with other world regions, immunisation rates are abysmally low. Of almost 8 billion doses administered by mid-January internationally, African countries accounted for a mere three percent, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, only about eight

percent of the continent’s population were fully vaccinated. High-income countries had rates ranging from 60% to more than 90%.

Vaccine supply has improved in Africa however. In January, African health workers had more than 500 million doses of vaccines at their disposal. Experts were urging national governments to show a strong commitment to vaccine deployment. “We’re at a pivotal moment,” said Richard Mihigo of the WHO.

TOO CLOSE TO EXPIRING DATES

Many challenges are obvious, including insufficient funding, lack of well-trained staff, inadequate cold-chain logistics and too little digitised data processing. It does not help that prosperous nations have been sending surplus doses close to the expiring dates. Late last year, a joint statement by two important institutions stated that most of the donated pharmaceuticals had a short shelf-life. It was issued by the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust, an AU agency, and the WHO programme COVAX. The acronym stands for Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access.

Indeed, African governments repeatedly had to destroy expired vaccines. Malawi made such an announcement in April 2021 (see Raphael Mwenguwe’s *Nowadays* in the D+C/E+Z digital Monthly 2021/08). In December, Nigeria disposed of more than one million expired AstraZeneca doses. In January, Uganda’s health ministry declared that 400,000 doses, mostly Moderna, had become useless.

Adhere Cavince, a Kenyan intellectual who specialises in international relations, says that donating expired vaccines to Africa runs counter to the donor governments’ rhetoric of solidarity in the pandemic. In his view, the only way to ensure Africa has adequate access to vaccines is to encourage local production (see Mirza Alas in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/12).

On the upside, Covid-19 death rates in African countries have stayed below what other world regions have experienced. So far, scientists do not have a full understanding of the reasons. Most likely, it matters that Africans’ average age is low, that the continent’s climate is hot and many people live in rural areas that are not densely populated. Moreover, Africans are believed to have stuck to hygiene rules. On the oth-

er hand, underfunded and understaffed health-care systems have probably failed to diagnose and register all coronavirus infections, especially in remote areas.

HIGH ECONOMIC PRICE

Early lockdown programmes have probably helped too, but the economic price was high. According to the World Bank, Africa's economy contracted by 3.3% in 2020, after 2.4% growth in 2019. The continent has thus been plunged into its first recession in 25 years. Poverty and inequality have worsened (for example in Uganda, see Ronald Ssegujja Ssekandi in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/12).

The disruption of the global economy, travel bans and snags in international supply chains have hurt. In 2020, exports and imports across Africa are estimated to have fallen a third below the levels of 2019, the year before the pandemic reached the continent. The International Air Transport Association reckons that, due to Covid-19, African airlines had lost over \$4 billion in revenue by March 2020.

The Omicron variant was discovered in South Africa in the third quarter of 2021. It fuelled the fourth wave of Covid-19. According to the WHO, a six-week surge of infections in Africa has now largely flattened, although case numbers are still high in

North and West Africa. Hospitalisation and death rates have luckily remained low.

Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa, says the fourth wave was brief, but steep and destabilising none the less. "The next wave might not be so forgiving," she warns. In her eyes, the crucial pandemic countermeasure is vaccination, so programmes must pick up speed.



BEN EZEAMALU

is a senior reporter who works for Premium Times in Lagos.

ben.ezeamalu@gmail.com

Twitter: @callmebenfigo

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Afghanistan: unprecedented need

In order to tackle Afghanistan's ongoing humanitarian crisis, the UN has launched a huge funding appeal.

By Jörg Döbereiner

The UN wants to raise \$4.4 billion for Afghanistan for 2022. "This is the largest ever appeal for a single country for humanitarian assistance," says UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths. The background is that Afghanistan faces "unprecedented levels of need amongst ordinary women, men and children," according to a report the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published in January. It is called Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 and reckons that 24.4 million people suffer humanitarian need. This is more than half the country's population.

Apart from violent conflict, the country has been hit by two severe droughts in four years. According to OCHA, Afghanistan is now the country with the most people suffering food insecurity in the world. "More than one in two children under-five is facing acute malnutrition and will be at risk of death if immediate action is not taken," OCHA warns.

Before the Taliban seized power last summer, Afghanistan's economy depended heavily on foreign aid. This support was withdrawn, and things have been deteriorating since (see box accompanying Hamed Sarfarazi's article in Focus section of D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/12).

Close to 700,000 people were internally displaced by conflict in Afghanistan in 2021, according to OCHA. Almost 9.2 mil-

lion people have been living in situations of forced displacement since 2012.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi calls for an additional \$623 million to support refugees and host communities in five neighbouring countries. Around 5.7 million Afghan people are reckoned to require help outside the country.

LINK

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Afghanistan:

<https://www.unocha.org/afghanistan>

JÖRG DÖBEREINER

is a member of the editorial team of D+C/E+Z. euz.editor@dandc.eu



Afghans receive assistance in northern Afghanistan, January 2022.

RESTITUTION

Returning the Benin objects

The Hamburg Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) is holding an exhibition to say goodbye to artworks from the former kingdom of Benin that were looted during the colonial period. The first artefacts should be returned to Nigeria this year.

By Anke Schwarzer

The exhibition displays 179 historical artworks made of bronze, ivory and wood, which come from the former city of Benin and belonged to the royal family. This year, they will be returned to Nigeria along with around 1,000 additional objects from other German museums (on the debate surrounding restitution see the contribution by Sabine Balk in the D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/11).

As the exhibition documents in a timeline, the country of Nigeria and the Benin royal family, which still exists, have been calling for decades for the return of the looted works from museums in Europe and the US. “It is high time to right this wrong,” said the general director of the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Abba Isa Tijani, at the opening. He asked: “Why should we tolerate this serious mistake from the colonial era?”

He appreciates the exhibition by saying it was the beginning of the return of the Benin bronzes to Nigeria. According to Tijani, the Hamburg museum’s announcement of the restitution worked as a catalyst for negotiations with other museums. He



felt that the significance of this development could not be overstated, and he is very much looking forward to future cooperation



Commemorative heads of kings of ancient Benin, cast from the Igun Eronmwon bronze-casting guild in the former kingdom of Benin.

with German museums and new forms of collaboration.

The artefacts were created in various centuries at the court of Benin. The nobility paid craftspeople to represent important events in the history of the kingdom. In elaborate bronze sculptures and carvings from ivory and wood, they recorded royal successions or illustrated trade with Portuguese seafarers. Manillas, bracelets made of brass and copper that served as currency, are also documented on the bronze plaques, most of which stem from the 16th and 17th

centuries. The director of the MARKK, Barbara Plankensteiner, considers the objects “outstanding artworks with world historical significance”.

A portion of the brass, as the exhibition demonstrates with reference to several objects, also came from Central European mills and was brought to West Africa by German trade companies in the 16th century via Hamburg and Antwerp. The Benin rul-

ers traded the valuable metal for ivory and spices – as well as for people who had been enslaved during wars. The latter were transported to the slave market in the Portuguese city of Lagos and later to plantations in the Caribbean.

The Hamburg exhibition displays photographs that document the looting of the artwork from Benin at the end of the 19th century. In 1897, a troop of British soldiers attacked the city with machine guns. The British Empire had long been bent on gaining free access to the city and its trade –

and on deposing the king. The military was aware of the existence of the treasures and planned to loot them in order to finance the invasion. Shortly thereafter, the artworks surfaced in London and Hamburg. In total, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 objects were plundered.

RESEARCHING THE TRADE NETWORKS

Another portion of the exhibition is devoted to the trade networks of the time. Gaiser, Umlauff, Konietzko and Brinkmann are the names of some of the most important people and trading firms. They are connected by arrows to each other, but above all to the ethnographic museum, which is now the MARKK. This installation looks like the police bulletin boards that investigators set up in order to track down a network of recipients of stolen goods.

But the police never investigated this case. Captains, colonial authorities and business people enriched themselves through the sale of the stolen objects with impunity. Only now are museums and researchers beginning to investigate these trade networks. At the very least, experts want to digitise all of the plunder that was scattered around the world and publish it on the new online platform “Digital Benin”. This database will also serve as the basis for an exhibition at the planned Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA) in Benin City.

Hamburg’s senator for culture, Carsten Brosda, believes this exhibition makes a “clear promise that all of the Benin objects in Hamburg will be restituted”. However, as a federal state, Hamburg alone cannot make a decision about restitution, since two countries are party to the negotiations. It can make preparations, though, for

instance by adding the transfer of property to Hamburg’s city budget. The value of the artefacts has been appraised at €60 million. The exhibition will run in Hamburg until the objects are returned either individually or collectively.

The MARKK is intensively engaged with questions of origin, authorship and the restitution of objects from the colonial period (also see my article in the Summer Special of the D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/08).

LINK

Digital Benin

<https://digital-benin.org/>

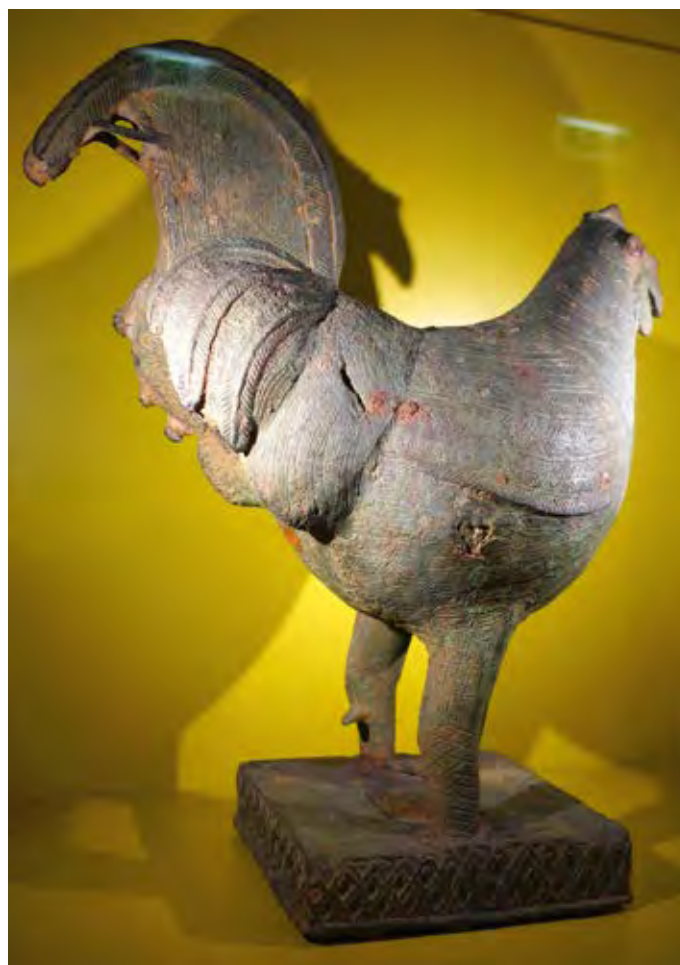
ANKE SCHWARZER

is a freelance editor and teaches adult education courses on history and politics.

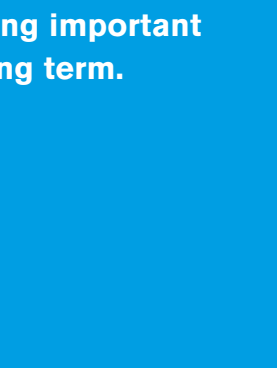
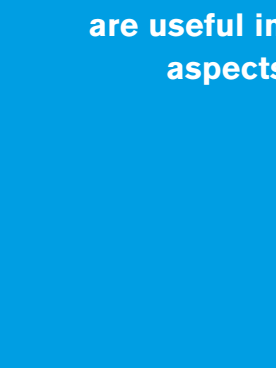
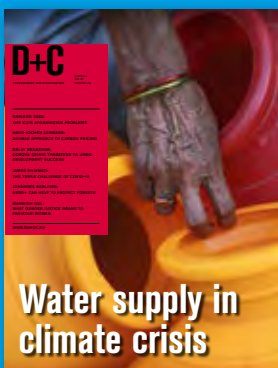
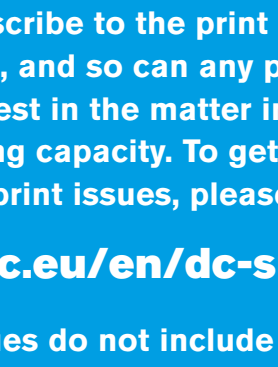
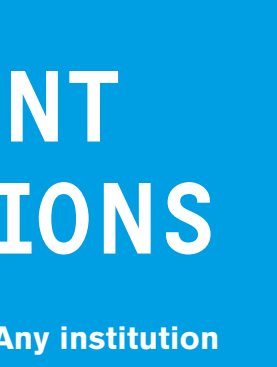
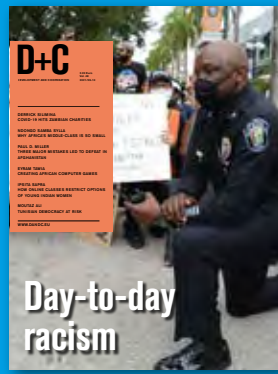
hallo@ankeschwarzer.com



Contemporary brass relief by artist Phil Omodamwen depicting the return of the looted coral regalia to King Oba Akenzua II in 1938 displayed in the exhibition at Hamburg’s MARKK.



