



Bridges Trade BioRes

Biweekly news, events and resources at the intersection of trade and environment

Volume 11 • Number 4, 7 March 2011

Sustainable Energy

- Clean Energy Issue Rattles Canada-EU
FTA Discussions 1

Environment at the WTO

- Amid Discord, WTO Members Explore
Compromises on Environmental Goods 3

Biotechnology

- EC Proposes Shift Away from
Zero Tolerance on Biotech Imports 4

Sustainable Development

- UNEP Tackles Green Economy,
Environmental Governance in Nairobi 5

In Brief

- BASIC Ministers Disappointed with Progress
on Climate Commitments 7
- Beijing Boosts Priority of Environment
in Development Plan 8
- India Slashes Duties on Electric and
Hybrid Vehicles 9

Events and Resources

- Events 9
- Resources 11

Bridges Trade BioRes® is published by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), an independent, not-for-profit organisation based at International Environment House II, Chemin de Balexert 7, 1219 Geneva, Switzerland, tel: (+41) 22-917-8492; fax: (+41) 22-917-8093.

Bridges Trade BioRes is made possible through the generous support of the Government of the United Kingdom (DFID) and ICTSD's core donors including the governments of Australia, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden. Your financial or in-kind support to BRIDGES and the BRIDGES series of publications is a direct and visible commitment to advancing sustainable development in global policymaking. For more details contact Andrew Crosby, Managing Director at acrosby@ictsd.ch or +41 (0)22 917 8335. To subscribe to Bridges Trade BioRes or access back issues, visit www.ictsd.net/news/biores/. Excerpts from Bridges Trade BioRes may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be directed to the Editor or the Director.

This edition of Bridges Trade BioRes was edited by Andrew Aziz, aaaziz@ictsd.ch. Contributors to this issue were Andrew Aziz, Abigail Hunter, Joachim Monkelbaan, Mahesh Sugathan, and Elizabeth Van Pelt. The Director is Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz.

ISSN 1682-0843

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Clean Energy Issue Rattles Canada-EU FTA Discussions

Transatlantic friction over Canada's vast bitumen oil deposits came to a head recently, after secret EU documents appeared to suggest that Ottawa had threatened to pull the plug on a prospective bilateral trade pact if Europe insisted on introducing an environmental clause for oil imports.

The documents, which came to light through access-to-information requests, suggest that Canada has lobbied the EU not to differentiate between tar sands oil and that from conventional sources when developing new fuel standards, going so far as to link it to the current negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Canadian officials immediately denied the allegation, insisting that the fuel standard issue is being discussed outside the trade talks. "While of concern, this issue is not linked to our commitment to productive free trade discussions with the European Union," Peter Van Loan, Canada's trade minister, said in an email statement.

Details of a briefing note prepared by EU officials for climate commissioner Connie Hedegaard were published by Reuters on 21 February. "Canada has been lobbying the Commission and member states intensively to avoid a separate default value for fuel derived from tar sands," it reportedly reads. "[Ottawa] has raised the issue in the context of EU-Canada negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement." Reuters cites unnamed sources close to the negotiations that support the details in the documents.

Canadian PM raises EU fuel policy concerns

A separate briefing note revealed that discussions over an evolving European fuel-quality directive took place during a high-level meeting between Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso during a Canada-EU summit last May. The directive in question would require transport fuel suppliers operating in the EU to reduce their lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions to 6 percent below 2009 levels by 2020.

The proposed directive also creates a division between conventional and unconventional oil sources, with oil sands classified as the latter. This opens the possibility that the standard would discourage European purchasers from buying Canadian tar sands oil. According to the briefing note, the two parties agreed to continue discussions, “in order to help broaden (the EU environment directorate’s) understanding of the issues presented.”

Public interest in the fuel quality directive escalated over 2010 until a document revealed that the EU would push back its ruling on the issue until December 2011 (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [11 October 2010](#)). Some speculated that the move indicated that the EU would be abandoning the initiative, but EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard have reportedly been working diligently on establishing a reliable mechanism for accurately measuring the carbon footprint of fuels.

