

Consensus exists on need to save forests

CLIMATE CHANGE

Preservation is 'least contentious' issue

DAVID FOGARTY
REUTERS

SINGAPORE – While nations bicker over the size of emissions cuts and climate funds, saving forests has turned out to be among the least contentious issues in UN climate talks and has achieved the most progress.

The reason, analysts and the world body say, is that curbing deforestation is an easy win for the climate and most countries support a UN scheme that aims to reward developing nations for protecting their remaining forests.

That bodes well for major UN climate talks that start next Monday in Copenhagen, where the scheme, called reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD), is likely to make further progress, though a number of issues need to be resolved.

Investors such as banks and some rich nations are pushing for REDD to be a success, potentially ushering in a carbon trading scheme from 2013 that could be worth billions of dollars a year.

"If anything is going to be delivered at Copenhagen it's going to be REDD," said Paul Winn, forest and climate campaigner for Greenpeace Australia. "That is because we are looking at a huge global emissions source. There is also the recognition that it is a relatively cheap, easy form of emissions reductions."

Forests soak up huge amounts of planet-warming carbon dioxide, such as emissions from burning fossil fuels. But the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization says about 13 million hectares (32.5 million acres), or an area roughly the size of England, are destroyed annually. That means deforestation contributes about 20 per cent of mankind's greenhouse gas emissions annually, according to the UN

climate panel, although a recent study says new calculations show the figure is about 12 per cent.

"I think it's a foregone conclusion that REDD will be part of the new agreement. Ironically it's actually the most advanced now," said Tony La Vina, chairman of the REDD negotiations.

La Vina, of the Philippines, says the scheme still faces hurdles and more talks are needed to seal a broad framework. But he said he had been surprised that, overall, the issue has been far less contentious than other parts of the climate negotiations, such as emissions targets and funding to help poorer nations adapt to global warming.

Financing for REDD was not a problem, he said. "Developed countries are at the door with the funding and the capacity-building and support and they just want to make sure certain things are met."

Bigger problems are trying to finalize which institutions would manage the cash, how to ensure developing nations have a say in how to use the money and the extent of the market's role in providing funds.

The broad idea of REDD is to reward developing countries with valuable carbon offsets for every tonne of CO2 that is saved from being emitted by protecting forests and rehabilitating them through replanting or sustainable management. The problem is that such carbon measurement and accounting is complex and time-consuming to put in place, requires laws to be enacted, officials to be trained and investors to be assured that the scheme won't be undermined by corruption. Ensuring forests aren't simply cut down later, or that deforestation is displaced to another region or country, is another concern.

Most world leaders going to Copenhagen

UN climate summit has 98 acceptances

JOHN ACHER AND JAMES GRUBEL
REUTERS

COPENHAGEN – Most world leaders, including Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, will attend a climate summit in Copenhagen this month, boosting chances that a new

UN deal to fight climate change will be reached, host Denmark said yesterday.

The number of leaders planning to come to the Dec. 7-18 talks has risen to 98 out of the 192 members of the United Nations, Denmark said. The number was up from 65 in a first count after invitations were sent last month. "It gives me a strong feeling that we are on the right track," Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen told reporters.

Many analysts say chances of healing deep rifts between rich and poor nations over how to fight global warming have improved after leaders including U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jibao have said they would come.

Obama plans to attend on Dec. 9, a day before he is due to collect the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Most other leaders plan to come on Dec. 17-18, pinning prestige on getting a deal done.



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The MUHC Cardiovascular Sciences Program

Leading the battle against heart disease in Canada

LORRAINE HAD SUFFERED FROM A HEART MURMUR since she was a child. But when she began to experience difficulty breathing, she knew something had changed. Doctors determined that Lorraine's aortic valve had started to narrow: a condition that typically involves open heart surgery. Because Lorraine also suffered from liver and kidney disease, such surgery posed grave risks.

Fortunately, Lorraine was a patient at the McGill University Health Centre's (MUHC's) acclaimed MAUDE unit, one of only a few centres in North America performing Percutaneous Aortic Valve Replacement. By threading a small instrument through an artery in her leg, surgeons could replace Lorraine's diseased valve without the risks of open-heart surgery. Three days post-surgery, Lorraine was back home and recovering comfortably. "As soon as I woke up from the surgery I felt better," she says. "I was able to breathe!"

Repairing hearts from childhood to adulthood

Patients like Lorraine are the *raison d'être* of the MUHC's Cardiovascular Sciences Program. "The MUHC has a very patient-focused approach to cardiovascular medicine," says Dr. Jacques Genest, Director of Cardiology at the MUHC and Director of the Cardiovascular Genetics Laboratory at the Research Institute of the MUHC. "Our goal is to offer high-end care across the lifespan, from diagnosis of heart problems in the foetus to care for the elderly."

"We have excellent multi-disciplinary programs in key areas. For instance, the MUHC is a Centre of Excellence in Congenital Heart Disease. We have an advanced heart failure clinic, and the busiest artificial heart program in Canada, – a program which combines medical and surgical approaches. We have a state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization facility and an advanced electrophysiology program for both diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. The list goes on and on."

Research: getting to the heart of cardiovascular disease

Research – a vitally important activity within the Cardiovascular Sciences Program – is divided into four main categories: basic, clinical, population-based and research into new applications of high technology. One important research focus is on the genetics of cardiovascular disease.

Scientists are also investigating how the body handles cholesterol, the artery-clogging substance which plays a key role in the development of many cardiovascular problems. Discoveries by Dr. Genest and his colleagues at the MUHC and McGill University recently led to changes in the Canadian Lipid Guidelines – nationwide standards that govern treatment of patients with high cholesterol.

The future of cardiac care at the Glen Campus

In the last several years, high-level cardiology was centralized at the Royal Victoria Hospital, resulting in more efficient care delivery. With the move to the MUHC's new facilities at the Glen Campus, the Cardiovascular Sciences



Minimally invasive valve replacement, as performed by Dr. Benoit de Varennes, is one of the complex procedures that the MUHC's Department of Cardiology specializes in performing.

Program will take another step towards even greater integration of patient care, teaching and research.

At the Glen Campus, Dr. Genest and his colleagues will have access to leading-edge facilities and technology, including surgical suites designed to accommodate the latest, minimally invasive cardiac procedures. Surgeons and physicians will work side-by-side, strengthening the interdisciplinary approach that is the MUHC's hallmark. And, with The Montreal Children's Hospital right next door, the MUHC's MAUDE unit, which treats patients with congenital heart defects, can offer even more seamless care from infancy through adulthood.

For cardiac researchers, the new Research Institute at the Glen Campus will offer one of the most advanced

research environments in North America. A highlight of the facility will be the Centres for Innovative Medicine and Translational Biology, designed to combine the strengths of clinical and laboratory researchers and move discoveries from the lab bench to the bedside so patients can benefit from new treatments and cures faster.

Every aspect of the Cardiovascular Sciences Program will benefit from the move to the Glen Campus, according to Dr. Genest. "The new facilities will allow us to develop an even more fully integrated approach to cardiovascular medicine and science, and an even better environment for our patients." For Lorraine and the thousands of Quebecers suffering from cardiovascular disease, this is heartening news indeed.



Research assistant Katia Desbiens is part of the team investigating the genetics of heart disease and lipid metabolism.

The New MUHC: Transforming Health Care for Generations



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