This rooster was cast in one of the workshops of the Igun Eronmwon bronze-casting guild in the former kingdom of Benin and likely dates from the 18th century.



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Two presidents: Pedro Castillo (left) and Luis Arce 2021 in Bolivia.

LATIN AMERICA

Winners face challenges

In Bolivia and Peru, victory in recent presidential elections went to parties on the left. However, in view of the massive problems the countries face, it remains hard to say what the political future holds.

By Susanne Stollreiter

Given the results of recent presidential elections, it is tempting to think that the left is on the rise in Latin America. In Bolivia, the race for the highest office was won in October 2020 by Luis Arce of the Movement for Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo – MAS) party. In Peru, victory went to the Leninist-Marxist Perú Libre party's candidate, Pedro Castillo, in June 2021. (On the December 2021 electoral victory of Gabriel Boric and the left-wing alliance Apruebo Dignidad in Chile, see Javier A. Cisterna Figueroa's comment on p. 16 of this issue.)

At a first binational meeting, Arce and Castillo showed a willingness to cooperate. They pledged mutual support, for example, on issues such as social-protection policies, security and defence. Nevertheless, there are reasons to doubt the formation of a strong leftist alliance – because both countries face major economic and domestic problems.

Bolivia and Peru both went through a period of political instability prior to the elections. In Bolivia, a general election failed in 2019. Fraud allegations led to unrest, and long-time MAS President Evo Morales had to leave the country (see box next page). After his departure, a conservative transitional government took office. It was initially more concerned with suppressing protests and prosecuting MAS supporters than arranging new elections.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit Bolivia hard. It delayed the elections by months and aggravated what was already a difficult economic situation due to falling commodity prices. Against this backdrop, Luis Arce profited from the fact that, as Morales' long-serving minister of economy, he was seen as a continuity candidate and driving force behind MAS' broadly successful economic policy. Therefore, the only thing surprising about Arce's victory was the margin: he won 55.1% of the vote, leaving second-placed Carlos Mesa trailing with 28.3%. MAS also won a clear majority in parliament.

CORRUPTION AND CORONAVIRUS

In neighbouring Peru, the years leading up to the elections were marked by corrup-

tion and political interference by business. Government blockades and political fragmentation gave rise to instability. In 2020 alone, there were three presidents. The last of them, Francisco Sagasti, took the country into elections at the head of a technocratic transitional government.

The election campaign was overshadowed by the pandemic: in June 2021, Peru reported the highest rate of Covid-19 deaths in the world. In addition, there were new accusations against one of the ex-presidents, Martín Vizcarra, who had jumped the queue for vaccination against Covid-19 during his presidency. All this persuaded large parts of the population to seek a break with the political establishment.

Nevertheless, the election went down to the wire. It ended in a neck-and-neck contest between political newcomer and trade unionist Pedro Castillo and opposition leader Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of Alberto Fujimori, the controversial former autocrat, who was sentenced to prison but later pardoned. She is a seasoned politician with close links to business and is suspected of corruption. Big corporations – and especially the economically libertarian capital Lima – feared disadvantages and launched a media campaign equating communism and socialism with terrorism.

Castillo won by less than 45,000 votes. Despite voting being compulsory, nearly 30% of the electorate abstained in the first round and almost 25% in the second.

Peru's rural and indigenous population voted in large numbers for Castillo. They believed that the rural school teacher from a humble background would stand up for them. It is doubtful, however, whether the government will be able to satisfy the high expectations for socio-political change. It has announced projects across many sectors – health, education, housing, food security and poverty reduction – but has yet to explain how they will be funded and implemented. That said, one proposal has received widespread praise: agrarian reform in favour of small-scale and regional production.

While ruling party Perú Libre campaigned for a bigger economic role for the state and more redistribution, early attempts at nationalisation have failed. At the same time, Castillo's economy minister has stressed that there will be no expropriation or price control; the emphasis will be on more state participation.



Politically, Peru is deeply divided, as the close election results and the distribution of seats in parliament show: the ruling party only has 37 representatives in the 130-seat chamber of Congress. Conservative and liberal forces are in the majority. Any legislative project can thus be blocked and the president can be deposed with a two-thirds majority. An early attempt to oust Castillo has already been made – but failed. However, a number of ministers have been forced to resign on suspicion of corruption and links to terrorism. This has further undermined desperately low public trust in politics and politicians.

The new government's first priority should thus be to avoid disappointing its

voters even more. If it succeeds in forming alliances with left-wing and moderate parties, it might achieve the majorities needed to prevent a permanent political stalemate.

DIMINISHING RESOURCES

In Bolivia, the political divides are similarly deep. Rifts are particularly pronounced between supporters of the government and opposition, but divisions also exist elsewhere. In the land use dispute between indigenous people in the highlands and lowlands, Luis Arce's government supports its voter base in the highlands. The concerns of indigenous lowlanders, on the other hand, are instrumentalised by the opposition to stir up anti-government sentiment. Conflicts are set to happen.

On the economic front, Arce favours a continuation of the massive exploitation of natural resources. But those resources are dwindling – notably natural gas, which has generated substantial revenues for the state. Mining, cattle rearing and monoculture farming also cause massive environmental harm. However, the new government has so far not taken steps to change the economic

system. On the contrary, the amount of forest land that can legally be cleared and used for agriculture has recently been increased.

Bolivia's government lacks the financial resources to revive the economy the way it promised in the election campaign. For ideological reasons it refuses to consider external financing options, such as approaching the International Monetary Fund or private investors. In the face of the ongoing pandemic, it is not clear how an economic recovery can be achieved without alternative remedies.

In both Bolivia and Peru, it thus remains questionable how far the current governments can actually be considered progressive. At present, inspiring projects and transnational alliances – with spill-over effects on neighbouring countries – are not to be expected from the two Andean countries.



SUSANNE STOLLREITER
is a policy officer for Bolivia and Peru in the Latin America and Caribbean Department of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in

Berlin.

susanne.stollreiter@fes.de

Bridging divides

Since Bolivia's ex-president Evo Morales was forced to resign in 2019, domestic politics in the country has become increasingly polarised. Camps are currently divided over the question of whether Morales committed electoral fraud or was the victim of a coup. The present government led by Luis Arce of the Morales party Movement for Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo – MAS) shows little appetite for reconciliation and dialogue. It is making an all-out effort to impose its view that a coup took place.

Numerous judicial proceedings have been launched against members of the opposition and transitional govern-

ment for involvement in the "golpe de estado 2019". Since the judiciary follows the government's political line, observers do not expect the trials to be fair and independent.

Conversely, the opposition also has adopted radical positions. Examples include Santa Cruz' Governor Luis Fernando Camacho and the civic committees (comités cívicos) of Santa Cruz and Potosí.

The latter's street protests are frequently violent. Recently, President Arce had to revoke a law against tax evasion and money laundering because of violent demonstrations by informal traders and civic committees.

This setting makes domestic dialogue very difficult. Think tanks close to Germany's major parties – Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation – have therefore teamed up with the UN mission and the German

embassy to launch debates involving political camps. The aim is to shift the focus away from differences and towards finding solutions to the challenges that society as a whole is facing. The project is funded by Germany's Foreign Office. STO



Pro-government demonstrators in La Paz, Bolivia, March 2021.

BLUE ACTION FUND

Funding for ocean protection

Blue Action Fund draws a positive balance in an impact report marking its fifth anniversary. The non-profit foundation promotes marine and coastal protected areas and works to secure the livelihoods of coastal communities. In pursuit of that goal, it provides targeted funding for non-governmental organisations that are active in developing countries.

By Sabine Balk

Blue Action Fund (see my article in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2018/01) reports that it has so far invested € 43 million in 17 projects, designating or securing more than 350,000 square kilometres of marine protected areas (MPAs). This has directly benefited more than 225,000 people on the coasts of Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. Beneficiaries include fishermen, MPA management teams and other users of marine resources.

The projects that Blue Action Fund (BAF) supports are responses to the global environmental and climate crisis. They include initiatives combating the dramatic decline in marine biodiversity, increasing re-

silience to climate change and creating sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

The foundation emphasises that the world's oceans have huge potential for mitigating climate change. However, less than 1% of global Official Development Assistance is currently used to fund marine conservation, says BAF and aims to “close this massive funding gap”. Established by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and KfW Development Bank, it receives additional funding from the governments of Sweden, France and Norway as well as the Green Climate Fund.

One of the projects funded by BAF is the Primeiras and Segundas Environmental Protected Area (PSEPA), which stretches along 200 kilometres of Mozambique's coast. The marine area encompasses coral-line islands with uniquely rich marine fauna and mangrove forests that provide valuable ecosystem services. According to the BAF report, environmental organisation WWF uses the funding – totalling €3 million – for measures to protect the PSEPA and to create new livelihoods for coastal fishing communities.

WWF is working with government authorities and local stakeholders to establish a functioning marine management structure. This includes deploying “community rangers” to monitor compliance with the rules. BAF reports that the number of rangers has been increased from 9 to 24. They are tasked, among other things, with preventing illegal fishing, poaching and mangrove cutting.

These activities are a major problem in the coastal region and are largely driven by local poverty, the report says. The WWF project is therefore also designed to promote sustainable fisheries management practices and raise awareness of sustainable management in local communities. The organisation has established 77 Farmer Field Schools in 19 communities as well as 217 Village Savings and Loans groups. According to the report, the latter include nearly 3,000 women – who are a special focus – and have generated savings totalling US \$ 114 452.

In the Farmer Field Schools, locals learn how to protect and sustainably manage fish nurseries and mangroves. This in turn improves fishermen's catches and augments local communities' incomes.

Another marine conservation project supported by BAF is located around Cocos Island in Costa Rica. Situated hundreds of kilometres off the country's Pacific coast, the marine area is home to more than 1,600 species of marine fauna and flora.

BAF reports that a great deal has already been achieved with the € 3.7 million funding provided for the Cocos Island project – above all winning the support of national authorities as well as numerous implementing partners. Moreover, the MPA around Cocos Island has been extended by 150,000 square kilometres, which means that more than 30% of Costa Rica's waters are now protected.

LINK

Impact Report – 5 Years of Blue Action:

https://www.blueactionfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Impact-Report_5-Years-of-Blue-Action.pdf



SABINE BALK

is a member of the editorial team of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

euz.editor@dandc.eu



Blue Action Fund supports the monitoring of endangered turtles in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific Ocean.

The exhaustion factor

Brazilian workers in a wide range of occupations are falling victim to work-related burnout as the Covid-19 crisis drags on. The main causes are increased workloads, difficult working conditions, fear of infection and – for those working from home – the mental impact of isolation.

The symptoms of burnout are extreme physical and mental fatigue, headaches, changes in appetite, insomnia and difficulty with concentration. Nearly half (47%) of Brazilian workers surveyed showed some symptoms of burnout during social isolation, according to the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), a Brazilian research institution focused on biological sciences.

The incidence of burnout is highest among health-care workers. In this sector, 78% of workers are affected by burnout to varying degrees, according to a 2020 study by PebMed, a Brazilian start-up that develops content for doctors and nurses through specialised apps.

About one in six Brazilian health workers shows signs of serious burnout, according to the Instituto D’Or de Pesquisa e Ensino (D’Or Institute for Research and Education), a non-profit research organisation. The reason for this dramatic impact is clear. Health professionals deal directly with the pandemic, caring for waves of sick people, experiencing the pain of losing patients and colleagues, and confronting their own fears of being infected.