Experts say the EU is being extremely cautious about establishing scientific evidence to back the potential trade barrier, should Canada decide to take the issue to WTO dispute settlement.

Environmentalists concerned over clause to protect corporations

Critics on both sides of the Atlantic have taken issue with a proposed investor-state dispute settlement clause in CETA that would allow corporations to sue governments if climate change regulations inhibited their ability to produce fossil fuels.

Environmentalists across Europe staged protests against the free trade pact last month, arguing that the clause would compromise the EU’s ability to effectively regulate greenhouse gas emissions (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [7 February 2010](#)). Scott Sinclair, director of the Trade and Investment Research Project at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a left-leaning research institute, says CETA poses a similar threat to environmental protection in Canada.

Sinclair says the governing Conservative Party of Canada will likely continue to push hard on the issue as a means of placating voters in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, which rely heavily on revenue from the oil industry and have historically been strong supporters of the party.

But the role of bitumen in the CETA negotiations is particularly notable because Canada does not currently export any oil to the EU. Sinclair says Canada is not concerned about the loss of potential markets, but rather the precedent it could create as other countries try to introduce emissions-curbing policies.

For their part, environmentalists in Europe say officials are obligated to establish rules on fuel quality as they try to meet pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 percent from 1990 levels by 2020. EU member states have set themselves the same target date for increasing renewables’ share in final energy consumption to 20 percent, and achieving a 20 percent increase in energy efficiency.

ICTSD reporting; “Tar Sands Row Threatens Canada-EU Trade Deal: Sources,” REUTERS, 21 February 2010; “Trade talks could wreck climate change measures, campaigners warn,” THE GUARDIAN; 31 January 2010; “Canada pressured EU over its green policy to protect Alberta’s oilsands: Documents,” THE VANCOUVER SUN, 23 February 2010; “EU to tackle Canadian tar sands in new law -sources,” REUTERS, 23 January 2010.

ENVIRONMENT AT THE WTO

Amid Discord, WTO Members Explore Compromises on Environmental Goods

Doha Round proposals for expedited liberalisation for trade in environmental goods risk destroying infant green technology industries in developing countries without benefiting the environment, Brazil's ambassador to the WTO argued recently.

Roberto Azevedo, Brazil's WTO envoy, argued that negotiations under the Doha mandate for the reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers to environmental goods and services (EGS) should include agricultural goods of particular interest to developing countries – not just industrial products.

Arguing that the chief objective of the negotiations was to deliver a 'triple-win' of environmental, developmental, and trade benefits, he stressed that the EGS were "not market access negotiations nor should they be turned into super sectoral market access negotiations," in a reference to the sector-specific liberalisation initiatives that are part of the standard non-agricultural market access (NAMA) talks.

In his intervention in the Committee on Trade and Environment - special (negotiating) session, Azevedo underscored the need for an outcome that offers measurable environmental gains along with improved trade opportunities for developing countries. He criticised discussions in the committee for failing to "shed any light on how the environmental and developmental dimensions of the Doha mandate are to be fulfilled through tariff reductions [and/or] elimination on a list of goods of interest to some members only."

The crux of Azevedo's critique is not unique to Brazil. Several other developing countries, such as India, China, Argentina, and South Africa, have been critical of a list of 153 environmental goods submitted for prospective tariff elimination by a group of mostly industrialized countries in 2007. They argue that many of the items on the list have

non-environmental purposes, and in general coincide with the export interests of industrial countries more than with any objective environmental measure.

Despite the contentious backdrop, WTO members have been engaging in simulation exercises to see how tariffs on the proposed list of 153 environmental goods might be reduced as part of a Doha Round agreement. China last week presented the results for three major industrialised members - the United States, the EU and Japan - and three major developing countries, China, India and Brazil.

