
[Our expectations for the Climate Change Convention's COP6](#)

The sixth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Climate Change will take place in November in The Hague, The Netherlands. The public at large, increasingly concerned over the present and future effects of climate change, may well expect as a matter of course that their governments will have the good sense to take constructive action to solve the problem. Among those of us who have been participating in this international process, however, expectations are somewhat different.

The fact is that this Convention appears to be going in the wrong direction and many of those participating seem to be quite happy about that. It has in fact become a negotiation more concerned with how much money each country thinks it might save or grab in the short term than about finding true solutions to a real problem.

To cut or not to cut emissions? Amazingly enough, that does not seem to be the question. For all it seems quite clear that cutting emissions is a need. However, most of the major emitters and oil-producing countries are trying to find ways to avoid doing what they know needs to be done, telling themselves that this will somehow save them money.

The promise of short-term money is also increasingly a factor for many Southern delegations. Three years ago, prior to the Kyoto climate meeting in 1997, one African climate-change negotiator angrily told a Northern-country representative that "our countries are not toilets for your emissions!" Yet today, many Southern countries are going out of their way actually to offer themselves as such "toilets" in order to gain a few dollars, renting or selling their countries' lands and forests to act as supposed carbon sinks for the emissions that Northern countries will continue sending to the atmosphere. The fact that this particular sewage system won't work, and that the resulting climate change is having increasingly serious effects on their people, ecosystems and economies, is seldom mentioned.

The upshot is that the current round of climate negotiations are focused on carbon sinks and not on carbon emissions reductions, equal rights to the atmosphere, and the adoption of clean, renewable and low-impact energy -- which is what they should be about.

Government delegates bewitched by false economics, not surprisingly, are backed by many businesses. The Climate Convention has the peculiarity of having a number of active participants lobbying under the name "Business NGOs". Believe it or not, the room they occupy even bears that name. Among others, the nuclear "business community" is active in the talks, trying to sell its "clean" energy to save the planet. More unexpectedly, even some environmental NGOs appear to be playing the carbon sinks game and are willing to receive carbon money for forest conservation and rehabilitation.

On the positive side, there is a large representation of NGOs and indigenous peoples organizations trying to make governments change course in The Hague. This could well come to pass if people in all countries of the world were to put sufficient pressure on their governments and on the conference

delegates. That means making people aware of what's happening, organizing pressure on governments and bringing that pressure to bear at The Hague. Without that pressure, it is all too clear what the outcome in November will be.