Speech therapist Thamires Avellar does rehabilitation work in Rio de Janeiro with hospitalised Covid patients and is one of the affected health workers. “There are days when I work one shift after another and I start having problems concentrating,” she says. “Sometimes I go into the bathroom and cry, feeling powerless to make much difference. At times like that I feel no will to continue living. People have no idea how this pressure affects our psychological condition.”

Avellar is not alone. Psychologist Patricia Marquezelli says feelings of being overwhelmed at work often spill over into the private lives of health workers. “Problems arising from our mental state at work can not only greatly hinder our work performance, but can also drain the energy we need to achieve our personal goals.” Medications and other therapies can help to alleviate depression and anxiety related to burnout, she adds. But changing the work environment and ensuring daily relaxation also help.

Above all, recognising the problem and seeking help are essential. Marquezelli says: “When we realise that something is not going well with our minds, it is essential to leave prejudice aside and look for a specialised professional who will help us. Mental health is one of the foundations needed for us to be better professionals.”

Employees working from home – who number around 11% of the country’s 74 million workers, according to the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) – also experience burnout. Most companies that sent workers to home offices had no time to figure out how to operate efficiently in such a system. That produced a certain amount of chaos. The stress was compounded by the social isolation felt by many workers.

Patricia Andreolli, a pharmacist, sees the results in her shop. Demand for anxiety medications has shot up, as the stress takes its toll. “I think people are exhausted, afraid of losing their jobs and anxious because they don’t know what to expect,” she says.



THUANRY RODRIGUES
is a journalist in Brazil.

thuanryrodrigues@gmail.com

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Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 40

53113 Bonn

Phone: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-0

Fax: +49 (0) 2 28 2 07 17-150

www.engagement-global.de

ADVISORY BOARD:

Thomas Loster, Prof. Dr. Katharina Michaelowa,

Dr. Susanne Neubert, Prof. Dr. Imme Scholz, Hugh Williamson

PUBLISHER:

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Executive directors: Jonas Grashey, Hannes Ludwig

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EDITORIAL OFFICE:

Dr. Hans Dembowski (DEM; editor-in-chief; responsible for content according to Germany’s regulations), Sabine Balk (SB), Jörg Döbereiner (JD), Dagmar Wolf (DW; assistant), Maren van Treel (MVT; social media)

Freelance support: Aviva Freudmann (AF), Jan Walter Hofmann (JWH; layout), Malcolm Bell (translation), Claire Davis (translation)

Phone: +49 (0) 69 75 91-31 10

euz.editor@dandc.eu

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Fazit Communication GmbH

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PO Box 1363

D-82034 Deisenhofen, Germany

Phone: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-8 32

Fax: +49 (0) 89 8 58 53-6 28 32

fazit-com@cover-services.de

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SUBSAHARA

Tense situation

Because Mali's military regime has postponed elections, ECOWAS has imposed sanctions on the country. It is hard to see how the regional block will escape the current stalemate.

By Karim Okanla

When military leaders seized power in Mali in August 2020, they promised elections for the country to return to constitutional rule. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) set the deadline of 27 February 2022. Mali belongs to this regional block.

Assimi Goïta, the army officer who staged the coup, did not like the deadline. Late last year, he insisted on a transition period that might last until 2026. Appointing himself president, he had reaffirmed his power grab in a second coup in May 2021.

ECOWAS does not accept the election postponement, nor did the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) which uses the CFA Franc. All WAEMU members, including Mali, belong to ECOWAS as well.

On 9 January, top leaders of ECOWAS and WEAMU met in Accra, the Ghanaian capital. The presidents of Nigeria and Togo, Muhammadu Buhari and Faure Gnassingbé, were absent. The military government of Guinea Conakry did not take part either. Because of its undemocratic nature, it has been suspended from intergovernmental meetings. Compared with other regional blocks in Africa, ECOWAS has a good, though not perfect history of insisting on constitutional governance (see Vladimir Antwi-Danso in *D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly* 2018/03).

To put pressure on Mali's regime, the Accra summit imposed rather strict economic sanctions. Among other things, the list includes:

- the closure of member countries' borders with Mali,
- the suspension of economic transactions (with exceptions for food, pharma and medical supplies), as well as
- the freezing of assets owned by the Malian state and its agencies.

The WAEMU added sanctions of its own.

Mali is an important country. It has a huge territory and shares borders with the geo-strategically important Algeria. What happens in Mali, can easily have impacts on all ECOWAS members.

Mali's military junta responded in anger. Goïta called the sanctions "illegal, illegitimate and inhuman". He asked his people to take to the streets to vent their anger. Thousands did so. Mali imposed reverse sanctions, moreover, claiming that both ECOWAS and WAEMU are manipulated by France and the EU.

ANTI-FRENCH SENTIMENTS

Goïta's regime is thus exploiting anti-French sentiments. Some journalists celebrate his stance as liberation from the dominance of the former colonial power. This kind of rhetoric resonates in many African countries.

The background of the current problems is Mali's severe security crisis. When Libyan dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi was toppled in 2011, arms from his country suddenly became available. Since then, Islamist militias and other violent groups have been roaming Mali's vast Saharan north. In 2012, Mali's frustrated military grabbed power, but democracy was restored fast. Even with the support of French troops and a UN mis-

sion, however, the country's security forces have not been able to stem unrest. Violence sometimes spills over into the more densely-populated south, and things have been deteriorating.

As the French public is unhappy with the situation, the French government wants to halve its military presence. In this setting, Mali's current regime is said to be interested in support from Wagner Group, the private Russian military-service provider with a rather bad track record regarding human rights.

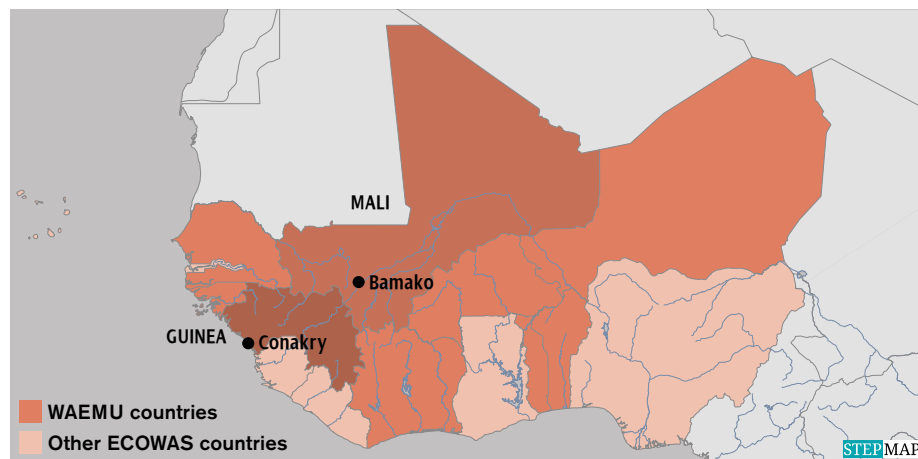
The other ECOWAS members, however, oppose Wagner involvement, and so do France and other European partners. Christine Lambrecht, Germany's defence minister, has recently spoken out against the "deployment of mercenaries" for example. German soldiers take part in the UN mission. EU countries, moreover, are also keen on democratically legitimate rule.

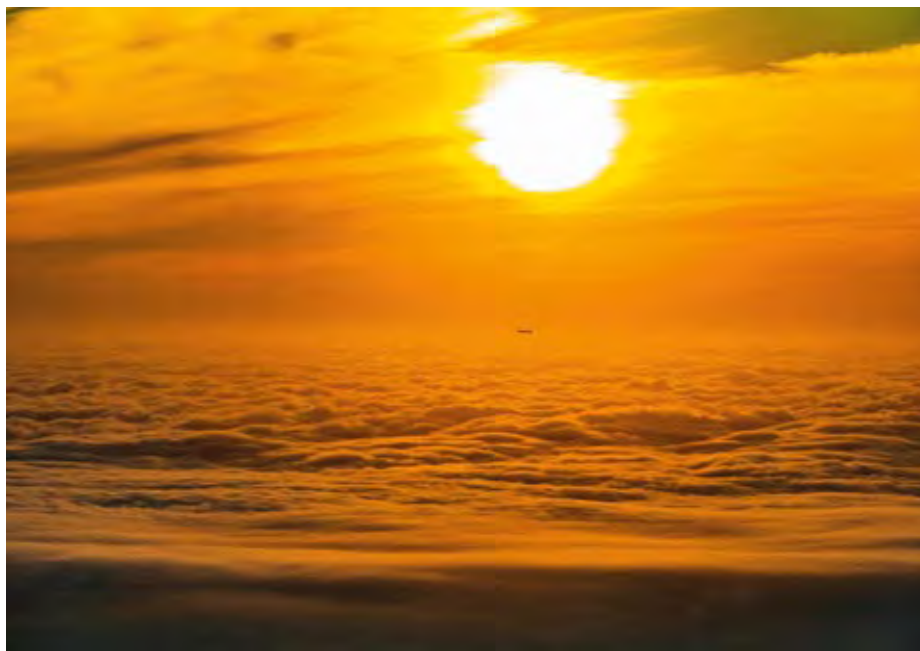
The situation is tense. Humanitarian problems are getting worse in Mali. Other ECOWAS members are feeling the pinch too. Mali's regime had a point, for example, when it stated that Senegal's main port normally has a lot of traffic thanks to landlocked Mali. The military government of Guinea Conakry, moreover, has said it will not enforce sanctions.

The good news is that leaders on all sides say they are still willing to talk. It is hard to see, however, how they might escape the current stalemate.



KARIM OKANLA
is a media scholar and
freelance author based in
Benin.
karimokanla@yahoo.com





Solar geoengineering would reduce solar radiation.

CLIMATE CRISIS

Ban solar geoengineering

To mitigate global heating, this technology is being proposed as an option. The big problem is that it is impossible to assess what risks global application would lead to.

By Imme Scholz

In January, 16 scholars published an open letter to governments around the world, asking them to ban solar geoengineering at planetary scale. I endorse the appeal for the following reasons:

Global solar geoengineering aims at reducing incoming sunlight on Earth in order to mitigate global warming. The most prominent proposal is to inject the stratosphere with aerosols. Put simply, we would dim the sun a bit. Proponents say this is necessary because greenhouse gas emissions are not being reduced fast enough.

It would be wrong, however, to try to get a grip on the climate crisis by using a technology that incurs even bigger technological, political and ethical risks. We simply do not know the efficacy, the impacts and risks of solar geoengineering

technologies applied at planetary scale. Nobody can tell what they would mean for regional weather, for sunshine, wind and precipitation. Equally unpredictable are the consequences for food and water supply. It is indeed extremely difficult to assess whether these technologies will deliver the desired results and what the undesired side effects might be. Even related experiments are risky.

Moreover, relying on untested technologies could suggest that we still have plenty of time to transition away from fossil fuels. We do not. We must decarbonise economies and make them environmentally sustainable fast.

Given that so much remains unknown, decisions are needed at a global level concerning places, methods, intensity (aspired degree of cooling) and duration of global solar geoengineering interventions. Decisions regarding liability for potential damages and losses are equally required. All countries and all communities who might be affected would have to be involved in international deliberations.

In many low-income countries, the climate crisis is already harming. Most likely, rural communities' livelihoods would be further depleted by unforeseen or uncontrollable impacts of global solar geoengineering. This is why indigenous communities have vehemently opposed related experiments in Sweden – and prevailed.

As low-income countries would be particularly at risk, they should be in control. Unfortunately, the countries that are in a position to use the technology are unlikely to give them much say – especially as they hope to buy time for decarbonisation.

Legitimate decisions on global solar geoengineering do not only require knowledge we lack and the acquisition of which is dangerous. They also require democratic global governance. The rights of future generations and living organisms in general must be considered. After all, impacts of solar geoengineering may threaten the survival of various species, very much including humans.

There actually is a considerable risk of governance failure because, even at planetary scale, solar geoengineering would not be expensive. Application would thus not depend on much international cooperation.

For these reasons, we argue that this technology should be banned. There should be no further research and development and no patents. Nor should global solar geoengineering figure in international agreements or national climate policies. The open letter is addressed to national governments and the UN, but others can act responsibly too. Research funders can stop funding research on global solar geoengineering technologies. Private philanthropies, universities, think tanks, civil-society groups, business lobbies and local governments can endorse our appeal. Of course, individual citizens are welcome too.