Simulations reveal potential tariff cuts for specific EGs

According to the Chinese document, the standard tariff treatment for developed countries being discussed in the NAMA negotiations (a 'Swiss' formula with a coefficient of 8) would reduce the US's average tariff rate on select environmental products from 1.31 percent to 0.94 percent. In the case of the EU, the average rate would fall from 2.01 percent to 1.45 percent. For Japan, the decline would be from 0.24 percent to 0.16 percent.

In contrast, China's own average tariff for the same set of products would come down from 7.59 percent to 5.02 percent using a "Swiss" formula coefficient of 20, one of the parameters under consideration for developing countries in the NAMA negotiations. In the case of Brazil, the average applied tariff rate would fall much more dramatically, from 31.71 percent to 12.08 percent. For India, the average rate would go from 30.47 percent to 11.28 percent.

The move to highlight the relatively deep tariff cuts faced by developing countries was seen by many as a lever to secure special and differential treatment provisions, as well as technology transfer.

More simulations on the impact of tariff cuts on environmental goods, especially on trade flows, are expected shortly.

‘Hybrid’ approach presented

Mexico made a presentation on the ‘hybrid’ approach towards tariff liberalisation. Mexico’s approach would see members undertake tariff-reduction commitments on a self-selected list of environmental goods, and then use a request-offer process to negotiate further commitments.

In another presentation on possible elements of a ‘hybrid’ approach, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong and Norway proposed to have a core list of ‘single-use’ environmental goods, complemented by a selected list and a request-and-offer approach.

The presentations attracted a lot of discussion and interest particularly on the part of medium-sized developing countries that are neither big emitters of greenhouse gases nor likely beneficiaries of large-scale support for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Several countries asked a lot of questions on the hybrid approach, and did not dismiss it out of hand.

Most members say they wish to see more constructive engagement in the EGS negotiations, and expressed the belief that there are many areas where the gaps can be bridged, despite the discord voiced last week.

Proponents of the hybrid approach will work in the coming weeks to prepare a more formal presentation in time for the next round of negotiations in mid-March.

ICTSD reporting.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

EC Proposes Shift Away from Zero Tolerance on Biotech Imports

The European Commission (EC) has endorsed an end to the policy of “zero tolerance” on genetically modified (GM) material in animal feed

imports. If both the European Parliament and Council do not oppose the move, the threshold for unapproved GM material in imports for animal foodstuffs would be raised from 0 to .1 percent by summertime.

The Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH) at the Commission is calling for the change to account for the accidental presence of a minute percentage of GM material coming from third countries in order to lessen the strain of the growing feed costs on the livestock industry.

Environmental groups, however, argue that the claims are baseless and say allowing unapproved GM materials into Europe is harmful to consumers and a slippery slope to permitting more GM materials enter EU markets.

While the Commission, industry, and exporting countries argue that the current, zero tolerance policy allows miniscule quantities of unauthorized GM materials to disrupt large-scale international trade to Europe, green groups say the position is not backed up by facts.

“If you look at the most official figures, we see that since mid September 2009, no single shipment of size destined to be animal feed in Europe was rejected because of contamination with GMOs not authorised in Europe,” says Greenpeace Europe spokeswoman Stefanie Hundsdorfer.

Feed market

According to Commission statistics, imports in animal feed products totalled some €15 billion last year, with 80 percent of these comprised of GM maize and soy from the US, Brazil, and Argentina. While these imports represent a major source of protein for the EU’s livestock sector, pro-GM lobby groups insist that importers are reluctant to invest in large shipments due to fears of the current policy.

Through harmonising an implementation policy, says the Commission, the uncertainties faced by European feed producers in marketing feed made from imported raw materials and European

farmers in satisfying their animal feed requirements, would be mitigated.

In a press release, the European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC) describes the decision as "an important step towards more legal security" for manufacturers of feed and the European farmers in the fodder business. The issue is of particular importance of late with farmers now facing a major spike in world cereal prices.

