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LATEST NEWS IN SUSTAINABILITY

NO. 146 | December 2023

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

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Consultative Status, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

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- NGO Sustainability team

“A successful COP28 is not about a single individual or nation, but the collective will and concerted efforts of all countries in these negotiations” -Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Francisco La Camera

Francisco La Camera serves as the Director-General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), an intergovernmental organization dedicated to supporting countries in their transition to sustainable energy. IRENA plays a pivotal role as a platform for international cooperation, serving as a center of knowledge on renewable energy.

La Camera was first appointed as the Director-General of IRENA in 2019. Under his leadership, the agency has established several strategic partnerships with United Nations organizations, including UNDP, UNFCCC, and the Green Climate Fund. In 2023 he was reappointed for his second term where he will continue to focus on promoting renewable energy sources and advancing global energy transition. Under Francisco La Camera's leadership, IRENA has deepened its collaboration with the Pacific Community to accelerate renewable energy



deployment in Pacific Island countries. This partnership focuses on capacity building and project facilitation, including significant projects like the Sa'asa'ai Biogas project in Samoa, which converts waste into sustainable biogas. Previously, La Camera served at the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land & Sea as the Director-General of Sustainable Development, Environmental Damage, EU, and International Affairs from 2014. In this role, he

Francesco La Camera speaking at COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt promoted cooperation, particularly with developing countries and Small Island Developing States, and played a key role in international events like

UNFCCC's COP 21 to 24 and Italy's G7 Environment Presidency in 2017. He also contributed to establishing the Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development in Rome and the Financial Platform for Climate and Sustainable Development.

“There Will Come Soft Rains”

by Sara Teasdale ¹

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum trees in tremulous white,

Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

¹ Sara Teasdale. "There Will Come Soft Rains." *The Language of Spring*. Beacon Press, 2003.

“U.S. spending on Clean Energy and Tech Spurs Allies to Compete”

By: Ana Swanson, Jeanna Smialek, Alan Rappoport, and Eshe Nelson, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Under the Biden administration, the United States has embarked on its largest industrial policy push in decades, using financial incentives such as tax breaks and grants to encourage factories producing solar panels, electric vehicles, semiconductors, and other green technologies. The push is a response to the offshoring of production to countries such as China, which has sapped domestic production. However, the push has consequences internationally as other countries, particularly in Europe and East Asia, have accused the U.S. of protectionism. In response, they are creating their own incentives to keep companies from relocating. Some are calling it a ‘subsidy race.’ Furthermore, critics argue that the initiative, which according to the Biden administration will unleash over \$3.5 trillion over the next decade, fosters a ‘tit-for-tat’ situation which enables companies that sell high-value technologies to ‘country shop’ for the most favorable conditions. The development is also concerning for smaller economies, which do not stand a chance to compete with such policies. Currently, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is the principal policy attracting companies to the United States.

[Full Article](#)

“Food Systems: Supporting the Triangle of Food Security”

By: Jon Heggie, *National Geographic*



Photo: Getty Images

The food security framework can be imagined as a triangle with one vertical side as addressing food needs for billions of people. The other vertical side is protecting the earth from declines in biodiversity and climate change. The base supporting both of those is enhancing the livelihoods of people that work in the supply system. The facts outlining the toll the food system has on the planet are apparent: creating over a third of greenhouse emissions, three quarters of water consumption, and using about half of habitable land. It will require collaboration between all stakeholders throughout the food process, from distributors to processors, packagers to growers. To create nutritious food, we need to increase productivity. Food choice ranges can change to support sustainable and just food systems, such as alternative forms of protein than meat. Packaging that circumvents the need for preservatives or refrigeration could help accessibility to safe nutrition. Companies like Tetra Pak help the goal of global food supply by creating school feeding programs. Pesticides and monoculture should not be used and hydroponics could offer an alternative to growing on soil.