LINK

Call for an international non-use agreement on solar geoengineering - plus option for signing:
<https://www.solargeoeng.org/take-action>



IMME SCHOLZ

is the deputy director of the German Development Institute (DIE) and will soon move on to become

co-president of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which is close to the Green party.

imme.scholz@die-gdi.de



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LATIN AMERICA

Finding the centre

Gabriel Boric, Chile's new president, must rise to daunting expectations. On the one hand, voters want fundamental reform, on the other, he needs to ensure stability. He's trying to do both.

By Javier A. Cisterna Figueroa

In Chile, the public is keenly reading the signals being sent by the president-elect, 35-year-old leftist Gabriel Boric. The new government will take office on 11 March. It

The 2019 uprising led to an unprecedented process of constitutional change. A new constituent assembly was elected (see my assessment in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2020/12). The established centre-left and right-wing parties saw their popular support fall to unprecedented lows. Quite clearly, a majority of citizens wanted to start anew.

In view of the traditional political forces' weakness, two improbable candidates became the main presidential contenders in the 2021 election:

tion of renewal and moderation. His cabinet choices are interesting – and telling. Of 24 ministers, 14 are women, eight are independents and nine come from outside the capital, a novelty in centralised Chile.

Among the women, Izkia Siches stands out (35). She is a doctor and former president of Chile's Medical Association. She is also of Aymara indigenous descent. She will be the first female minister of the interior and thus be in charge of public security.

Camila Vallejo (33) will be the government's spokesperson. She is a former leader of rebellious student movement that demanded social progress in 2011. Antonia Urrejola (53), is the former president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and will become the foreign minister. Maya Fernández (50) will be the defence minister. She is a socialist and the granddaughter of former president Salvador Allende, who died during Pinochet's military coup. He committed suicide when the presidential palace was bombed.

In a clear nod to moderation, Boric chose Mario Marcel (62) as the finance minister. He was until recently president of Chile's Central Bank and is internationally respected. He is independent, but has been associated with previous centre-left governments. For some, however, he represents a return to the market orthodoxy that plunged Chile into social turmoil. Many others, however, consider his appointment is a welcome sign of stability.

Boric says his priorities for the first months of his presidency will be economic recovery, managing the pandemic and protecting the constitutional reforms. The constituent assembly is expected to produce a new Magna Carta between July and September of this year. The document will then be submitted to a plebiscite with compulsory voting.

A rejection of the new constitution and a consequent return to the dictatorship's constitution would mean dramatic failure for Boric. His goal is to build the new Chile. Some analysts put it this way: he wants to be the last president of the old era and the first of the new era.



In the second round, Gabriel Boric convinced 55.9 % of voters.

is worth recalling how Boric, the former student leader who became Chile's youngest-ever president, became a key figure in the nation's political renewal.

For 30 years after the end of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), Chile kept following market-orthodox policies. This rigid approach was taken by the military regime, and it became anchored in institutions and even the constitution. In October 2019, powerful protests erupted, denouncing the economic and social impact of those policies. People demanded end to "30 years of abuse of power". Masses rallied for a more egalitarian social order.

- the far-right José Antonio Kast, who represented a coalition of ultraconservatives and nationalists, and
- Boric, who was backed by an alliance of left-wing parties including the Communists.

The foreign press viewed these blocs as polar opposites. The truth was more nuanced: in a bid for centrist voters, Boric showed more courage and flexibility than his opponent. Boric's moderate tone proved decisive, leading to his 55.9% victory in the second round of voting in December.

Since his victory, Boric has signalled that he aims for a finely tuned combina-



JAVIER A. CISTERNA FIGUEROA

is a journalist based in Concepción, Chile.

cisternafigueroa@gmail.com

OUR VIEW

The truth must be remembered

Desmond Tutu, the South African archbishop who passed away in December, was a great faith leader and a great human-rights campaigner. One of his famous statements was: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Tutu also knew that brutal repression may be forgiven, but must never be forgotten.

By Hans Dembowski

The Anglican leader helped to end apartheid, and then led South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In view of his nation's lingering problems, it is debatable to what extent lasting reconciliation has been achieved, but there can be no doubt that his commission helped to build a shared and realistic narrative of what white supremacist rule meant. Without such an understanding, neither reconciliation nor a shared democratic future are possible.

It is depressing that efforts to suppress the historical truth are spreading fast in many countries. Three prominent examples are China, Russia and the USA.

Shortly before Christmas, authorities in Hong Kong removed monuments that reminded people of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing in June 1989. Back then, young people had set up a protest camp there, demanding democracy. The regime sent in the military, and the troops drowned the pro-democracy movement in blood. In the past three years, the Communist regime has crushed Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement too, so now it feels able in that city to suppress the historic truth of what happened in 1989.

In Russia, the human-rights organisation Memorial International was banned by court order shortly after Christmas. Part of this non-governmental organisation's mission was to document the atrocities of totalitarian rule. The Russian authorities accused Memorial of technicalities such as not having disclosed in each and every publication that it receives foreign funding. They also claimed the organisation supported ex-

tremism. The real reason why Memorial was banned, is that President Vladimir Putin's nationalist propaganda increasingly focuses on the glorification of Russian history. The truth is inconvenient.

Unlike the regimes in China or Russia, the US administration has full democratic legitimacy. But while the federal government is not repressing historical truths, such efforts are going on at the subnational level. The administrations of several Republican-run states are doing what they can to purge books that deal with the history of slavery from school curricula and libraries. They say they must protect white children and teenagers from feelings of guilt and anguish. By the way, the very same right-wing policymakers who are suppressing knowledge of history in education, speak of an unacceptable "cancel culture" when universities deny liars and conspiracy theorists public platforms. It is no coincidence, of course, that those who are uncomfortable with what happened in the past are also in denial about the climate crisis and tend to fall for Donald Trump's big lie of the presidential election having been stolen.

In all cases mentioned above, there is no serious debate about what the truth is. The pattern is that powerful people today are siding with oppressors of the past, and the point is to suppress politically inconvenient information.

In German eyes, such developments are depressing. We are aware of our disturbing history of genocide and two dictatorships in the 20th century. Most of us do not feel personal guilt for crimes perpetrated by previous generations, but we are committed to not letting anything like that happen ever again. One implication is that we are determined to keep the memory alive. In German cities, brass cobblestones on sidewalks remind people of Jewish Germans who used to live there until they were deported and killed by the Nazis. The famous Holocaust memorial in Berlin is not the only public reminder we have of a horrible history.

The general consensus is that the future of our democracy depends on people knowing the historical truth. Those who want to suppress it, ultimately want to suppress people.



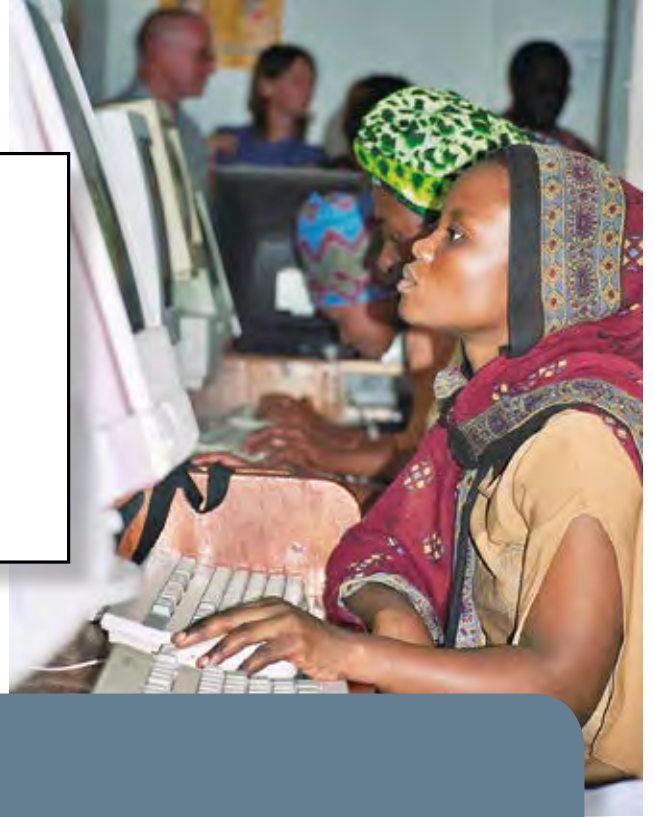
HANS DEMBOWSKI
is editor in chief of **D+C**
Development and Cooperation / **E+Z** **Entwicklung und**
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euz.editor@dandc.eu



Brass cobblestones on German sidewalks remind people of Jews who were deported and killed by the Nazis.

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Green Recovery

“Nature-based solutions are the best options.”
DAVID MFITUMUKIZA, P. 20

“Failure to adopt green policies is likely to deepen poverty.”
JOSÉ SIABA SERRATE, P. 22

“Seen from the global south, the funding situation is totally unfair.”
SALEEMUL HUQ, P. 25

“In the absence of international support, local and traditional survival strategies matter very much.”
WANJOHI KABUKURU, P. 27

“So far, Congress has not passed some of Biden’s most important proposals.”
KATIE CASHMAN, P. 28

“In Germany, the pace of emission reductions must more than double by 2030.” **JÖRG DÖBEREINER, P. 31**

“The present economic system fails to respect planetary boundaries.”
SABINE BALK, P. 32

Leaving a flooded hospital in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

COHERENT POLICYMAKING

Decentralise, but strengthen governance

East African countries are struggling with multiple crises. The term “green recovery” sounds promising, but does not accurately describe what is happening. David Mfitumukiza of Makerere University in Kampala assessed matters in our interview.

David Mfitumukiza interviewed by Hans Dembowski and Jörg Döbereiner

What impacts of the climate crisis are currently hurting people in East Africa?

There are three main hazards: drought, flooding and shifting seasons. The third is actually the most important for nature-economies where agriculture is the dominant sector. Unfortunately, it is getting the least attention. Changing weather patterns reduce food production and incomes. Subsistence farming is affected worse, because smallholders cannot afford to invest in new equipment or inputs. They have no wiggle room. Of course, the impact on commercial farms is bad too. When drought or floods occur, they are often devastating of course. People in some parts of Kenya and neigh-

bouring regions in Ethiopia and Somalia are currently suffering food insecurity because rainfall was erratic and insufficient.

What does Covid-19 mean in this context?

Well, the pandemic is not over, so it's impossible to give a conclusive assessment. Several things are evident nonetheless. Poverty has increased. The urban poor could not work during lockdowns. Food distribution suffered because markets had to close. Fresh produce could thus not be distributed, and prices dropped dramatically. For example, a bunch of bananas that previously would have fetched the equivalent of four US dollars suddenly was only worth ten cents. In our world region, moreover, rural-urban dynamics matter very much. Typically, people who live in the villages depend on some kind of financial report from relatives or well-wishers in the cities. In times when poverty gets worse in urban areas, it therefore gets worse in rural areas too. Moreover, public services deteriorated, especially in rural areas where they were weak to begin with.

What are the environmental consequences?

The pressure on marginal land has been increasing faster than it usually would. Village people are desperate to expand their fields. A certain pressure exists all the time as all countries in the East African Community have population growth rates of at least 2.3%. Because of the pandemic, however, we lost even more forest, grasslands and wetlands than we normally would. Those losses always weaken ecosystems, not least because they further reduce biodiversity, and one consequence is that nature's resilience to climate change keeps dwindling. At the same time, carbon is released into the atmosphere, so the climate crisis is further exacerbated. In our part of the world, poverty, population growth and the global environmental crisis are mutually reinforcing phenomena. Coronavirus has made everything worse.

Do African countries need stimulus programmes to improve matters in the sense of a green recovery or a green new deal? The guiding idea is to do two things at once: fight poverty and support the transition to a sustainable economy.

We certainly need the economy to recover and to get people out of the pit. I am not sure, however, that “green recovery” is a term that describes what is happening. Our governments are focusing on getting the economy started again. That is their top priority. They do not worry much about environmental sustainability. We certainly still need economic growth if we want to reduce poverty, but it is unfortunately less obvious to everyone – at least in the short term – that growth must be environmentally sustainable. Our systems of governance tend to be weak, but only strong systems are able to take longer-term trends into account. In least-developed countries (LDCs), public finances are generally stretched. That means that the scope for stimulus programmes is very small, which in turn reinforces the disposition to think in the short term.

So when governments do consider environmental issues, they are probably more interested in adaptation to climate change than in mitigation?