Consumer safety

Members of the EU have been more hesitant towards GM crops than nations such as the US, Brazil, and Argentina because of concerns over consumer safety. Approval of GM products in Europe is the job of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and all materials are required to undergo rigorous testing before being approved for commercial use. Furthermore, all products that contain over .9 percent of GM ingredients must be properly labelled for European consumers ([EC Regulation No. 1830/2003](#)).

The new legislation would allow for minute amounts of GM materials to bypass EFSA testing before enter Europe's borders. Though the .1 percent of materials would be required to be approved in a non-EU producing country and pending authorization at the EFSA, environmental groups argue that this violates the fundamental principles of Europe's consumer protection.

"There is absolutely no reason to allow contaminated food to be fed to animals in Europe," said Mute Schimpf of Friends of the Earth Europe. "Weakening safety rules to appease the animal feed industry compromises human and environment safety."

If passed, the legislation would allow for the first ever non-authorized GM materials to enter onto EU soil. Voting on the issue at the European Parliament and Council will take place in the next three months.

European biotechnology policy has been a heated issue in recent years, with several member states eschewing official policy on the cultivation of GM

crops and a proposal to partially decentralise the approval process (see Bridges Trade Biores, [7 February 2011](#)).

The US has long been at odds with the EU over their policy on GM products, arguing that the approval procedure is too lengthy and not based on scientific evidence. In February 2006, the WTO ruled against the EU in a dispute filed by the US, Argentina, and Canada over the bloc's arduous biotech approval process (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [17 February 2006](#)).

"EU to Vote on Admitting GM Food" WALL STREET JOURNAL 22 February 2011; "EU moves to allow traces of GMO in feed" ASSOCIATED PRESS 26 February 2011; "EU experts approve trace GM in feed imports: Official" EURACTIV 23 February 2011; "EU experts approve trace GM in feed imports: official" REUTERS 22 February 2011; "Unauthorized GM crops could be allowed in British food chain for the first time after EU vote" THE TELEGRAPH 28 February 2011.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNEP Tackles Green Economy, Environmental Governance in Nairobi

Delegates from around the world met in Nairobi, Kenya last week to hammer out details on what role the green economy and international environmental governance will play in the much-anticipated 2012 Earth Summit (Rio+20).

Over 1000 participants were in attendance at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-26/GMEF). From 21-24 February, representatives discussed the conference's main themes, the green economy and international environmental governance. Both themes will form the central pillars of Rio+20, which seeks to accelerate progress toward advancing sustainable development globally.

Delegates focus on green economy

Initial discussions focussed on hashing out the details of how countries can work together to develop a robust, international green economy. In her summary of the meeting, newly-elected Governing Council President Rosa Aguilar Rivero emphasised that the green economy is an important force for driving sustainable development, because it will help countries overcome their increasing vulnerability to climate change and reduced access to natural resources.

Green economy discussions were backed by a new report published by UNEP, entitled “Towards a Green Economy.” The report uses economic modelling to demonstrate how countries can successfully transition toward a green economy with the right mix of policy and investment changes. In addition to driving sustainable development, the report identifies poverty reduction, global economic growth, and an increase in overall employment as long term benefits of a green economy.

Trade concerns surface once again

Concerns were voiced by representatives from developing countries about financing the green economy transition. Aguilar Rivero stressed that both the public and private sector should bear the responsibility for financing the transition. Also emphasised was the urgent need to assist developing nations in financing this initiative while simultaneously exploring innovative financing mechanisms to fuel investment and technology transfer.

Fears over the possibility of new green trade barriers were expressed at the meeting with developing countries particularly concerned that the transition to a green economy could unfairly restrict access to markets in the process of going green. UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, reassured conference members that these concerns were not unique to the green economy, and that discussions should be focused on minimising the risk of new economic instruments to create trade barriers. Aguilar Rivero's further encouraged nations not to block their markets under the pretext of “greening.”