[Full Article](#)

“COP28: As ‘Humanity’s Fate Hangs in the Balance’, UN Chief Calls for Urgent Action to Prevent Planetary Crash”

By: *UN News*



Photo: Getty Images

UN Secretary General António Guterres urged action on leaders to end fossil fuel dependence and to address climate justice. In his remarks, he stressed the need for cooperation and political will to address the “sickness” only the global leaders “can cure”. He praised the development of the fund for loss and damage to lighten the burden faced by vulnerable countries from the influences of climate disaster. To underscore his message, he remarked on his journey to the melting ice of Antarctica and the melting glaciers of Nepal. He gave hope that we can avoid planetary crash and reach the 1.5°C goal by a path chartered by the IPCC. Energy markets and food prices are just some of the pieces at stake. Mr. Guterres said the global stocktake should address three areas: first, drastically cutting emissions by the global stocktake setting clear expectations for economy-wide nationally determined contributions by all countries aligned with 1.5°C warming, second, a just transition to renewables should be accelerated by actions like cutting coal, and thirdly tackle climate justice by addressing extortionate borrowing costs that block developing countries’ climate action plans and surging finance for adaptation and loss and damage.

[Full Article](#)

“Americans Love Avocados. It’s killing Mexican forests?”

By: Simon Romero and Emiliano Rodríguez Mega, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Western Mexico is being deforested to make room for more avocado orchards in order to increase exports to the United States. Almost all such deforestation has in the last two decades likely been in violation of Mexican law as it is largely driven by criminal gangs, corrupt officials, and local landowners. Americans currently eat three times as many avocados as they did twenty years ago, and human rights and environmental activists say the trend comes at a high cost. Avocado orchards have high environmental impacts, and trees require vast amounts of water to grow. In 2021, the U.S. and Mexico signed a deal to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030, but nonprofit Climate Rights International has found that American officials have taken no action to stop avocados grown on deforested land from entering the American market. An anonymous official with the state prosecutor’s office said that the environmental unit had been warned by supervisors not to investigate orchards larger than 12 acres. The *New York Times* found in interviews that Mexican locals fighting the deforestation have been met with intimidation, abductions, and shootings.

[Full Article](#)

“A Loss and Damage Fund in the Pacific?”

By: Kate Higgins, *IDN*



Photo: Getty Images

Island nations face threats from rising seas and extreme weather despite contributing little to global carbon emissions. At last year’s COP27, developing nations successfully pushed for the creation of a Loss and Damage fund that wealthy high-emitting countries would pay into to address irreparable climate harms. However, the fund's operational details remain unresolved. Pacific leaders urge that the mechanism should prioritize financing their region's intensifying recovery costs after cyclones, flooding and saltwater intrusion destroy infrastructure and displace communities. With Australia and New Zealand’s support, a decentralized Pacific facility could serve as a model for swiftly mobilizing Loss and Damage aid to other climate hotspots. COP28 will finalize fund procedures, and Pacific organizers are rallying diplomatic pressure on historical emitters to follow through on promised compensation for unavoidable loss and ecological grief afflicting their homeland islands.

[Full Article](#)

“Shipping Contributes Heavily to Climate Change. Are Green Ships the Solution?”

By: Ana Swanson, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Maritime shipping generates nearly 3 percent of global carbon emissions, but making vessel fuels greener is difficult because sustainable options like hydrogen and ammonia are too scarce or costly and deploying carbon capture technology widely across the sector remains further off. The sector has pledged to halve emissions by 2050 but environmentalists argue more ambitious goals and immediate solutions are needed. Some companies are beginning to experiment with using wind or hydrogen power for small domestic routes, while carbon credits let major carriers like Maersk and CMA CGM purchase emissions offsets to claim net-zero cargo transport. However, most ships globally continue burning heavy fuel oil, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) rejected proposals this fall for alternative power systems, tougher fuel rules, or even speed limits to curb shipping pollution. Without binding IMO agreements or national policies to support the adoption of zero-emission marine fuels, shipping may undermine global climate efforts. Small-scale pilot projects have limited near-term impact on overall carbon reductions but could pioneer innovations for long-haul vessels to one day replace the use of fossil fuels. Stronger regulatory action remains essential to

chart a more sustainable course for the massive shipping industry critical to world trade.