Yes, the thinking is that African countries have contributed very little to causing global heating so they cannot do much to control that problem. At the same time, LDCs are



Savannas are under severe pressure – unless they are protected.

especially exposed to the impacts, so everyone understands that we must adapt. This reasoning is flawed however. Yes, it is true that, in our countries, transportation, power generation and industries do not emit huge quantities of greenhouse gas emissions. However, deforestation, the loss of wetlands and the degradation of ecosystems in general do contribute to the climate crisis. Our contribution to mitigation should be to stop those trends.

And what can a country like Uganda do to adapt to a hotter climate?

There's a lot we can do. When infrastructure was built in the past, weather risks did not get much attention. That has changed. Today, potential flooding is slowly being considered in the planning and construction of cross-country roads. In similar ways, we can make sure that infrastructure such as power supply stays operational in cases of excessive rainfall or unusual heat. In regard to agriculture, a lot can be done as well. Small-scale irrigation schemes are most valuable, they often involve water harvesting. By storing water when it rains, we can boost farming in general and considerably reduce the impact of drought. African governments are aware of these things, so they feature in national adaptation plans. Nature-based solutions are the best options because they are very cost-effective and typically contribute to climate mitigation as well as adaptation.

Please tell us more about nature-based solutions?

Well, many communities depend on natural resources, so communities' resilience typically depends on the resilience of the ecosystems they live in. Ultimately, this is about making people's livelihoods compatible with sustainable land use, instead of only trying to maximise the output of agriculture in the short term by adopting supposedly modern technologies (also see Susanne Neubert in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/11). A very promising project is the Adaptation Fund Wetlands Restoration Project, which is implemented by Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment. The local people are directly involved, and they are keen on making things work out because they understand just how important the natural resources are. Of course, grasslands, forests and savannahs deserve attention too.



Local communities depend on wetlands.

Let's return to the topic of stimulus programmes. High-income nations have invested trillions of dollars, but low-income nations cannot afford government spending of that kind. What international assistance do you need?

Well, we certainly need funding. Whether you call it climate finance, official development assistance or debt relief does not matter much. Money is not everything however. As I said earlier, systems of governance matter very much. They must ensure that money flows to where it is needed most – grassroots communities. Funding from international agencies should therefore go along with technical cooperation to boost state capacities. International agencies should not only talk to national governments; they must also pay attention to community-based organisations who know best what is needed in terms of infrastructure, health care, education, public services et cetera. Central governments generally understand that international support which we need can actually reach the places where the impacts are felt. In fact, there is an initiative started by LDCs governments to promote this cause. It is called the LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR). It was signed by national governments, but the programme is designed to support local governments in building effective systems and financing mechanisms to boost grassroot resilience.

Bilateral and multilateral agencies cannot bypass state agencies when they attempt to deliver support. Unfortunately, they do not find powerful sub-national partners everywhere as easily as in Kenya, where county governors are quite influential.

Yes, it is important to decentralise governance, and again, technical cooperation can help. On the other hand, cross-border thinking is needed too. In Africa, traditional community life largely ignores national borders. Nomadic communities move from place to place, and in times of crisis, other people start fleeing to relatives, who may live in a different country. In such settings, support for a specific communities in need should not be limited to a single country. More generally speaking, policymakers should always pay attention to these things. We are dealing with global problems and certainly need international solutions.

LINK

Further information on LDC LIFE-AR:
<https://www.iied.org/supporting-ldc-initiative-for-effective-adaptation-resilience-life-ar>



DAVID MFITUMUKIZA
 is senior lecturer in the
 Department of Geography,
 Geo-Informatics and Climatic
 Sciences (GGCS) at Uganda's

Makerere University in Kampala.
dmfitumukiza@gmail.com

GREEN RECOVERY

Reviving economies sustainably

To restore prosperity following the Covid-19 pandemic, Latin America has focused too much on short-term measures rather than long-term policies that support the environment. The region should shift resources to a wide range of longer-term green recovery policies.

By José Siaba Serrate

When it comes to recovering economically from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region has more work to do than most. The pandemic hit LAC hard, both medically and economically. On the health front, the region suffered almost one-third of all global deaths, although it has only 8% of the world population.

On the economic front, the region's gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 6.8% in 2020, compared with a three percent reduction in world GDP. LAC populations worked 16% fewer hours than in the previous year – almost twice the global rate of job loss. Poverty and extreme poverty reached levels not seen in the last 12 and 20 years, respectively, according to the UN Economic Commission for LAC (ECLAC).

The region's post-pandemic economic recovery has been partial and fragile. To speed up recovery, policy makers have focused on short-term needs rather than on environmental projects that promote long-term growth. This approach is mistaken: Combating climate change is a necessary component of long-term recovery and can speed that recovery along.

The reverse is also true: Failure to adopt green policies is likely to deepen poverty. Consider this comparison: Whereas the Covid-19 pandemic pushed 4.8 million Latin Americans into extreme poverty, the impact of climate change will add an estimated 5 million more to their ranks by the end of the decade. One reason for this: LAC is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the impact is magnified by high population density in risk areas.

But promoting environmental protection is only part of the array of policies need-

ed to promote a sustainable post-pandemic recovery. The region also needs well-targeted measures to address health and social challenges.

So far, LAC governments have not given sustainable policies enough attention in

77% of the regional recovery budget so far has gone to short-term projects compared to only 16.1% for long-term recovery projects, according to the GRO.

Similarly, the region lags behind the Rest of the World (RoW) on environmentally sustainable economic recovery expenditures. In LAC these comprise 0.5% of total spending, compared to 2.8% in RoW.

In terms of absolute numbers, the comparison is similarly stark. On average, advanced economies allocated \$12,700 per capita to post-Covid recovery, compared to



Latin America's economy, battered by Corona, needs long-term policies to flourish.

their post-Covid economic recovery plans. In 2020, the 33 LAC countries allocated \$318 billion to recovery measures, but only \$46 billion of that amount went to green measures. The region's allocation of 14.5% of aid funds to green projects falls well short of the global average of 19%, according to the Global Recovery Observatory (GRO), an initiative of Oxford University, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the German Development Agency GIZ.

To be sure, LAC cannot compete with the much larger fiscal and monetary stimulus packages of the advanced economies. But the region has discretion in how to spend the funds it does have. Unfortunately,

\$650 in emerging markets and developing economies. LAC lagged even further behind, allocating only \$490 per capita as of May 2021.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

On the plus side, the region has many opportunities to close the gaps between what it is now spending on green recovery projects and what it could and should be spending.

To begin with, the region received timely help from multilateral institutions. A Special Drawing Rights issuance by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) put \$43.5 billion into government coffers. In addition, LAC has a wealth of natural re-

sources, which it can leverage in a drive toward a green recovery. The region is home to 22% of the world's forested areas, meaning that it could be an effective global carbon sink. It has mineral resources that are crucial for decarbonisation. And it is a major net food exporter, with great potential for low-emissions agriculture and aquaculture. The region also has the world's cleanest energy mix, according to the World Bank.

The region's governments should use these advantages to focus on developing renewable energies and ensuring universal access to electric power and clean fuels. Among other measures, they should expand and modernise hydroelectric plants and electric

transmission lines, and take steps to improve energy efficiency (see box on this page).

Governments should also do more to attract private investors to their renewable energy industries. Several governments have already taken steps in this direction. Renewable energy auctions have eased the development of LAC solar, wind, hydroelectric and biomass energy projects. The result has been renewable-energy producing plants worth more than \$46.8 billion and representing 27 gigawatts of new capacity.

LAC governments should also expand business opportunities in their fishing, aquaculture, forestry and climate-friendly agricultural industries. And they should

protect the environment by promoting water reuse, reducing leaks, encouraging energy efficiency and promoting clean fuels by reorienting energy subsidies. On average, LAC governments have spent over \$250 billion per year on energy subsidies in recent years. They should gradually reduce subsidies for fossil fuels and instead levy taxes on carbon emissions.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Governments should also promote innovation in the way the green recovery is financed. It is encouraging to note that LAC governments and corporations increasingly

Room for improvement

Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have only scratched the surface when it comes to implementing a green recovery agenda. Key areas for promoting this agenda include using nature-based solutions, digitalising sectors, and improving transport and energy infrastructure. The region's governments have room for improvement in all three areas.

The use of nature-based solutions is an often-neglected component of a green recovery. This involves managing and restoring ecosystems to reduce the effects of flooding, drought and extreme heat. A good example is restoring mangroves – shrubs or trees growing along ocean coasts or in slightly salty inland waterways – to help safeguard the surrounding land. Such measures also protect infrastructure such as bridges and buildings against extreme weather. They also create jobs, promote public health and purify water resources.

Nature-based solutions offer untapped potential for environmental improvement.

According to the United Nations Global Compact – a UN-sponsored agreement among businesses to adopt sustainable policies – nature-based solutions can deliver one-third of the mitigation needed to meet global climate targets by 2030.

Digitalisation – using digital technologies to create value and improve efficiency – is another often-neglected contributor to a green recovery. At its best, digitalisation enables

socially inclusive transformation by making information more accessible and easing communication. Digital technology has nearly infinite applications, from strengthening payment systems to enabling financial inclusion and fostering education and health care. Properly implemented, digitalisation can create business opportunities for small and mid-sized enterprises on electronic platforms. It can also help to integrate a region into the global economy.

Improving transport and energy infrastructure would

also speed progress toward a green recovery. Transport and electricity generation are responsible for 65% of LAC's CO₂ emissions.

Air quality in the region's cities would benefit from greater availability of electric and non-motorised transport. If electric vehicles were available to all drivers in five major LAC cities – Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; San José, Costa Rica; Mexico City, Mexico; and Cali, Colombia – more than 435,000 premature deaths could be avoided by 2050.

The connection between economic recovery and more sustainable energy and transport infrastructure is clear. Adopting green technologies in these sectors creates jobs in the short term and promotes a livable environment in the long term. The LAC region could create 15 million net new jobs by 2030 in renewable energy, construction, manufacturing and sustainable agriculture by backing a transition to net-zero emissions, according to a joint study in 2020 by the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Labor Organization. JSS



Nature-based solutions are best: mangroves in Panama.

are turning to debt markets to finance a sustainable recovery.

In 2020, LAC bond issuers floated their highest-ever number of green bonds – financial instruments that raise funds for environmental projects. In less than two years, between September 2019 and June 2021, issuance of LAC green bonds more than doubled, from \$13.6 billion to \$30.2 billion. By year-end 2021, the region's bond market was on track to show similarly positive numbers.

The government of Chile was the motor behind this growth, issuing \$3.8 billion in green bonds, followed by various issuers from Brazil with \$2.5 billion. In addition, new countries entered the green bond market in the past two years: Barbados, Bermuda, Ecuador, Panama, and Argentina issued

their first green bonds since 2019, bringing the total number of green, social and sustainability issuer countries in LAC to 15.

Green bonds are the most established of the environmental, social and governance (ESG) debt instruments, but they are not the only ones. Sustainability-linked bonds (SLBs) are becoming increasingly popular alternatives. SLBs are debt instruments linked to achieving defined ESG objectives. In 2020, for instance, Banco del Estado de Chile – a public bank created by the government in 1953 – issued a yen-denominated “women’s bond”, raising the equivalent of \$95 million to improve women entrepreneurs’ access to financial and other services in Chile.

While non-financial corporations and governments have dominated the LAC’s

green bond market, with 39% and 25% of the market respectively, multilateral development banks (MDBs) have been doing less direct issuing. MDBs reduced their volumes from 18% of the LAC green bond market in 2019 to 14% in 2021. Yet MDBs play an important role in catalysing private sector participation in these markets (see box below: A push from development banks).



JOSÉ SIABA SERRATE is an economist at the University of Buenos Aires and at the University of the Centre for Macroeconomic Study (UCEMA), a private university in Buenos Aires. He is also a member of the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI). josesiaba@hotmail.com

A push from development banks

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) are major players in the drive toward sustainable economic recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In addition to directly financing projects, MDBs help to attract billions of private sector money into “green” infrastructure projects. They also give borrowers expertise and advice.

In 2021, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) allocated \$19.5 billion in new loans to LAC, of which almost 70% focused on climate change. The IDB plans to provide another \$24 billion in climate and green financing over the next four years. All projects receiving support must conform to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Similarly, CAF (Corporación Andina de Fomento), the Venezuela-based Development Bank of Latin America which is owned by 19 governments and 13 private banks, is directing major resources to green recovery

projects. It plans to allocate \$25 billion in the next five years to help countries increase their climate resilience, develop renewable energy projects, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen biodiversity and conservation efforts.