Delegates asked to address weak environmental governance

Later discussions in Nairobi addressed the theme of international environmental governance with many expressing need for a more comprehensive framework. Conference members identified the environment “pillar” as the weakest in the sustainable development agenda, and called for a restructuring of international environmental governance at regional, national, and international levels. Aguilar Rivero emphasised that this type of reorganisation is crucial to the success of Rio+20.

“It is clear that if we want to achieve advancement in the implementation of sustainable development we have to raise environment to the level of the other pillars [in the sustainable development agenda],” said Aguilar Rivero's summary, which will form a key input into the year-long Rio+20 preparations.

Delegates also emphasised the importance of including all stakeholders in the IEG reformation process, and identified Rio+20 as an important opportunity to discuss and debate the issue.

Other discussions at the conference touched on the possibility of developing an alternative to gross domestic product (GDP) as a way of better measuring a given country's economic and social well being. The meeting also adopted 17 decisions for UNEP's upcoming work programme.

UNEP said the governing council meeting was crucial to increasing focus on the key issues that will ultimately dominate the agenda next year in Rio.

“As a result of this Governing Council, the direction for that reform has been given a greater focus, new momentum and taken on a greater sense of urgency which will inform the discussion, debate and finally the outcome of Rio+20 next year,” Achim Steiner, UNEP's executive director, said in a statement.

More information

The president's summary of the conference can be accessed on [UNEP's website](#).

ICTSD REPORTING; “Green Economy and Environmental Governance Reform Backed by World’s Environment Ministers,” UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME, 24 February, 2011; “President’s Summary,” UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME, 24 February, 2011; “Summary of the 26th Session of the UN Environment Programme Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum,” IISD, 28 February, 2011.

IN BRIEF

BASIC Ministers Disappointed with Progress on Climate Commitments

Ministers from key developing countries meeting in New Delhi last week expressed disappointment over rich countries’ lack of progress on meeting their fast-start climate change funding commitments and encouraged parties to remain focused on seeing the Bali Road Map through to completion.

In their joint statement, environment ministers from each of the BASIC countries – Brazil, South Africa, India, and China – declared that although the Cancun agreements represented “a step forward in the global action on climate change,” the agreements should not replace the Bali Road Map, which was adopted in 2007. Representatives from Argentina, Algeria, and the Maldives also attended the 26-27 February meeting.

The ministers pointed to the lack of attention the Cancun agreements paid to the issues of equity, intellectual property rights, and trade, all of which are important to developing countries. “There are number of issues not addressed in the Cancun Agreements which need to be brought back on the table,” said Jairam Ramesh, India’s environment minister.

The BASIC ministers further agreed that the Bali Road Map should be the premise for future work of the parties and should also provide the underlying structure for the future agenda of the

Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

The ministers also expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of fast-start funding that had been provided by developed countries thus far. Ramesh termed the missing capital the “biggest disappointment,” and suggested it may cause problems for future climate summits.

Fast start funding, under the Copenhagen Accord, was pledged to Africa, least developed countries and small island nations by developed countries in the amount of US\$30 billion in new and additional aid for climate change (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [30 April 2010](#)). Discouragement stems from the fact that thus far, actual funding allocated to the financing initiative only totals some US\$6.28 billion according to national reports and the joint project tracking initiative.

“It is highly regrettable and most unfortunate that even after 14 months of the Copenhagen Accord, under the so-called Fast Finance Track window, there is hardly any significant disbursement,” Ramesh said. “Unless the countries begin to see funds flowing, the atmosphere at Durban will be clouded with doubt and suspicion.”

Despite interim setbacks, the BASIC countries say they remain optimistic for future climate change negotiations. They have pledged to help mobilise support for the major upcoming environment meetings, such as the UNFCCC’s 17th Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP17), the Rio+20 Earth Summit, and Convention on Biological Diversity’s 11 Conference of the Parties (CBD COP11).

More information

The joint project tracking initiative can be accessed [here](#).