[Full Article](#)

“U.S. and China Agree to Displace Fossil Fuels by Ramping Up Renewables”

By: Lisa Friedman, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

The United States and China in a cooperative effort to tackle climate change have released statements on plans to expand renewable energy and displace fossil fuels. The countries agreed to “pursue efforts to triple renewable energy capacity globally by 2030,” marking the first time China has agreed to specific emission targets in its economy. The so-called “Sunnylands agreement” does not promise the Chinese phase out of coal, or any Chinese plans to stop the construction of future coal plants. However, the country agreed to targets for *all* greenhouse gas emissions – a significant step as its current climate goal only concerns carbon dioxide. While the agreement brings positive news, there is skepticism on whether the efforts of the U.S. (the historically biggest polluter) and China (the current biggest polluter) are enough to keep global warming less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

[Full Article](#)

“One Unexpected Way to Reduce Violent Crime? Create Green Spaces.”

By: Allison Tores Burkta, *National Geographic*



Photo: Getty Images

The violent crime rate went down from 2,774 incidents in 2012 to 985 just ten years later. Greening projects have been mowing vacant lots, such as the Genesee County Land Bank’s Clean & Green program. The effects extend beyond making the neighborhoods feel safer, where research has shown it reduces violent crime. In a review of 45 papers, crime in urban areas was reduced with inclusion of green spaces. In a direct comparison of assaults and violent crimes between maintained vacant lots through the Clean & Green program and untreated vacant lots, the former had 40% less of those occurrences. The theory behind this is “broken windows” and “busy streets”, where broken windows send a signal that nobody’s watching whereas a busy street creates a sense of community. Where racist policies exist, such as redlining, that create situations affected by economic decline for low income people, even if they didn’t cause it, a systematic process of undoing that can be undertaken.

[Full Article](#)

Yes, Growing Trees Will Greatly Help Fight the Climate Change Crisis

By: NGO Sustainability Board Member, Ambassador Dr. Koki Muli Grignon,

~Originally published in The Standard, Kenya~

According to the United Nations, the world is standing on the brink of climate calamity because it will exceed 1.5 °C by 2035 and it faces a 2.5 °C warming by 2100.

The rate of the sea level has doubled in the last decade leading to hurricanes, submerging islands, food and water crises, refugees, and other human crises.

Climate change is an existential catastrophe and an emergency that must be addressed NOW. We urgently need deep, rapid, and sustained greenhouse gas emission reductions of 43 percent by 2030, just 7 years away and we MUST get to net ZERO GHG emission by 2050.

In July 2022, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), convened the Third Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies Between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, in partnership with the UN University (UNU) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

More than 2,000 participants generated significant potential solutions and proposals to better address the climate emergency and reversals in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In September 2015, following a successful process co-chaired and co-facilitated by Kenya, the UN General Assembly adopted the SDGs in the report entitled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

SDG 13, “urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts,” has 5 targets specifically dealing with scaling up action to combat climate change. SDG 15, “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss,” dealing with life on land requires a fundamental shift in humanity’s relationship with nature.

According to the UN, people and the planet will suffer severely if we continue to lose our forests, degrade our land, and cause species to become extinct, warning that the world is currently facing the largest species extinction event since the dinosaur age. The situation is grim because the protected area coverage of key biodiversity areas has stalled since 2015 and 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land was degraded every year from 2015 to 2019! This is why our government should be congratulated for the tree-growing vision to enhance our forest cover by 2032. Declaring 13th November 2023, a tree-growing holiday is the best effort at reforestation and the enthusiasm with which Kenyans embraced it is indicative of our love for the environment

irrespective of the role IMF might have played in it. It was truly heart-warming to witness literally everyone planting trees. We ordinarily plant trees anyway, but making it a national event made so much difference. It feels great to learn that the target of planting over 150 million was achieved in one day alone.