Beyond providing direct financing, MDBs take the lead in structuring projects to attract private lenders while also protecting the interests of borrowers. Projects aimed at environmental improvement and social inclusion typically take many years to reach fruition. They also typically require low interest rates, flexible amortisation periods and generous conditions for collateral (such as repayment only from the profits of the project and not from the borrower’s other assets) if they are to be economically viable.

MDBs can create projects offering such terms by backing the projects with their vast networks of resources. For

example, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has signed a green finance partnership in LAC with more than 40 other development finance institutions. So far, this group has financed over \$2 billion in credit line programmes and leveraged more than \$6 billion in green private investments. This support can be delivered to green recovery

projects through a network of 72 national development banks in LAC, which also bring their own resources to the table. Together, these national institutions have \$1.7 trillion in assets, a combined portfolio of \$1 trillion, and nearly 80,000 branches throughout the region. Together, they can form a powerful force for driving a green economic recovery. JSS



Mauricio Claver-Carone, President of the Inter-American Developmental Bank (IDB).



Flood damages in western Germany in August 2021.

PUBLIC FINANCES

“This is not tax payer money”

Seen from the global south, the funding scenario that results from a fragmented global-policy arena is totally unfair. The Bangladeshi climate scholar Saleemul Huq discussed matters in a D+C/E+Z interview.

Saleemul Huq interviewed by Hans Dembowski

In my reading, the Glasgow climate summit COP26 basically resulted in leaving it to market forces to put a check on global warming. The agreements made invite private-sector companies to take climate action, without putting much pressure on them. That is what governments of prosperous nations wanted. If things go well, that just might suffice to limit global heating to 1.5°, but we have no guarantee. Do you agree?

Yes, but you are missing something important: we are running out of time. COP26 was basically business as usual. We got marginal progress in many areas, so the global agreements are now a little bit better than they were previously. But what the summit did not take into account – and that was especially true of diplomats from high-income countries – was how bad the impacts of climate change are already. Average tempera-

tures on Earth have increased by 1.1° since the industrial revolution set in. 2021 was the year when the climate knocked loudly on the doors of Europe and North America. Extreme weather is causing increasing harm. Some 180 people died in Germany because of flooding last July. In late December, wildfires destroyed almost 1000 homes in the Denver-Boulder area, which is the well-developed centre of Colorado. People in high-income countries are now experiencing mass suffering due to extreme weather in ways we in low-income countries have been for years. Nonetheless, the COP26 still pretended that climate change is something that will affect us in the future.

Are you implying that the 1.5° limit set in the Paris Agreement is now obsolete?

No, not at all. It still matters if we don't want things to spin out of control completely. My point is that the climate crisis is here and we have to act now. We will be seeing the kind of disasters I just mentioned for the next 20 to 30 years, whatever we do now. Average temperatures are set to rise year after year. The 1.5° goal is important. Though we really must take immediate action now, there was no sense of urgency in Glasgow.

There has been a lot of talk of “green recovery” or “building back better”. However, stimulus programmes to escape the Covid-19 crisis have hardly been geared to making economies environmentally sustainable. By March last year, the 30 largest economies had spent more than \$14.9 trillion, of which only \$1.8 trillion was used for green purposes. Global stimulus spending amounted to 16 trillion, but there was no meaningful international coordination. Low-income countries and lower-middle income countries, moreover, didn't have the fiscal space for stimulus programmes.

Seen from the global south, the funding situation is totally unfair. Prosperous nations keep failing to live up to their promises. The most striking recent example is the annual \$100 billion for climate mitigation and adaptation, which were informally promised at the COP in Copenhagen in 2009 and formally included in the Paris Agreement in 2015. As I told you in a previous interview, rich nations were supposed to make those \$100 billion in 2020, but the actual sum was only somewhere between \$70 billion and \$80 billion (see D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/05). There still isn't even a proper tracking mechanism. In Glasgow, rich nations said “sorry” – and then postponed fulfilment to 2023. This is how they keep undermining their own credibility. Since the mid-1970s, most of them have not once lived up to the commitment of spending 0.7% of GNP on official development assistance (ODA). Germany only rose to that level a few years ago thanks to spending on refugees. We have no serious guarantee that you will not drop below it again. The G7, the club of long-established economic powers, is miserly when it comes to debt relief, while poor countries are actually suffering the impacts of greenhouse gases the G7 emitted over decades. What I've found most infuriating in Glasgow, therefore, was that diplomats from the USA and the EU changed the language in the final document in the very last minute. Instead of a Loss and Damage Facility, we only got a Loss and Damage Dialogue. Negotiations will thus drag on as though losses and damages were not happening right now, every day, all over the world.

What sums would be involved?

At this point, one dollar would be good. Your government has given nothing. Yes, they are investing in research on the mat-

ter, but that doesn't help people who are suffering now. No sovereign government has given any money. By contrast, Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, pledged £ 2 million. She is a real leader. Wallonia, the Belgian region, added another €1 million. Private foundations chipped in too, so all summed up we now have something like \$10 million. That is a start, but in view of the need, it is really nothing at all. Of course, whatever we discuss in regard to climate finance, ODA et cetera, is always far below what is required globally. To keep global heating below 1.5° hundreds of trillions of dollars are needed around the world, including from the private sector. The good news is that major corporations are waking up, but policy-making is not coordinated in any meaningful way.

Is there anyone who could serve as the coordinator?

Well, I think that Kristalina Georgieva, the managing director of the IMF, has been doing a very good job. She understands the issues, including the need to vaccinate people in developing countries fast (see Chimezie Anajama in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/06). This is yet another issue where high-income countries have let us down. Georgieva's initiative to expand special drawing rights was excellent (see Kathrin Berensmann in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/10). It basically means that governments around the world have an additional \$ 650 billion of IMF generated monies at their disposal. The share of low-income

countries is a mere \$21 billion, but even that comparatively tiny sum is helpful. Governments of high-income countries should support poorer partners with their new special drawing rights. They can afford to use them generously. This is not taxpayer money. It doesn't affect their budgets.

You said that Glasgow delivered marginal progress. Please give an example.

So far, 80% of the inadequate climate finance high-income countries have provided has been geared to climate mitigation. The reason is that mitigation investments are often profitable in business terms, for example, when they flow into renewable power generation. Adaptation projects do not deliver profits, but they are especially important for low-income countries where emissions are low, but climate impacts are severe. A good result in Glasgow was that adaptation funding will double. That is less than the 50% of climate finance that climate-vulnerable countries demanded, but it is a step the right direction.

Is adaptation funding being used well?

Unfortunately, the most vulnerable and poorest communities hardly benefit so far. We need more action that is driven by grassroots communities. In this area, international agencies can actually play an important role. They should pay attention to what local civil-society leaders say. Grassroots communities understand best what they need. At the same time, international agencies should hold state agencies in develop-



ing countries accountable and track what happens with international funds.

Are there any lessons from Covid-19?

I would say that the most important lesson is that we are in for surprises. The USA and Britain were believed to be leaders in terms of pandemic preparedness. Nonetheless, the death toll was particularly high in both countries. Leaders in rich countries generally underestimate the risks they are running.

How is your country, Bangladesh, coping with climate impacts?

The news is mixed. On the downside, extreme weather events are getting worse. Many people's livelihoods are being destroyed. On the upside, we have become good at leaving no one behind when disaster strikes. We regularly have floods that are worse than what Germany saw this summer, but our death toll is normally zero. Our early warning systems work. Everyone gets timely text messages. People know what to do to stay safe. Secondary school students play an important role. They pass on what they learn in school to families and neighbours. Many assume personal responsibility for taking care of particularly vulnerable people in moments of crisis – consider an elderly lady who lives on her own and is one of the very few people who still do not use any digital device. In terms of disaster preparedness, even Germany can benefit from our experience. In July, Bangladesh-style cell-phone messaging would have saved many lives.



Neighbourhood left smouldering after wildfire in Colorado in late December 2021.



SALEEMUL HUQ
is the director of the
International Centre for
Climate Change and
Development (ICCCAD) at

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in Dhaka.

saleemul.huq@icccad.org
<http://www.icccad.net/>

CLIMATE CRISIS

Tackling “loss and damage”

In some countries, global heating is causing devastating harm with serious implications for people’s welfare. A report that was recently published by two think tanks, the London-based IIED and the Dhaka-based ICCCAD, provides insights into the challenges – and how to deal with them.

By **Wanjohi Kabukuru**

Climate related disasters are becoming worse, but global media attention is decreasing. They hardly paid attention to millions needing aid in East Africa because of severe drought in recent months, nor took notice when Typhoon Rai hit the Philippines before Christmas.

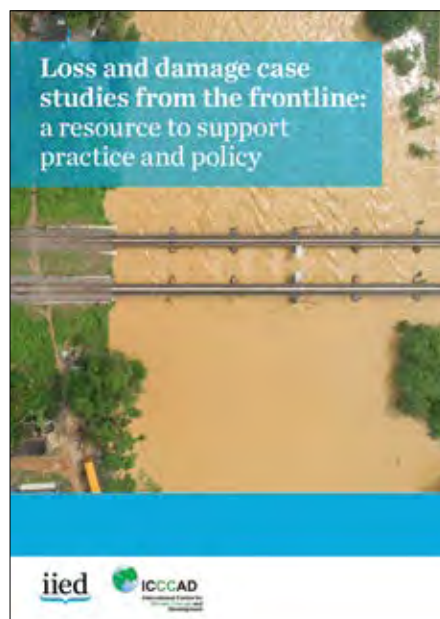
In the past decade, developing countries and small island developing states (SIDS) have borne the brunt of climate related hazards, including cyclones, excessive rainfall, heat waves and droughts. In 2020, Cyclone Harold caused damage worth about \$440 million in Vanuatu, a small island state in the Pacific. That was not quite half of the country’s annual gross domestic product. Events of this kind clearly overburden a nation.

The IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development) and the ICCCAD (International Centre for Climate Change and Development) have teamed up to create a “toolkit” for stakeholders in places that are exposed to climate risks. The publication was edited by Ritu Bharadwaj and Clare Shakya and launched before the UN climate summit in Glasgow 2021. The authors of the case studies are from developing countries which are exposed to climate risks but have not contributed much to bringing them about.

As introduction points out, the international debate on loss and damage began more than three decades ago. Developing countries have long demanded a mechanism to compensate for the harm done by extreme weather, and they wanted to see results at the UN climate summit in Glasgow (see ICCCAD director Saleemul Huq on P. 25 of this issue). However, the prosperous

nations, in spite of being major emitters of greenhouse gas emissions only agreed to keep discussing the matter further.

The IIED/ICCCAD publication shows that losses and damages hamper the adaptive capacities of many countries and may even exceed them. Many different factors have a bearing on those capacities. On the one hand, the exposure to climate hazards obviously matters very much. How people



cope, however, also depends on economic development, poverty levels, the quality of governance and infrastructure, the availability of essential services, the health status of both people and ecosystems, as well as many other things.

The IIED/ICCCAD publication was created to inform stakeholders in countries at risk and policy advocates. The guiding idea is to

- illustrate adverse impacts of climate change,
- explain what they mean for individual people, communities and ecosystems,
- highlight interactions with other issues such as poverty and conflict,

- assess coping and adaptation strategies,
- identify knowledge gaps, and
- spell out priorities for action at various levels.

Accordingly, the case studies in the book deal thus with different phenomena in highly specific circumstances. One case study shows how rising water levels hit household’s costs of living in a Tanzanian village. Another assesses how climate change is contributing to conflict and displacement the Lake Chad Basin (see Mabingué Ngom in focus section of D+C Digital Monthly 2022/01). Other topics covered include

- the impacts of heat and drought on a district in North India,
- infrastructure devastation in two villages in Bhutan and
- how one island of Vanuatu coped with Cyclone Harold.

In the absence of international support, people are developing mechanisms of their own, according to IIED/ICCCAD, and local and traditional survival strategies matter very much. The publication is designed to “harnessing a shared understanding of how effective these approaches and mechanisms are”. That, obviously, is a basis for scaling up.

Several approaches are helpful. The authors argue, for example, that early-warning systems contribute to reducing harm. At the same time, they warn that many losses will be permanent and that transformative measures will be needed in many places.

It is, of course, no coincidence that the IIED/ICCCAD publication largely, but not exclusively focusses on countries that belong to the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), an alliance of 48 developing countries. Together, they have a population of 1.2 billion people.