ICTSD Reporting; “Cancun Pact no Proxy for Bali Road Map: BASIC Nations,” HINDUSTAN TIMES, 27 February, 2011; “Delay in Disbursing Funds to Poor Countries Disappointing;

Ramesh,” THE ECONOMIC TIMES, 27 February, 2011; “No Going Back on Bali Road Map, Opine Basic,” EXPRESS BUXZZ, 28 February, 2011; “The Sixth BASIC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change Held in New Delhi,” EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE’S REUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA, 28 February, 2011; “UN postpones ‘green fund’ climate talks to April,” REUTERS AFRICA, 3 March 2011.

Beijing Boosts Priority of Environment in Development Plan

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao identified climate change and green development as central aspects of China’s development strategy over the next five years. China’s twelfth Five Year Plan (FYP), announced formally last Saturday in Beijing, establishes new targets for environmental protection and places energy efficiency at the helm of China’s national development strategy.

The FYP identified US\$600 billion worth of green growth initiatives including investment in budding green industries, locking carbon and energy reduction to 16-17 percent, and promoting a stronger responsibility system for energy savings and emission reductions.

Industries related to alternative energy, biotechnology, new generation information technology, alternative fuel vehicles and energy saving technologies are all outlined to be priority recipients of major investments under the FYP.

The new plan also sets an aggressive goal of 16-17 percent reduction in energy and carbon intensity – a measurement that links carbon emissions to economic output – by 2015, cutting energy consumption per unit of GDP 40-45 percent from 2005 figures. If realised, this would mean a significant drop in CO₂ emissions from China – the world’s largest emitter – despite evading the placement of carbon caps on its domestic industries.

China’s chief climate negotiator – Xie Zhenhug – endorsed these FYP initiatives as placing “climate

change and green-low carbon development at an even more important strategic position, raising countries’ shared confidence in facing climate change.”

Expanding power generation from “clean” energy sources such as nuclear, hydro, wind, and solar power plus increasing production and access to natural gas and oil, is also outlined in the FYP. Energy diversification is key to reducing pollution in China because 70 percent of energy at the moment is derived from the burning of coal, according to the Chinese Energy Research Society, a Beijing-based non-governmental organisation.

However, others are not as optimistic. Influential Chinese environmentalist Ma Jun of the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs says China must recognise that so-called renewable energy projects – such as hydroelectric dams – can still have significant environmental impacts.

Greenpeace China also remains sceptical of the targets of the FYP, stating that the detailed measures that will be released by individual industries in the upcoming months will be much more important than the targets of the national strategy.

While China has long been known for officially shying away from the link between environmental issues and economic development, recent statements suggest Beijing may be shifting its approach.

“We can no longer sacrifice the environment for the sake of rapid development and rash construction,” Wen said on 27 February. “These will only lead to production over-capacity, increased pressure on environmental resources, and unsustainable economic growth.”

“China announces ambitious clean energy plans for the next five years,” XINHUANET, 3 March 2011; “China pollution ‘threatens growth,’” BBC, 28 February 2011; “China says it wants green growth within five years,” AFP, 3 March 2011; “China sets growth target for new strategic industries by 2015,” XINHUANET, 5 March 2011; “Water, CO₂ the priorities for China’s 5-yr plan,” REUTERS, 3 March 2011; “What does

China's new five-year plan address," BBC, 3 March 2011; "China Puts Forth Energy Intensity, Carbon Intensity and Total Energy Consumption Targets in Twelfth Five Year Plan," NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, 5 March 2011.

India Slashes Duties on Electric and Hybrid Vehicles

India last week signalled its intention to help nurture a more sustainable transportation sector by announcing customs-duty exemptions and concessions for electric and hybrid cars in its annual budget. These, along with cuts duties for solar module manufacturers, are among a slew of duty concessions announced by the Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in India's parliament last week.