Imagine the magnitude of what we shall accomplish if we scale up and stick with this ambition. We shall reverse some of the serious damage to our forests, and environment while dealing with the negative effects of climate change.

It was impressive to see the coordinated and well-planned distribution of seedlings throughout the country and KEFRI and KFS truly merit accolades for providing seedlings. On Thursday 16th November 2023 KEFRI Kitui, NEMA, KEPHIS, County Government, and South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) led by the Vice Chancellor, Prof Douglas Shitanda planted over 3,000 mostly indigenous seedlings at the university. Although we have our nursery at SEKU, the collaboration portends exponential growth in tree cover. KEFRI introduced the KEFRI JAZA Miti App, which Prof Shitanda promised to have put into use by the SEKU fraternity. We are thrilled to see tree-growing being embraced, especially now that there is so much rain and expected to continue until the New Year.

If we accelerate the momentum with clear follow-up plans, we will achieve the goal President Ruto has set for Kenya by 2032. This is one bi- partisan issue almost all Kenyans agree on. We shall make a difference by

ensuring the trees we plant are nurtured and cared for until maturity.

COP28: Highlights and Takeaways

By: Intern, Egest Balla

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai has seen a flurry of notable announcements and initiatives during its first week aimed at urgent climate action across mitigation, adaptation, finance and more. A landmark achievement was the official launch of a long-awaited “loss and damage” fund to support vulnerable countries facing devastating climate impacts. Developed countries agreed to create the fund and lay out technical details in the coming year, though more clarity is needed on funding targets. There is optimism this signals a shifting attitude toward the concept of climate justice. Here are some key takeaways.

On curbing emissions, over 100 countries signed the Global Methane Pledge to cut methane pollution 30% by 2030, building on past commitments with new partners like Pakistan. Separately, over 60 countries launched an Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter that sees major fossil fuel producers unite to cut emissions from production, but with fossil fuels dominating talks, these efforts encounter criticisms of “greenwashing.” Clean energy saw a mega-announcement from over 100 countries promising to triple global renewable power capacity to 2,400 GW by 2030. Led by the U.S., Japan and Germany, the partnership should vastly accelerate renewables deployment this decade. The U.S. also pledged \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund over four years to help developing nations, though it falls short of fair share assessments.

In transport, a major new report from leading experts outlined targeted policies and measures

countries can implement across road, aviation, shipping, and rail to achieve full decarbonization by mid-century in line with net zero. Concrete policy steps like fuel economy standards for vehicles can drive rapid change. For cities and regions increasingly leading local climate efforts, a Cities & Regions Pavilion was launched to provide visibility and bring local leaders into global decision making. Over 60 cities also made pledges under the new Cities Race to Zero relay. To boost transparency, expert guidance helps subnational actors standardize emissions inventories and net zero plans. Finance took further steps with a new Energy Transition Accelerator partnership harnessing public and private finance to phase out coal power in South Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The crucial role of ending deforestation saw less progress. In light of this, a new fund that should channel payments to reward forest conservation lacked firm donor commitments early on.

Finally, global ocean and food systems, which are critical climate frontiers, saw their place solidified on the COP agenda. Bold proposals call for 100% sustainable ocean management globally by 2030 to preserve this massive carbon sink, and over 130 countries agreed to put food systems transformation high on the climate action agenda through sustainable agriculture policies that boost resilience, productivity and adaptation. COP28 has mobilized commitments across nearly all dimensions of the climate fight. The ongoing encouraging announcements must now lead to lasting on-the-ground impacts worldwide to meet the urgency and scale of the climate crisis. The will seems stronger than ever, but there is still a long way to go.

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