LINK

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@WanjohiK

WANJOHI KABUKURU
 is a Kenyan journalist who specialises in environmental affairs.
wkabukuru@gmail.com

USA

The US needs to build back better

President Joe Biden has valid climate plans. Depressingly, he is struggling to make the Senate approve important policies. In the meantime, Democrats-run cities and states are taking the lead on reigning in the fuel industry and transitioning to a sustainable economy.

By Katie Cashman

Because of its leading role in causing climate change, the United States has a huge responsibility to mitigate the global climate crisis. In history, no other country has emitted more greenhouse gases. Currently, the USA is the second largest emitter behind China. After four years of total inaction under Donald Trump, President Joe Biden has finally made climate action a top priority – at least on paper. So far, Congress has not passed some of his most important proposals.

It was a promising step that Biden released an executive order in April 2021 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. By 2030, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would be half of what they were in 2005. These targets are in line with what science demands and well above what the Obama administration promised in the context of the Paris agreement in 2015. That pledge was to cut emissions by at least 26% by 2025.

The huge problem is that the US is not even halfway to achieving that. Humanity desperately needs the US to live up to Biden's commitments. That will take unprecedented federal spending and action across all levels of government. According to leading environmental organisations, an annual \$1 trillion in government spending will be needed for a decade.

Congress recently passed an infrastructure bill that includes \$350 billion for environmental efforts in the course of this decade. Among other things, the bill provides:

- \$40 billion for the expansion of public transportation,
- \$7.5 billion for the promotion of electric vehicles and charging infrastructure,

- \$3.5 billion for better insulation of homes and
- \$2.5 billion for the improved transmission of clean energy.

This legislation is important, but it simply will not suffice. Researchers from Princeton University reckon it will only reduce GHG emissions by one percent in

by nearly 15%, especially by providing incentives to phase out fossil fuels and converting the national grid to renewables. At the same time, BBB is designed to boost social services in the USA. The guiding ideas are to recover from the Covid-19 slump by safeguarding environmental sustainability and improving social justice. In regard to carbon emissions and social disparities, the USA is lagging behind other prosperous nations.

To a large extent, BBB is the result of what progressive policymakers have been proposing under the slogan “Green New Deal” for a few years (see my essay in the Focus section of D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly



New Mexico has oil, but is exposed to climate impacts. Its indigenous Navajo community was hit hard by Covid-19.

a decade. \$350 billion, by the way, is only half of what the US government spends on its military every year.

The infrastructure bill was supposed to be followed up with even more ambitious climate spending. The Senate, however, is refusing to pass a massive bill called “Build Back Better” (BBB), which the House of Representatives has already approved. BBB would invest another \$555 billion in climate mitigation in ten years.

From an environmental perspective, it is the bare minimum that needs to happen. BBB has the potential to reduce US emissions

2021/05). Related policies emphasise social justice, sustainability and communities' resilience. The background is that climate mitigation faces vigorous opposition from the immense lobbying power of oil and gas corporations who claim they are providing cheap energy and indispensable, well-paying jobs. Therefore, climate strategies must provide economic opportunities, including to the communities whose livelihoods depend on fossil fuels as well as those who suffer pollution.

Depressingly, it does not look like the Senate will pass the BBB bill. Though

majorities of US citizens have voted not only for President Biden, but also for legislators who endorse climate action, conservative regions are over-represented in the Senate (see box next page). In late January, it was impossible to tell what would become of Biden's agenda.

Initially, he had wanted the BBB budget to amount to more than \$3 billion for environmental and other purposes over 10 years. However, legislators trimmed that sum down to \$1.8 billion before the House of Representatives agreed to it. Some climate-policy provisions were removed, including, for example, incentives that were supposed to motivate power companies to increase their share of renewables systematically.

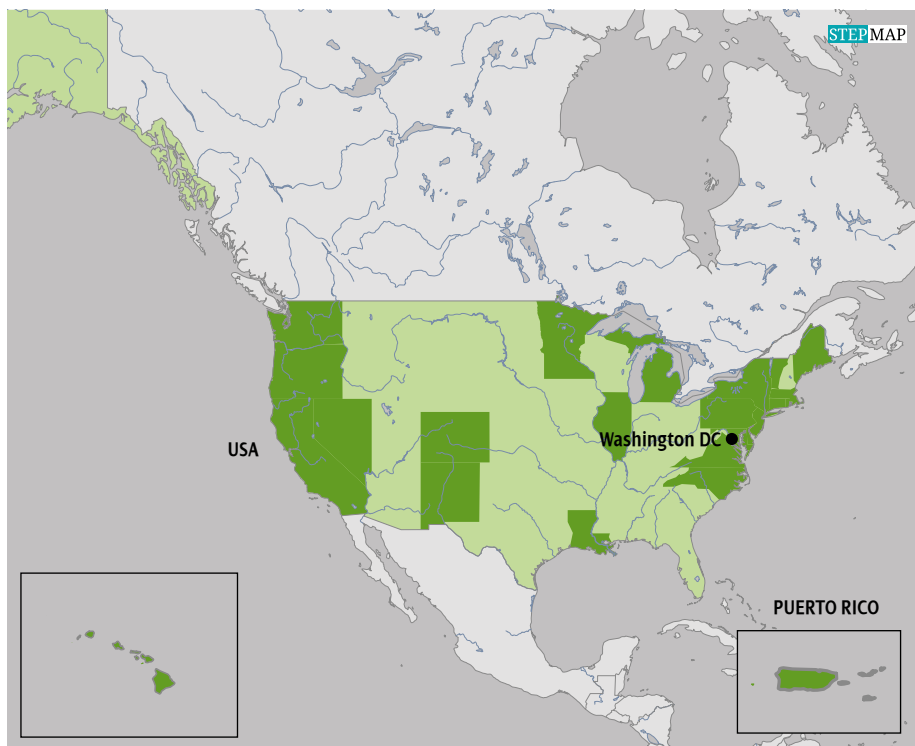
SUBNATIONAL ACTION

In a federal system of government, sub-national governments matter very much. While BBB proposals remain under deliberation, subnational governments are increasingly passing ambitious climate legislation and investing accordingly.

The US Climate Alliance was launched by progressive leaders during the Trump administration, in order to maintain momentum for climate action through state and city actions. Alliance states are leading the charge for a resilient economy, while also protecting communities from extreme weather, natural disasters, biodiversity loss and other climate impacts. Most, though not all Alliance states are run by Democrats.

"Clean cars" is a popular state climate policy which has been passed by 14 states and Washington DC. These policies use a provision under the federal Clean Air Act to adopt more stringent tailpipe pollution limits for vehicles than the national standards. These policies lead to the sale of more low-emission vehicles (LEVs) and zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). Hawaii and other states are also offering rebates for people to install electric charging infrastructure.

California has been a leader in regard to clean cars for decades. Its pattern of setting stricter emissions than the federal government made the automotive industry produce more fuel-efficient cars. None of them wanted to miss the opportunities of this large market. Transportation remains the largest greenhouse-gas emitting sector of the US economy. The potential for reductions is huge. The best approach is to reduce



Dark green shows members of US Climate Alliance, including Puerto Rico and Washington DC.

the need for a car at all. Public transportation can make a difference. Urban planning, moreover, can focus on greater density, better walking and biking infrastructure and electrified transportation. For such purposes, municipal and state funds are being used to improve matters.

California is pioneering climate mitigation in other sectors too. It wants to achieve economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2045 and also end oil and gas extraction.

Various reforms will be needed. Among other things, Governor Gavin Newsom wants to ban new oil and gas wells within a buffer zone of 3,200 feet (roughly one kilometre) from homes, schools and health-care facilities. This measure is not only meant to mitigate the climate crisis. Evidence shows that fossil-fuel extraction causes pollution which harms the health and safety of local communities. Protecting them is part of the Green New Deal agenda. Texas, Colorado and Pennsylvania have established buffer zones, but they are smaller than what California plans from 2023 on.

In terms of crude production, California actually ranks seventh among the 50 states, and its decision to end extraction by 2045 is quite radical. New Mexico is another important state to mention in the climate

fight. On the one hand, it is exposed to substantial climate impacts, especially drought and desertification. On the other, it has huge oil reserves. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham understands that shifting to renewables is necessary and has launched an incentive programme to make companies train and expand their workforce accordingly.

New York state also has a strong track record on Green New Deal policies. Tellingly, the major legislation it passed in 2019 is called the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

The depressing truth, however, is that Republican administrations at the state and municipal levels are not showing any interest in either environmental sustainability or social justice. US politics is polarised. The global community needs the Democrats to prevail. Otherwise, the UN sustainable development goals will prove illusive.



KATIE CASHMAN
is a project coordinator and climate policy associate with the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

(MCEA). The views she expresses in D+C/E+Z are hers, not those of the MCEA. kcashman23@gmail.com

Conservative minority often wins

At the UN climate summit in Glasgow in early November, US President Joe Biden reassured everyone that his country had rejoined the Paris Agreement and would live up to commitments. Congress had not passed the legislation he wanted. Had that been the case, his words would have been more convincing – and more influential.

Three months later, the US Senate has still not passed the Build Back Better (BBB) bill with which Biden wants to mitigate the climate crisis (see main story). The main reason is that Biden's Democrats only have a very slim majority. There are 50 Democratic and 50 Republican senators, and Biden's Vice President Kamala Harris casts the 101st vote when the Senate is tied. BBB thus needs the support of each and every Democrat in the Senate. Two of them – Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona – are not on board, arguing BBB is too expensive.

The Democratic base increasingly resents Manchin and Sinema. However, there is a deeper, systemic problem. The two senators' excessive power results from Republicans being overrepresented in the Senate. Each state has two senators, no matter how many people live there. California with 40 million and Wyoming with 600,000 people both have two senators. This formula ensures that rural, predominantly white areas are overrepresented. All in all, Democratic senators currently represent 40 million more people than their Republican counterparts do.

Making matters worse, neither Puerto Rico with more than 3 million inhabitants nor Washington DC with 700,000 are states, so they are not represented in the Senate at all. Puerto Ricans are mostly Hispanic, and Washington has a large Black community. Both places would probably elect Democrats. If each had two senators, Manchin and Sinema would matter far less.

The political system is not balanced fairly. Conserva-

In a similar way, who becomes president does not depend on who gets the most votes, but who wins the electoral college, in which states, not citizens are represented. In 2016, Donald Trump won the presidency even though Hillary Clinton, his opponent, had almost 3 million more votes. He was ahead in three swing states.

Today, many Trump supporters endorse the lie that he did not lose in 2020. There was an insurrection in the Capitol, but most Republican legislators now deny anything big has happened.



Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema are two Democrats in the Senate who are increasingly resented by their party's base.

tives' advantages sometimes lead to minority rule. Biden won a convincing majority, and, in both Senate and House elections, far more voters opted for Democrats who endorse climate action than for Republicans who do not. Nonetheless, climate action is stalled.

The Supreme Court is not balanced either. Republican presidents have appointed six of nine Supreme Court justices. Trump, who never won a majority himself and whose approval rating always stayed below 50%, appointed three, and Senate majorities, which

represented less than half of the nation's people, approved them. In the first case, Republican senators had kept the seat open for months arguing they had seen how voters would decide in the 2016 elections. In the third case, they rushed the nomination through only days before the 2020 elections which cost them the Senate majority and Trump the presidency.

The policy implications are huge. In January, the Supreme Court blocked Biden's executive order to introduce additional Covid-19 rules. Employees of big companies were supposed to be forced to either get vaccinated or get tested and wear masks at work. According to a recent poll, 52% supported this policy, but the court decided it would excessively restrict personal choice.

Biden likes to tell allies that "America is back" after the erratic Trump years. Sadly, his rhetoric is not entirely convincing. International observers know that Trump or someone like him may yet become president again. They are also aware of Republicans changing election laws at state levels in ways that increase that probability. Democrats in Congress want to pass national legislation that would reduce the scope for manipulation, and majorities of voters appreciate that. Once more, however, Manchin and Sinema are not cooperating.

Diplomats from other nations must tell them that they are undermining the soft power of the USA. It would make sense to send the same message to Republican legislators too. If the US does not lead by example, it ceases to lead. It failed in the Trump years, and its democracy still looks frightfully shaky. KC/DEM

GERMANY

Accelerate climate action

The German economy is recovering from the pandemic. But it will have to change significantly in a short time if the country is to meet its tougher climate targets.