The concessions reflect the 'applied' duties that will be applied at the border, rather than WTO 'bound' duty rates which are the maximum ceiling levels that a country is permitted to levy at any time. On the other hand, applied duty cuts can be rolled back any time unless they are bound multilaterally at the WTO. Nevertheless, the concessions have been welcomed by some groups.

"We are glad that the government has woken up to the need to encourage alternate fuel and electric vehicles," says Karl Slym, president and managing director, General Motors India. "We will showcase an electric version of our mini car next month. Though we have not decided whether to launch it here or not, if the government follows up the budget with more incentives, it will only help us decide."

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a prominent environmental think-tank based in Delhi, is among those sounding a critical note. According to the CSE, the budget "skirts the real issues" pointing to subsidised diesel that was being misused by SUV and car owners. It also blasted the government for not doing more to encourage public transportation.

While the duty exemption did not extend to a fully assembled electric or hybrid car, it covered specific parts such as battery packs and chargers. Similarly, basic customs duties on several inputs relevant to the production of solar modules were also reduced to zero. This reduction should be seen in the context of India's ambitious Nehru Solar Mission, which aims to significantly accelerate the production of solar power in India over the next decade. The initiative also aims to enable a strong manufacturing base for solar equipment in India.

In an initiative aimed at enabling Indians in far-flung villages "to partake of developments in green technology," Mukherjee announced that duties on solar lanterns would be reduced from 10 to 5 percent.

Another environment-related budget item worth noting is the exemption extended to crude palm stearin, a fully biodegradable and non-toxic input used in the manufacture of eco-friendly laundry soaps and bio-based asphalt – an emerging green technology used in road construction as well as machines used in the application of bio-asphalt.

ICTSD Reporting; "General Motors' electric Beat to hit roads next month" HINDUSTAN TIMES, 4 March 2011; "Direct subsidy transfer," The Economic Times, 16 February 2011; "Budget skirts the real issues, does not do enough for environmental concerns: CSE," CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT, 29 February 2011.

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Events

For a more comprehensive list of events for the trade and environment community visit the [BioRes online calendar](#).

Coming up in the next two weeks (7 March – 21 March)

8-10 March, Rome, Italy. SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL FISHERIES

COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN (GFCM) COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE. This meeting, organised by the GFCM Committee on Aquaculture will address the intercessional activities of the committee, research priorities, trends and issues of marine and brackish aquaculture, and other aquaculture related issues. The proposed programme of work for 2011-2012 will also be discussed. The meeting is open to all members of the GFCM and observers. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

14-16 March, Geneva, Switzerland. UNCTAD MULTI-YEAR EXPERT MEETING ON SERVICES, DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE: THE REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION (THIRD SESSION). This meeting, organised by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, will focus on the trends and features of regulatory and institutional frameworks for infrastructure services, development, and trade as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of these frameworks. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

17 March, London, UK. THE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SUMMIT: BUSINESS IN EVOLUTION. This conference will examine the rationale for truly sustainable businesses. It will attempt to show how putting environmental and social responsibility at the heart of management practices is key to securing the long-term future of a company. Topics to be discussed will include energy security and renewables, sustainable consumption, and how to work with ethical partners. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

20-25 March, Honolulu, US. FIFTH INTERNATIONAL MARINE DEBRIS CONFERENCE. Co-organised by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the UN Environment Programme, this conference will highlight research advances and allow sharing of strategies and practices to assess, reduce, and prevent the impacts of marine debris. The conference will bring together international marine debris researchers, natural resource

managers, policy makers, industry representatives, and the nongovernmental community. It seeks to provide an opportunity for the development of specific bilateral or multi-country strategies to reduce and prevent marine debris. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

21 March, Geneva, Switzerland. SEMINAR ON THE STATE OF FORESTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE) REGION. This seminar will address the question: How successful is sustainable forest management in the UNECE region? Over the course of three sessions, participants will discuss the past 20 years of state of the forests management, status, trends, and changes in wood resources, and the usefulness of state of the forests criteria and indicators. The seminar will include a tree planting ceremony to celebrate World Forest Day, which also occurs on 21 March. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

Other upcoming events

25 March, Geneva, Switzerland. TRADESIFT TRADE POLICY TRAINING COURSE. This one day course will show participants how to use TradeSift, a software tool designed to deliver highly cost effective trade policy analysis. The course will include a demonstration of the capacities of TradeSift to aid in the economic analysis of all aspects of trade policy and a 3 hours hands-on instruction in the use of the software. The course will be led by Dr. Michael Gasiorek, Dr. Peter Holmes, and Professor Jim Rollo, the developers of TradeSift. For more information, visit the [TradeSift website](#).

12-13 April, Bonn, Germany. THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE – SCIENCE, PRACTICE, AND POLICY. This conference, organised by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in co-operation with the European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA), will offer a platform to discuss recent research results in the field of climate

change and biodiversity. Special attention will be paid to the question of how these results can support practitioners and be fed into political decision making processes. The conference will include speakers from the European Commission, the Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre, and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

22-24 June, Geneva, Switzerland. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM: MAKING TRADE AND FINANCE WORK FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET. This third annual UNCTAD Public Symposium provides a venue for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on topics likely to dominate the global political agenda in 2011 and 2012. Key topics for discussion will be financial and monetary reforms for sustainable development and making the transition to a green economy fair and equitable. Participants from civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians, academia, the media, international organisations and governments will have an opportunity to exchange their views on these issues. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

4-7 July, Marrakesh, Morocco. AFRICA CARBON FORUM 2011. This Forum will provide a knowledge sharing platform for carbon investments in the African region. It will include matchmaking and deal facilitation sessions that will allow potential Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project developers to showcase their projects to interested investors and carbon buyers. The forum will connect representatives from Designated National Authorities, national focal points, representatives from several UN agencies, governments and the private sector. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

Resources

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy for review by the BioRes Team to biores@ictsd.ch.

TOWARDS A GREEN ECONOMY: PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION. Published by United Nations Environment Programme (February 2011). This report outlines the policy choices, urgent actions and investments that are needed for a global, low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially-inclusive “Green Economy.” It demonstrates that the greening of economies is not generally a drag on growth but rather a new engine of growth, that it is a net generator of decent jobs, and that it is also a vital strategy for the elimination of persistent poverty. The report seeks to motivate policy makers to create the enabling conditions for increased investments in a green economy. The full report is available [online](#).

ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF MARINE LIVING RESOURCES. Published by Earthscan (February 2011). This book addresses the question: how does society make the best use of its marine living resources? It outlines the problems associated with the management and conservation of marine living resources, giving particular attention to the twin concepts of economic value and sustainability. The book also examines in detail the key methods that may be used to collect and analyse socio-economic data, oriented towards the information needs of decision makers and stakeholders involved in fisheries management. The book is available for purchase at [Earthscan's website](#).

THE ENERGY REPORT: 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY BY 2050. Published by Wild Wonders of Europe in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund, ECOFYS, and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (February 2011). The Energy Report presents a possible transition to a global, sustainable energy system. The two-part report addresses the fundamental question: “Is a fully sustainable global energy system possible by

2050?” The report finds that by utilising today’s technologies alone, 95% of all energy can be renewable by 2050. To make the transition, the report insists on abandoning the convention of meeting energy demand with fossil fuels, and provides the elements needed for the transition. The full report is available [online](#).

BREAKING RECORDS IN 2010: AIR QUALITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND TRANSPORT IN ASIA: A YEAR IN REVIEW. Published by the Clean Air Initiatives for Asian Cities Center (February 2011). This annual review is part of Clean Air Initiatives – Asia’s (CIA – Asia) mission to promote better air quality and liveable cities. The review aims to understand the related air quality, climate change, and transportation events and statistics of the past year and predict the emerging trends in Asia in the coming years. The report’s overarching message for 2011 is that policymakers need to understand sustainable cities as an important development issue. The full annual review is available [online](#).