By Jörg Döbereiner

Covid-19 has had significant impacts on German economy. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 4.6% in 2020, the first Corona year, but the economy began to recover in 2021, with GDP increasing by 2.8%. In 2021, the unemployment rate averaged 5.7%. Strong government support, including for job retention and furlough schemes, proved useful.

Since less money than planned was needed to fight the Corona crisis, the new German government wants to allocate €60 billion of the Corona funding to a transformation and climate fund. In fact, Germany's climate policy challenges are so enormous that every cent is welcome. After the Federal Constitutional Court overturned the original climate law last year, Germany had to tighten its emissions targets. The new target is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 65% by

2030 compared to 1990. By 2045 at the latest, Germany should have a climate-neutral economy (see article by Hans Dembowski in D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2021/09).

At present, however, the country is not on a good path. In the short term, emissions have fallen due to Corona. But from 2021 to 2023 they will probably be too high, as the new Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Robert Habeck, a member of the Greens Party, predicts in his assessment of Germany's current climate action status. The measures taken so far are insufficient in all sectors, and the pace of emission reductions must more than double by 2030, according to the programme Habeck presented in January.

In order to achieve the new climate goals, the new government wants to, among other things:

- make two percent of the country's land available for wind power – four times more than before,
- make solar power mandatory on new commercial buildings,
- ramp up the production of green hydrogen,

- create 1 million public charging points for electric vehicles by 2030 and
- speed up procedures for building renewable energy facilities.

The leading business groups are largely in agreement with these plans. They know that Germany is facing an enormous structural change. What they want from policy-makers, above all, is framework conditions that enable them to be competitive internationally. These include a reliable infrastructure, low energy and electricity costs and less bureaucracy.

Environmental organisations generally approve of Habeck's plans, especially the accelerated expansion of renewable energy. But they also argue that Germany's climate goals still fall short of the 1.5-degree target of the Paris Climate Agreement. Fridays for Future, the climate strike movement, also says the measures do not go far enough.

Implementation of the government's plans is already meeting with resistance. For example, some federal states have regulations that block the planned expansion of wind power. In many places, residents are protesting against the building of new power lines or wind turbines. Responding to this, Robert Habeck emphasised that this is not just a technical debate, but one with significant social and cultural aspects.

What policymakers and business leaders agree on: The transition to greater sustainability and climate protection holds potential for conflict, but also great opportunities. Germany could develop innovative solutions that are of interest to other countries. This could ensure value creation, jobs and prosperity in the long term. But that is still a long way off.

LINK

German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action: Germany's current climate action status.

<https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Downloads/E/germany-s-current-climate-action-status.html>



JÖRG DÖBEREINER
is a member of the editorial team of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z

Entwicklung und Zusammen-

arbeit.
euz.editor@dandc.eu



Minister Robert Habeck shows emissions trends in Germany, January 2022.

OUTDATED PARADIGMS

Shaping a shared and sustainable future

Societies and economic systems must be transformed towards greater sustainability and resource efficiency. That is the single biggest challenge humanity faces. Experts are proposing various solutions. The German political economist Maja Göpel is one of them. She has been working on related issues for years. She questions established mindsets and wants to change attitudes.

By Sabine Balk

Maja Göpel, who teaches at Leuphana University Lüneburg, has held prominent positions in major consultative bodies, including serving as secretary general of the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU). For the transformation to a sustainable society, she wants concepts such as “productivity” and “economic activity” to be reconsidered, reappraised and redefined in ways that seriously take into account planetary boundaries and ecosystem services. Society must not strive for growth and individual gain, she says, but for individual and societal well-being.

In her book “Unsere Welt neu denken” (Rethinking Our World) she takes a sweeping look at the challenges facing humanity. She considers “the broad outline of the transformations that can be seen today”. With sights set on a “common sustainable future”, she offers ideas that mediate between people who demand change and the “preservers and blockers”.

Göpel shows very clearly that “business as usual” cannot continue because it will destroy the very foundations of human life. The plain truth is that growth and resource-exploitation will end once “nature and its ecosystems are deprived of the ability to regenerate reliably”.

The present economic system fails to respect planetary boundaries, but is still geared to the pursuit of unchecked growth. The fact that this cannot continue indefinitely has been understood by scientists

since the 1970s and was accepted by the international community at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Nonetheless, there has been no significant change in resource consumption. The reason, according

her, it is a manifestation of human presumption. “By subordinating natural systems to human needs, we reduce their diversity, make them more vulnerable and need to make ever-increasing efforts to stabilise them.” Unless we learn to rebuild social systems, she warns, they will inevitably collapse.

NEW MINDSET

Göpel stresses that we must first recognise the rules on which our economic system is based. Only then will we be able to change it. She recommends reconsidering “what prosperity will mean for people in tomorrow’s



Black Friday shopping in New Jersey, USA.

to Göpel, is: “We have refused to face the new reality. We have spent nearly 50 years in a bubble of self-deception, paying heed to financial indicators rather than biological ones.”

Göpel sees proof of her assessment in the current economic system. According to

world”. New language and terminology will be crucially important. She sees a need for new concepts for “expressing what will be relevant in the future”. At present, Göpel says, “growth” means “destroying the planet”, while “adding value” is nothing more than “making money”.

The scholar also sees social equity as key to achieving a sustainable economy. Where the gap between rich and poor is widening, she sees at risk social cohesion and perceived standards of living. However, she is not only interested in equity within societies, but also between rich and poor nations. She considers it a huge problem that high-income countries outsource environmentally harmful industries to low-income countries and exploit commodities from those countries.

Göpel assesses what “technological progress” means in the transformation she wants to see. She laments that technology is

not seriously taken into account in environmental debates. High-tech solutions mean both opportunities and risks (see Sabine Balk in the Monitor section of D+C/E+Z Digital Monthly 2019/07). For example, electric cars and high-performance internet require a lot of energy and consume resources, thus contributing to global warming. On the other hand, high hopes rest on technological options for carbon sequestration.

In “Unsere Welt neu denken”, which is currently published only in German, the author’s focus is on explaining the problems to readers. Her book “The Great Mindshift”

was published in English in 2016 and focuses on how to make transformation happen (see box).

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SABINE BALK

is a member of the editorial team of D+C Development and Cooperation / E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

euz.editor@dandc.eu

The great mindshift

Achieving sustainable development presents an extremely complex challenge for all social systems. In “The Great Mindshift”, Maja Göpel, a German scholar, elaborates how transformation processes can succeed. The book is available in English as a free download.

Göpel states that the UN Environment Programme has correctly argued that “coordinating a deep and enduring system change is neither a single pathway nor a linear process.” Dynamics can be cir-

cular, for example, when a new mindset modifies the rules of a system, but the system also supports the mindset shift. To meet the huge challenges humanity is facing, the author believes that must happen at a huge scale (see main article). New rules and incentives can bring about structural change. They can thus serve as crucial mechanisms, exerting a powerful influence on systemic behaviour over time.

As Göpel spells out, a new aim or purpose slowly

but surely becomes normative in a successful transformation. For example, the meaning of “growth” is redefined, and that change then reinforced by various institutions, in social relations and people’s minds.

The political economist explains: “For me it is not so much that we have to find an alternative to freedom and prosperity, or even growth. We have to reclaim their meaning for a world with nine billion instead of one billion people”. People today, she adds, lack spiritual guidance. Production and consumption have been commodified and more homogenous, but the potential for satisfying needs has not increased.

Göpel calls for a “Second Enlightenment” in the 21st century – an allusion to the 18th century movement that sought to overcome obstacles to progress through rational thinking, placing scientific knowledge above religious belief. Göpel considers more enlightened attitudes essential in the following areas:

- “Progress” should not be measured only in monetary terms. It must be equitable and balanced, so differentiated social, environmental and cultural indicators are needed.

- “Freedom” should not be understood as the absence of obstacles to individual consumption; it should embody human security and contentment, including freedom from the fear of falling behind in the race for resources and the freedom from the endless want that has become embedded in our culture, hindering our well-being.

- “Prosperity” should not mean ever more consumption. It can signify a holistic understanding of human needs and diversified strategies of need satisfaction.

- “Economic growth” should not be an end in itself. Different types of output and activity serve the purpose of good living within planetary boundaries.

Göpel appreciates that many of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are in line with these principles. Nevertheless, she is critical of the way they dogmatically propagate GDP growth and greater incomes even for the rich. SB

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Maja Göpel at a climate protest in Berlin in 2021.

“Because of the pandemic, we lost even more forest, grasslands and wetlands than we normally would,”
Ugandan climate scholar David Mfitumukiza argues in our interview.

Page 20

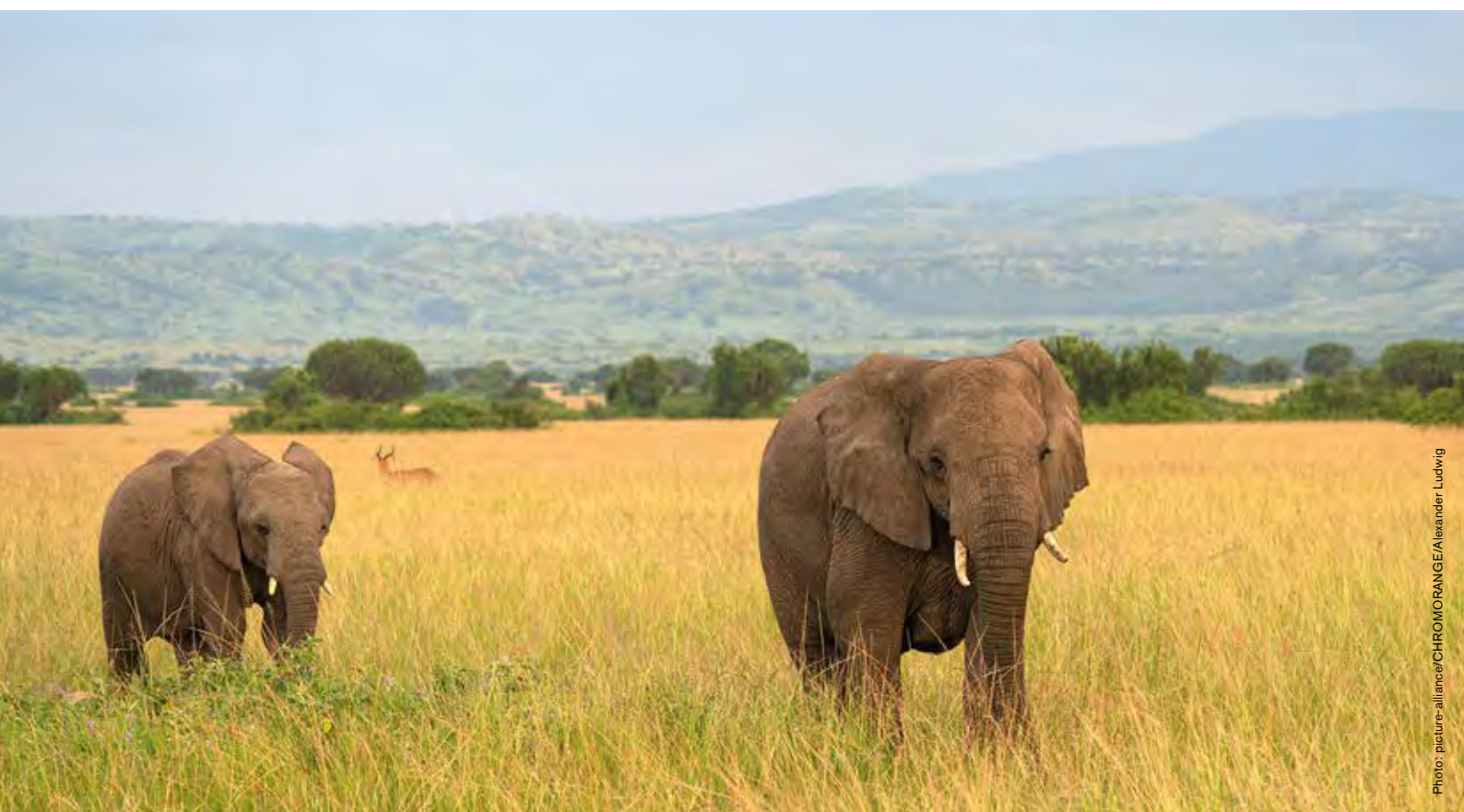


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